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NEEDS, WELL-BEING AND MORALE IN THE CITY: SUBJECTIVE ASPECTS OF THE QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG BLACKS IN DURBAN

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DOCUMENT AND MEMORANDUM SERIES

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CASS 35/78

NEEDS, WELL-BEING AND MORALE IN THE CITY: SUBJECTIVE ASPECTS OF THE QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG BLACKS IN DURBAN

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December 1978

For many people questions about the 'quality of life' boil down to questions about socio-economic conditions and amenities. Obviously these factors are of cardinal importance, but their effect on the quality of life cannot be judged by external and objective evaluations of the adequacy of living standards. Social and economic conditions affect the quality of life only through the subjective and personal reactions of ordinary people to these conditions. This brief analysis is an attempt to identify and describe the major factors bearing on the quality of life of black people in Durban, at the level of rank and file reactions to every-day life.

In a situation in which the vast majority of ordinary black people is poorly educated and lacks access to channels for communicating grievances and frustrations, research findings based on cross-sectional samples of opinion serve a vital purpose. As far as is possible, the discussion which follows is based on such research. The findings may not always be consistent with the established views of officials and even of some representatives of organisations within the black communities. Cross-sections of opinion are frequently challenged by those external to the situation and by some of the more prominent spokesmen and women, who more often than not are drawn from elites or from select groups. Controversy over research findings is only to be expected. Nevertheless it is hoped that this brief analysis will be able to contribute in some way to policy aimed at improving the quality of life.

I. COMMUNITY NEEDS

1) Priorities in Community Problems:

Two highly experienced black interviewers conducted lengthy probing interviews among a stratified random sample of 150 people living in Durban's second largest African township, Kwa Mashu. The following priority-listing of problems is based on the spontaneous responses of subjects to open-ended probes about problems in their day to day lives in the township.

Problem mentioned spontaneously	Percentage mention
Crime and threats to physical safety	62%
Inefficient transportation	54%
Lack of adequate educational facilities	36%

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Problem mentioned spontaneously(continued)	Percentage mention
Poor local government and administration	32%
Lack of residential security of tenure	27%
Fluctuating rentals	26%
Cramped houses	25%
Night raids by authorities (aimed at finding 'illegal' residents)	23%
High rentals	21%
Lack of medical services	17%
Inadequate maintenance of houses	15%
Poor sanitation and refuse collection	15%
Shortage of housing	15%
Privacy within housing	14%
Lack of public facilities (telephones, toilets, pools)	13%
Design and quality of housing	11%
Lack of recreational facilities	10%
Lack of commercial facilities	8%
State of repair of roads	7%
Lack of sufficient pre-school facilities	1%

2) Priorities in Day to Day Life Concerns

A more intensive investigation of needs and priorities in the black communities is currently in progress, sponsored by the Urban Foundation in Natal. Thus far, very intensive in-depth probing among a cross-section of 75 subjects in African townships, supplemented by a procedure in which subjects are asked to give priority ratings to each of an exhaustive list of life-quality issues has yielded interesting results. In perusing the results given below one must remember that the emphasis was on felt life-priorities, not simply on township problems as in the previous results.

Top Priority	
	Material circumstances
	Education for self
	Education for children
	Security of residential tenure
	Maintenance and protection of the family
	Financial and social security in old age
	Respect and good behaviour in children
	Belief in God
	Home ownership
	Job opportunity

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Top Priority(continued)	Size and strength of houses
	Adequate police protection
Prominent Priority	Quality of family life
	Security of marriage
	Pride in black or Zulu identity
	Physical safety in the community
	Availability and cost of educational facilities
	Care and supervision of children
	Availability of medical attention
	Good community leaders
	Good community administration
	Opportunities for job advancement
	Maintenance of traditional customs and beliefs
	Parental duty and commitment
	Good health
	Participation in religious activities
	Building/adding to homes
	The love of a woman/man
	Transport facilities
	Community facilities
	Job security
	Availability of legal advice
Lower Conscious Priority	Entertainment
	Recreation
	Status
	Friendship and social life
	Self-confidence
	Self-expression
	Consumer behaviour
	Appearance and design of houses
	Choice of residential area
	Extended family relations
	Links with country area
	Community solidarity
	Equality with whites(for its own sake)
	Political participation (for its own sake)
	Self-expression in work
	Aesthetics

