

The Future of Human Rights: Class Struggle in Makhanda, South Africa

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By Athabile Ntlokwana

Supervisor: Professor Eduard Jordaan

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ORCID ID 0000-0003-4295-135

Abstract

The future of human rights continues to be subject to scholarly debate. One aspect of this debate concerns support for human rights among different economic classes in the Global South. This thesis investigates the future of human rights by focusing on the town of Makhanda, South Africa. Does the middle class support economic rights and the redistribution this implies? Are poorer classes' support for human rights dependent on the realisation of their economic rights? To answer these questions, this study uses qualitative in-depth interviews to gain insights about the attitudes and perspectives towards human rights of persons living in the Global South.

The findings suggests that support for human rights exist among poorer classes and is not dependent on the realisation of their economic rights. Despite their economic rights being disregarded, the poor express a continued need for support for civil and political rights. While the middle classes support economic rights, they nonetheless withhold consent for the redistributive measures those rights entail.

The future of human rights suggests that, while support for civil and political rights is likely to persist, economic rights may continue to be systematically disregarded, as the middle class is unwilling to bear the burden of the redistribution that their realisation requires. It remains unclear whether – and for how long – poorer classes will continue to endorse the human rights framework in the absence of meaningful progress toward the realisation of economic rights, without challenging those who enjoy these rights.

Declaration

I, Athabile Ntlokwana, hereby declare that the work on this Master's dissertation is my original work (except where acknowledgements indicated otherwise) and that neither the whole or any part of it has been submitted for another degree in this or any other university.

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Abbreviations

UN – United Nations

US – United States

NPGs – New Great Powers

BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa

Tables

Table 1: Class labels and total number of participants

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The future of human rights

There is a lively scholarly debate about the future of human rights (Hopgood, 2007; Sikkink, 2017; Braaten, 2020; and Zyberi et al., 2022). One disagreement is about what drives change and progress in human rights. Some scholars link the future of human rights to the West.¹ They argue that the future of human rights is dependent on the strength and power of the West to ensure its safety and survival from threats, such as global wars, populism, illiberal order, and nationalism (Braaten, 2020:9; Cooley and Nexon, 2022:109; Regilme Jr, 2019:162, and Braaten, 2020:9). However, the West is seen as being in decline, enabling the rise of the countries that threaten human rights order, such as China (Rodríguez-Garavito, 2014:499; Piccone, 2018).

China systematically violates human rights at home (Machado, 2023:10; Cai, 2013:793). An international system of human rights dominated by China will likely not promote, protect, and enforce human rights and punish violations (Braaten, 2020:3).² What is more concerning for scholars is that China will bring an authoritarian political system, illiberal values, and state-directed capitalism to the international order, thereby undermining the principles upheld by Western-led institutions such as the United Nations (UN), World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF), which have historically supported human rights (Machado, 2023:10; Beeson, 2020:1, and Braaten, 2020:9). Scholars argue that if the decline of the West has undermined international human rights, the rise of China poses a greater threat (Cai, 2013:793).

Another group of scholars argues that the future of human rights depends on the strength of the United Nations (UN) in addressing challenges that confront human rights (Alston and Megret,

¹ The West here is understood as the United States and European allies.

² The rise of China comes with different values and preferences. The domestic behavior of China and lack of positive image on human rights is used to claim that China might undermine the effectiveness of human rights.

2020:2). These challenges include the prevention of wars, protection of state sovereignty, terrorism, and issues of global poverty (Akani, 2020:96). One particular problem is that the UN allows peacekeeping problems to fester by failing to bring about immediate peace or enforcing ceasefire, which can ultimately result to a bigger crisis (De Coning, 2018:3; Pushkina, 2020:269). The UN has limitations, such as resource constraints and geopolitical dynamics, which make it difficult to provide an effective and faster response to human rights violations (Di Pasquale, 2023:2; Nan, 2024:1029). The UN's inadequate responses to Palestine, Rwanda and the Syrian Civil War are among the evident failures of the UN peace-keeping and human rights protection mission.³ Scholars argue that, in order for the United Nations to strengthen their role in continuing to protect and promote human rights, it must enhance its capacity to respond promptly to crises and effectively address violence, disease, and starvation (Akani, 2020; Joseph, 2020:120; and Di Pasquale, 2023:83).⁴

A third group of scholars argues that the future of human rights depends on the strength of the Global South (Tamale, 2020; Jensen, 2016). They argue that the daily operations of international human rights have gradually changed from being shaped by the Global North to a multipolar framework. The North not only had the power to shape human rights institutions and policies that aligned with their interests but also disregarded alternative voices that tried to shape the human rights system (Tamale, 2020). With the dominance of the Global North receding (Kornprobst and Paul, 2021), the problem confronting states from the Global South is the hegemonic legacy of the Global North in setting the international human rights agenda (Rodríguez-Garavito, 2014). In practice, this means the Global North tends to emphasize rights that align with its own cultural and political values – for example, the right to privacy and free speech – while disregarding rights that matter the most to the Global South needs and concerns,

³ The issue was delayed response or little involvement from the United Nations

⁴ The UN needs to work on a number of fragilities that include threats of new dangers to peace and global justice such as wars and poverty.

such as right to adequate food, housing, education, and basic minimum wage (Patnaik, 2024). The states from the Global South have responded to this problem by constantly re-examining the legal, political, social, intellectual, and moral foundations of the international human rights system (Jensen, 2016; Santos, 2014:412, and Grovogui, 2011:175). They are fighting to broaden the dialogue about cultural, social, and economic rights (Tamale, 2011:43; Rodriguez-Garavito, 2014:499). Unlike the Global North, the Global South states stress the importance of cooperation rather than accepting one-sided dominance. Faced with all these challenges, the Global South in its approach to human rights is moving toward an international order where all states can get the opportunity to contribute to the international human rights system. Scholars argue a Global South by addressing these issues is likely to champion and address new human rights and ensure future survival of all human rights (Zyberi et al., 2022:5).

These groups of scholars provide a useful forecast of the drivers of progress and change in human rights. However, there is a further perspective that scholars link to the future of human rights – one that focuses on class and class conflict (Hopgood, 2017). This perspective argues that globally, civil and political rights generally enjoy greater respect than economic rights.⁵ There is a class element to this: middle classes enjoy civil and political rights but have less need for claiming their economic rights – these are already realised for their class. The poor might enjoy civil and political rights alongside the middle classes, but their demands for recognising their economic rights are often disregarded.

A number of scholars have argued that the widespread failure to address the economic rights demands of the poor puts the global human rights regime at risk (Hopgood, 2017; Tamale, 2020; Matua, 2008; Braaten, 2020).⁶ The resulting consequences of failing to address the

⁵ Civil and political rights include freedom of speech, access to courts, rights to life, rights to privacy, and rights free trial; and economic rights are basic human rights namely: right to education; right to clean running water; right to housing; and right to food.

⁶ The reasons for human rights to be at risk will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 2.

economic rights - such as social unrests, crime and insecurity, and erosion of rule of law - threatens the rights and safety of society as a whole. Hopgood (2017:11) argues the “South is focusing more on social justice and less on civil and political rights,” to minimise such consequences. Scholars argue that for human rights to endure, it is necessary to broaden support for human rights in the Global South and increasingly among the world’s poor (Tamale, 2020; Braaten, 2020). However, such broadening of support would require a class compromise: for the middle classes to consent to an expansion of economic rights to the poor and the redistributive implications of such consent, and for the poorer classes to continue supporting civil and political rights. Whether such a class compromise can be achieved remains uncertain, as scholars like Hopgood, despite exploring the topic, have not examined enough evidence to draw definitive conclusions.

Other scholars have repeated Hopgood’s claim about the advantages that would come from addressing economic redistribution and broadening human rights support through a class redistributive compromise. To them, the willingness of the middle class to consent to such redistribution would strengthen economic rights and global justice, and would support all human rights (Visage, 2019; Burger and McAravey, 2014). In this context, global justice refers to global redistributive justice, which includes the reduction of poverty and inequality (Brooks, 2023:3).

Just as importantly, scholars foresee problems for human rights if economic redistribution is not addressed. They argue that the disadvantage for human rights in failing to address redistribution can perpetuate poverty and inequality, as the gap between the haves and have-nots continues to widen. Not only does this undermine the realisation of human rights but it also exposes the limits of the human rights enterprise as a legal and political framework for global justice (Dehm, Golder and Whyte, 2020:5). This is the case precisely because, among the poor, redistribution is increasingly seen as a human rights issue. It is believed that, if human

rights are deployed more critically and strategically, they could “offer a useful tool in broader redistributive struggles against inequality at the national and international level” (Fredman, 2011:566; Dehm, Golder and Whyte, 2020:2). The non-fulfilment of redistribution will expose the limited usefulness of human rights to the poor. If left unaddressed, the failure to incorporate redistribution and economic aspects of human rights will undermine the entire human rights framework and jeopardise its long-term survival.

A further destruction that scholars note is that redistribution setbacks and cutbacks are likely to trigger social discontent, particularly if the poor are disproportionately affected (Lierse, Lascombes and Becker, 2022:439). MacNaughton, Frey and Porter (2021:2) argue that economic inequalities and a lack of willingness to support redistribution continue to fuel some of the everyday protests across the world, with the poor blaming the middle and upper classes for avoiding tax, hogging wealth, and offering less support to the government for the realisation of redistribution. Put differently, the lack of redistribution is predicted to create a middle class that is in isolation and not compatible with the human rights needs and interests of the broader society (Akinkugbe and Wohlmuth, 2016:78). They argue that a middle class disconnected from politics affecting the poor is a problem. The poor seek service delivery, good governance, and respect for all human rights. A disengaged middle class undermines expectations for redistribution for the poor. The danger is that the more human rights continue to exclude the economic rights of the poor, the more it will experience a decline in respect, and eventually face its endtimes (Hopgood, 2017).

It is unclear whether we have entered the “endtimes” of human rights, as Stephen Hopgood has argued. Among human rights scholars, uncertainty is the dominant sentiment (Rodriguez-Garavito, 2014:499). Scholars have not satisfactorily considered the empirical aspect of economic redistribution. As will be shown later, class struggle as a driver of change in human

rights and claims of economic redistribution has not been explored sufficiently, especially in the Global South.

This study examines the potential for such class compromise in the Global South. This study examines the attitudes and understandings different classes have of human rights and redistributive class compromise to see whether such class compromise will come about, and what that could mean for the future relevance of human rights. More specifically, this study will examine the attitudes of residents from Makhanda, a town in South Africa. I will interview people from different classes about their views on human rights, class compromise, and redistribution. Although this will be explained further in Chapter 3, the middle class is understood as those who have social services such as adequate housing, sanitation, and access to clean water while the poor are defined as those who lack them.

1.2 The debate about class in South Africa: the middle class, poor, and working class

An understanding of economic class in South Africa is crucial to this study. To achieve clarity, however, is not straightforward. At least two major challenges present themselves. The first is the question of how to define the ‘middle class,’ ‘poor,’ and ‘working class.’ Second, it is necessary to consider whether the way class is defined differs between the Global North and Global South.

1.2.1 Defining the “middle class,” “poor,” and “working class”

Class definitions and thresholds vary. Some scholars define and determine class through self-identification - by allowing people to put themselves in a category based on how they perceive their standing in society (Visage, 2013:2; Zizzamia et al., 2016:1). One problem with this approach can be seen in the “Multiple meanings of the middle class in Soweto, South Africa”. The authors note that letting people self-identify can lead to confusion, as people do not always know which category they fit into (Phadi and Ceruti, 2011).

Others define class according to income, typically using an individual's or a household's monthly income (Visagie and Posel, 2013:150). Income as a measure provides an individual's economic power, which is closely tied to social status. This approach is criticized for being arbitrary, as income is a temporal variable; it changes over time thus making it an unreliable indicator for long term social class (Burger et al., 2015:32). Scholars further argue that income-based measurements are not grounded enough in social contexts to capture class-like preferences, identities, and interactions. For that reason, class definitions require the inclusion of further attributes (Melber, 2022:207).

A third way scholars determine class is through using an "affluence-based conceptualisation" (Visage, 2013). The measure here is focused on the patterns of consumption. Simply put, this approach is based on how people spend money, what they spend it on, and their way of life. The way people demonstrate their wealth in getting certain goods is associated with social status. The affordability of what they consume is closely linked to the accessibility of services which remain beyond reach to others unless one can financially afford them (Ledger, 2021:6).

Defining who is middle class in South Africa is a challenging task (Mbandlwa, 2024:438). Ndlovu (2020:570) acknowledges that the middle-class category comes with fuzziness and instability. Southall (2016:1), however, points to a general agreement in South Africa that the middle class is a category made up of individuals or households in the middle range of hierarchies of occupation, income, property ownership, and wealth. According to Southall (2018:467), members of the middle-class are typically urban-based, future-oriented, well-educated, politically assertive, and attuned to ever-changing technology. However, defining the middle class as urban based overlooks the growing middle class in townships and rural areas. The middle class is typically occupied by professionals such as teachers and nurses, managers, legislators, and senior officials (Visagie, 2013:3; Mbandlwa, 2024:439). The average earnings of middle classes in 2023 per individual monthly after personal income tax

are as follows: R15 000 to R21 000 lower middle class, R22 000 to R51 000 middle class (Pillay, 2024; StatsSA, 2024), R52 000 and more for upper middle class (Mbandlwa, 2024:439). This approach is considered for this thesis, as it assumes that an individual earning within these brackets has access to services such as education and healthcare and can maintain them independently.

In contrast to the middle class, the poor are the disadvantaged and marginalised class in society. The poor can be defined using monetary terms, associated with inadequate income (Jansen et al., 2015:151). They are often not employed, and those who are employed are low-paid labourers doing non-unionized jobs (Seekings, 2014:135). The jobs the poor do include street vending or small-scale entrepreneurship. Unlike the middle-class occupations, the jobs for the poor do not require a university degree (Mahlatji, 2023:27). The poor are defined not only by the poverty that affects them as a class, but also by the conditions of the environments in which they live. As Nnadiozie (2013:85) points out, the poor usually live in un-serviced communities – areas that are characterised by limited access to basic infrastructure and essential public services.

Other scholars have repeated that the poor can also be defined using non-monetary terms, linked to inadequate access to public and private services (Jansen et al, 2015:151). They argue that the poor often lack skills and training employers value and are deprived of sustainable access to services such as healthcare, clean running water, education, electricity, sewer systems, consistent removal of refuse, and adequate housing (Nnadiozie, 2013:85). In many cases, poor residents must rely on informal alternatives, such as illegal electricity connections or makeshift toilets. With these economic challenges in sight, the poor are vulnerable to poverty traps such illness and debt, which further exacerbate their state of poverty. They often rely on state support such as social grants, food parcels, and relief grants for essential services (Seekings, 2015:4; Mbandlwa, 2024:439). Based on these conditions of deprivation, the poor

are characterised by their lack of access to services. This understanding of class will form the basis of the approach used in this thesis.

The working class comprise individuals or households “dependent on semi-skilled and unskilled workers in sectors other than agriculture and domestic work” (Seekings, 2010:8). The working class is made of occupations such as service and market sale workers, plant machinery operations, manufacturing, fishery workers, craft and trade related workers, and all elementary occupations (Visage, 2013a; Mbandlwa, 2024:439). This group falls slightly above the poor in economic class in South Africa (Seekings, 2023:2). The working class, like the middle class, get their income from salaries, which may be low (Mahlatji, 2023:27). However, the working class usually face exploitative poor working conditions, such as not being paid according to labour laws, not receiving pensions and benefits, and long working hours (Mahlatji, 2023).

It is not always easy to distinguish the poor from the working class. Although the poor and working class are distinct, there is an overlap between these groups (Alexander, 2013a:29). Individuals may move between these class categories in response to changing access to resources, employment, and social and economic factors such as inflation, unstable wage, limited education, pandemics, and disabilities. One overlap between these groups is low wages and unstable unemployment. Most working-class individuals earn low wages, and work as casuals or contract workers, which can push them into periods of poverty (Seekings, 2015:26). Second, the poor and working-class often have challenges of social mobility, where they face barriers to accessing opportunities to improve their social and economic situation. These groups usually experience both poverty and working-class status simultaneously.

For these reasons - including lack of access to resources, unstable unemployment, and low wages - the poor and working class are mostly affected when economic rights are not recognised because they enjoy limited economic opportunities and are most dependent on

public services. The poor would gain considerably should a redistributive compromise be reached.

Given the complexities of class, this thesis adopts an approach that defines these groups primarily in terms of their access to essential public services. The middle class is understood as those with stable access to basic services such as water, electricity, education, and healthcare, while the poor are those lacking reliable access to these services, often living under underserved or informal communities. Adopting this approach provides a clearer and practical framework that highlights a key dimension of socio-economic inequality, making it easier to distinguish between these classes. Furthermore, this definition allows for a more precise identification of participants relevant to discussions on redistributive compromise, as it directly links class to access and deprivation, which are central to this thesis. Importantly, this approach enables a clear analysis of whether the middle class, as a stable group, actively supports the economic rights of the poor and the redistribution such policies implies, as well as whether the poor's support for broader human rights depends on the realisation of their economic rights. By focusing on service access, this study aims to clarify the boundaries and interactions between the middle class and poorer classes, thereby facilitating a more targeted analysis on human rights.

Above, I sought to argue that economic classes can be distinguished according to access to services. The middle class has access to public and private services, and can maintain them on their own, while the poor lack such access. For the working class, access to services is not assured. For the poor to live decent lives they need constant provision of public goods and services which require a degree of redistribution from the middle class.

1.2.2 Differences in defining class in the Global South and North

The way class is conceptualised, experienced, and measured in the Global North and South differs (Robins, 2019:2). These differences stem from the economic, social, political, historical,

and cultural dimensions that shape these divides. For instance, the Global North often follows rigid employment patterns, access to social services, and geographical location to measure class. The Global South goes beyond this measure, and considers multidimensional measures of class that include social, cultural, and political factors that influence social status, such as traditional occupations, informal economy, urban-rural divide, consumption patterns, ethnicity, and religious affiliations that play a significant role in shaping class dynamics in the Global South (Schotte, 2018:32).

There are many economic factors that complicate the study and measurement of economic class in the Global South. One is the high rate of unemployment; South Africa has consistently had high rates of unemployment over the years (Kristen et al., 2023:321; Schotte, 2018). This makes it difficult to use traditional class metrics to define and analyse class using income and occupation. For instance, someone may be employed but not occupy a stable working class or middle-class position that offers security, matches their skills, and ensures a decent livelihood. Another factor is the existence of an informal economy which makes it difficult to define and measure class solely on economic indicators. For instance, some individuals fall in the middle-class status without middle-class occupations, but by participating in the informal economy such as casual labour, street vending, and subsistence farming. In contrast, the Global North has more formalised employment structures and welfare systems that makes more legible and statistically measurable economic class. Seekings (2015:27) argues that by recognising these context-specific indicators helps to understand the nuances of who belongs to which class.

The Global North standards assigned to define and measure the middle class, and the poor seem to not entirely hold the same relevance everywhere. For instance, in the Global North, there are disputes whether the self-employed should be part of the middle and working classes due to the mix of both unskilled and skilled individuals (Burger et al., 2015:29). While the bulk of self-employment in the Global South is survivalist informality not entrepreneurial, it can turn

to entrepreneurship. However, by not holding a professional work such as consultancy - that aligns with the middle-class characteristics, the self-employed may not be considered as an elite group in the Global North. For this reason, the Global North standards of class may be ill suited for South Africa because they lack consideration of economic inequality and alternatives to salaried employment. Scholars seem to suggest that the grouping of people into a class should come from that specific place and be value laden. Visage (2013:2) argues that South Africa should have special definitions and approaches for their middle class, especially as a country embedded with inequalities, wide distribution of income, and relatively low median levels of income compared to countries in the Global North.

