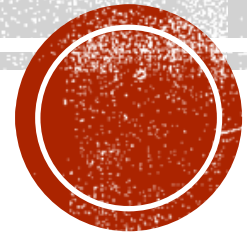


A GENERATION OUT OF APARTHEID: EXPLORING EDUCATION EXPERIENCES AMONG THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK MIDDLE CLASS

Presentation for the MLDS Center Research Series

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OVERVIEW

- Significance
- Gaps in Literature
- Methods
- Why this group?
- Results/Major Themes
- Conclusion
- Local Application
- Questions



SIGNIFICANCE

- Recency of Apartheid
 - I lived during this time!
- Two generations of black middle class
 - Those who earned university degrees under Apartheid or shortly after
 - Lived during severe social restrictions
 - Children born just a few years after abolition of Apartheid
 - *More free society*



LITERATURE

- Literature on middle class black South Africans discusses:
 - employment (Crankshaw, 2012).
 - politics (Resnick, 2015).
 - disadvantage (Iqani, 2015).
 - **consumption/materialism.**
- Lack of:
 - empirical studies; many are theoretical
 - intergenerational mobility narratives



METHODS

- Qualitative
- Interviewed six families, face-to-face
 - Daughter-mother; daughter-father; daughter-mother-father
 - Students and parents interviewed separately
- 40 minutes to 115 minutes
- Interviewed in homes/college campuses
- Thematic analysis/inductive approach
 - I intended to study conspicuous consumption
 - I did not know what to expect
 - Looked for broad themes
- Limitation: all female students



WHY THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS?

- 80% black; eight percent coloured
- Blacks only, initially
 - Colleague said coloureds are black; interesting turn...for the better
- Middle class shows progress in a nation, thus evidences social change
 - Serves as a realistic dream
 - Lives with, interacts with, supports lesser resourced blacks and coloureds
 - Relatively privileged, as a result of structural change



RESULTS / MAJOR THEMES

- Impact of Structural Change
- Intergenerational Mobility
- Parental Sacrifice



IMPACT OF STRUCTURAL CHANGE

- **Greater academic opportunities**

- “One is not limited to being a teacher or a nurse. Now you can actually do whatever your heart tells you. My older sister is studying drama. Back in the day you could have never said I’m going to study drama as a career, ‘cause it would be like I’m paying for your education and your career still has no guarantee. Why would I sacrifice so much and now that is possible, you’re actually able to pursue your passion while still learning so much from the education system.”

-Participant #1, black university student

- Financial and social comfort with taking risks; very middle class
- Students could also choose which university they would like to attend.



IMPACT OF STRUCTURAL CHANGE

- **Greater residential opportunities**

- “I think I lived my whole life, telling myself I would love to get out of this situation and although it’s not bad, you always think you can do better so I definitely think that shaped my education because I believed that if you work hard enough, if you get this degree, if you pass this test, you’ll be able to live in the place where you want to and nothing will be able to stop you so I definitely think that played a role in my education.”

-Participant #2, coloured university student

- Spirit of hope



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- Spirit of hope

- **Though there is a spirit of hope, for some there is a spirit of doom for others.**

- “...it all depends on what your household’s financial state is looking like. A lot of your education depends on what your financial status is looking like.”

-Participant #2, coloured university student

- Abolition of Apartheid did not bring an equal level of hope for everyone.
- Systemic oppression, despite structural changes



INTERGENERATIONAL MOBILITY

- Parents' mobility enabled significant investment in **children's education**.
 - “By the time we had our children, our careers were established. We were fortunate. Firstly, to send our two children to the best schools that we could afford at that stage when they were growing up. And I mean, my thinking was always, that I would want my children to have it better than I had it when I was growing up as a child.”

-Participants #3, coloured parents
 - None of the second generation participants attended township schools.
 - Former Model C or boarding schools



INTERGENERATIONAL MOBILITY (CONT.)

- Parents' mobility enabled them to **support students emotionally**.
 - One student stated, "...obviously they have been through this so they understand the pressure."

-Participant #2, coloured university student
 - As a first generation college student, I could not say this.



INTERGENERATIONAL MOBILITY (CONT.)

- Parents' mobility impacted **students' aspirations**.
 - “We were always making a way for our struggles and how difficult it was not to make them fearful of the future, but to encourage them actually that what they are given, the opportunities they were given, they can actually dream bigger and go wider and higher than we were able to when we were their age.”

-Participants #3, coloured parents



INTERGENERATIONAL MOBILITY (CONT.)

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-Participants #3, coloured parents

- “I remember very good memories of her working on her [mom] assignments and stuff and I always asked how does anyone write so quickly? When am I going to get to write that quickly and she'd give me magazines and stuff like that. I literally taught myself how to read.”

-Participant #7, black university student



PARENTAL SACRIFICE

- Parents forsook some things to invest in their children's education.
 - “In order for us to keep them at that school, we had to sacrifice. So, in order for us to go on a holiday, we have to plan it. Everything must be planned and prioritized. Our children were in an accident last year and our car was breaking off, so in order for us to buy a new car, but we had to put the car on hold to make sure they are sorted first.”

-Participants #3, coloured parents



CONCLUSION

- Re-emphasize the role of structural change, parent's status, and parent's sacrifice
- Increased capacity to dream, for parents and children
 - Social change!!
- Policy/Social Justice Question: How do we make it so more people can dream?



APPLICATIONS TO THE MLDS

- Study the college and career outcomes for Black students in Maryland;
- Study the school and district contextual characteristics that might help Black students succeed in Maryland postsecondary institutions;
- Link Census data to examine outcomes specific to Black students from middle class neighborhoods



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QUESTIONS AND CONTACT

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