These results illustrate a fundamental problem facing anyone making an assessment of necessary improvements to the quality of life. At least some of the lower priority issues above must exert a powerful unconscious effect on life satisfaction and morale. A major aim in the ongoing study is to establish which of the apparently low priority issues affect morale meaningfully. In the meantime, however, these results afford some basis for the formulation of policy for the improvement of the quality of urban living. Overwhelmingly, the key priorities tend to be practical, material and concerned with security, but with education and the maintenance of the family being of particular concern. As one might expect in communities having to cope with insecurity and material stress, religious faith appears to provide important reassurance in day to day living.

3) Quality of Housing

The results above give an indication of the relative importance of housing in the spectrum of issues and concerns in urban living. While the size of houses is of top priority, housing style and quality is in roughly a middle priority position for the community at large. They may well be more important for the emergent middle class, however, as further research may demonstrate.

Very broadly, our results thus far suggest the following rank-order of preferences regarding the design and quality of housing:

Issues of Key Concern	Space - more room - bigger rooms - accommodation for visitors - sex and age separation Privacy vis-à-vis neighbours Amount of rentals
Issues of Prominent Concern	Convenient location Size of plots Safety and security Housing amenities (electricity, maintenance, etc.) Functional plots (space for vegetables/flowers/car/livestock) Sanitation and health (toilets are preferred to be attached to the house but secluded from living space) Freedom to use homes for petty entrepreneurship

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Issues of Prominent Concern(contd)	Ventilation and insulation
	Finish (walls, ceilings)
	Practical relations with neighbours
Issues of Lesser Conscious Concern	Aesthetic features of house design
	Self-expression in housing style
	Status symbolism of house appearance
	Aesthetic features of surroundings
	Empathy with neighbours

Overwhelmingly, for the rank and file, the issues of concern therefore, are the practical, utilitarian and functional aspects of housing. (Needless to say, this is not necessarily so in the middle class.) Nevertheless, here again at least some of the more subtle or aesthetic or image features of housing may unconsciously relate to morale and satisfaction. For example, do the houses symbolise inferior racial status? Does the 'total administration' of township housing estates inhibit lifestyle and cause apathy or low morale? These aspects deserve further study.

A noteworthy feature of housing is that very few African people seem to identify with their dwellings. It is seen as 'white man's housing for Africans'. The effects of this lack of identification on life satisfaction have immense implications for community consciousness in black areas.

The issue of housing requires further comment. The vast majority of Africans live in small four roomed standard 51/6 houses on very small plots of no more than 300 square metres. Whether these houses are owned or not, the scope for addition of rooms and modification of the structure is limited. Despite these limitations, many householders have in fact modified the appearance of their homes in imaginative ways. This reflects the desire shared by a small but growing proportion of black urban dwellers to display outward signs of a distinctive status and lifestyle. We must, however, consider here how much more difficult it is for Africans, and Indians and Coloureds who live in townships to achieve the distinctiveness they desire than is the case in the freehold suburban areas. The location of small, box-type houses in the middle of tiny plots maximises the inflexibility of the structures.

Perhaps more serious are internal arrangements. The houses are

of what may be termed a restricted lower-middle-class Western style with maximum internal inflexibility. There is only a very tiny proportion of African teenagers, or young adults, for example, who have rooms of their own which they can decorate and arrange to suit their tastes. We have noted that informal shack housing and traditional and semi-traditional housing all over Southern Africa frequently responds to the privacy needs of different age groups by having separate structures for young adults or separate entrances for certain rooms. Clearly the design and planning of township housing must seriously affect the quality of life, particularly through its effect on privacy.

A further point in this connection concerns the lack of variety of types of formal housing, and the layout of housing within township areas. We should consider whether needs do not exist for higher-density housing clustered near transportation routes and township centres which would allow younger adults and working couples greater ease of access to central facilities and greater flexibility of movement. Younger adults in Umlazi, Kwa Mashu and other mass-townships, almost inevitably have to live as boarders and lodgers. Although this may accord with established family and household patterns in traditional society and in slum areas, it could so easily conflict with the aspirations aroused in a modern urban environment.