Class structures are often less rigid and fluid in the Global South, with individuals moving between economic positions based on hybrid livelihood strategies (Ndletyana, 2014:5; Burger et al., 2015:26). Furthermore, the Global North frameworks for class analysis often fails to account for these structural and cultural differences such as race, religion, and ethnicity, leading to analytical blind spots when applied to Global South context. One could suggest that the classification of “class” in the context of the Global South may need to be re-examined While class measurements developed in the Global North may not fully capture the realities of the South, access to basic services can serve as a useful indicator for distinguishing between social classes in these contexts.

To clarify the focus of this thesis in light of the above definitions and complexities of class in South Africa, and the Global North and Global South, this thesis defines class primarily in terms of access to basic services. Those who meet the threshold of access to services such as education, adequate housing, clean running water, and security are considered middle class. Those who do not meet the threshold of access to these social services are poor. Those in between the middle class and poor are referred to as the working class.

1.3 Research aims

This thesis aims to assess the relationships between class, redistribution, and the support for human rights.

It will first assess the view that poor South Africans have on human rights. The aim is to understand the way poor people in South Africa perceive rights in relation to their class. The objective is to examine whether the poor will continue to support political rights despite the ongoing failures to realise their economic rights.

The second aim of this thesis is to understand the character of middle-class support for human rights, specifically the extent to which the middle class supports economic rights for the poor and the redistribution towards the poor and what such economic rights imply

The third aim is to consider what the answers from earlier aims suggest about the future of human rights.

1.4 Research questions

In *The Endtimes of Human Rights* (2014), Hopgood claims that class struggle is the driver of human rights. Hopgood wonders whether the middle class will “be a progressive force for human rights” globally (Hopgood, 2019:16). Hopgood argues that the middle-class accesses opportunities through their status in society and only fights for rights that will increase their power and status (Gilder, 2018). In his analysis of the middle class, Hopgood argues that the middle class puts more value on civil and political rights and has less need for economic rights. In this way, it becomes difficult to say that the middle class is a consistent supporter of all human rights. To Hopgood, it is unclear whether the poor neglect civil and political rights and focus on rights that are more pressing to their situation, such as economic rights including right to clean water, adequate housing and education. While Hopgood raises these questions, not enough attention has been given to their validity, nor to the position of these classes in the

Global South. This study, therefore, answers the questions previously raised by Hopgood in the context of Makhanda, South Africa.

1. Does the middle class support economic rights and the redistribution this implies?
2. Are poorer classes' support for human rights dependent on the realisation of their economic rights?

1.5 Evidence from the Global South

Much scholarship on human rights comes from the Global North. The straightforward consequence of this is that there are significant gaps in our knowledge about human rights in the Global South (Santos and Meneses, 2020). One such gap is the Western liberal conceptualisation of individual rights. This conception struggles to resonate in formerly colonised countries that respect the 'critical vitality of group rights' (Tamale, 2020: 207). The other gap is the use of Western-centric perspectives and narratives as central explanations for the discourse of human rights that often overlook or disregard the experiences and knowledge creation from the Global South (Therien, 1999:723). The interpretation of human rights often entails a departure from the theories that originated in the Global North, such as Marxism and Liberalism, as they may not fully reflect the historical, social, and economic realities of the Global South (Barreto, 2013:5).

The way human rights are understood today is a consequence of this dynamic. Scholars in the Global South argue that perspectives on human rights in the South should be expanded (Izarali, Masuku and Ibhawoh, 2019:5). This section considers the power dynamics between the Global North and South, the dominance of the North in the discourse of human rights, and why human rights evidence and events from the South matter. In other words, this section explains why the

reliance on evidence from the Global North is problematic and proposes how the thesis aims to address this issue.

Power dynamics between the Global South and North are often seen as different and unequal, the South at the periphery and North at the core. For Tamale (2011:43), “the tendency is for the Northern partner to dominate, control and exploit the Southern counterparts.” The dominance happens because the North holds a significant portion of the world’s income, governance of international institutions, and influence in foreign policy.

Global North dominance is also seen in the discourse of human rights through funding disparities, where funding on human rights research is more concentrated in the North, with fewer resources available for research in the Global South (Ode, 2010). The disadvantage is that with much funding available in the North, evidence of human rights also comes from the North. For this reason, scholars in the Global South often rely on citations of publications from the Global North to make their case, while the scholars in the Global North cite themselves and remain inward-looking (Collyer, 2018:58). It is argued that the Global South with limited funding, have less influence and resources struggles to compete with the dominance of the North. Due to limited funding opportunities in the Global South, many scholars writing about human rights based on these contexts are stationed in the Global North, where greater resources and research support are available. The challenge is, at times, those scholars contribute to producing knowledge about human rights “which cannot be made relevant in the solving of local problems” (Collyer, 2018:58). In other words, their approach to human rights issues in the Global South is through a Northern lens, which can result in ineffective solutions that fail to address context specific challenges.

A further problem is that scholars often rely on data that is easily available such as UN documents (Izarali, Masuku and Ibhawoh, 2019; Tamale, 2011:43). However, these documents

and data do not adequately represent what human rights look like (Haug, Braveboy-Wagner and Maihold, 2021:1926). This is largely because they are grounded in universalistic frameworks that often overlook the lived experiences, cultural contexts of communities, and socio-political realities of people in the Global South. This is a particular problem with regard to our knowledge about the Global South because the data from the UN often represents a top-down approach to human rights, while neglecting local perspectives that prioritize qualitative insights to human rights than quantitative data (Izarali, Masuku and Ibhawoh, 2019). As a result, when relying on the scholarship of the North it becomes difficult to develop targeted interventions that seek to address specific human rights needs of the communities of the Global South.

To produce a much more balanced understanding of global issues to inform effective and sustainable human rights solutions, it has been argued that researchers from the Global South need more representation in global research collaborations, conferences, and in international academic journals that focuses on human rights (Rodríguez-Garavito, 2014:507; Ibhawoh, 2019:34). Others argue that a diversity of literature on human rights is much needed to expand the perspective on human rights in the Global South (Izarali, Masuku and Ibhawoh, 2019). For instance, expand the perspective on the debates on development and its impact on human rights, particularly in the context of economic rights.

Tamale (2020:186) further argues that dominant human rights discourses that overshadow and marginalise Global South perspectives on human rights should be critically repositioned. The global human rights community must recognise and integrate the valuable insights and solutions offered by scholarship from the Global South, in order to promote and foster a more inclusive and equitable approach (Dirlik, 2007:15). More specially, the Global North should learn with the South and from the South to develop more effective and inclusive human rights discourses and strategies (Santos and Meneses, 2020). That approach can unearth important

human rights evidence, views, and perspectives about the Global South that would remain lost to the human rights discourse (Pratt and De Vries, 2023).

Izarali, Masuku and Ibhawoh (2019:12) argue that it is important to locate the existing claims made by the Global North about human rights “in the scholarship of human rights in Africa.” By centring the Global North claims in African scholarship, African-led solutions to human rights challenges can be supported, rather than relying solely on external interventions. In this process, the Global South can decolonise knowledge and challenge dominant Western narratives about human rights (Dirlik, 2007:12). More specially, considering the issues about rights that have received insufficient attention in scholarship in the Global South such as economic rights.

This study intends to remedy this shortage of attention and scholarship about human rights in the Global South, by using a South African community to discuss the future of global human rights. This thesis situates the research through using experiences and scholarship from the Global South to produce a wider and better understanding of human rights on civil and political and economic rights. The experiences of participants will be used to address the gap in evidence emerging from the Global South, providing important, context-specific insights that are often overlooked in mainstream human rights research dominated by the Global North perspectives.

1.6 Contents of chapters

This research is divided into six chapters with various sub-sections in each chapter. Chapter 2, “The future of human rights,” first gives an overview and discussion of the understandings and key perspectives’ scholars have on the debates about the global future of human rights. This chapter pays attention to three themes. First, it pays attention to the debates about the future of human rights with a focus on the decline of the West. Second, Chapter 2 pays attention to three drivers of human rights: class struggle, the role of great powers to international economic rights, and neoliberalism.

The third chapter, “Research methodology,” introduces the methodology. The decision about which methodology to use is not straightforward. One question is whether to use a quantitative or qualitative approach. The next issue to be considered will be about which methods of data collection to use, how to select interview subjects, and how many persons to interview. Lastly, this chapter addresses the ethical aspect of research.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research. It presents participants’ responses to various questions related to human rights and redistribution. It presents the results in sections and themes, namely: Class and access to services; support for civil and political rights and economic rights; and redistribution and desired changes for human rights, to allow for a more efficient discussion and analysis in chapter five.

Chapter 5 presents the analysis of the research findings. Specifically, it presents its findings about whether support for a class compromise exists, and what that would mean for the global future of human rights.

The concluding chapter provides a summary, highlights the contribution of this study, reflects on limitations, and makes suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: The future of human rights

2.1 Introduction

Scholars disagree about the global future of human rights. Works by many different influential scholars point to various futures of human rights, with some offering optimistic visions, while some making more pessimistic forecasts. Hopgood (2017) presents a creeping pessimism about the decay and “endtimes” of human rights amid the current challenges. Braaten and Dancy (2020), who stress the role of civil society, are more confident about continued successes and improvements of human rights. Other scholars advocate for the exploration of alternatives in assessing the future of human rights, emphasizing the need to move beyond the traditional human rights framework in order to consider more radical approaches to global justice (Rodríguez-Garavito, 2021; Moyn, 2018; Cargas, 2019:293).

The emergence of new trends in human rights, such as those involving artificial intelligence (AI), economic inequality, and gender and LGBTQ+ rights, has prompted scholars to observe and predict possible futures of human rights. A task of such nature to scholars is a difficult one to perform, as it is not always clear to see where the human rights trends lead and the kind of future they signal (Zyberi et al., 2022:1). Some argue that the future of human rights might be doomed due to present threats. They argue that human rights must confront challenges arising from the failure to realise economic rights for the poor, due to prioritisation of civil and political rights. Others argue that there still exists room for optimism. What is clear is that human rights are often at crossroads, requiring scholars to frequently use various yardsticks to measure and debate their decline or improvements, thus arriving at conflicting questions, predictions, and conclusions (Dancy and Fariss, 2023:252).

Human rights face many questions about the future. Will the international order of human rights that developed over decades enter its “end-times,” as Hopgood suggested? Will international wars and conflicts decline and what role will human rights play in the process? Will activists continue to use the language of human rights? Will the challenges that face the oppressed and marginalised minorities be addressed? Will human rights collapse or continue to have purpose and flourish in the Global South while facing severe challenges in the West? Will human rights institutions tackle all these challenges? The ongoing scholarly exchange on these questions has heightened interest in critically examining the global future of human rights.

This chapter considers the literature on the future of human rights. First, it does so by paying attention to the improvements and positive outcomes for human rights. Second, it considers the debates about the role of the West, its decline, and the rise of non-Western states. Third, this chapter explores the rise of right-wing populist movements, the challenges imposed by new technological advancements to human rights, and the impact of protracted civil wars on human rights. Fourth, it highlights three key drivers of change and progress in human rights: (1) Neoliberalism and human rights; (2) the influence of great powers on human rights; and (3) class conflict.

2.2 Debates about the future of human rights

Debates at forecasting the future of human rights often revolve around the interplay between progress and challenges in the field. On one hand, some scholars are optimistic about the future of human rights, arguing that if we take a long-term view, then the human rights trends show improvements, from a decline in torture and mortality to increased levels of health and education (Dancy and Sikkink, 2017:26). Building on these trends, Sikkink further argues that an examination and comparison of current data with historical records of human rights suggests

a decrease in violence and most serious violations of human rights, and fewer episodes of international and civil wars (Sikkink, 2017:141).

Scholars have marshalled a substantial body of data to demonstrate that significant improvements and greater awareness have emerged in the field of human rights (O’Connell, 2021; Sikkink, 2017). Sikkink (2017:141), drawing from a wide range of data, argues that there has been progress in human rights, particularly in the realms of rights of sexual minorities, gender equality, and rights of people with disabilities. For example, LGTBI rights, although not accepted everywhere, have shifted from being completely taboo to becoming a recognized and increasingly institutionalised aspect of international human rights discourse. Another notable example is the improvement of opportunities for women. As the percentage of women in school has increased around the world, there has been a reduction of inequality in education between men and women (Sikkink, 2017:141). Gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment has been achieved in most regions, illustrating the tangible impact of global efforts to improve access to education. The abovementioned line of trends bring optimism to scholars and bode well for the future, as it implies to them that the time for human rights to expire has not really come.

In contrast, another group of scholars point to various obstacles for the future of human rights (Hopgood, Snyder, and Vinjamuri, 2017). One problem is the decline of the West, traditionally the strongest backer of human rights (Hopgood, Snyder, and Vinjamuri, 2017:324; Reus-Smit, 2019:29; and Braaten, 2020:9). The West has been routinely behind human rights in various ways. Major institutions and NGOs of international human rights are situated in the West, in New York, London, and Washington (Hopgood, 2017:287). The West has also been behind the funding of international human rights (Reus-Smit, 2019). Consequently, the West’s decline threatens the promotion and protection of human rights, historically advanced through its foreign policy, humanitarian interventions, and funding (Reus-Smit, 2019:129). This shift

raises critical questions about who will assume responsibility for upholding and backing human rights standards in a changing global political order (Braaten, 2020:6). Not only does this have negative implications for the funding of human rights initiatives and organisations globally but also implies a potential threat to the regime of human rights.

As the West's grip on global power loosens, space for China to assert its influence on global human rights opens up (Piccone, 2018). Scholars are pessimistic about the rise of China. They argue that the emergence of China brings different principles, values, interests, and priorities to the forefront of human rights. China's record of human rights is characterised by restrictions on freedom of speech, suppression of sexual minorities, and intimidation of human rights defenders (Piccone, 2018). Unlike the United States, China emphasizes the principles of non-intervention and sovereignty (Wu, 2010:86). China upholds the principle that states should protect and promote human rights in accordance with their specific national contexts, free from the domination or interference of other states (Braaten, 2020:3; Cai, 2013:793). Given this approach and its poor human rights record both domestically and internationally, scholars note that China is likely to be inhospitable to global human rights norms due to its principles and values (Machado, 2022:10). Piccone further argues that with this record, China's ambition to shape international human rights might weaken the international system of human rights, leading to dire consequences for the human rights order (Piccone, 2018:5).

A third group of scholars forecast that the rise of right-wing populist movements worldwide poses a major challenge to the continued relevance of human rights, particularly in the West (Alston, 2017; Roth, 2017). Right-wing populists typically promote causes antithetical to the respect for human rights: xenophobia, racism, exclusionary nationalism, and a rejection of international law and institutions (Braaten, 2020:7; Posner, 2020:25). The rise of leaders such as Donald Trump is used as evidence to relay a message that the rise of populists is bad for human rights. What makes them bad drawing from Trump's presidency is the undermining of

the international human rights in ways that showed hostility to immigrant policies, omission of human rights to foreign policies, and an unapologetic praise of authoritarian head of states (Braaten, 2020:8; Regilme Jr, 2019). The pronounced xenophobic, nationalistic, and racist behaviours exhibited by populist movements pose a significant challenge to the international human rights order. One challenge they pose is being a threat to democracy, while the other is legitimizing the suppression and exclusion of different races (Braaten, 2020:9). A further challenge they pose is that they weaken the rule of law by undermining judicial independence. The danger of populism threatens to reverse the progress and accomplishments of human rights.

There are also scholars who argue that the new technologies put human rights at risk (Pyrohovska et al., 2024). They argue that digital technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) when used without adequate and ethical safeguards can undermine privacy (Iza, 2021:1). Against the backdrop of emerging tools of technology such as electronic files, electronic signatures, digitalization of documents, and the advancement of the internet, human rights are increasingly vulnerable to disinformation and manipulation. The threat is that data about states and individuals can be easily accessed, thereby increasing the risk of being compromised. For instance, with the advancement of the internet, individuals are attractive targets for cyber threats. Cyber threats can be responsible of spreading of damaging rumours, theft of passwords, posting of personal data without permission, and impersonations, which compromise rights such as right to privacy, freedom of speech, right to security, and right to non-discrimination (Iza, 2021:2). Scholars argue that for human rights to survive, must be protected under the new circumstances exposed by digital technology.

The future of human rights also hinges on the ability of the United Nations to provide robust protection to people and states from engaging in war. According to Zyberi et al. (2022:3), a third of the countries who are member states at the United Nations are directly or indirectly

involved in international wars and civil conflicts, including the war in Ukraine since February 2022, the civil war in Ethiopia that began in 2020, and the protracted armed conflicts in Israel, Palestine, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, all of which have caused serious violations of human rights. The ability of the UN is mostly challenged by these violations to human rights; however, it continues to expand its mechanism to adapt its structures to better safeguard human rights globally.

Scholars offer several recommendations to address the challenges and threats to human rights. Some suggest that funding for human rights must be significantly increased, particularly in the Global South where such support is most needed (Ron, Pandya, and Crow, 2016:3). Others suggest that the protection of human rights should be strengthened for marginalised groups such as refugees, LGBTQ+ communities, and persons living with disabilities (Harvey, 2019:445). Scholars further argue that the disregard for economic rights for the poor, along with the continuation of global inequality, must be addressed. The disregard of economic rights denies the poor the opportunity to live decent lives. Sikking argues that it is pivotal for states, scholars, and organisations to find ways for “making human rights work” (Sikking, 2017).

These recommendations by scholars, therefore, are advanced based on the belief that the future of human rights is one of continuous adaptation, making it possible to reshape human rights frameworks to better serve human rights needs and ensure protection (Zyberi et al., 2023). It is necessary for scholars to imagine and think about the already existing rights in new ways to ensure the survival of all human rights (Schulz and Raman, 2021). They argue further that human rights are bound to go through the process of evolution, where their relevance, protection of the needs of the people, and robustness is tested. To them, some rights regress over time while others advance into new rights altogether depending on the context. That implies that profound threats to human rights will always be there. Schulz and Raman (2021), suggest that scholars must care more about a positive future for human rights than caring about

being their “obituary writers” based on the challenges that human rights face. This is especially important when those shortcomings can be clearly diagnosed and addressed. This implies that the opponents or critics of human rights should not aspire to see human rights reach their “endtimes.”

2.3 The drivers of change and progress in human rights.

This section underlines three drivers of change and progress in human rights. These include neoliberalism, the influence of great powers to international economic rights, and class struggle. Neoliberalism is understood as an idea and system of policies that advocate for individualism, free markets, and privatisation, while great powers are understood as countries that have power to shape the trajectory of human rights at a global level. Class struggle here is understood as a conflict between people of different social positions in society for the realisation of economic rights.

2.3.1 Neoliberalism and economic rights

Scholars point to a further driver of change and progress in human rights - neoliberalism. The relationship with neoliberalism yields both positive and negative outcomes for human rights, with the latter predominantly outweighing the former. Scholars argue that human rights have become an accomplice to neoliberalism (Dancy and Farris, 2024:254). One problem is that neoliberal policies such as tax cuts, free market and free trade, reduced government intervention, and privatization contribute to rising economic inequality (Fourie, 2022:2). This section examines the relationship between neoliberalism and human rights change, particularly the influence of neoliberalism on economic rights.

