

Race, racism and racialisation in wellbeing

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What effect does race – racism, racialization have on wellbeing?

1. “We can’t breathe”: Franz Fanon, Black Lives Matter and a recent cry during student protests
2. How has racism impacted on processes of human development?
3. The danger of either claiming too much for racism or too little
4. What role does agency play?



SASAS data (14 yrs) on effects of racial discrimination

Statistically significant, modest negative associations between feelings of racial discrimination and:

- (i) Standard of living
- (ii) Health
- (iii) Personal achievement
- (iv) Personal relationships
- (v) Personal safety
- (vi) Feeling part of a community
- (vii) Future (financial) security



South African Stress and Health Study (SASHS) data

1. Found undoubted links between
 - Race and mastery
 - Race and self-esteem
2. Also found race effect diminished by:
 - Socio-economic status
 - Education
 - Material resources
3. Is it race or class? Or are we asking the incorrect questions?



Adapted but not preferred

1. Internal capabilities allow individuals to take advantage of opportunities
2. Capabilities shaped by oppressive environments; results in internal constraints
3. When individuals accept their oppression as normal -> Adapted preferences
4. Fanon, Freire and Biko explain
5. People living in oppressive environments are angry at the treatment but feel powerless to fight back
6. Leads to apathy, self-destructive, anti-social behaviour
7. What responses are needed to change this?



Racism in wellbeing: Insights from a pilot SASAS module

- A 12 question module in SASAS 2017 asked the following questions:

Who is feeling respectfully or disrespectfully treated in various domains; how do they feel about this treatment; to what do they attribute this treatment; how empowered do they feel to be able to change how they are treated; and who should act to change this state of affairs?



To what extent do you feel you are treated well or badly in SA?

BY SECTOR	In general	In public	At home	Services
Very badly	3.2	2.6	1.2	9.1
Somewhat badly	15.0	10.3	3.9	17.9
Neither badly nor well	26.0	24.5	9.6	26.4
Somewhat well	33.1	35.3	19.2	20.6
Very well	21.0	25.5	65.5	21.0
(Do not know/Not sure)	1.8	1.8	0.6	5.1



To what extent do you feel you are treated well or badly in SA?

BY POPULATION GROUP	Black African	Coloured	Indian / Asian	White
Badly	19	16	13	17
Neither badly nor well	27	31	44	32
Well	55	53	42	50



To what do you mainly attribute this treatment?

	%
The colour of my skin (race)	20
Don't know/Not sure	18
Whether I am a man or a woman (gender)	10
How much money I have (wealth/class)	10
Because of my age	9
Because of where I'm from (national/regional)	8
What work I do/whether I work	7
How much education I have	6
What language I speak	5
Other (Specify)	4
Sexual orientation	1
Disability	1



To what do you mainly attribute this treatment?

	Very badly	Somewhat badly	Neutral	Somewhat well	Very well
<u>The colour of my skin (race)</u>	40.3	32.6	26.6	14.7	9.4
Whether I am a man or a woman (gender)	7.4	7.4	8.0	11.6	14.6
How much money I have (wealth/class)	5.2	16.8	13.9	9.3	3.6
<u>What work I do/whether I work</u>	19.9	4.9	6.2	8.2	4.7
Because of my age	3.3	2.6	5.7	12.9	14.5
Because of where I'm from (national/regional)	7.6	10.6	5.8	8.3	7.2



Who should ensure people are treated well and with respect?

	Very badly	Somewhat badly	Neutral	Somewhat well	Very well
<u>Government</u> institutions (such as the courts, policies, laws)	<u>41.7</u>	<u>46.8</u>	<u>34.7</u>	25.9	27.0
The group of people the affected person belongs to	5.7	6.4	6.5	4.8	5.2
Organisations concerned with people's dignity	15.7	10.0	6.4	6.2	7.4
The person who is affected	15.5	11.9	7.6	17.5	16.9
<u>All people</u> who believe respectful treatment is important	13.6	22.9	<u>40.9</u>	<u>43.6</u>	<u>40.4</u>

Race in wellbeing: Insights from a pilot studies

1. Criteria:

- Gendered household composition
- Socio-economic class
- Race
- Security of tenure

2. Methods:

- Recruitment
- Family/household/event mapping
- Individual interviews – over 18

Our sample

1. **3 households in Thornton**
 - Informal settlement
 - White suburban family
 - Coloured suburban family
2. **4 households in Vulindlela**
 - All African
 - 3-owned, 1 rented – all mud houses
3. **Commonalities**
 - All female headed
 - Multigenerational – larger, smaller in Thornton