II. THE MOOD OF EVERYDAY NON-WORKING LIFE

In an earlier investigation we were concerned with the purely subjective responses to day to day leisure among Coloured people, Indians and whites in Durban. As part of a larger study among stratified random samples of 1 865 whites, 678 Indians and 189 Coloured people, subjects were asked to think generally about their non-working lives. A series of words was presented to each subject describing aspects of the meaning and quality of leisure time. They were asked to pick those words which 'rang a bell' or fitted the quality of the non-working lives of people like themselves. The results for whites, Indians and Coloured people are given below. Africans could not be included for a range of purely practical and technical reasons.

Word describing quality of non-working life	Percentage of subjects picking word describing their lives					
	Whites		Indians		Coloured people	
	men	women	men	women	men	women
Fun	70%	69%	56%	36%	74%	60%
Limited	37	39	41	41	40	40
Friendly	79	79	56	42	85	79
Boring	10	12	15	16	11	18
Active	73	66	43	23	72	56
Free	62	60	45	24	69	34
Meaningless	5	8	3	4	7	9
Lonely	11	19	14	21	14	25
Happy	84	85	59	45	77	74
Inactive	10	13	8	8	16	15
Sociable	75	74	47	32	73	67
Dull	4	7	12	12	5	11
Exciting	53	48	41	24	60	40
Empty	3	6	6	5	16	6
Relaxing	79	79	49	40	77	57
Important	53	52	44	36	53	28
Full	52	53	23	18	44	37
Frustrating	13	13	5	6	8	17
Eventful	51	45	13	10	35	36
Tiring	25	25	13	6	29	34
Monotonous	10	13	7	10	21	17
Refreshing	70	67	34	22	69	45
Varied	58	58	11	8	42	31
Unhappy	3	4	3	3	9	17
Controlled	11	11	4	2	14	16
Dangerous	11	6	3	2	15	5
Stimulating	62	57	25	11	47	23
Ordinary	49	54	21	22	63	62
Average positive	66	64	39	27	63	48
Average negative*	10	12	10	11	13	16

* 'Tiring', 'dangerous' and 'ordinary' omitted

The results have been summarised in the form of the average percentages of endorsement of clearly positive and negative items in each of the different groups (given at the base of the listings). There may be differences between the population groups in the ease with which they were able to recognise or respond to certain items, however, and therefore the percentages may not be strictly comparable across racial groups. The comparison is best made by comparing the ratios of endorsement of negative to positive items for each group. These are as follows:

white men	1 : 6,6
white women	1 : 5,3
Coloured men	1 : 4,9
Indian men	1 : 3,9
Coloured women	1 : 3,0
Indian women	1 : 2,5

These ratios strongly suggest that whites as a group experience a more positive quality of non-working life than others. Coloured and Indian women in particular, seem to have the most attenuated leisure of all.

The differences are by no means simply a matter of facilities. The size of families, numbers of children to care for, the amount of freedom allowed women and a host of other factors influence this quality of life. The differences revealed in the results above undoubtedly are also connected with the amount of mobility people enjoy. Poorer people and women with families are particularly limited in the variety and scope of their leisure interests. Public planning of facilities requires to take full account of the kind of problems suggested by the differences outlined above.

III. BLACK PEOPLE IN THE WIDER CITY

The greatest single impetus for the elaboration and diversification of human culture and experience came with the growth of urban centres. Among the myriad influences of the city, one element is of key importance to the quality of human life - the element of <u>choice</u>.

Cities are the places, par excellence, where people have been able to escape from the roles, statuses and activities so characteristically prescribed for them in rural peasant or subsistence communities.

The division of labour and the social diversity of the city have allowed people to identify alternative interests and pursuits, reference groups and models of behaviour. The city has allowed, what, in the sweep of human development, must be seen as a veritable explosion of social and economic aspirations and lifestyle options.