The relationship between human rights and neoliberalism is complex and contested, with scholars holding diverse perspectives. Different scholars define and interpret neoliberalism in different ways. While there is no fully agreed upon definition, it is possible to get a sense of the term. Nikpouya and Zareina (2024:2) understand neoliberalism as an ideology advocating

for individualism, free markets, and privatisation as means for progress and economic advancement in human societies. In Harvey's words, neoliberalism implies the "financialisation of everything" (Harvey, 2005:33), for economic policies to align with free markets (Anderson, 2024:2). Put more clearly, neoliberalism turns all aspects of life into marketable, tradable, and investable things. As a result, the state functions in accordance with the policies and principles of neoliberalism that put emphasis on the market system (Fourie, 2022:5).

A positive aspect of neoliberalism is its claim that human well-being can be best advanced by freeing the individual to use their entrepreneurial skills and freedom and participate in the market (Graafland and Verbruggen, 2021:1114). At the global level, this implies that neoliberalism removes barriers to the flow of money and goods in order to liberate the markets (Crowley and Hodson, 2014:92). This model includes thinking of global labour as competing across the world. Such mobility and opportunity allow people from formerly disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their social status and dignity within society (Qian, 2023:218)

The relationship between human rights and neoliberalism generates unfavourable outcomes for human rights. Samuel Moyn in his recent work, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* (2018), argues that the relationship between human rights and neoliberalism limits the ambitions of human rights to foster economic redistribution (Moyn, 2018). Moyn (2018), argues that human rights have become a toothless companion of neoliberalism. Human rights as currently understood and implemented, are unable to challenge the underlying neoliberal policies. They help neoliberalism make its way "through sharing the same individualism" agenda, and the same "suspicion of collectivist projects" (Moyn, 2018:175). In other words, instead of addressing broader economic structures that perpetuate inequality, human rights focus primarily on prioritising and protecting individual rights. For that reason, Moyn contends that human rights, while important to some, are not enough to challenge the dominance of neoliberalism, and it is time to move past them (Moyn, 2018:220).

Jessica Whyte, in *The Morals of the Markets: Human Rights and the Rise of Neoliberalism* (2019), echoes Moyn's assessment of the interconnection of human rights and neoliberalism. She argues that human rights help neoliberalism to exist without any hindrance. For Whyte (2019), the relationship between human rights and neoliberalism is of "fellow-travellers." Implying that human rights have not been hijacked or made powerless companions of neoliberalism but rather are playing an active role in influencing and developing each other (Whyte, 2019). Human rights justify and legitimize the interests of market friendly human rights that protect free trade, rather than promoting social and economic justice. One problem is that in legitimizing the efficiency of markets, neoliberals also pioneered arguments that economic redistribution is not only a dangerous economic suicide but also a threat to human rights (Whyte, 2019). Whyte (2019) notes that economic rights or social justice is threatening to the underpinnings of the market.

A primary concern in the realm of human rights is that neoliberalism has led to a dramatic commodification of social welfare (Connell, 2010:23), that is, it puts goods and services that were formerly provided by the public sector into the hands of private companies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Private companies are driven by profit, a goal that does not always align with other goals such as the alleviation of poverty and inequality. While this may be the case, other scholars argue that the European model of neoliberalism - which balances free-market economies with strong state-run welfare systems - allows for initiatives such as income support, as well as a host of other essential public services such as education, water, and sanitation (Graafland and Verbruggen, 2021:1116). These scholars argue that this model allows the state to implement a progressive tax system that pays for a broad range of welfare policies such as housing support, healthcare, public transportation and education (Graafland and Verbruggen, 2021:1120). Through the marriage with neoliberalism, scholars argue that human rights inadvertently perpetuate the structural inequalities inherent to

neoliberalism. Critics contend that neoliberalism's emphasis on market fundamentalism and commodification of welfare has hindered the realisation of economic rights, allowing further continuation of inequality and poverty (Connell, 2010; Brown, 2015; Moyn:2018). Through the marriage with neoliberalism, scholars argue that human rights inadvertently perpetuate the structural inequalities inherent to neoliberalism. Critics contend that neoliberalism's emphasis on market fundamentalism and commodification of welfare has hindered the realisation of economic rights, allowing further continuation of inequality and poverty (Connell, 2010; Brown, 2015; Moyn:2018).

The model of neoliberalism demonstrates limited investment in the provision of basic public services (Fourie, 2022:5). It encourages individuals to participate in the market system rather than investing in public goods and the delivery of basic services. Scholars critique the intersection of human rights and neoliberalism, arguing that it prioritises individual success through markets over collective well-being through redistribution. This approach reinforces the notion that poverty is a personal failing, rather than a symptom of deeper structural issues, such as discrimination, inequality, and lack of access to resources. Placing the onus on individuals makes it their responsibility to lift themselves out of poverty.

Wendy Brown, in *Undoing the Demons: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolutions* (2015), notes that neoliberalism has a regressive influence on redistribution by employing language and rhetoric that advocate for replacement of taxation mechanisms to avoid policies that promote economic redistribution. Connell (2010:24) points out that the expansion of markets and the creation of new ones allow for counter redistributive acts such as low taxation and lower levels of public spending which undermine redistribution. Thus, initiatives to promote human rights focused on redistribution are constrained. This is the case precisely because the disappointing historical progress of human rights in terms of addressing social and economic rights is attributed to neoliberalism. Scholars declare that the enterprise of human rights as an existing emancipatory

and protective force have been hijacked and kidnapped by neoliberalism (Whyte, 2019). This situation is causing human rights to be less committed to economic redistribution and global justice.

2.3.1.1 Implications of neoliberalism on human rights

In light of the above analysis, it should be asked what the future implications of neoliberalism for human rights are?

Neoliberalism has far-reaching consequences for human rights related to redistribution, especially through the creation of new markets, increased competitiveness, and institutionalisation (Giroux, 2009: 30). A troubling consequence is that the unfulfilled promise of economic rights may lead to the poor losing interest in rights in general when their economic rights are neglected. If the world becomes more neoliberal, inequality widens. Some scholars suggest that what is needed to achieve economic redistribution is a robust assault on and a break from neoliberalism (Moyn, 2018; Whyte, 2019:208). This means that human rights need to break from the underpinnings of the market that have failed to promote inclusive and equal participation in economic freedom.

For many, there seems to be ample consensus that neoliberalism is the driver for the ongoing struggle to realise economic rights (Moyn, 2018; Whyte, 2018). Questions of economic justice are often overlooked in neoliberal discussions of human rights (Sherry, 2014:20). Scholars argue that even though human rights are used within the neoliberal discourse, neoliberal policies such as privatisation of basic social services such as food, education, and health, and welfare cutbacks contradicts such rights. The outcomes and implications of this contradiction is increased levels of poverty and inequality (Aalbers, 2013:1084), particularly vulnerable, excluded and marginalised groups.

Moyn (2018:8) point to a further negative effect of neoliberalism on human rights, that the free market nature of neoliberalism uses the state, especially in the Global South, to exhort individuals to conform to the market system. In this way, neoliberalism derails the state from building an economy that serves the collective but for individual self-advancement. The state takes a back seat as the sole function as an agent of the citizens and assume a responsibility to be the sole agent of the market system to ensure a functioning economic system (Fourie, 2022:19). The central role that the state performs is the dismantling of obstacles that are in the way of capital accumulation for markets to flourish (Weigratz, Mujere and Fontein, 2022:202).

As a result, individuals in need of basic services and welfare from the state are encouraged to take responsibility for their situation and participate in the market (Sherry, 2014:23). To take individual responsibility caused by inequality sounds unreasonable to the poor, as it implies that poverty and inequality might be a fault of their own doing. For this reason, neoliberal policies downplay the welfare rights, while encouraging individuals make the changes necessary for them to access services using the markets (Sherry, 2014:22).

What mattered greatly for the Global South is for human rights to give the same status priority given to civil and political rights to economic rights. Instead, neoliberalism derailed human rights in its way to build a vehicle for the prioritisation and protection of the worst-off. For neoliberals, Whyte (2019:73) argues that economic rights are a great threat to individual rights. Therefore, the prioritization of the collective worst-off would collapse the free market order, as the free market order of neoliberalism is built on suspicion of redistribution, it sees it as an excuse for creating welfare dependency (Sloma, 2019:6).

Be that as it may, neoliberalism to Aalbers (2013:1083) may have failed over the years and created a crisis for human rights, however, its practices will remain functional. What has been witnessed over the past despite the crisis is not the dismantling but the continuation of

neoliberalism. Neoliberalism finds ways to respond with more neoliberalism than crushing, Aalbers (2009:1085) argues. Given the above, despite being problematic to human rights, what remains unclear is whether a failing neoliberalism is the best solution for human rights. Considering that within the broader context of global justice, the significance of the new liberalism to human rights enterprise is perceived as failing and trading away human rights and protection against global injustice.

2.3.2 The influence of great powers on human rights

While the preceding section draws our attention to the relationship between neoliberalism and human rights as a driver of progress, other scholars see other factors at play (Redslob, 2015; Zayas, 2023; Cai, 2013; Fassbender and Traisbach, 2019; Schulz and Raman, 2020). These scholars argue that the influence of great powers drives progress in human rights. Their domain of activities and interventions drives major actions in both promoting and undermining human rights. This section explores the ways in which the dual role that great powers play drives change in human rights.

Great powers have been an important part of international relations, particularly in shaping and influencing global human rights norms and policies (Cai, 2013:755). Although there is no precise definition of great powers, they are generally identified based on a range of indicators, including material and normative factors. On one hand, material factors include the economic development, territory, population, military power, and material interests of a state. On the other hand, normative factors include values, norms, ideologies, and a state's willingness and aspirations to behave like a great power and be recognised by its peers (Cai, 2013:755). Put simply, great powers possess a combination of these factors to exert significant influence in shaping the international order (Redslob, 2015:139).

There are multiple great powers at play shaping the international order, and one of their key roles is the promotion of human rights (Redslob, 2015:139). While some play a much more

obvious and public role on human rights, others play a subtle one by setting standards and participating in institutions that shape the global economic landscape. The United States is seen as a key example of a great power advancing a global human rights agenda (Zayas 2023). The United States has positioned itself as a leader in the promotion of human rights in its foreign policy (Zayas, 2023; Cai, 2013). This commitment is particularly evident in its approach to the Middle East, where the US foreign policy emphasises both maintaining stability and advancing human rights in the region (Korshenko, 2025:21). In Iran, human rights violations - particularly the suppression of free speech, ill-treatment of ethnic and religious minorities - have been a central concern of United States foreign policy (Korshenko, 2025:24).

Great powers help to construct and expand the international human rights enterprise through assisting victims, monitoring and sanctioning offenders, and implementing peace processes (Brysk, 2009:3). One snapshot of measures by great powers to foster greater respect for human rights includes supporting the International Criminal Court, a body established to bring justice to gross human rights violators, providing funding for the United Nations, and accepting a number of refugees from conflict regions (Brysk, 2009:21). Furthermore, they promote peace through control of weapons, peacekeeping initiatives, and conflict prevention to protect human rights. Through these actions, great powers drive progress and influence international human rights norms that prioritise the protection of human rights.

While great powers contribute such a significant role to the development and protection of human rights in the international community, de Zayas alert us to be aware that the disadvantage is that they can be subject to manipulation and being held hostage by geopolitical interest, which impact healthy progression of human rights (de Zayas, 2023). This happens because of the economic and legal authority that great powers have in controlling the direction of human rights, be it through states, public policy, and international relations, to drive change and progress in human rights (Wetzell, 2012:8). For example, while states are committed to

promoting human rights, they often find themselves balancing the advocacy and promotion of these rights with the need to maintain key partnerships that serve their economic interests (Korshenko, 2025:24). While states may express a desire for peace in the Middle East, they are also motivated by access to oil. Similarly, while they advocate for an end to human rights abuses in the Democratic Republic of Congo, their interests are often influenced by the region's valuable gold resources (Zyberi et al., 2022:3).

This implies that beneath the promotion of human rights lies a pattern of undermining these efforts through strategic economic interests, sometimes leading to contradictions between great power's stated values and their actions (Fujita, 2011:376). This can also be seen in the way great powers promote economic assistance in their foreign policy. For instance, while the financial aid appears to be an act of immense cooperation between states, there is a palpable tension, which Dolan-Evans (2022:532) raise that great powers "offer business solutions to economic and political problems" that comes with heavily attached strings that are detrimental to developing countries. In this way, the debt of developing countries increases, leading to damaging effects on economic rights (Evans, 2001:93).

Putting it more clearly, the embrace great powers have for human rights is often predicated on a double standard, where strategic interests override moral principles, therefore, weakening the human rights discourse (Cardenas, 2003). For example, great powers such as the United States were reluctant to impose sanctions on apartheid South Africa due to concerns that such actions might jeopardise access to minerals and threaten sea lanes for transporting oil from the Middle East (Walldorf, 2008:2). Similar dynamics have played out in other cases, where geopolitical and economic interests take precedence over efforts to protect and promote human rights in regions experiencing severe violations. This inconsistency weakens the credibility of the human rights discourse (Cai, 2013:755).

The inconsistencies of great powers lead to structural transformations of international relations and a loss of moral authority among traditional great powers (Cia, 2013:755). They lead to the rise of potential New Great Powers (NGPs), such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), and other states whose global agenda for human rights remain less transparent and, in some cases, openly at odds with established international norms.

To emphasise the central point of this section, great powers play a very critical role in influencing progress in human rights. On one hand, they promote human rights, condemn violations, intervene in ongoing wars, provide financial assistance to developing states - all under the banner of advancing rights. On the other, they frequently act in ways that contradict their commitment to human rights, by supporting authoritarian regimes for geopolitical gain, overlooking human rights violations committed by allies, and selectively apply intervention measures. This dual role of great powers not only emboldens other states to disregard human rights but also creates lack of credibility to the enterprise of human rights.

2.3.3 Class struggle: Civil and political, and economic rights

In line with Stephen Hopgood, there is another further challenge to the prospects of human rights – one that has to do with class conflict and the relevance of human rights to the poor (Hopgood, Snyder, and Vinjamuri, 2017). Class conflict is a tension of conflict that “emerges between the purveyors of civil and political rights and those of economic rights” (Hopgood, 2017:286). Class conflict takes place as a result of different competing needs, interests, and values different classes have. Hopgood, among other scholars, contributes fresh insights on the debates on the future of human rights, emphasizing previously overlooked factors that shape its trajectory. One of Hopgood’s arguments in *The Endtimes of Human Rights* (2017), is that class conflict poses an additional threat to the human rights project, as civil and political rights continue to enjoy priority over economic rights, without adequate measures in place to address the basic economic needs of the poor.

Indeed, many studies have highlighted the challenges and problems surrounding the nature of civil and political and economic rights (Allsop, 2020; Marochini, 2014; and Cumar, 2017). Civil and political rights are regarded as necessary, direct, less expensive, and easy to implement, and are praised for placing limits and important checks on government power (Howard-Hassman, 1983:470; Allsop, 2021:481). Economic rights, on the other hand, are often disregarded from the enterprise of human rights for being unrealistic, costly, and unenforceable (Anderson, 2023:3). More importantly, it is seen as a problem that the realization of these rights requires considerable government action (Allsop, 2021:481). For instance, the government has a responsibility to ensure that people have access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and adequate housing.

These rights are categorised into generations based on some of the aforementioned priorities. More broadly, the classification also reflects their historical development, enforcement mechanisms, modes of implementation, justifiability, and overall focus (Cumar, 2017:206; Algan, 2004:128). Civil and political rights are considered first generation rights, whereas economic and social rights are labelled second generation rights. Civil and political rights only require the will of the government and minimal material resources such as courts, police and military to secure the aforementioned rights, while economic rights require extensive material resources and place the government under a duty to take legislative measures with available resources to achieve progressive realisation (Cumar, 2017:206; Tushnet, 2011:178). The characterisation of human rights into generations contributes to their protection in chronological order, prioritising civil and political rights (Algan, 2004:121).

With the priority of civil and political rights, scholars believe there is a danger that human rights will continue to be discussed in institutions like the United Nations (UN) but will decrease in relevance to the poor because human rights will continue to overlook the pressing economic needs of much of the world's population (Tamale, 2020). When the human rights

enterprise overlooks the pressing needs of the poor, it can lead to perpetual cycles of poverty and social and economic inequalities, in which the poor are left without access to basic necessities such as education, food, healthcare, and fair economic opportunities. This oversight not only undermines equality and justice but also threatens the stability and development of societies as a whole.

According to Hopgood, the middle class “enjoy many social and economic opportunities without the need for human rights, and when they do not, they seek only those rights that will fill gaps in their own power” (Hopgood, 2020:285). In other words, for the middle classes, civil and political rights appear to be more relevant than economic rights. Civil and political rights allow the middle-class advantage to constrain the elite power and the state. For instance, by exercising these rights, the middle class can constrain the state’s power to engage in abusive practices such as torture and promote a more accountable and responsive government.

The poor, on the other hand, have a greater interest in and need for the realization of economic rights. Unlike the middle class, the poor are more concerned with economic rights because they struggle to produce and consume in the private sector, which denies them access to all the essential goods and services they need (Hopgood, 2017:290). This exclusion of the poor within the private sector not only deepens the existing social and economic inequalities but also undermines the realisation of fundamental human rights for marginalised populations.

However, the realisation of the economic rights of the poor has considerable redistributive implications. Specifically, it implies redistribution from the middle and wealthier classes to the poor, because redistribution, as commonly understood, entails the transfer of economic resources or services from individuals or groups with greater access to those with less (Musyoka, 2015:128; Hopgood, 2017). More specifically, redistribution entails progressive taxation to finance public investment, welfare programs for the poor, cash grants, and spending

on education and health (Ostry, Berg, and Tsangarides, 2014:8; Chatterjee, Czajka, Gethin, 2021:37). Redistribution can be realised through government collection of taxes or through voluntary efforts by the middle-class or upper-class individuals to share their wealth with the poor. Such economic transfers would alleviate the pressures faced by the poor, including poverty and the profound unfulfillment of social and economic rights, (Bozzan and Scabrosetti, 2024:4).

There is disagreement about who should be the beneficiaries of distribution. Some argue that the poorly educated and widowed or elderly women should be the focus (Bozzan and Scabrosetti, 2024:15), whereas others argue that the unemployed and disabled should be targeted (Musyoka, 2015:129). The financial burden of redistribution is borne by those with greater resources. Scholars generally note that when redistribution is carried out, it results in reduced inequalities and has positive impact on economic growth (Ostry, Berg, and Tsangariders, 2014:7). However, for Hopgood, redistribution is likely to meet with resistance from the middle class (Hopgood, 2017:308).

Hopgood (2017:302) observes that support for economic rights is often scarce. For instance, In America, Martins Gilens in *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America* (2012), has shown that the middle class and the wealthier classes oppose redistribution of wealth by large margins (Gilens, 2012). Thomas Edsall highlights that even the well-educated, well-paid, and comfortable middle class show no interest when it comes to redistribution (Edsall, 2015). Hopgood argues that even the Chinese and Indian middle class will oppose large-scale redistribution of their wealth (Hopgood, 2017). In general, the middle class tends to overestimate the fairness of economic redistribution and is often reluctant to redistribution policies (García-Sánchez et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the middle class tends to hold conservative stances on fiscal matters such as taxation and welfare, while simultaneously adopting more liberal positions on social issues including abortion and LGBTQ+ rights (Hopgood, 2017:303). In other words, the middle class prioritizes lower taxes and reduced government intervention in economic matters and focuses more on issues that do not necessarily align with the needs of the poor. Other scholars argue that middle class resistance to redistribution may be driven by fear that it will enable the poor to access middle class neighbourhoods and social circles (Lupu and Pontusson, 2011:319). They argue that for some middle class, such socio-economic mixing is not favourable, as it undermines their position in the status hierarchy (Lupu and Pontusson, 2011:319).