Methodological insights

1. Recruitment strategies: social media, flyers, referrals, solicitation outside supermarket
2. Discomfort with involving entire household
3. Difficulties in including men
4. Intimate-partner violence, sexual abuse
5. Difficulties in recruiting lower middle class participants (qv. working class and precariat)
6. Need better relational entry to communities
7. Class and domestic space – questions about where to conduct interviews (space and comfort)
8. Psychological support during fieldwork (for researchers and participants)



Researcher: The interview process was an emotional one, both the community mapping exercise and the individual interview. **There were tears throughout the interview and this was triggered by some things that the family had gone through in the past.** Although it was evident that the family was at a point in life where they seemed to be strong and moving on with their lives, having to re-tell their experience brought up a lot of emotions. **This made me feel like we were opening old wounds for the family,** and while I understand that this is an issue that they have been living with for many years now, I thought the one thing that made it difficult was having to share the story with strangers.



Thornton

Issues raised

- Housing
- Employment
- Safety from crime
- Schools and education
- Family
- Religious community
- Transportation
- Racism and sexism
- The presence of men

KEY THEMES

1. Innovation & collective resources
2. Pivotal events
3. Networks of relations



T: **My mother** is my rock I can always depend on her, **my aunt** is easy to talk to she is the neutral person and is able to mediate arguments between me and my mother. **My cousin** is also very easy to talk to and even when I need help getting picked up from wherever I can call her, **it's that consistency that one needs.**

I: **Everybody seems to know everybody.** The Muslim community in Thornton ...they do a lot for the area. A part of them are part of **a neighbourhood watch**, they always **helping the homeless** in the area, they take them off the street and put them safe and things like that. Always **arranging like sports to get the kids off the street**, they are involved in the community in that way.



J: Last year I went to the primary school [to register my daughter] so when the secretary sees [me write down] the place we are living in and sees me filling in the form, she took away the forms from us, just because they don't want children from our place. **They deprive children of education; they are just judgemental they cannot understand circumstances sometimes.**

J: **Break-ins** were a major concern for me, someone invading your space. Thornton is relatively safe but then recently someone was **abducted** and was found somewhere and that person lived close by. Sometime you have **people following** you or checking you out through their car windows.



Vulindlela

Issues raised

- Plagued by illness
- Grants
- Sanitation
- Church and prayer,
- Neighbours, stokvels
- Safety and policing
- Teen pregnancy
- Unskilled work
- Employment
- Education, colleges
- Recreation, libraries

KEY THEMES

1. Ubuntu eroded
2. Families a source of emotional and financial struggle and support
3. No experience of talking about pain, survival, trauma, therapeutic alternatives, emotional resources



“Government is helping, what would we be eating... without pension?... **We would've been dead a long time ago without this pension**” (F_67_Vulindlela).

“If there was no grant I was going to **end up doing things I don't like**” (F_21_Vulindlela).

“We can buy food, take children to school and buy them clothes. ... My Mother also uses her pension to buy food, pay for **funeral policies and pay tithes and pledges** at church” (F_43_Vulindlela).

“I used the Social support **grant to study** a Security course, if I could get a job my life would improve” (F_32_Vulindlela).



“Most of the time when you are a woman you are not trusted that there are things that you can do to develop a community. Here in this community **counsellors are ... I have never seen a woman taking that position. Even in churches** they do not allow a woman to be a leader because they believe that a woman’s power cannot do something that can develops lives... A woman is not trusted” (F_59_Vulindlela).

“There is no home without a woman; everything is done by a woman” (F_49_Vulindlela).



“If I wasn’t a black person I would be having a good life, but because of my skin now... I’m 59 years old... I’ve never experienced the joy that is experienced by the people of other colours. **People of other colours had a good life from the beginning, had beautiful houses, and getting better salaries than us because they are better”** (F_59_Vulindlela).

No the colour of my skin has nothing to do with anything, everything lies in education that’s all, being black does not prevent a person from being a doctor, **gone are those days where it was only white people who can do certain things,** now everyone can do anything” (F_32_Vulindlela).



Where to from here?

1. An deep contextual study of wellbeing
 - Langa and Thornton
 - Soweto and Mondeor
 - Vulindlela and Edendale
 - Rustenburg and Marikana
2. An index of wellbeing – repeated biennially
 - Material, Subjective, Relational
 - Strategies – individual and collective
 - Agency, co-agency, helplessness



**networks of
wellbeing:** a five year
study of collective strategies to
improve unequal lives

now