With the expansion of social roles and identities has come a corresponding elaboration of the importance of personal identity, associated with variations in lifestyle and the presentation of self in the community. The advent of 'consumer society' has provided the most recent elaboration of choice in lifestyle. However superficial and transient the rewards of commercial consumption may be argued to be, the social and recreational goods of the modern city probably represent for ordinary people, the epitome of delight in choice.

1) The City in Apartheid Society: Durban

The brief and oversimple general comments on the urban experience given above focus attention on less obvious features bearing on the quality of life in South African cities. The spatial and economic differentiation between the races in our cities is clearly manifest. The hidden consequences of this differentiation are noted far less often.

When one thinks of the needs of blacks in an urban area like Durban, one tends to give first consideration to housing, employment opportunities, education and social welfare facilities. Certainly these rather concrete benefits are basic to the evaluation of the circumstances of any group and section I has reflected this. These features, however, are necessary but not sufficient preconditions for a satisfactory quality of urban living for blacks. For the sufficient conditions one must look to a number of less obvious factors which together create both the available variety of lifestyle options and must have a powerful effect on the morale of urban blacks in a city like Durban.

The following is a selection of the urban resources, amenities and benefits which normally complement material welfare in determining morale and satisfaction with urban living. We will discuss each one in the light of the circumstances of black people in Durban and the opportunities they have to cultivate satisfactory lifestyles.

2) Ease of Access to the Metropolitan Centre

Local areas, whether suburbs like Kloof, Bellair, Westville or

townships like Chatsworth, Kwa Mashu, Umlazi cannot provide anywhere near a full range of amenities to answer all tastes. Unless one expects suburbanites to live what would be tantamount to a small-town existence, one assumes that people will look to the metropolitan centre for many of their consumer requirements and recreational needs.

Suburbs would be dull places indeed if they were not related to a metropolitan centre. Whites who live in, say the suburb of Kloof, are willing to commute long distances in order to enjoy the benefits of large gardens and a quiet, semi-rural atmosphere, but they nevertheless identify with the metropolis as a whole. The suburb only achieves its meaning in contrast to the urban centre; the two complement each other. Few people would be prepared to live in a commuter suburb if they were completely cut off from good restaurants, cinemas, theatre, other recreational facilities, and the choice in shopping offered by the urban core. It is the central economic and social marketplace which ultimately helps to determine the quality of life in the suburbs.

Consider, in contrast, the position of the two major African townships, Kwa Mashu and Umlazi. They are also far out of town with roughly equal commuting times. The inhabitants, however, can make no trade-off of distance for space, peace and quiet and semi-rural charm. They live on tiny plots in tiny houses in suburbs with very high crime rates. Some have likened Kwa Mashu to a ghetto on the edge of the city.

Worse still, Kwa Mashu is linked to the urban centre virtually only by economic ties. The metropolis takes the labour and the money of people in Kwa Mashu in its factories, offices and shops but offers little in return.

The metropolitan centre of Durban, with all its specialised attractions and entertainment, is largely closed to residents of Kwa Mashu. Blacks in Durban are perhaps more fortunate than those in other centres because the Grey Street area at least offers some centre-city diversions which are open to Africans. There are cinemas and one or two pubs, hotels and restaurants which accept all black patrons. International hotels may offer certain attractions for wealthier blacks, but by and large, the dominant centre attractions, particularly for youth - the clubs, the discoteques, the gymnasiums, the specialised hobbies groups and a variety of types of special occasion entertainment are closed to blacks.

Perhaps more important than the fact of individual facilities which are unavailable to blacks is the total subjective effect of our patterns of planning and social segregation. This would apply particularly to black youth, who like all young people, are less home-bound than their elders. It would not be surprising if young blacks felt only a partial identification with the city. Their perceptions are likely to be those of being relegated to peripheral encampments; cut off from the heart of the city and its core attractions.

3) Freedom of Movement

Problems of lack of access to centre amenities are, of course, aggravated hugely by impediments to freedom of movement. The number of private motor vehicles is still relatively low among African groups in the city. Public transportation to and from the townships to the city is overcrowded at peak times but nevertheless serves its functions during these times. At night, however, transport problems are enormous. Perhaps the greatest problem is transportation within the sprawling townships of Umlazi, Chatsworth and Kwa Mashu themselves. Unless people can afford taxis, which are seldom available late at night, people have to walk long distances through dark and dangerous streets. The incidence of physical violence is notoriously high. All this adds up to crippling inflexibility in the movement of people during leisure hours.