Greg Mills (2023:1) suggests that that and the failure to implement redistributive reforms stems from weak state performance, the misuse of public funds, and failure to improve productive capacity and competitiveness. Moreover, Mills (2023) argues that, compared to countries like Singapore and Spain, South Africa adopts policies that prioritise short-term popular demands for redistribution over long-term economic development reforms. For this reason, there is scepticism that even if redistribution is carried out and implemented, without addressing government weaknesses, the problem of inequality and poverty may continue to persist.

Put differently, at the heart of the future of human rights lies a class conflict. The middle classes support and enjoy the civil and political aspects of human rights but are likely to resist the extension of economic rights. The poor, should their demands for economic rights go on being unmet are likely to withdraw their support from human rights more generally. Or perhaps, without economic justice, they would begin to make demands that threaten the liberties of the middle class. If left unresolved, it threatens future support for human rights, or, as Hopgood puts it, human rights will be set on “a road to nowhere” (Hopgood, 2017).

Hopgood's forecast for human rights is dire, yet there is the potential for all human rights to be salvaged. What is needed for human rights to ensure relevance, is for human rights to address the economic powerlessness of the have-nots (Matua, 2008:35). The solution lies in class compromise: for the middle classes to agree to an expansion of economic rights to the poor and the redistributive implication of such an agreement, and for the poorer classes to continue supporting civil and political rights. The potential for such a compromise is the focus of this study.

2.4 Conclusion

It is now in vogue to say the future of human rights is doomed. This perspective is not grounded in enough evidence, as other perspectives highlight that the future of human rights has not reached its "endtimes". This chapter presented debates about the futures of human rights; a future shrouded in uncertainty. While some scholars believe that the future of human rights depends on the strength of the West, others argue that it is in fact dependent to the multitudes of non-Western countries. Others highlight the impact of right-wing populism to the survival of human rights, the threat of new technologies, and the continuation of civil wars. This chapter also focused on further challenges and drivers of progress and change in human rights, including the influence of great powers to economic rights; and the limitation neoliberalism has to the efforts of human rights. This chapter also highlighted an additional challenge to the enterprise of human rights- one that involves class conflict, which is a central part of this thesis.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

The two previous chapters have focused on literature on the future of human rights, class struggle, and the possibility of redistributive compromise. This thesis intends to assess whether the middle class support economic rights and the redistribution it implies, as well as whether poorer classes' support for human rights depends on the realisation of their economic rights. This chapter presents the methodology for identifying and examining these attitudes and understandings. There were many issues to consider in the choice of methodology. At least five challenges present themselves. One is the question of methodological approaches which guide the study, specifically on whether to do a quantitative or qualitative study or some combination. The second issue has to do with the methods of data collection to use, whether to do in-depth interviews or a survey. The third challenge is deciding on the rationale for selecting participants. The fourth challenge this chapter addresses is ethical treatment. Lastly, this chapter addresses the number of interviews necessary for this study.

3.2 Choice for qualitative methodology

This study examines the attitudes and understandings that different classes have towards human rights and redistributive class compromise. One way to capture these attitudes and understandings would be through a quantitative study. That would most likely entail a survey questionnaire in which answers receive a score. One strength of quantitative research is reliability in administering surveys and the accuracy of the answers among a large group. Quantitative studies also have the advantage of saving time for participants when administered. This approach has the advantage of measuring and using numbers to generate and make for easier generalizability and comparison (Jopling, 2019:55). The data measured becomes easy to convert and analyse statistically. However, the quantitative approach also has significant disadvantages, primarily the lack of depth and nuances to how participants respond to questions

(Tarerdoost, 2016:38). A quantitative research approach is inadequate for this study as it falls short in understanding depth of human perception, beliefs, attitudes and experiences (Choy, 2014:101).

To overcome these shortcomings, this study employs a qualitative approach, which offers the advantage of investigating and unearthing rich information about people and societies. This approach allows the researcher into the world of participants where they tell their experiences using their own words (Mahlatji, 2023:155). This is achieved using various data collection and analysis methods, including purposive sampling and semi-structured, open-ended interviews (Mohojana, 2018:1). This approach best suits this research as it allows for the exploration of meanings, insights, and behaviours of people in each situation through one-on-one in-depth interaction with participants (Mukorombindo and Coetzee, 2013:50). It further allows the researcher to discover answers that would probably not have been discovered through a survey that requires a score, statistical analysis, and empirical calculations – but through interview questions that make people share more broadly their world views (Musyoki, 2015:93).

Additionally, qualitative research includes methods such as documentary and textual analysis, observation of experimental natural settings, and voice recording, videotaping, and photographic techniques (Berg, 2012:3). These methods expand the reach and convenience of qualitative research to allow the interpretation of social worldviews more broadly (Pathak, Jena, and Kalra, 2013:192).

A qualitative approach to research is often criticised for not being scientific and accurate enough (Berg, 2018:2). The qualitative approach allows respondents to provide a subjective assessment of their world view. In a sense, respondents construct the narrative to suit their context rather than aim for objectivity. However, these critics overlook that qualitative approach is more appreciative of the viewpoints other people have (Moriarty, 2011:3). They

also miss the fruitfulness and depth that can be derived from qualitative procedures (Musyoki, 2015:93). For these reasons, the quantitative approach is inadequate for this study, and the qualitative approach works best for this research.

3.3 Data collection

This study relies primarily on two methods of data collection, secondary sources and interviews. First, it engages the relevant literature on the range of subjects that concern this study, notably human rights and the political economy of South Africa. The sources of literature are found through browsing the internet, sources and books from the university library, newspapers, public records and government statistics, and reviews of existing research by scholars. This literature helps make sense of the topic and provide clarity on how to best carry out the research. The literature also helps in analysing the data collected from the participants to make sense of how the redistributive compromise can take place, and how the support for civil and political rights can continue.

The literature about the political economy of South Africa helps analyse the political and economic scenarios that affect the participants' livelihoods. These scenarios may include the constraints to the economic life of participants such as lack of public services, inflation, and unemployment. More specifically, it helps us to understand how having and not having access to services influence the attitudes and experiences of different people to human rights.

Second, this study uses interviews to generate data. More specifically, this study uses semi-structured interviews to examine the potential for a class compromise, how persons understand human rights and the relationship between civil and political rights on the one hand and economic rights on the other. The advantage of interviews allows participants to give more nuanced answers than in a quantitative survey. This arises from the flexibility that interviews offer the researcher to ask participants about their experiences and opinions, which may lead to a dialogue where new research-related questions are explored (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree,

2006:315). When this happens, the data becomes more extensive, detailed, and more informative for the interviewer (Moriarty, 2011:2). Interviews can also be varied in length, from thirty minutes to several hours, giving the interviewer the opportunity to discover information that was not going to be considered in a survey (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006:315).

The researcher could either interview a group of people at the same time or individuals (Sargeant, 2012:1). According to Winwood (2019:15), what is good about group interviews is that they bring participants together and encourage them to interact with each other and develop the discussion and debate further following the researcher to gain more data. The agreements and disagreements participants have with each other may reveal interesting insights for the researcher.

However, group interviews for this study are not appropriate. Group interviews for this research compromise anonymity. In their study, Phadi and Ceruti (2011:89) invited two or more middle class people to one interview. These participants had to navigate the awkwardness of talking about their income and middle-class status in the presence of others. These participants seemed to appreciate confidentiality and anonymity when sensitive topics like income are raised. On the other hand, individual interviews make anonymity easier to achieve. By doing individual interviews, the identity of participants is not be revealed, but their views are revealed. The views they give are not be linked to a specific person. Participants for this study remain anonymous and confidential. Doing individual interviews for this research allow the researcher to pay special attention to one participant to express their views without being dominated and interrupted by others. One-on-one interviews makes it easier for the researcher to manage the direction of the discussion for the purpose of getting data.

While the format of interviews usually uses a face-to-face format, new digital forms allow for online interviews (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006:314). These new digital forms help

expand to the pool and number of participants in a study, who initially could not be part of the study. Thunberg and Arnell (2022:577) argue that digital interviews enhance reach to long-distance participants even though ethical issues may arise. Digital interview methods are varied; they include emails and telephone interviews, online surveys, and video conference interviews. For this thesis, the alternative to in-person interviews includes video conference interviews using the Zoom application for participants who want to be part of the study but cannot participate in a face-to-face meeting.

Interviews are suitable for this study due to the varied benefits they offer both the researcher and the participants. For the researcher on one hand, Winwood (2019:12) argues interviews facilitate the development of a dialogue and allow for the exploration of a range of participant perspectives during data collection. Interviews allow the researcher flexibility in probing or clarifying questions. On the other hand, interviews offer participants the opportunity to articulate their experiences and interpret their circumstances in their own terms. This method encourages a more interactive dialogic exchange between the interviewer and the interviewee, thereby enriching the depth and quality of the data collected.

3.4 Identifying participants

There are several considerations in selecting interviewees for this study. The first has to do with defining classes, and how these classes are chosen. The second relates to identifying, accessing participants and the sampling strategy used to recruit participants. A third consideration concerns the number of participants to interview.

3.4.1. Defining classes

There are various economic and social approaches to defining classes (Visage, 2013). The approach for choosing participants for this thesis focuses on those who have access to services, and those who lack it. The middle class here is understood as those who have access to services. In defining the middle class, this thesis focuses on services such as access to water, sanitation,

adequate education, healthcare, housing, recreational amenities, and security. The occupations that give clues about which people might have such services are professionals such as nurses, teachers and lecturers, managers, police officers, and soldiers (Visage, 2013). The middle class is able to sustain access to services without relying on external assistance.

In contrast, in this thesis, the working class is understood as a class below the middle class and slightly above the poor. This means that not all the working class have access to services. Within this class, while some individuals have access to a limited range of services, others have access to an even smaller share of those services. Some individuals may have access to services such as education and healthcare yet lack access to other basic services like adequate housing, electricity, clean running water, and proper waste management. Others may be more underserved, with access limited only to healthcare. This class is made up of semi-skilled or unskilled workers (Seekings, 2010:8). Most of these workers do all the elementary occupations such as service and market sales workers, plantation, domestic, fishery, and trade related workers (Visage, 2013a; Mbandlwa, 2024:439). The working class does not live as comfortably as the middle class, but at the same time, not in dire conditions like the poor.

The poor are understood as those who lack access to services (Ramphoma, 2014:64). The poor, as mentioned in chapter one, are usually unemployed, with significantly limited resources compared to the rest of society. They usually make a living through self-employment entrepreneurship, by becoming street vendors. One challenge with these occupations is that they do not guarantee stable income and benefits. People belonging to this class lack basic services, such as clean water, decent healthcare, housing, and education, and they rely on external assistance to enjoy these services (Koob,2023). The poor are at the bottom in society. They are a marginalized group with little or no voice at all.

The poor face varying levels of deprivation, from absolute lack of access to services to relative limitations, with select services like education and healthcare accessible to their children (Jansen et al., 2015:151). However, those with children accessing these services struggle to maintain access on their own. This is the case because poor households are likely to be headed by an unemployed single parent or a parent in the low-wage market (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, and Maritato, 1997:1). For this reason, the poor struggles to purchase goods for their children such as clothes, stationary, food, and stimulating toys. As a result, without any further support the children of the poor end up unable to enjoy the little access they have to other basic services such as education.

3.4.2 Choosing classes

This study focuses on the middle class, poor, and working class. Firstly, the choice of the middle class best suits the purpose of the research, and matches Hopgood's focus on and predictions of the middle class in the Global South. In *The Endtimes of Human Rights* (2014), Hopgood claims that class struggle is the driver of human rights. Hopgood wonders whether the middle class will "be a progressive force for human rights" globally (Hopgood, 2019:16). Hopgood argues that the middle-class accesses opportunities through their status in society and only fights for rights that will increase their power and status (Gilder, 2018). In his analysis of the middle class, Hopgood argues the middle class puts more value on civil and political rights and has less need for economic rights. In this way, it becomes difficult to say that the middle class is a consistent supporter of all human rights.

Hopgood's argument is that the middle class has the capability to preserve global human rights by supporting economic rights. However, while some indicators, such as voting, work on international issues of human trafficking, and supporting women's rights, that show the middle class want to pick up the global human rights banner, at this point the middle class is not necessarily progressive on inequality (Hopgood,2014:71). To Hopgood (2018:311-312), the

middle class is more interested in fighting for civil and political rights, specifically for gender and religious issues which may not be the priorities in countries where poverty is of concern. The priority for this thesis is about poverty and economic rights, which is why the choice of interviewing the middle classes is for this study to understand whether they would support economic rights and the redistribution this implies.

Secondly, the poor and working class are chosen to understand their views on human rights, and especially their position on civil and political rights. The poor and working class are disadvantaged groups that often rely on support from the state to have their economic rights realised. Koob argues that the poor are left with few means of reversing economic inequality, such as redistributive policies (Koob,2023:3). Do the poor neglect civil and political rights and focus on rights that are more pressing to their situation, such as rights to clean water, adequate housing and education? Does this lead to a class struggle? Hopgood (2017:286) argue “a class struggle emerges between the purveyors of civil and political rights and those of economic rights.” What this thesis wants to find out from the poor and the working class is their willingness to continue supporting civil and political rights, even if their economic rights are not yet realised.

In choosing classes, this thesis focuses on the Black middle class. The historical race divides and the current race debates are not explored here, even though the focus of this thesis regarding class and redistribution will be the Black middle class specifically than other races. Social and economic patterns seem to be changing with race gradually becoming less relevant than class (Burger et al., 2015:25; Chatterjee, Czjka and Gethin, 2023:1). This change of patterns, however, “should not be read to mean racial inequality has been completely eroded” (Gonou,2014:2). The difference to date is not as wide racially, it has become more between the haves and have-nots. There is a shift in the making of class (Southall, 2022:60), more segments of black people are poor, while white have nots are relatively low. What is more interesting as

mentioned above is that more black people are becoming middle class. This approach highlights how class, rather than race alone, continues to shape lived experiences, access to resources within Black communities.

Furthermore, the choice for the black middle class over middle classes of other races is based on its strong link with spatial past. Some of the black middle class have biological, social, and economic relationships with their social friendships and relatives that are in the townships even though they live in decent suburbs (2015:133). These linkages portray the black middle class as progressing and achieving a new status from that of township, and that put them in a position where they are viewed from a dependency point of view by those in the township. Musyoka (2015:133) argues that this dependency relationship is largely accepted by the black middle class, where they provide majority of economic support to their relatives and friends who are in the townships.

Putting it more clearly, black middle class is seen as the backbone of development with the provision of economic support and opportunities they create (Neubert, 2019:2). Neubert (2019) further argues that the middle-class position is an indication of the possibility of economic success to the poor. For that reason, for this thesis, the black middle class as a class doing better than the poor and working class, is chosen to see whether they consent to large scale redistribution of their wealth to those who lack services.

The wealthy are excluded from the consideration of classes. First, research suggest that the wealthy tend to oppose redistribution (Cohn et al., 2021:23; García-Sánchez et al., 2020). Various scholars indicate that the wealthy oppose redistribution due to less trust in government's ability to carry redistribution process in an effective way (Witko and Moldogaziev, 2023:3). Redistribution requires a level of trust to the government, as public policies often have risky and uncertain outcomes. For that reason, the wealthy resort to actively

supporting the poor themselves rather than letting the government to “eat” their money with ineffective policies (Cohn et al., 2021:24).

Second, considering the wealthy for redistribution is complicated by their ability to manipulate the system to maintain economic advantages. The wealthy can respond to taxation in a way that is by and large unavailable to the middle class and working class (Landier and Plantin, 2013:1). With their wealth, they can acquire sophisticated financial instruments that help them minimize and avoid tax liabilities. For these reasons mentioned above that prior research has consistently demonstrated that they are in opposition to redistribution, this study excludes the wealthy and instead seeks to explore attitudes among other groups.

3.4.3 Accessing participants and sampling strategy

Saunders and Townsend (2018:3) argue that what is important when recruiting participants is to first gain access. Access to participants can be gained in various ways. It can be gained physically, virtually using internet, and through access to organisations (Saunders and Townsend, 2018:3). To Amundsen, Msoroka and Findsen (2017:5) gaining access to participants is not where it all ends once accessed, it requires constant arduous negotiations to maintain the access throughout the process of collecting data.

The way participants are accessed for this research is physical, and through a purposive sampling technique. This means that participants are selected based on the reach and judgement of the researcher. A purposive sampling technique allows the researcher to select participants that are suitable from the population who have experience and knowledge and can positively contribute to the depth of the study (Palinkas et al., 2015:534; Saunders and Townsend, 2018:9). As mentioned in chapter one, one study, "Multiple meanings of the middle class in Soweto, South Africa," showed that letting potential participants self-identify can lead to confusion, as participants do not always know which category they fit into (Phadi and Ceruti, 2011). Letting participants to self-identify can lead to dishonesty as they tend to want to portray

themselves in a positive light. Effective checks and balances are necessary to avoid such confusion. Therefore, for this study, participants are identified based on the criteria of the researcher, which focuses on those who have or lack services.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, participants are understood to have services if they have access to the following: education, housing, healthcare, electricity, clean running water, food, and waste management. Conversely, they are understood to lack services if they do not have access to none of these. More importantly, their ability to source and maintain these services on their own is considered. This allows the researcher to differentiate whether the participant belongs to the middle class or the poor.

The researcher only focuses on participants that are 18 - 60 years. Visagie and Posel (2013:150) in their analysis of class in South Africa argue that it is impossible to identify “class status of non-economically active adults as well as children.” Non-economically active adults include housewives, students and pensioners. Students, therefore, do not form part of the research.

The researcher recruits in two phases. Saunders and Townsend (2018:4) argue that gaining access to participants is a “continuous process, rather than a single event.” For phase one, the researcher will stand outside a busy place such as PicknPay, Shoprite, and Checkers in Makhanda. These retailers cater to a diverse demographic makeup of Makanda that will make the samples to be representative. Notably, Shoprite tend to attract a larger proportion of lower-income shoppers – the poor, while the Pick n Pay and Checkers draw a mix of middle class and working-class customers for their grocery needs. Through informal exploratory conversations the researcher will try to secure formal interviews. Interviews will be arranged for those who agree to be part of the research.

Participants formalised their consent to participate by signing a consent letter (see appendix A). The consent letter was shared with participants before the interview, which was be

distributed in hard copy format or via email. As can be seen from the consent letter contained in Appendix A, the voluntary nature of their participation is made clear. Details of the consent letter focus on what the participants must know about their involvement in the research to inform them of their participating decision. The letter makes it clear that participants may end the interview at any time they feel uncomfortable or for other reasons. The participants were made fully aware of the purpose, risk, and benefits of the study. They were also awarded full transparency before they participate in the study to make sure they consent in an autonomous and voluntary way.

The next step included starting the interviews. The participants who have signed a consent form, also had agree to the audio recording of the interviews. Usually, semi-structured interviews are scheduled in advance (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006:315), but the researcher moved ahead with interviews on the same day where the participants agreed. Recorded interviews were transcribed as soon as the interview process was completed. Hand notes were made during the interview process to capture the responses of participants who did not agree to being recorded.

There are anticipated challenges that may arise when accessing participants. One involves participants that can only express themselves in Afrikaans. IsiXhosa and English are the languages that the researcher knows best. As much as they are widely spoken in Makhanda, so is Afrikaans. Although the researcher uses application of translations such as Google Translate, the meaning of the information may be distorted or interpreted differently.