4) Opportunities for Self-improvement

Educational and occupational aspirations are very high in African townships. In the study in Kwa Mashu reported in section I, it was noted that over eighty per cent of parents said that they wished their children to achieve professional or university status - a helplessly unrealistic aspiration in a working class community characterised by cripplingly high failure and drop-out rates in schools. There is, thus, virtually a built in 'demoraliser' in the educational system for Africans. The task of substantially improving educational performance in schools is an enormous one beyond the scope of anyone but the government. Nevertheless, there is a need for the disappointment and disillusionment following upon educational failure in the normal school system to be alleviated.

Part of the quality of life lies in hope - hope for betterment; hope for another chance. For this reason, the impact of a good system of part-time and/or correspondence tuition with appropriate facilities could have an impact of morale which far exceeds its actual performance in

improving standards of education and job opportunities. What is needed is for there to be a visible means of getting a 'second chance' Opportunities for self-improvement, however, must be real. Whatever is offered must not trade in false or remote hopes, as do so many commercial ventures in the field of part-time tuition.

5) Identification with the Community

In public housing schemes people are allocated houses arbitrarily, as vacant homes become available. There is little or no choice of location with townships. This could become relatively more problematic for residents in time than it is at the moment because, as things are planned currently, there is little purpose in exercising choice. Some neighbourhood units in townships may have higher crime rates than others, but by and large the areas are characterised by an unalleviated sameness.

Working class or poorer people do not normally respond to their surroundings in obviously aesthetic terms, but any observation of less-crowded peri-urban squatter or informal housing areas will reveal a great deal of concern with landscaping (albeit rudimentary), individuality of houses, and with gardens and shrubbery. One suspects that the average township does little for the unarticulated aesthetic sense among inhabitants.

Aesthetics are important in themselves as far as the quality of life is concerned. Of equal, if not greater importance, however, is the fact that ugliness and boredom may inhibit identification with the community. Other factors compound the problem.

The Centre for Applied Social Sciences has found in African township studies over the years that people tend to be suspicious of and largely alienated from neighbours, have very few close friends and, by inference, may experience the community as hostile.
Africans traditionally have a kin and lineage-based pattern of social organisation. This cannot survive in the modern city where families are separated by the demands of occupational pursuits and housing allocation. On the other hand, a Western urban pattern of social organisation has not filled the vacuum. The needs surface in myriad small Zionist religious groups; in 'homeboy' groups among migrants; in gang organisation and in numerous shebeens which attempt to provide an atmosphere of familiarity and companionship in difficult circumstances.

These problems of social adjustment may well aggravate the effects of crime, poor transportation and lack of planning making it difficult or impossible for township residents to experience a feeling of warmth and belonging in their neighbourhoods. Home ownership may do much to produce a sense of identity in the community despite the other factors. But then not everyone can afford to or would wish to own their homes. There is also the possibility that if surrounding conditions are too bad, people may even mentally write off their investments in their homes and end up feeling almost as alienated as anyone else.

If people are to achieve rewarding identification with their residential areas and neighbourhoods, major requirements have to be met in the planning of these areas.

a) Firstly there has to be opportunity for informal face to face interaction in a relaxed atmosphere for smaller meighbourhood units rather than the current administrative divisions. Even a neighbourhood shopping mall or circle of shops around a small garden courtyard would probably be a good beginning - a place where women can meet others regularly and interact. (Once in Lesotho, a particular village was supplied with a large number of taps. Women disliked them and continued to use the old central water outlet, because it gave them an excuse to meet friends and interact with others.) For men similar places other than the mass beerhall must be provided. The need among youth for the typical American 'Corner Drugstore' is critical. And such places must be well lit, if possible well policed and must offer diversion - a milk-bar, a small squatters' market, a communal television set, a well-equipped general dealer, a small stage for amateur bands, etc., etc.

b) Secondly, authorities must be seen to care about the neighbourhood. A good start would be to give the neighbourhood units and the streets real names, not numbers. Sidewalks must be grassed, small, hardy, colourful shrubs planted (of a type which cannot be used for fuel), and people must be offered loans to improve their homes, even by simply adding a coat of paint.

c) Thirdly, people should be given the opportunity of electing small neighbourhood committees which should each be given a small budget allocation to be implemented on neighbourhood improvement.