Another challenge includes making core terminology, such as “class” or “redistribution”, understandable. Phadi and Manda (2010:81) alert us that the word “class” cannot be accurately translated to most South African indigenous languages. When translated, it has multiple meanings attached to it. There is a potential that some participants may not understand the

concept of middle class upon interpretation due to language. However, these challenges are not insurmountable as the term can be explained to a significant degree.

3.4.4 The number of participants

What scholars often struggle with when conducting research is deciding on the ideal number of participants (Barkhuizen, 2014:5). To Mohlatji (2023:158), qualitative research often has smaller samples when compared to quantitative (Mohlatji, 2023:158). However, there is no ideal number of participants (Gentls et al., 2015). Choosing the appropriate number of participants often depends on whether those numbers will achieve the research goals such as establishing whether something is possible. For instance, a sample size of 20 participants can be adequate for a Master's thesis, especially in qualitative research (Saunders and Townsend, 2018:11). In other words, a sample size depends on whether the participants enable the research question to be answered, by reaching saturation (Saunders and Townsend, 2018:12). What is more important in choosing participants is that they should be representative of a larger population about whom they belong to (Saunders and Townsend, 2018:5).

For this study, the aim was to get twenty participants who will allow the researcher to collect the views that will be used for analysis - ten participants representing the middle class the other ten for the poor. A sample of twenty participants is deemed sufficient to provide comprehensive insights into key elements under investigation in this study (Saunders and Townsend, 2018:11). Participants for this study are largely chosen on the basis of their availability, accessibility, and awareness of their social position. Other important factors include the availability of time and money. Since this research is for a Master's thesis, there is not enough time and financial support to study large numbers of participants.

It is important to include a representative sample and avoid interviewing participants until exhaustion, by pursuing excessive sample sizes. Saunders and Townsend (2018:5) argues that choosing a suitable number of participants is depends on their ability to provide insights and

information that is sufficient to enable the research question to be answered. In other words, a sample size should not be too small to reach saturation and not too large to make in-depth analysis and discussion difficult (Saunders and Townsend, 2018:11). Having too many participants can lead to the researcher missing important contributions from participants.

3.5 Choosing Makhanda as a site for research

Makhanda is a small city in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, under Makana Municipality. According to the most recent census of 2022, it has a population of 97 815 (Census, 2022). Makhanda, like many South African towns, is spatially divided along socio-economic lines, reflecting stark class disparities between the have and have-nots. It is also made of a mixture of nationalities and languages (Heshu, 2020:27). The predominant languages are English, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, and Afrikaans.

The city is divided in two halves, the haves and affluent predominantly white in the West, the have nots or poor who are non-white in the townships in the East such as Joza, Tantiyi, Fingo and Hlalani (Kalina, Makwetu, and Tille, 2023: 17759). For Matthews (2015:1), the townships have their more upmarket areas but “many middle-class black people today live in the former white suburbs.” In South Africa, public spheres are no longer racially segregated (Southall, 2023:60). Makhanda’s social and economic features are similar to what we find in the rest of South Africa.

Makhanda is situated in the Eastern Cape, the second poorest province in South Africa (Mukorombindo and Coetzee, 2013:50). Large numbers of the population in the Eastern Cape are living in poverty. Like much of the Eastern Cape, the city of Makhanda is marked by alarming rates of unemployment and severe economic inequalities, that undermine the well-being of residents (Hoefnagels, Irvine and Memela (2022:275). Hoefnagels, Irvine and Memela (2022:271) argue that even the prominent economies that carry Makhanda such as Education and Tourism are under threat due to the dysfunction of the municipality. The dysfunction means

that public goods and basic services are not consistently supplied (Irvine, 2021). Makhanda is faced with unreliable water supply, deterioration of infrastructure and sewerage spills.

The dysfunction of the municipality in Makhanda is a typical challenge facing the broader South Africa. Services delivery and municipal problems are a problem for both the small and big towns of South Africa. Theletsane (2013:134) associate the dysfunction of the municipalities in South Africa with corruption. The consequence of the corruption in his analysis is that it affects the poor; if not addressed, it is likely to lead to further failures of the government.

The municipality in Makhanda over the years has had serious financial problems leading to the dysfunction of the city which impacts service delivery (Davids et al., 2020:4). As a result, a court ruling was declared to disband the municipal council due to failures to ensure services delivery in communities. The consequences of the dysfunction of the municipality are not evenly borne, as the middle class, with resources, are able to sustain themselves, while the poor are less capable of coping.

Makhanda is emblematic of the Global South. First, the infrastructure and service delivery challenges Davis et al (2020) pointed out, including water shortages and inadequate waste management, are frequently observed in Global South towns. Second, the informal sector made of street vendors and spaza shops in Makhanda due to alarming unemployment rates is another hallmark of the Global South economies (Hoefnagels, Irvine and Memela (2022:275). Informality is a common issue in the Global South which is seen as a solution to economic development, access to services, and sustainability. Third, towns in the Global South are dependent on a singular economy. To Hoefnagels, Irvine and Memela (2022:275), education is a prominent economy that carries Makhanda. However, the Global South is also defined by the aspiration to challenge and transform the struggles facing the region. This aspiration is

reflected in Makhanda's agency with the National Arts Festival, struggle in fighting corruption, and resistance movements such as #RhodesMustFall. Makhanda, therefore, is a microcosm of the broader Global South. The town is shaped deeply in the characteristics of the Global South, which includes low income, limited industrialisation, colonial legacy, post-apartheid transformation, and socio-economic inequalities (Bull and Banik, 2024:196).

Makhanda as a site for collecting data for the study is chosen for two reasons. First, it is based on convenience and the geographical location of the researcher. Rhodes University is where the researcher studies, and it is located within Makhanda. The positionality and familiarity of Makhanda to the researcher allow direct access to areas where participants could be found. Having lived and studied here for six years, it would be interesting to get the views different people have and would be more revealing of the dynamics people have of their class and human rights. Secondly, the research requires time and resources. With limited time and resources, the researcher was compelled to opt for the convenience of the town, which is a nevertheless fairly typical representation of South Africa. The areas that will be used for data collection are within walking distance.

Furthermore, interviews are conducted at Rhodes University because of the convenience. To participants unable to travel to Rhodes University; to accommodate their accessibility constraints, the researcher conducted interviews at an alternative location of their choice.

3.6 Interview questions

Interview questions are grouped according to themes. The first set of questions focuses on establishing the social position of the participants, notably their economic class. The second set of questions investigates the participants' support for civil and political human rights. The third set focuses on economic rights. The fourth and final set of questions focuses on the view participants have about redistributive compromise.

The researcher asked the participants the following questions about social class:

- Which social class would you describe yourself as belonging to?
- Why do you think you belong to this class? Is it resources, way of life, income and occupation?
- Do you have access to services such as security, water, health and education?
- Do you need assistance from the government to get all your services?
- Do you have a secure job?
- Can you save money?
- Which human rights matter the most to you?
- Which part of Makhanda do you reside in?

With regard to support for civil and political rights, the interviews will be asked:

- Do you support political rights, such as freedom of speech, and voting?
- What makes you believe political rights are important?
- Do you believe all people should enjoy political rights?
- Do you support political rights even if economic rights are not realized?

With regard to support for economic rights, the interviews will be asked:

- Economic rights include the right to education, housing, clean water, and health. What is your view of economic rights?
- Do you support economic rights?
- Do you believe people are deserving of economic rights?
- Would you be part of the people who give to those who lack services?

Questions about the relationship between rights:

- Which rights are most important?

- Would you support limits on political rights for economic rights?
- Should we support both political and civil and economic rights?
- Do you think people should support some human rights even if they do not benefit from them?
- How do you feel about taking from the middle class and giving to those who are poorer?
- What changes you would like to see in how the relationship between political and economic rights is, and what remains?

3.7 Ethical issues

It is important to anticipate the ethical aspects of social science research (Yip, Han, and Sng, 2016:684). All research with humans involves ethical issues. What is important is how researchers treat ethical issues when conducting research. It is of utmost importance that researchers comply with ethics. This section considers some of the ethical issues that may arise when conducting this research, and how they are addressed. The anticipated ethical dilemmas that may arise from conducting this research include, first; the risk of harm; second, the ethical risk of bias; and third; the possibility of participants making disagreeable or uncomfortable statements.

First, there are potential risks of harm to respondents that may arise in this research process that include feelings of shame and anger. These may be triggered by the questions asked by the researcher. Put simply, the characterization of people as poor might make them feel embarrassed that they don't have access to certain services. At the same time, it is crucial to find out their views despite such potential discomfort. According to Agarwal et al. (2021:1), discomfort in research can appear at any stage, be it in fieldwork, when analysing findings or when choosing research. What is important for scholars is to consider where the discomfort is coming from and navigate the process of not allowing it to continue. Participants who feel uncomfortable will be given the liberty to avoid questions that trigger their discomfort. The

researcher will also have to suggest a break if a participant continues to be triggered or stop the session

Second, participants' privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity are strictly upheld throughout this study. While their responses are reported and analysed, they are not be linked to a specific person. In this way, personal association is prevented and there is no violation of privacy in any way. Lastly, this study obtained approval from the Rhodes University Humanities Research Ethics Committee.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the methodological approach to investigate people's attitudes about human rights and redistributive compromise. Among other things, it discussed the reasons for choosing a qualitative over a quantitative approach, and the rationale for selecting participants, the reason for siting the research in Makhanda, and some ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the methodological procedures for conducting this study. It laid the justification for the research approach, the criteria for choosing participants, the motivation for Makhanda as a place for conducting interviews, and the methods for collecting data. This chapter presents the findings of the thesis. It considers participants' responses to questions about their perception of human rights and redistribution. This study aims to find out the views people who lack access to services have toward human rights, and the character of the middle-class support for human rights and redistribution. In doing so, twenty people were interviewed for this study. The data collected from the interviews was organized and prepared through a process of transcription and organization of field notes.

Interviews differed in the level of detail and insight they provided. While some were insightful and detailed, others were less helpful as participants were not forthcoming. The interview questions asked were designed to get insight about various topics, experiences and perspectives. One set of questions focused on class position in society, especially as these relate to access to services. Two further sets of questions focused on support for civil and political rights, and economic rights, respectively. The fourth set of questions focused on redistribution and what participants would want to see change the way human rights currently are. This chapter presents the findings under these themes and these sets of questions.

4.2 Class position and access to services

In this study, access to services is used to determine someone's socio-economic class. This section uses access to services as a yardstick to determine the social and economic status of participants, their need for assistance, and the human rights that matter the most to participants.

To illustrate the way class influences access to services and subsequently the perception of participants to rights, this section offers insights of participants. These insights are mirrored according to the set of questions asked to participants. From the first set of questions, the first question was asked: which social class would you describe yourself as belonging to and why? The findings demonstrate an intersection of realities that participants use to forge their class identity. Eight participants classified themselves as poor, one participant from the eight others noted the reason for that classification:

I believe I belong to the poor, which is lower class. Class is predominantly based on resources one has in possession. So, without those resources, one is likely to be in a lesser class (Participant 1).

Many echoed this sentiment when asked why they believe they are poor. Other participants explained:

I think it is basically the way of life and income. I earn under R350 000 per year (Participant 2).

I am poor because I do not have anything of value in my name. I live in an area that has written poverty all over it. Clean running water is scarce, roads are full of potholes, and I have been unemployed for almost five years without any luck of unemployment (Participant 20)

This group of eight participants who identified themselves as poor mentioned amongst other things that makes them poor are; background of not having much; not being able afford food, clothes, and decent lifestyle; and the kind of location they reside in within Makhanda. They believe that with such background it is difficult to get employment or opportunities that can change their lives.

Another group of nine participants classified themselves as middle class. Most of the participants who described themselves as middle class based that on a combination of things, including income, occupation, resources, and geographical location. One of the participants noted when asked what makes him middle class:

I would say both occupation and income. The reason I say that is based on the South African Statistics, anyone that earns R10 000 – R20 000 are considered as middle class (Participant 3).

Another participant claimed the middle-class category due to not belonging to any other classes:

I classify myself as middle class because I do not fall under the less privileged or rich. I am in the middle (Participant 6).

Other participants did not hesitate to put themselves in the middle-class category:

Growing up, both my parents were working. They both supported me. Now I have an income of my own that puts me in the middle-class bracket (Participant 8).

I say middle class on the basis of income and resources (Participant 10).

Amongst the participants one revealed the intricacies of being in the middle class category:

I am middle class by occupation, a teacher, but I earn an income of a working class (Participant 12).

This participant pointed to grey areas in the classification of people mentioned in Chapter 1 and 3 (see Chapters 1 and 3). Defining the middle class comes with a considerable amount of fuzziness and nuance. The response from the participant shows that the reward of a middle-class occupation can be less and diminish when the status associated with the role is not

matched by its financial compensation, potentially placing individuals within a working-class income bracket.

A third group of three participants put themselves into the working-class category. Their sentiments about being working class mostly focused on the type of employment they have, income, and their position below the middle-class lifestyle and above the poor. A participant explained:

I would say income and occupation. I would also say the type of employment
(Participant 11).

The participants' responses reveal that income, occupation, resources, and way of life are key factors that distinguish and separate social classes. It should be noted, however, that these factors are not static; an individual can transition from poverty to working class and eventually to middle class. Similarly, this means the same downward mobility can occur, where individuals can move from middle class to working class or poverty.

The following questions the participants had to answer were: "Do you have access to services such as security, water, healthcare and education; and do you need assistance from the government to get these services?" These questions aimed to see to what extent participants have or lack access to services, and their level of independence from - or dependency on - government assistance. The eight poor participants agreed that they have access to basic services, the same as the nine middle class and three working class. The poor offered a common answer:

Yes, I do (Participant 2).

Same as the working class, they agreed to having access to services:

Yes, I do. All these you have mentioned (Participant 11).

The middle-class participants also echoed that:

I have access to security, water, and healthcare. I am no longer studying, but I can afford education for my daughters (Participant 15).

All groups of participants described themselves as having access to the most basic services that included security, water, health, and education, without exception. However, in the explanations that followed their answers varied. Even though participants agreed to have access to the aforementioned services, responses to the question, “Do you need assistance from the government to get all your services?” varied. Some mentioned a lack of capacity to source and maintain these services independently, while others indicated that they are able to obtain and maintain them on their own. The poor mostly mentioned the lack of capacity to get and maintain these services. They said:

I do need government assistance (Participant 1).

At the moment, I am benefiting from the ones offered by the government (Participant 2).

Yes, I do need assistance more than anyone (Participant 13).

The working class with little capacity also mentioned the need of the government assistance:

In terms of electricity and water, I don't think I have the capacity to source that for myself in a sustainable secure way. That is a role government play. With security, I enjoy public security facilitated by the government when in public, but where I stay, I have my own private security (Participant 11).

The middle class demonstrated confidence in getting basic services by themselves:

I can get them on my own without any assistance from the government (Participant 5).

I can get them and maintain them by myself (Participant 7).

I can get these services without any assistance from the government without any problems. I can live completely off the grid if it needs to be, but for now there is no need because the government supplies these basic needs (Participant 19).

However, four out of nine middle-class participants expressed that the government plays a role in accessing some of the basic services. They said:

In certain aspects, yes. We all need help somewhere, somehow, and for the most of it is brought by the government. However, the town provide opportunities that make it possible for one to not rely on the government (Participant 8).

The government definitely has a part to play in providing me with some services, such as security and water. Health and education I provide and maintain on my own (Participant 10).

I would say based on inflation; I need some sort of assistance from the government. For instance, if we look at water, it is expensive. It is great getting free water (Participant 3).

I need assistance from the government; without the government I would not be able to (Participant 9).

While participants claimed the vitality of government assistance, there are those who also mentioned the inconsistency of the government services in Makhanda. Their answers showed that depending on the government for basic services can sometimes be a disadvantage. From the participants, there are those who expressed the struggle of accessing some basic services such as water due to water crisis in Makhanda due to lack of working infrastructure and

government competency. Their answers reflected limitations to accessing these basic services due to either positionality in Makhanda or the disaster of government crisis.

Education, yes. Water and health care, I mean we are in Makhanda. There is a bit of a struggle with that, on the brighter day of Makhanda, I do have access to those (Participant 6).

Sometimes I do have services, sometimes I do not. I depend on the government for these services. Sometimes, the government inconveniences us and we end up going for weeks and months without some of those services (Participant 13).

Like the poor and working class, some participants belonging to the middle class mentioned the difficulty and expense of securing and maintaining their own services. What is evident from the responses of the participants is that even though those who have access to services can secure and maintain them on their own, they would rather have the government provide those services for them.

The above realities are accompanied by various factors that hinder participants to securing and maintaining the services by themselves, namely: lack of a secure job; inability to save money; and the part of Makhanda they reside in. When asked if they do have a secure job, and can save money, they all responded with a “no” (Participant, 1; 2; 4; 13; 16; 17; 18; and 20). Participant 13 sums the situation of the poor when it comes to saving money:

No, as soon as it comes there is always needs that need to be covered (Participant 13).

The working class is relatively better-off compared to the poor; they do have jobs, although low-paying, but allow some individuals to save money. When asked about the security of their jobs, they said:

It is relatively secure. It is a contract job. So, I have a leeway to seek compensation or discreet resolution (Participant 11).

No, I do not have a secure job. I am on contract (Participant 12).

Interestingly, some participants from the middle class also expressed that their employment contracts are short term. These participants said:

For now, I would not say I have a secure job. It is a contract, nothing permanent as yet. I will be working for the next three years, then see what happens (Participant 3).

No, it is contract for now (Participant 5).

No, not at the moment. I am on contract (Participant 9).

One participant cited working for a family business when asked about his job security:

At the moment no, I work for my family (Participant 6)

Some securely employed middle-class participants noted:

Yes, I have a permanent job where I receive a fixed salary (Participant 8).

From the answers above about class position and access to basic services, it is indeed true, there are multiple meanings that people attach to their class and how they access basic services (Phadi and Ceruti, 2011). The poor attributed their poverty and reliance on government aid to their lower-class position, also citing job insecurity and inability to save money. While they do have access to services, the extent of that access is limited by government functionality, which inconveniences them when these services are not delivered. The working-class participants are relatively better off than the poor as they have jobs, but they rely on the government for access to basic services. The middle is split between those who can afford basic services without government help and those who rely on government support to access these services.

Interestingly, the latter group often has the financial means to afford these services independently but chooses to rely on government provision. If government support is insufficient, they can still access these services on their own.

Table 1: Class labels and total number of participants

Combined class labels	Number of participants
Middle class	9
Working class	3
Poor/ lower class	8
Total	20

4.3 Support for civil and political rights

This section explores a second group of questions that focuses on the character of the poor’s support for civil and political rights. With regard to civil and political rights, the participants were asked: “do you support civil and political rights such as freedom of speech and voting?” All eight participants from the poor agreed to support civil and political rights. They responded to the question in this way:

Yes, I do support these rights. They give you a voice and help direct the future you want and potentially for your children (Participant 2).

Ideally, I would still say I support freedom of speech. For example, even if you do have resources such as water and electricity, and unable to express yourself it means you are controlled, even though you are controlled (Participant 1).

Yes. Some people all they need are those rights in their lives. Who am I to wish they do not exist simply because I want economic rights in my life (Participant 13).

Notably, the responses from the poor demonstrated a strong support for civil and political rights, with particularly pronounced emphasis on the importance of freedom of speech. Similarly, nine out of nine middle-class participants expressed strong support for civil and political right, elaborating on their significance and importance. A consensus was also reached among three working class participants. When asked, one middle class participant summed up the group's views:

Definitely, I support those rights. Without trying to make it about race, as a black man, rights to privacy, access to court and all legalities matters the most when you consider the history of South Africa (Participant 3).

Following this question, participants were asked: "What makes you believe civil and political rights are important?" The poor listed various reasons, some mentioned the convenience of having these rights, while others highlighted the importance of having freedom of speech. These participants summed up the answers from the poor:

We need all these rights; they make life easier for us or other people who need them (Participant 13).

I would like to say is freedom of speech because it allows people to express yourself. Expressing yourself does good to our minds and being (Participant 1).

I believe people should participate in freedom of speech or observe things based on their interests. If they do not want to involve their selves, they shouldn't (Participant 4).

The middle class and working-class participants added:

Freedom of speech. It gets you to say whatever you want to say, your voice is heard, and no one can take that away from you (Participant 6).

I believe in having privacy over anything. The right to privacy matter more than anything to me. With the advancement of Artificial Intelligence, I fear that this right may be compromised. That makes me worried (Participant 15).

Due to the nature of my work and profession, I would say the constitutional rights of an individual in South Africa. The constitution is the supreme law of the land, and no organ of the state is above that law. The constitution encamps all the rights a person needs (Participant 8: 2024).

From the above responses, all participants acknowledge the importance of civil and political rights for various reasons. Some valued them for guaranteeing freedom of speech, while others saw them as crucial for protecting their lives. No participant expressed any opposition to these rights, highlighting the value placed on them by the poor, working class, and middle class.

The next question posed to participants was: "Do you believe that all people should enjoy political rights?" In answering this question, participants touched on the sensitivity of civil and political rights and economic rights being enjoyed by all human beings. They expressed their frustration about political rights being enjoyed by everyone in different circumstances. One participant from the poor said:

No, not all people deserve to enjoy political rights. For instance, people in prison, rapists, and murderers. They get to have rights such as free education while students who are outstanding and try their best to be good citizens struggle to find funding and study further. While you are a criminal, you get free food – three meals, free shelter, free clothing, and free education (Participant 2).

Other middle-class participants echoed this sentiment, and explained:

Human rights pertain to us as human beings. We all should have them and be able to experience and express them. However, they are sensitive. For example, if someone kills another person, prior to the actual act of murder both these persons had human rights, right to life, freedom of speech, and so forth. When now this person gets killed without their consent, the murderer has his own human rights. Even as a police officer, if you are affecting any arrest to a suspect you are obligated to read them their rights. Murderers have rights even if they forfeited others and their own rights (Participant 8).

No. I do not understand why murderers, rapists, and criminals enjoy these rights when they take these rights from other people. People who do not respect the rights of others should not enjoy rights (Participant 15).

While emphasizing the importance of civil and political rights, participants noted that certain circumstances may warrant limitations on the exercise and enjoyment of these rights. These circumstances include situations where individuals pose a significant danger or threat to others, such as cases involving sexual assault, murder, and violence.

Participants were then asked to share their thoughts on the following: “Do you support civil and political rights even if economic rights are not realised?” Three out of eight poor participants expressed commitment to support civil and political rights despite lacking access to economic rights. These participants recognise the importance of civil and political rights as

essential for their struggle for economic rights. However, the remaining five participants from the poor rejected the idea of supporting one set of rights over the other, mentioning the need to support all human rights. The answers expressed by the majority of the participants reflected a cemented desire to support civil and political rights and economic rights simultaneously. This participant sums up the answers:

No, I don't support political rights if economic rights are completely ignored. For a political system to work, there has to be some level of economic security, in terms of protecting not only businesses, but also people in terms of their right and ability to make money. If people have no houses, I am unsure why they would want to enjoy political rights alone (Participant 11).

I think there should be a balance, even if they are not realized. I think it is important for us to have a voice. A way to combat this is to educate people so they make informed decisions (Participant 2).

In a sense, I would like to think I support them all, with all of them being in a point of equilibrium. Of course, it depends on what the person is short off. For example, if I am going to tell you I am a poverty-stricken person, then I am more likely to be aligned more with rights about social grants. Since I feel that I am not allowed to express myself, I feel more of a need to put an anchor on freedom of speech (Participant 1).

More participants shared similar explanations for supporting both these rights without exception:

No, I cannot support political rights at the expense of economic rights (Participant 10).

That is a tricky one. I would support those rights if the nations also practiced their responsibilities. For them to work, I also believe economic rights should be present. If

we only focus on the right to vote, and not the right to education, it does not really work alongside the needs of people or uplift the community (Participant 3).

I think both of them should be supported. You cannot replace one for the other. Both of them need to be recognized because it is the hierarchy of needs and they both feed into each other (Participant 5).

However, one middle class participant explained why he would support civil and political rights even if economic rights are not realized, he said:

I would support these rights even if people do not have economic rights. We still need to have a say about our own land, in courts, and just a voice in general. Even if people are struggling, we still need these rights. We cannot look after everyone (Participant 9).

The poor expressed a unanimous desire for civil and political rights and economic rights to be supported equally. However, the majority of them rejected the idea of supporting civil and political rights if economic rights are completely ignored. In their explanation, there should be a balance of support for both civil and political rights and economic rights, without exception. In other words, they argue that the realisation of one set of rights over the other does not uplift communities and may lead to further inequalities. Studies suggest that universal endorsement of both civil and political rights and economic rights is rare, as people tend to favour one set of rights over the other. However, civil and political rights have full support among selected residents of Makhanda.

4.4 Support for economic rights

This section focuses on the third set of questions asked to participants. These questions aimed at understanding the middle-class support for economic rights. Participants were asked: “Economic rights include the right to education, housing, and health; What is your view on

economic rights?” Of the nine middle-class participants interviewed, nine expressed strong support for economic rights. Responses from the middle class are summarized below:

I fully support them. Economic rights matter the most to me, not to say rights to voting do not matter. However, clean fresh water and education matter the most to me. Not everyone has a talent, or they know what their talent is. For me, the reason I am here is because of education; I made it work for myself. Everyone deserves these rights, especially those in need (Participant 3).

Basic human rights, rights to shelter, rights to food, rights to water. Those are the ones that are mostly important, including health and education (Participant 2).

As someone who is in the private sector, I understand housing as a right, and I put more importance on the right to adequate housing. I do recognise the importance of housing, water, and all other basic human rights (Participant 11).

To me, socio-economic rights matter the most to me. Those include education, health, and water (Participant 10).

Health care means the most to me because it allows me the opportunity to preventions and treatments. We need health care from young to old (Participant 12).

Contrary to the expectations that the middle class may resist support for economic rights, all middle-class participants showed unanimous support for economic rights. The general view middle-class participants shared about economic rights is that they are important and necessary human rights. They mentioned that these rights are necessary for various reasons, including for the provision of basic services, human dignity, improved health outcomes, and to access employment opportunities and development. While the question aimed at understanding middle-class support for economic rights, a notable finding emerged: the poor who were also asked demonstrated strong support for these rights. This outcome was not unexpected, as the

poor often face significant challenges that require basic access to socio-economic rights to live a better life.

The middle-class consensus on economic rights aligns with the earlier responses of the poor in section 4.3, which showed strong support for civil and political rights. The pattern gathered from all participants' responses on support for these rights highlights the vitality of having these rights. When asked: "Do you believe people are deserving of economic rights?", the middle class said:

Yes. We are all people at the end of day. We are all equal, we must have rights equally regardless of class (Participant 7).

I believe every human being in South Africa should have access to rights. I cannot be biased to other people. Everyone deserves a chance and opportunities to rights (Participant 9).

When I look at the other side of taking those rights from someone, society looks cruel, oppressive, and looks like you are taking away life from someone. The right to education creates freedom and the ability to think and create something for yourself. It appears as though you are being oppressive the minute you take away those rights (Participant 5).

Yes. Economic rights are more important than political rights. Political rights need to be there to protect how everyone interacts including natural and juristic proceeds, but economic rights are basic necessities (Participant 11).

These answers demonstrate that the middle class understand the necessity of having these rights for survival and living a decent life. As mentioned by participants, the absence of these rights may lead to a society that is unbearable to live in, if these rights do not exist and find support.

Participants were further asked if people should support some rights even if they do not benefit from them. This question required the participants to expand on the previous answers about their support for both these rights. This is to understand their support for rights that are not their immediate rights of choice. Some participants said:

I would not say they really need to. I would also not say pick one right over the other, but it would not make any sense if you were going to vote and you do not know why you are voting and who you are voting for. I believe people must support those rights so that those who are in need to have them (Participant 3).

Another participant also explained that these rights exist with the other and for the other:

Yes. Support comes in many forms. Some offer financial support, others intellectual support, and people like me just like the idea of all people enjoying rights that matter the most to them. People should support all rights if they do not inconvenience them (Participant 15).

One participant remained neutral, expressing neither support nor opposition to the idea that people should advocate for certain rights even if they do not personally benefit from them: The participant said:

People should be free to support whatever they want (Participant 10).

The findings indicate a statistically significant consensus among nine middle-class participants, with complete participation expressing strong support for economic rights despite having the immediate rights of preference. This shows that participants prioritize the well-being and dignity of others even if it does not directly impact their own lives. Moreover, it shows that they understand that everyone deserves to have their rights respected and protected.

4.5 Redistribution and desired changes to human rights

The fourth set of questions focused on the participants' perspectives and support for redistribution, and desired changes for human rights to survive. Specifically, it focused on what the middle class says on the issue of redistribution. The middle class offered varied answers when asked: "How do you feel about taking from the middle class and giving to those who are poorer?" Of the nine middle class participants interviewed, six showed unwillingness to support the idea of giving services to those who are poorer, while three had no issue with redistribution. Those who disagree with redistribution, argued:

As a working person, I have a really bad take on that. Without appearing as selfish, however, for us we are paying heavy tax, and we work so hard. There are more things that still to happen in the world that affect everyone. If you take the small bread we have and share it with other people because they are less fortunate than us, in reality, it is not fair. In reality, communism does not really work. That is a setback that would put me back into poverty. Also, in a way that will make the less fortunate lazy if they know we will provide for them. It will promote laziness while putting us in a harsh position (Participant 3).

That is unfair. We are already being taxed for everything. Tax is the devil. It is attached to everything, to savings, to buying food, petrol, and a car licence disk. Being a working person is uncomfortable. Paying tax comes with expectations of having everything working, but the government inconveniences us. The roads are not working, there is no water, and crime is bad. Why should I agree to give to other people when I can just help myself out of living in misery? (Participant 15).

While I believe that by being blessed with resources; you have to bless others, we have to be selfish. Even though we can never look away when we see people struggling and

dying, but you have to get on your feet before you help someone else get on their feet (Participant 9).

To a lesser extent. I believe that giving should be an option, not an obligation (Participant 10).

The participants not in favour of redistribution stressed tax as one of the reasons for disagreeing to give to the poorer. They also mentioned that redistribution may promote laziness if the poorer depend on the middle class. Their refusal shows the financial vulnerability of their position, as their rejection is not based on not wanting to support redistribution but on impact it will leave on their side if they do.

Middle-class participants who back the idea of taking from the middle class and giving to those who are poorer said:

Fairly speaking, yes, I do back an ideal of redistribution. In a country like South Africa, the poor fall under the majority of the population. The majority of the country is now marginalized by poverty, not because they do not have the motivation to work or the skills, but infrastructure and opportunities are made scarce and limited due to the fast-growing population. It is not easy to find a permanent solution; however, I believe redistribution aims to bridge such a gap between the rich 1% and the marginalized poor who make up the majority of the country. The poor are stricken by poverty, absence of sanitation, and a lack of basic services and rights. If redistribution compensates the gap between the rich and poor, I believe in a form of tax redistribution would be a just cause for the less fortunate. The rich are subject to select which charities they donate to, no, they should be taxed for said income and revenue to bridge the gap. Even though we are developing as a country, we come from a brutal past that left all systems in place to oppress others (Participant 8).

Yes, definitely. That is what we much part of, and that goes back to my family in terms of extending a hand to others who are in need. Being in the middle-class position, you are able to help others who are not in this position (Participant 5).

We do not live in a world where everyone is equal. The sad reality of this world is that there are some people who will be successful while others are not. I think everyone who is in any position of helping should support redistribution. I believe redistribution goes a long way to those who are actually in need, and trust me, some people are in dire need. Social and economic assistance such as social grants go a long way (Participant, 19).

When asked: “Would you be part of the people who give services to those who lack services?” Six out of nine middle class participants refused to be part of the people who give services to those who lack. Their refusal comes from not having enough resources, tax burdens, family responsibilities and perceived unfairness of redistribution. These middle-class participants explained:

We are already being taxed for everything. Tax is the devil. It is attached to everything; to savings, to buying food, petrol, and car license disk. Being a working person is uncomfortable. Paying tax comes with expectations of having everything working, but the government inconveniences us. The roads are not working, there is no water, and crime is bad. Why should I agree to give to other people when I can just help myself out of living in misery? (Participant 15).

I think I speak for everyone in South Africa when I say, yes, but I do not want to be taxed more. I am being taxed already; VAT is a tax that is meant to tax you outside the realm of anything. I believe those who are affording should not have any problem with this. However, there should be clear plans on how the tax is going to be utilised in

addressing matters of redistribution to bridge the gap of poverty. The government must use the tax in a proper way. We are being taxed and we do not see how the tax is being utilised. In fact, we are being taxed more each time, every year (Participant 8).

Redistribution is somehow setting us up for failure as working people. On top of the horrible tax situation we are into, what more can we do? I have a family to take care of, my mother and my siblings are all dependent on me. I cannot have any other people to support with my income without going broke (Participant 19).

While majority of the middle class rejected being part of those who give services to those who lack, three out of nine agreed. This answer sums up why:

Yes, definitely. That is what we are much part of, and that goes back to my family in terms of extending a hand to others who are in need. Being in the middle-class position, you are able to help others who are not in this position (Participant 5).

The overall conclusion is that the middle class is not ready to be part of the people who give services to those who do not have. The middle participants refuse redistribution based on their rejection on tax, which is already a burden in their economic status. The reluctance also comes from factors such as the unpredictability of the economy, family commitments, and the vulnerability of their class to falling back into poverty. With these answers that participants give, it is difficult to reach consensus on supporting redistribution even though consensus is established on supporting both civil and political and economic rights.

As a way of closing the interviews, participants were asked: “What changes would you like to see in how the relationship between civil and political rights and economic rights is?” This question aimed to get participants’ dissatisfaction with the human rights enterprise, and how they imagined the solution to be. Their answers touched on a lot of challenges, while others

criticized the human rights enterprise, others offered ways for the improvement of the enterprise. Participants said that:

What I would rather love to see is the integrity behind these rights. To explain, with the freedom of speech, you should not be curbed and have it to a certain extent then you do not have it. If it is like that, then what is it? What is freedom of speech if you are not free enough? (Participant 1).

Not to abuse them. A lot of people have the tendency to abuse or misuse their rights (Participant 6).

I would love to see the constitution being respected more (Participant 8).

The change I would love to see is people being informed. People must realise that every right has a responsibility. They should know when each right is applicable (Participant 10).

They should be practiced equally, and they must see, and reflect us as poor people (Participant 13).

Put more funding to make all human rights possible and attainable (Participant 15).

The way other participants answered this question focused on changes for the whole enterprise of human rights. For example, one participant said:

I feel that they are more centred into religions whereas some people are not religious at all. If human rights could be made out of religion or be objective, they would be catering everyone (Participant 4).

The attitudes of the participants about their desired changes in human rights confirms that indeed there might be challenges troubling human rights that requires attention. They also

confirm that people have their own version of what human rights should be and do. In that they develop their own expectations about the role of rights in addressing their needs and challenges.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the results from the data collected from participants of this research. The results above showed different understandings that selected residents of Makhanda attach to human rights. It also revealed various factors that influence their experiences and views. The results in this chapter are reduced and narrated into sections and themes that will allow an easy discussion. The following chapter discuss the findings in this chapter in depth and answer the research question.

Chapter 5: Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the findings of the interviews. The purpose of this chapter is to consider these findings in relation to the questions that motivate this thesis. These are to understand whether rights depend on redistribution; how people perceive the various human rights, the extent of the middle-class support for economic rights, and the extent of the poor's support for civil and political rights. The participants' responses are discussed using the questions and data in chapter four. The analysis is supported by secondary data, such as literature about human rights, and political-economic studies of South Africa.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section discusses participants' support for civil and political rights and economic rights. The second section considers the perspectives people have on redistribution. The third section of this chapter analyses what the answers mean for the future of human rights. The analysis presented in these sections aims to assess the extent of human rights support in the Global South.

5.2 Understanding participants' support for civil and political rights and economic rights

Literature cited in Chapter 1 and 2 suggest that the middle class supports civil and political rights and the poor economic rights. As argued by Stephen Hopgood, for the middle class, civil and political rights appear to be more relevant than economic rights as they earn income through private employment or enterprise and obtain goods and services through markets, rather than relying on government assistance (Hopgood, 2020:285). As a result, rights that protect individual freedoms – such as free speech, right to voting, and property rights – are more immediately relevant to their daily lives than economic rights like state-provided services. For the poor, economic rights are of primary concern, given that their ability to access meaningful social and economic opportunities frequently depends on state intervention. As a result, they

rely on public services (Hopgood, 2017:290). What is at stake if human rights support is divided, with the poor prioritizing economic rights and the middle class focusing on civil and political rights is that human rights universality and indivisibility may be compromised. This division can lead to a fragmented human rights movement, making it challenging to build broad coalitions and advocate for human rights. It might also lead to a decline in support for civil and political rights. In this section, the character of support for civil and political rights and economic rights is discussed. The aim is to understand whether the middle class support economic rights and if the poor support civil and political rights. This is necessary in order to understand the participants' rights priorities and their willingness to support and advocate for a broader range of rights beyond those that directly affect them. Understanding these nuances and dynamics allows for more realistic projections of redistributive compromise, which is likely to influence the trajectory future of human rights.

The relationship between civil and political rights, and economic rights is a contested terrain. Disagreements focused on which set of rights has priority over the other (Howard-Hassamann, 1983:468). The support for economic rights amongst other things implies that economic rights to basic needs is of more importance and priority to people than civil and political rights, and the latter should either wait, be postponed, or be suspended until basic economic rights are realized and secured (Howard-hassamann, 1983: 468; Oloka-Onyango, 1995:5).

Available literature on civil and political rights, and economic rights frequently centres on the character and nature of state support for these rights, often overlooking the lived realities and perspectives of right-holders themselves. For example, much of the literature focuses on how states treat these rights and their behaviour towards them, but pays little attention to peoples' attitudes toward human rights concepts (Ron, Pandya, and Crow, 2016:13). Human rights reports such as those produced by the UN and Human Rights Watch provide essential documentation of the debates on civil and political rights and economic rights, nevertheless,

those reports rely heavily on secondary sources, desk research, and expert opinions, rather than firsthand accounts from right-holders. This section prioritizes the voices and experiences of ordinary persons to test Hopgood's claim about the Global South. The focus on and prioritization of individual's experiences and perspectives of these rights is an attempt to address the one-sided literature on support for these rights. What this section tries to understand from participants is: is it justifiable to suspend civil and political rights in pursuit of economic rights?

Some human rights scholars argue that individuals who lack access to basic economic rights may see little value in civil and political rights such as freedom of speech, the right to association, and access to courts, whereas those who have their basic economic needs met tend to prioritise civil and political rights (Howard-Hassamann, 1983: 478). However, looking at the findings in Chapter 4, they weave together different attitudes, perspectives, and understandings participants have about human rights that dispute these presumptions. The findings show that assessing the participants' level of commitment and willingness to uphold human rights is a nuanced issue, as attitudes towards different types of rights can vary depending on individual's circumstances.