Only measures like these and others will begin to inject some of the character into townships which will allow people to identify with their immediate neighbourhoods; to see them as places which offer some diversion and which are benign and supportive of their needs.

Any findings emerging out of this report and out of subsequent research have to be implemented in a way which allows the communities themselves to participate as actively as possible and to impose their own sense of priorities. But, a community cannot act as a complete collectivity. It has to act through leaders and spokesmen.

All this is much easier said than done. It is well known that people living at subsistence level or below tend to become primarily concerned with survival. The results in section I of this paper tend to bear this out. They are often highly competitive in a negative sense - atomised, almost predatory and above all highly fearful and sceptical about possibilities of improvement in their circumstances. Even community leaders representative of the poorer people, if they exist, are often regarded with suspicion or are seen as useless.

The basic challenge is to identify and promote a type of community leadership which ordinary people will see as representative of themselves. This leadership does not exist in any meaningful sense at present. There is only one way to let it emerge. Small neighbourhood projects have to be launched in which there is some tangible reward for participation. Competition-based projects with small prizes is one way of arousing interest. Project co-ordinators must select those participants who stand out as having the ability to co-ordinate others and act as spokesmen/women. Then these people have to be given resources (albeit modest) to utilise for the benefit of the community. Their control over resources is both satisfying to them and maintains interest, and also ensures that they will be seen to have something to offer. This, after all, is how effective leadership works in most communities - it is seldom based purely on altruism or philanthropy. Leadership has to have its own rewards, either material or symbolic, and it has to offer rewards, once again, either material or symbolic. At the heart of commencing any community development project must be the injection or accumulation of the kind of resources that can start generating rewards, and to put these resources in the hands of people who are likely to continue generating these rewards, both for themselves and others.

In communities like the townships in Durban, resources are so limited that some initial external provision of resources is essential. This can, however, come close to being a handout or philanthropy. The utility of a handout ends with its expenditure. One must guard against this by making the initial handout self-renewing and by letting it form the basis of a social arrangement which will be self-perpetuating.

Perhaps one example can be given. We deliberately choose an example bearing upon youth recreation because this is critical in view of the poor morale and manifold frustrations of black youth in our townships. Say an external agency sponsors a pop, jazz and vocal group competition in a community hall, with prizes. The prizes go towards tuition and purchase of musical instruments. A youth music society is formed and office-bearers elected. The occasion is taken to explain that an ongoing competition will be established. The ongoing competition involves a venue (previously selected), some organisors, drawn from the office-bearers of the society, and the opportunity for groups to perform before audiences regularly. The competition involves a prize for the biggest Friday and biggest Saturday night audience drawn a month (at say 20c a person). Initially the regular prizes will have to be paid by the sponsor, but as audiences grow, hopefully sponsorship could gradually be withdrawn, as could supervision as the youth organisors become more competent. Possibly in this way one could end up with regular Friday and Saturday night concerts in neighbourhood situations in the townships.

This is perhaps a very obscure example, but the same basic principles could apply to numerous other activities - home-improvement competitions, dress-making competitions, vegetable growing competitions and the like.

Basically, what is being argued is that community development must emerge in such a way that not only welfare is emphasised, but also the promotion of local leadership, the alleviation of boredom and the improvement of general morale.

In concluding we must note that the quality of life in any modern city is always constrained by the availability of resources in the hands of residents. For this reason we cannot see the points made above about the quality of life as being distinct from other points made elsewhere in this report about the availability of jobs and employment and from satisfaction of basic, practical family and educational needs.

Within the constraints of available resources, however, good planning and good community development must operate to maximise the quality of human life. Black people in Durban have had neither good planning nor good community development. There are constraints upon the quality of their lives which go far beyond the availability of resources. These deficiencies must be corrected very soon, or the quality of life for all in the city will be placed increasingly at risk.