The interview findings suggest unanimous support for all rights regardless of class. Notably, all eight poor participants expressed strong support for civil and political rights. Similarly, unanimous support for economic rights was evident among the nine middle-class participants interviewed. Furthermore, all three working-class participants supported both civil and political rights and economic rights. This outcome contrasts with what scholars in the literature review claimed about support for human rights. More importantly, it opens up a new discussion on the nature of that support.

The support for all human rights, however, does not mean that these rights matter the same way to all participants. Participants expressed their preference for certain rights even though they support all rights. Some claimed that civil and political rights matter the most to them, while others preferred economic rights. Interestingly, is that all participants agreed that their non-preferred rights may be important to the next person, and for that reason deserve equal support. A participant summarized the injustice of being denied access to a basic set of human rights:

When I look at the other side of taking those rights from someone, society looks cruel, oppressive, and looks like you are taking away life from someone. The right to education creates freedom and the ability to think and create something for yourself. It appears as though you are being oppressive the minute you take away those rights (Participant 5).

This experience, and others mentioned in Chapter 4 suggest that the debate over priorities and non-priorities of civil and political and economic rights should not be an ongoing debate. Participants disagree that civil and political rights should be postponed or rather have limits to achieve economic rights. Support for both rights can be summarized in the following statements:

I think both of them should be supported. You cannot replace one for the other. Both of them need to be recognized because it is the hierarchy of needs and they both feed into each other (Participant 5).

No, I don't support political rights if economic rights are completely ignored. For a political system to work there must be some level of economic security, in terms of protecting not only businesses, but also people in terms of their right and ability to make money. If people have no houses, I am unsure why they would want to enjoy political rights alone (Participant 11).

The understanding participants have of these rights suggests awareness that these sets of rights need each other. In participants' understanding, the economic distribution of services takes place through a form of political process, or at least through the assertion of civil and political rights such as voting and access to court. The sentiments of the participants are amplified in Neier's argument that civil and political rights are among the solutions and effective ways to address economic rights (Neier, 2006: 1). Similarly, Macharoni (2014:309) argues that civil and political rights and economic rights are indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated in theory, even though in practice may not be equally protected. For example, the right to education lays a foundation to understand and practice civil and political rights (Cumar, 2017: 212).

While the majority of human rights studies have consistently claimed that people often take a stance, favouring either civil and political rights or economic rights (Hopgood, 2017), the community of Makhanda has demonstrated another possibility for human rights. Specifically, the participants form an example where the language of human rights is used to support all human rights. The eight poor participants not only value civil and political rights for what they are but also values these rights as a means to secure their economic rights. For example, protesting, a fundamental civil right, is often used to prompt government action on economic concerns (Koob, 2023:103).

From the above, it is evident that meaningful exercise and enjoyment of civil and political rights are believed to come from enjoying basic economic services (Allsop, 2024:490). Moses (2019:168) cites Marshall (1950), who argues that the realisation of full citizenship encompasses the fusion of civil and political rights and socio-economic rights. This perspective is echoed in participants' responses, which align with the importance of integrating these rights. In this aspect, for a decent life for individuals, both these rights must be satisfied because they all influence and reinforce each other. The position taken by the participants thus challenges

Stephen Hopgood's (2017) argument (see Chapter 2) that the poor primarily advocate for economic rights, while the middle and working classes prioritize civil and political rights.

The participants' support and strong advocacy for both civil and political and economic rights can be explained by various influences and factors. For some, the endorsement of all human rights is influenced by their access to services and their position in society. For others, it is influenced by the state of corruption in the town, which requires a balanced need of civil and political rights and economic rights (see Chapter 3 for this argument). Participants, regardless of class, need their civil and political rights for economic rights to be delivered. Therefore, they understand the need for balanced support and respect for these rights.

The conclusion that can be reached in this section is that the participants' support for civil and political rights is unanimous. None of the people interviewed, even among the poor participants, expressed disregard for human rights. Participants do not want to see limits on civil and political rights for the realization of economic rights, even though economic rights might be their immediate priority. They acknowledge that civil and political rights play a huge part in their socio-economic mobility. They also acknowledge that both these rights coexist. What they suggest is that these rights get the same level of respect and funding they deserve in order for them to be functional for all people. Given the aforementioned unanimous support for both civil and political rights and economic rights, one might expect substantial support for economic rights. As we shall see below, support for redistribution is polarised. The following section considers what the participants' support for civil and political, and economic set of rights translates to.

5.3 The possibilities of redistributive compromise

“Putting economic and social rights on the same plane as civil and political rights implicitly takes an area where compromise is essential...” (Neier, 2006:3).

Economic rights are commonly given lower priority than civil and political rights. One major obstacle to recognizing economic rights is their significant cost implication, which needs a sort of negotiation and compromise, where income is transferred from the middle class to the poorer classes (Neier, 2006:2; Camur, 2017:210). While the costs of upholding civil and political rights entails, for instance, trained and qualified judges, a police, courts, an electoral organisation, the provision of individual security and protection (Papanikos, 2025:11; Çamur, 2017: 207), many scholars argue that the cost of protecting civil and political rights is less compared to a much more substantial cost realizing economic rights (Papanikos, 2025:11). The costs of realising economic rights are considered to be more extensive, comprising the implementation and maintenance of social welfare programs, education, health, infrastructure development, and enforcement of labour laws and regulations for large numbers of people. For example, building and maintaining a school will always involve ongoing costs, including infrastructure maintenance, teacher salaries, electricity, learning materials, water, and security. The same applies to healthcare, which involves costs such as medical equipment, staff salaries, utilities, medication, and facility maintenance. For these reasons, scholars argue that civil and political rights, requiring fewer resources, are prioritised for immediate implementation, while economic rights are delayed due to financial constraints (Eide, 2001:10; and Quintavalla and Heine, 2019:679).

To generate the money needed to realize economic rights, class concessions and compromise are necessary (Wright, 2015:185). In other words, this involves redistributing resources from the haves to the have-nots (Musiyoki, 2014 :127). In Hopgood’s terms, this necessitates finding

a common ground among those who have resources with those who lack services to continue supporting civil and political rights. This section uses the answers from the participants to assess whether redistribution has support among selected residents of Makhanda.

The findings revealed a complex interplay of opposing forces where participants expressed divided opinions on redistribution, with three participants embracing the concept and six others expressing opposition. The three middle-class participants who were open to the idea of redistribution mentioned, among other things, that redistribution has the potential of helping the less privileged and reducing the gap between the rich and poor. To them, redistribution can drive significant positive changes, such as creating equitable societies and enabling the disadvantaged to access essential services like education, healthcare, and sanitation.

The three out of nine the middle-class participants in support for redistribution believe that the poor are not poor through the fault of their own. To them, their poverty is a result of a combination of factors, including the lack of employment, scarce education and training opportunities to acquire skills, and the traumatic aftermath of apartheid in the country. They further mentioned municipal incompetencies that hinder economic growth and development. Research shows that indeed, the South African economic performance is in a state of crisis (Aboobaker, 2024:36). The country is burdened by unemployment, poverty, inefficient administration, and unsuitable economic policies. This statement from participant eight sums up the position of the poor and why redistribution is important:

In a country like South Africa, the poor fall under the majority of the population. The majority of the country is now marginalized by poverty, not because they do not have the motivation to work, or the skills, but infrastructure and opportunities are made scarce and limited due to the vast growing population...and a brutal past that left all systems in place to oppress others (Participant 8).

The sentiments expressed by the participants are not far removed from the actual reality of the poor in South Africa. The majority of South Africans exist under challenging social, political, and economic situations that are not by their own design, but a result of the current government and a legacy bequeathed by the apartheid regime (Kajiita and Kang'ethe, 2016:104). The country is troubled with unending political conflicts, poor infrastructure, homelessness, unsafe and degraded environments, and underdevelopment in various parts (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2024:81). These factors and others automatically put the poor in a state of depression. For this reason, it is fair to say economic intervention is a crucial step towards addressing some of the root causes of poverty and improving the socio-economic well-being of disadvantaged groups. Redistribution plays a crucial role in enabling the poor to live decent and dignified lives. Kajiita and Kang'ethe (2016:103) argue that redistribution policies in an unequal society “makes the difference between life and near-death for millions of South Africans who have little chance of being included in the mainstream economy.” Redistribution, therefore, provides a necessary form of economic relief to the poor, helping to bridge the gap between poverty and economic stability. For instance, child grants and feeding programs play a critical role in reducing child poverty, thereby enabling children from disadvantaged households to access education (Kajiita and Kang'ethe, 2016:104).

Despite the above-mentioned need for redistribution, six middle-class participants voiced their concerns about and objections to the idea of redistribution. Their resistance stemmed from concerns about an unfair burden to support the poor, on top of the already existing taxes. Indeed, redistribution in its nature involves collecting taxes by the government and spending them on transfers and public services (Koob, 2023:73). In their view, the idea of redistribution would have unintended consequences, crippling and undermining the economic stability of the middle class and working class. In other words, the middle-class possessing the means to access and maintain basic economic services independently, they see themselves as not having enough

to support additional burdens, such as assisting government-sponsored programs. For that reason, they rationalize their opposition to such policies. One participant stated:

We are already being taxed for everything. Tax is the devil. It is attached to everything, to savings, to buying food, petrol, and a car license disk. Being a working person is uncomfortable. Paying tax comes with expectations of having everything working, but the government inconveniences us. The roads are not working, there is no water, and crime is bad. Why should I agree to give to other people when I can just help myself out of living in misery? (Participant 15).

This statement highlights the burden of taxations the middle-class carry, it also highlights the dire state of service delivery in Makhanda (see Chapter 3), and more broadly, South Africa. South Africa is characterised by economic and political instability such as unemployment, poverty, and inequality (Cilliers and Aucoin, 2017:1). Crime, corruption, and poor governance exacerbate this instability, leading to underperformance of basic services and resource delivery. This current economic situation, with limited steps for moving up from one economic bracket to another, is the source of frustration for the middle and working classes, who are shouldering the burden of a struggling economy (Cilliers and Aucoin, 2017:3).

As discussed in chapter two (see Chapter 2, section 2.3.1), Hopgood (2017), posits that the middle class enjoys aspects of civil and political rights, and is likely to resist the extension of economic rights. Hopgood argues that the middle class “enjoy many social and economic opportunities without the need for human rights, and when they do not, they seek only those rights that will fill gaps in their own power” (Hopgood, 2020:285). For this reason, Hopgood believes that the middle class may be averse to redistribution not only due to their comfortable socioeconomic status but also because they do not perceive a personal need for these rights.

Interestingly, the findings provide are that six out of nine middle-class participants believe that being middle class is a vulnerable position - it is one crisis away from poverty. Scholars agree that the middle-class often live from pay-check to pay-check, with limited savings to fall back on in a case of crisis or unemployment (Zizzamia et al., 2016:13). This finding shows that the middle class's resistance to redistribution stem from their economic fragility, therefore, contradicts the presumption of the middle-class position mentioned by Hopgood. The following statements from the participants sum up the fragile financial situation of the middle class that may push them into poverty by unexpected expenses and income disruptions:

...there are more things that still to happen in the world that affect everyone, if you take the small bread we have and share with other people because they are less fortunate than us, in reality it is not fair. In reality, communism does not really work. That is a setback that would put me back to poverty. Also, in a way that would make the less fortunate lazy if they know we will provide for them. It will promote laziness while putting us in a harsh position (Participant 3).

Redistribution is somehow setting us up for failure as working people. On top of the horrible tax situation we are into, what more can we do? I have a family to take care of; my mother and my siblings are all dependent on me. I cannot have any other people to support with my income without going broke (Participant 15).

The above-expressed sentiments of vulnerability of the middle class highlight the immense social and economic pressure they face to share and allocate their wealth, which, in turn, hinders their ability to save and invest money (Musyoka, 2015:iv). This suggests that adding redistribution to the existing economic burdens of the middle class increases their vulnerability of slipping back to financial insecurity rather than achieving financial security. Scholars argue

that a starting point to being a secure middle class is being able not to fall back to poverty (Zizzamia et al., 2015:13).

Several middle-class participants remarked that redistribution creates laziness, as those who are not working or lack resources and services may benefit at the expense of those who are working, rather than working to support themselves. Fong, Bowles, and Gintis (2015:278) argue that people tend to support less redistribution when they blame the poor for their poverty or suspect trails of laziness. These scholars further argue that blaming the poor for being lazy often serves as a convenient excuse to prioritize their own interests and justify their selfishness.

Given the economic realities of South Africa – and the Global South more broadly – it is unlikely that the middle class justify their selfishness by stigmatising the poor as lazy, though this cannot be ruled out as a possibility. If this is the case, research presented in Chapter 2 suggests that resistance to redistribution may arise from the belief that market economies provide equal opportunities for participation and upward mobility. The attitudes from the middle class may also come from the belief that the playing field is level, poverty is a result of personal failure rather than structural barriers, and redistribution may create welfare dependency. Indeed, there is a growing concern among South Africans that the provision of social and economic assistance to the poor such as grants, creates a culture of dependency and weakens the motivation to work (Surender et al., 2010). Or rather, the poor deliberately reduce their work efforts to prolong their vulnerability in order to qualify for the benefit transfers for a long period of time as possible (Kajiita and Kang’ethe, 2016:105). These are some of the unintended consequences of redistribution, a cause initially aimed to heal by sharing wealth the haves and have nots. However, the concerns above about the culture of dependency and laziness miss that “social grants prevent the poor from slipping further into poverty and settling scores of pre-apartheid imbalances” (Kajiita and Kang’ethe, 2021:101).

Branding the poor as lazy appears to stem from the frustration and sense of injustice felt by middle-class individuals who work hard in a tough economy, only to be asked to support redistribution. Six out of nine middle-class participants expressed concerns that redistribution would take away from the limited income they work hard to earn, further eroding their already constrained financial resources and increasing their vulnerability to unforeseen events such as the COVID-19 pandemic – an unexpected crisis that severely disrupted financial security. Put more clearly, these middle-class participants believe they are not in a strong enough financial position to extend a helping hand. This sentiment underscores the middle class's financial constraints and fear of uncertainty. One participant mentioned:

You have to get on your feet before you help someone get on their feet (Participant 9).

What is noted from the above is that middle class participants who oppose redistribution do so not because they possess ample resources and refuse to support it. Rather, their contention is that they do not have sufficient resources. This raises important questions: what threshold of resources would the middle class consider sufficient to warrant support for redistribution; and what sets apart those middle-class individuals who support redistribution from those who do not?

Scholars believe that redistribution requires a long-term commitment because achieving and maintaining economic rights is an ongoing process (Ron, Pandya, and Crow, 2016:8). Instead, individuals in the Global South tend to prefer charitable support that provides immediate relief - such as giving someone money for bread or donating clothes - over long -term structural change. Ron, Pandya, and Crow (2016:8) argue that support for long-term human rights reforms - including economic redistribution - is weaker among individuals in the Global South. These scholars further argue that data suggest many people in the Global South support human

rights ideas, but only a select few contribute financially to human rights reforms (Ron, Pandya, and Crow, 2016:3).

The idea of the middle-class opposing redistribution directs the attention to the state of the economy, which seems not to guarantee enough form of economic security to this group. Their opposition to redistribution seems to come from the perception that redistribution does not embody the equality of burden, and that there should be a reward for the middle class for carrying such responsibility (Fong, Bowles, and Gintis, 2005:283). From the above, it is not difficult to see that redistributive compromise is an unhappy marriage for the middle class.

A common thread among participants that are hesitant and cautious about redistribution is their focus on taxation as a primary means of achieving redistributive compromise. They seem unaware of the diverse policy areas under which the compromise can take place, which go further than taxation. The policies include not only tax, but wage and benefit arrangements, social spending, price controls, social protection arrangements, and labour protection legislations (Teichman, 2007:447). The members of the middle and working classes who took no interest in redistributive compromise solely believe in tax being the only achievable way.

Similar struggles and challenges in reaching redistributive compromise solutions have been experienced in Chile and Mexico (Teichman, 2007:455). Programmes and policies aimed at providing cash transfers and social assistance to the poor often get delayed due to resistance from those who have resources. Existing scholarship also suggests that support for redistribution throughout the Global South remains low due to low commitment levels to redistribution initiatives (Lopez et al., 2020:489). This observation, however, requires a deep examination of the readiness of the Global South to commit to redistribution policies. It remains unclear to see whether redistribution is the issue, or the issue and challenge is the manner in which redistribution is brought up to the people.

The interpretation of these findings shows that there is no consensus on the matter of redistribution. This conclusion is partly arrived at by looking at the data which reveals variance in redistributive attitudes, making it hard to achieve redistribution. Overall, the responses showed a third supported redistribution, while two-thirds opposed it. Even though some participants support economic rights, taxpayer's resentment toward its demands tend to close the window for action, as they refuse to internalise the responsibility for redistribution. While these participants believe that all rights should be fulfilled, they are cautious about redistribution as a means to achieve this goal. For these reasons, it seems too early to put hope on this generation of middle class and working class in Makhanda. They are currently polarized on the idea of redistribution and still immersing themselves in wealth. In the near future, they would likely be operating under less pressure and find consensus to redistribute.

5.4 Implications of participants' attitudes of redistribution towards the future of human rights.

This section draws from the above analyses of the attitudes and understandings participants have about civil and political rights and economic rights to consider their meaning for the future of human rights. The attitudes participants have towards redistribution offer a wide range of possibilities, some of which may pose risks to human rights that need to be addressed through targeted policy and advocacy. For instance, public opinion has real-world consequences on the state, voting behaviour, and how human rights are upheld and undermined within a society.

Key insights emerge from the analysis of the findings, and notable observations and lessons can be drawn from the participant's attitudes towards rights. In the section (see section 5.2) about their support for civil and political and economic rights, participants, when asked about their support for these sets of rights, demonstrated a strong commitment, boding well for the future of human rights.

Human rights rhetoric serves as a necessary starting point for rights to continue to exist, even if it does not translate to concrete actions or policies. Scholars argue that for human rights to endure and thrive, they require a chorus of optimistic voices advocating for their support (Sikkink, 2018). The unanimous support for civil and political rights and economic rights by the residents of Makhanda is a desired outcome for human rights. It challenges the claims that the “lingua franca” of human rights is on its way to losing relevance (Dancy and Farris, 2024:252). Their support for human rights is a vital step towards promoting the culture of human rights, disputing the claim of a gradual loss of relevance.

Human rights - especially in the Global South, and particularly in countries that experienced prolonged forms of oppression such as segregation, and gained independence later than others, tend to place a strong value on human rights, recognising the long and difficult struggle it took to achieve, and uphold them. They continue to be seen as valuable by to people in the Global South. This is evident from the support shown by the participants, which is challenging scholars such as Mutau, who argue that people seeking empowerment in the age of capitalism will realise that human rights is not their language to fight their struggles (Mutau, 2008:1034). Overall, the responses indicated that the language of human rights continues to serve as a powerful and recurring tool for participants to fight against injustice. Those injustices may include corruption, lack of service delivery, poverty, racism, and gender inequality.

Even though it is difficult to confidently generalise about the rhetorical impact of human rights, the discourse remains highly salient – evidenced by the unanimous support in Makhanda. The strong backing of these rights by the residents of Makhanda suggests they are unlikely to face the “endtimes,” Hopgood suggested, as such support plays a crucial role in securing their long-term viability and sustainability.

While the results from the residents of Makhanda show that support for human rights continues in the Global South to socialize many abusive states into better behaviour, unite people to use the language of rights when protesting, and are necessary to live a decent life. However, more talk does not always mean better action. The gap between compelling human rights rhetoric and meaningful political and economic change can often be sizable (Hafner-Burton and Ron, 2007:382). The support for human rights in the Global South would be more far more compelling if it were consistently backed by sustainable concrete actions.

Section 5.3 has shown that human rights rhetoric does not always correspond and translate to substantial support for human rights. Scholars argue that the use of human rights vocabulary and resonance is not sufficient if it does not confront the problems faced by people, such as poverty, inequality, and discrimination (Dancy and Farris, 2024:252). While participants have agreed to support all human rights, their support fell short to convince direct openness and interest to redistribution, with two-thirds of the middle class in opposition. Among the factors influencing participants' scepticism and caution is taxation, which already pose a significant burden in their daily lives. Six out of nine of the middle-class participants believe that they are being taxed excessively on every aspect of their lives, citing examples such as taxes on savings, roads, employment, and food items. For the participants, consenting to redistribution would further increase their tax liability. For this reason, they decline and delay redistribution. This delay could lead to drastic consequences for the enterprise of human rights, if economic basic rights are not effectively realized for the poor.

Inequality is a pressing concern of the world today, with far reaching consequences for poor individuals and society (Liscow, 2021:495). If left unaddressed, the inequality may escalate into a catastrophe for social, economic, and political instability that disturbs all human rights. For instance, at an individual level, the living conditions caused by poverty and lack of access to basic services might exacerbate one's risk of "engaging in violence due to increased

exposure to violent subcultures, substance abuse and the availability of crime as a means to ‘redress the exclusion felt through not having material goods that define social inclusion’ (Cilliers and Aucion, 2017:3). At a social level, delayed response to redistribution may lead to increased social unrest with the growing tensions and protests demanding change.

It follows, therefore, that this volatile dynamic where the poor lash out at the rich, might prompt a reactive backlash. This dynamic will create an environment that will likely hinder the exercise of civil and political rights as well. For instance, the tensions may result in loss of life and freedom of speech. O’Connell (2021:12) echoes this sentiment that challenges in accessing economic rights also threatens the foundations and enjoyment of civil and political rights. This is antithetical to the fundamental goals of the human rights movement, which includes the enjoyment of all rights. The human rights community cannot afford this scenario to unfold, where exercise of rights is hindered, as it undermines the very existence and purpose of human rights.

Many consequences can emerge from failures of redistribution that undermine support for human rights in the Global South, such as the rise of extremist ideologies. Unsuccessful redistribution efforts may also fuel xenophobia, leading to the scapegoating of foreigners in areas plagued by inequality and poverty, as locals may redirect their frustrations towards outsiders. The failures of redistribution can create the perception that services and resources are scarce, and the only way to access these resources is through competition. Xenophobia inherently contradicts the values and principles of human rights (Emmanuel, 2015:128). It is always accompanied by outbursts of violence that threaten civil and political rights of not only foreigners but the locals as well.

Participants have contributed valuable ideas on how to improve support for human rights in the Global South. Some participants suggested that those in power must not abuse human rights

(Participant, 6). Others in their suggestions mentioned that human rights must be able to see and reflect the needs of the poor and not be centred around any religious perspectives (Participant, 13; and Participant 4). More importantly, participants suggested that increased funding for human rights initiatives in the Global South is essential for their effectiveness and broader support.

The suggestions put forward by the participants not only point to the shortcomings of human rights, but they also highlight the desirable vision and care people have for human rights to be protected from any forms of violations and not to substitute their role. This leads to the argument previously encountered in Chapter 1, that solutions about many human rights challenges and how to improve support for human rights in the Global South can be found when the experiences of people are to be considered. However, those solutions will require more than just rhetoric, but substantial support for them to translate into reality. Rob, Pandya, and Crow (2016:3) alerts us that not only does the Global South often lack enthusiasm for financially contributing to human rights reforms such as redistribution, but many individuals are also comfortable relying on international funding to support their human rights needs.

5.5 Conclusion

The above discussion gave a detailed analysis of the attitudes and understandings the members of the community of Makhanda have on human rights and redistribution. Participants expressed unanimous support for civil and political rights, and economic rights. The support can be explained as a positive outcome given the existing assumption that civil and political rights are of more importance than economic rights. The analysis also revealed that it is still too early for redistributive compromise as two-thirds of middle-class participants are in opposition. Even though the middle-class support both civil and political rights and economic rights, their support does not translate substantially for economic rights. While support for human rights is high, support for redistribution in Makhanda has been largely unsuccessful. Although

Makhanda is not fully representative of the Global South landscape, it offers a glimpse into the nature and limits of human rights support in the region.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the final summation and conclusions of this thesis. To conclude this thesis, a recap of the objectives and findings is necessary. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the variance in human rights attitudes, more specifically, civil and political rights and economic rights, and the potential for the middle-class to consent to redistribution. However, before exploring this position, the future of human rights is discussed in depth.

This study has been organized in six chapters. Chapter one is the introductory chapter situating the research in context. This chapter mapped out the reason for the study along with the objectives and aims. The objective guides the research and the direction of discussions.

Chapter two focused on local and global literature on the future of human rights, and the drivers of progress and change in human rights. The chapter presented literature on various versions of human rights futures, and what drives changes in the enterprise of human rights. From the debate about the decline of the West and the rise of the Global South, the rise of populism and authoritarianism as threats to human rights, and climate change. To a further debate about class conflict and redistributive compromise.

Chapter three considered the methodological aspect of conducting the research. The articulation of chapter three focused on choosing an appropriate research approach for the research, which means choosing between quantitative and qualitative approach. It also focused on the methods used to collect data, the sample and description of the participants, the justification of Makhanda as a place for conducting the research, and the ethical considerations.

Chapter four presented the results collected using the methodology articulated in chapter three. The results were classified into sections and themes. Chapter five analysed the results to answer the research objectives. The analysis informed the gaps that the thesis aims to explore. The

analysis of the findings leans from the literature about human rights and the South African economy. The summary of the research follows.

6.2 Research summary and concluding statements

With the data at hand, concluding this study, there are four core points that emerged. Through conducting in-depth interviews, and discussing the results, this thesis was able to tell that support for human rights comes in different forms.

First, the above analysis of the interviews in Chapter 5 have shown that support for both civil and political rights and economic rights is possible. A striking finding from the literature review is that the middle class tends to prioritize and support civil and political rights over economic rights, often perceiving the latter as unnecessary. Conversely, the literature review also suggests that economically disadvantaged individuals or those lacking access to essential services tend to prioritize economic rights, while showing limited interest in civil and political rights. Contrary to the literature review, the findings revealed a consistent theme that the middle class and poor do not offer selective support for civil and political rights and economic rights. The research reveals that both the middle class and poor demonstrate equal support for all human rights, and that collective support is crucial for the longevity and viability of these rights.

Second, from the discussion in Chapter 5, it is clear that rhetorical endorsement of human rights often fails to translate to tangible support. This finding exposes the profound disconnect between the intention and rhetorical commitments to support all human rights, and the tangible actions and reality of implementing meaningful support to bring these rights to life. There are various reasons why there is an underwhelming commitment to consent to redistribution. On one hand, those who agree with and support redistribution often lack confidence to be among the donors or personally be part of those who give and contribute for those who are in need, despite advocating for redistribution. Opponents of redistribution on the other hand, cite

concerns about their own vulnerability, stemming from taxation and family obligations. Additionally, they emphasize the unpredictability of the economy, which creates uncertainty and adds to their financial burden. Participants believe that with their current tax burden, family obligations, and unpredictability of the economy, it is too early to accommodate another burden of redistribution.

Third, the presented findings demonstrate that human rights have a long way before considerable progress on economic rights is seen. Addressing the cost implication of economic rights requires not only the commitment of the middle class and working class to redistribution, but also significant reforms, including tackling government maladministrations, corruption, poor service delivery, and economic instability. This implies, for redistribution to be successful and effective needs a substantive effort from both the public and government.

Fourth, the findings revealed positive and negative implications for the future of human rights. Participants' rhetorical commitment to support both civil and political rights and economic rights indicates a recognition of the importance of human rights and the need for a continued support and promotion. The sustained rhetorical support for human rights suggests that the fundamental values of human rights such as dignity, equality, and justice still resonate with the people, fostering a sense of hope and optimism that human rights are not nearing their "endtimes." Alternatively, the future of human rights could be troubled and doomed by complications if ongoing inconsistencies in addressing economic rights continues. This is not to say that economic rights are the only driver of progress and change in human rights. However, it appears that if economic rights continue to be overlooked and unaddressed, it may lead to social, political, and economic tensions, potentially triggering unrest and widespread violations of civil and political rights.

From these findings, it is possible to argue that it is too early for complete redistributive compromise to take place in Makhanda. The support for both civil and political rights and economic rights does not make a complete compromise if the resources-holders and those with access to services show less interest in redistribution. The attitudes and understanding of people of Makhanda about human rights are in a good direction, however, they should strengthen their commitment to these rights into substantive support. Substantive support is very important for the realisation of economic rights. The human rights enterprise is intricately linked to various drivers of change and progress, which ultimately shape and determine the future landscape of human rights. However, if redistributive compromises are not addressed, class conflicts may escalate, ultimately threatening the very foundations of human rights.

6.3 Strengths and limitations

This section provides a critical evaluation of the thesis, highlighting its key strengths and contributions to the field of human rights, and areas of improvements. The limitations of this thesis stem from three primary sources: from methodological constraints; limited time; and areas that require further research.

This thesis possesses several notable strengths. One of the primary strengths of this thesis lies in its employment of a qualitative research approach, which enabled the generation of rich and detailed data. The collection of data through in-depth interviews, yielded valuable insights into the research questions which focused on the middle-class support for economic rights and the redistribution this implies, and the whether the poorer classes' support for human rights is dependent on the realisation of human rights. It allowed participants to give their own expression of thoughts and experiences. The descriptive information of the research gave us a better understanding of the attitudes different classes have towards human rights. More specially, it provided insights into whether class compromise in the Global South is possible or not.

Second, this study endeavour contributes to the better understanding of class dynamics in relation to human rights in Makhanda, and more broadly in the Global South. This research has revealed the attitudes the community of Makhanda have towards civil and political and economic rights, more specifically, the respect and support of these rights. This thesis has also revealed the factors that motivate less commitment to redistribution.

Third, as depicted in Chapter 4 and 5, the research bears the strength of using primary evidence from the Global South to discuss the future of human rights. As mentioned in Chapter 1, most scholarship on human rights comes from the Global North. The Global North often focuses on documents from the United Nations to make claims about rights in the Global South. This research expands the evidence of human rights from the Global South. This research demonstrates the significance of the Global South in shaping the future of human rights, providing evidence that challenges and balances the narratives prevalent in the Global North. Overall, this thesis makes a significant contribution to the existing literature on the future of human rights and redistribution, particularly in the context of the Global South, with a specific focus on Makhanda, South Africa.

This thesis is not without limitations. While this thesis has its limitations, they are relatively minor and do not detract from the overall validity of the research. One involves participants that only express themselves in Afrikaans. IsiXhosa and English are the only languages that the researcher knows best. As much as they are widely spoken in Makhanda, so is Afrikaans. Participants that expressed themselves in Afrikaans, their data was transferred to applications of translations such as Google Translate. The outcome rate was between good and dissatisfying, as the meaning of the information could potentially be distorted or interpreted differently that it does not live to the original data.

Other limitations include linguistic barriers. More specifically with regards to core terminologies of the research which include “class” or the “middle class.” Phadi and Manda (2010:81) alert us that the word “class” cannot be accurately translated to most South African indigenous languages. When translated, it has multiple meanings attached to it. Some participants struggled to understand the concept of middle-class interpretation due to language. Some did not understand the difference between the middle class and working class. Part of this confusion is that some participants occupy middle class jobs with salaries of the working class. However, proper and adequate usage of language for the understanding of participants was highly noted.

The constrained time for completing a Masters degree limited the scope of the study. The two years of completing this does not suffice to engage a larger group of participants or broader areas of South Africa in order to understand their attitudes and experiences toward human rights and redistributive compromise. More importantly, the lack of financial means also imposed limitations on traveling. Had more time been granted and financial means for traveling were not a limitation, the pool of participants might have been diverse and more representative of different parts of South Africa.

A large-scale study on redistributive compromise and human rights can have a huge impact on the campaign for human rights. This study can be considered a step towards understanding the attitudes the residents of Makhanda have towards consenting to redistribution, and what can be expected from individuals of Makhanda in the future. It also reflects experiences from the Global South that remain underrepresented in the mainstream human rights discourse.

6.4 Suggestions for future research on the future of human rights

The future of human rights hangs in the balance, shrouded in uncertainty. The path forward for human rights to survive requires many improvements and developments. The human rights enterprise has more areas to expand in terms of research.

In the future research of human rights, it is recommended to expand research in the following aspects:

1. Studies of the future of human rights looking at class conflict and the possibilities of redistributive compromise must explore ways to give post redistributive support to the middle class and working class.

2. Another possible topic of investigation is that when observing the drivers of change and progress in human rights, scholars should ground and integrate the lived experiences of individuals into their research to create a more nuanced and responsive human rights approach. The details shared by the individuals with their understandings, experiences, and attitudes sort of balance where the scholarship of human rights is in terms of understanding rights in relation to people.

3. The topic of redistribution remains important in the debate about human rights and economic rights in particular. A possible topic of investigation around this debate could be to look at the feasibility of redistribution to human rights. Scholars should examine if compromise on economic redistribution is the only essential way to garner middle- class backing for economic rights initiatives.

4. Analyse the main factors that make the middle class and working class or those who have resources and access to services to be less interested in redistribution. A follow up on a large-scale to assess the patriotism of the middle class and their understanding of their social and economic position to help the poor.

5. What approach is more urgent for economic rights to be on the same plane as civil and political rights; is it redistributive compromise or the effectiveness of the government in implementing rights?

Future prospects of human rights include a constant exploration of the above-mentioned topics. The recommendations are provided to strengthen the existing work on the enterprise of human rights. Also, the recommendation of these topics comes from the findings, discussion, and interpretation of the results that required new forms of research for further clarity. The more knowledge on human rights is expanded, the more the enterprise of human rights can get much closer to answer whether human rights are reaching “endtimes,” as Hopgood pointed, or are here to stay.

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Interviews

Note: To uphold research ethics, interviews are anonymous, ensuring the protection of participant's personal information

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Appendix A: Consent form

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

(To be signed by research participant/s)

Project Title: The Future of Human Rights: Class Struggle in Makhanda, South Africa

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to examine the attitudes and understandings that different classes have towards human rights and redistributive class compromise. The views that participant/s give will be used to analyse what that could mean for the future relevance of human rights.
2. Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project (Ethics Approval Number) and I have seen/may request to see the clearance certificate by contacting the Ethics Coordinator (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za)
3. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.
4. I will participate in the project by engaging in an interview with the researcher.
5. My participation in this research will be towards the field of Political and International Studies. The information I share will help the researcher to analyse and offer recommendations for the future of human rights.
6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. The following risks are associated with my participation: Situations of discomfort - discomfort may occur when topics that are sensitive are mentioned. To mitigate this

risk, the researcher will not ask personal questions that might trigger emotional harm to the participant, and if the participant wishes the researcher not to further ask such a question the researcher will stop immediately. By doing so, discomfort will be avoided.

8. The Researcher intends to use the information received from participant/s for obtaining a Masters degree, and it will be published in the University library website under the name of the researcher. However, confidentiality of records will be maintained, and my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conducting of the research, unless I indicate to the contrary/recognize that as a public figure my identity will inevitably be/become known, in which case I agree to accept the loss of anonymity.
9. In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013) it remains my right to request the Researcher to provide me with a detailed explanation of exactly how confidentiality and anonymity of the data I provide will be achieved. I may also request to know exactly how my personal information will be stored securely, and for how long it will be stored.
10. If any data collected from me for this research project is to be used by the Researcher for any further study, I am to be informed in writing and my written consent requested again. I need not give consent for the new research if it is incompatible with the initial purpose of the present study (POPIA, s15(3)). Equally, I can simply reject the request. In such cases, a formal request needs to be made to me by the researcher via the Ethics Coordinator (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za).
11. In terms of the POPI Act, I possess the right to receive feedback about this research. This will take the form of an email. Unless I elect not to receive this feedback.
12. Any further questions that I might have regarding the nature of the research and/or my participation in it will be answered by email to the researcher.

13. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record by the Researcher.
14. I agree/disagree (delete inapplicable) to the Researcher's request to take photographs, or videoing me as part of this research project, recognizing that agreement here is likely to raise the risk of compromising my anonymity and that steps will be taken to ensure this will not happen if my consent is given.
15. I agree/disagree (delete inapplicable) to the Researcher's use of voice recording of my comments and opinions during interviews, the purpose of which is to ensure the accurate recording of my views/responses. Furthermore, I have the right to request a copy of the interview transcriptions to confirm that my opinions are accurately recorded
16. Any conduct or behavior that is inappropriate by the researcher must be reported to the supervisor (e.jordaan@ru.ac.za) or (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za).

I,, have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all the questions that I wished to ask, and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised or coerced in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

.....
 Participants signature Witness Date

Table 1: Class labels and total number of participants

Combined class labels	Number of participants
Middle class	9
Working class	3
Poor/lower class	8
Total	20

Appendix B: Interview questions

Questions about social class

- Which social class would you describe yourself as belonging to?
- Why do you think you belong to this class? Is it resources, way of life, income and occupation?
- Do you have access to services such as security, water, health and education?
- Do you need assistance from the government to get all your services?
- Do you have a secure job?
- Can you save money?
- Which human rights matter the most to you?
- Which part of Makhanda do you reside in?

With regard to support for civil and political rights, the interviews will be asked:

- Do you support political rights, such as freedom of speech, and voting?
- What makes you believe political rights are important?
- Do you believe all people should enjoy political rights?
- Do you support political rights even if economic rights are not realized?

With regard to support for economic rights, the interviews will be asked:

- Economic rights include the right to education, housing, clean water, and health. What is your view of economic rights?
- Do you support economic rights?

- Do you believe people are deserving of economic rights?
- Would you be part of the people who give to those who lack services?

Questions about the relationship between rights:

- Which rights are most important?
- Would you support limits on political rights for economic rights?
- Should we support both political and civil and economic rights?
- Do you think people should support some human rights even if they do not benefit from them?
- How do you feel about taking from the middle class and giving to those who are poorer?
- What changes you would like to see in how the relationship between political and economic rights is, and what remains?

Appendix C: Interview list

Participants	Place of Interview	Type of Interview	Date of Interview
Participant 1	Rhodes University	In-person	2024, November 08
Participant 2	Rhodes University	In-person	2024, November 08
Participant 3	4 Chase Street	In-person	2024, November 12
Participant 4	Rhodes University	In-person	2024, November 13
Participant 5	Rhodes University	In-person	2024, November 14
Participant 6	4 Chase Street	In-person	2024, November 15
Participant 7	Joza	In-person	2024, November 15
Participant 8	Tantyi	In-person	2024, November 15
Participant 9	Tantyi	In-person	2024, November 15
Participant 10	Rhodes University	In-person	2024, November 15
Participant 11	Joza	In-person	2024, November 14

Participant 12	Online	Zoom	2024, November 12
Participant 13	Fingo	In-person	2024, November 10
Participant 14	Xolani	In-person	2024, November 13
Participant 15	Rhodes University	In-person	2024, November 14
Participant 16	Fingo	In-person	2024, November 11
Participant 17	Fingo	In-person	2024, November 19
Participant 18	Hlalani	In-person	2024, November 29
Participant 19	Rhodes University	In-person	2024, November 08
Participant 20	Vukani	In-person	2024, November 09