

**Effects of school, race, gender and socio-economic status on  
aspirations: *A study of urban and rural youth in the midlands  
of KwaZulu-Natal***

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## ABSTRACT

Leading researchers on aspirations of the youth have reported that differences in race, Socio-economic status (SES) and gender may result in differences in aspirations. However, little knowledge is available about the effects of race, gender, and SES on the realistic or unrealistic nature of aspirations. Using Allport and Gillespie's (1955) "future autobiography" method, 267 matric students were asked to write essays about their future aspirations. They also completed a short demographic questionnaire. A content analysis method was employed.

The results showed that differences in school, race and SES had significant effects on aspirations. The results also showed that young people who were in low SES had lower realistic aspirations than those in the middle or upper SES. The students from schools with poor resources and learning facilities also had lower realistic aspirations than those students in those schools with adequate learning facilities. Black youth had more unrealistic aspirations than their Indian and white counterparts. Indian youth was also found to have more unrealistic aspirations than the white youth. However, the study did not find any significant effect of gender except in minor instances.

Differences in aspirations could be attributed to social, political and economic experiences that South African youth are exposed to. These experiences may produce attitudes and perceptions about themselves which in turn influence their future aspirations.

**PREFACE**

Unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, this project is the result of my own work.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Research on aspirations of the youth has received attention in both educational and developmental research. Among other reasons, this is because aspirations of the youth have been associated with their knowledge of the real world (Hanson, 1994). Researchers have tried to identify those phenomena of this knowledge which influence aspirations of the youth. For instance, Hanson (1994) indicated that social and economic phenomena like gender, race and SES, play a very important role in shaping youths' aspirations. Thus, gender, race and SES have been identified as important phenomena in the study of aspirations, and are said to have an impact on youths' thoughts, feeling and attitudes (Hanson, 1994; Mickelson, 1989).

Research has shown that aspirations of the youth vary by gender, race and SES. For example, youth who belong to lower social and economic categories tend to have aspirations which reflect these social and economic stratification systems (Bourdieu, 1973; Hanson, 1994; Kerchoff, 1976). Although the youth may want to succeed, those groups of youth in different social and economic strata tend to have different aspirations and expectations of their chances of success. Since young people differ remarkably in their conception of the society in which they live, they are also likely to differ significantly in the goals they set for themselves within that context. Consequently, differences in the goals that young people set for themselves may result in differences in aspirations.

In addition, Kerckhoff (1976) mentions that social and economic systems that the youth are living under determine allocation processes in which individuals are not free to achieve according to their talents. He also argues that young people are subject to social and economic forces that "identify, select, process, classify, and assign individuals according to externally imposed criteria" (p. 379). Thus, young people's aspirations for their future are then affected by these observed constraints.

They then think, act, and view things according to these social and economic categories which shape their attitudes towards their lives (Hopper, 1973).

Hall (1996a) adds that aspirations are a product of early identity formation, and are also structuring agents of future identity development. When young people grow up, they observe others in the same social and economic strata, and they tend to identify themselves with those in the same group. This kind of identity then shapes their attitudes towards the future, hence youth's aspirations are said to be rooted in identities and perceptions which are formed during early stages of development (Hall, 1996a).

Danziger (1958b) also mentions that aspirations are a key focus for identity research because they are both intensely personal and socio-political in nature. According to Danziger (1958b) aspirations are rooted in individuals' attitudes, feelings and thoughts. They are also socio-political in the sense that they are part of social and political systems of the time.

If aspirations are both personal and socio-political, it is possible that changes in socio-political context may bring about changes in aspirations. That is why Fanon (1986) observed that aspirations are collective phenomena which reflect the historical and political spirit of the time. This means that aspirations are not static but they change as a result of historical and political changes. Since aspirations are influenced by social, political and economic systems of the time, they can probably change as a result of major social and political change (Louw, 1983).

Danziger's (1958a;1963b) groundbreaking research on aspirations pioneered a trend in South African research which focuses on the aspirations of the youth. Using students' essays of future autobiographies, Danziger (1958a;1963b) observed that South African youth differed in their future aspirations. His studies showed that social and economic factors could significantly influence aspirations that young people hold for themselves. Using black and white students from different

South African universities, Danziger (1958a; 1963b) found that white students were largely concerned with purely private goals and satisfaction. Black students, on the other hand, emphasized aspirations to serve and bring benefits to their communities far more frequently. The results also showed that the social limitations of black students on personal planning tend to give much less space to the individual's private aspirations. Danziger (1963a) argued that these social limitations among the black students tend to make them put much more space to their socio-political aspirations than individual's private aspirations. Danziger (1963a) then concluded that social and economic contexts can shape future aspirations.

Research on aspirations has focused mainly on the association between race, gender and SES. The main focus has been on whether the aspirations are high or low as in the context of racial, social and economic differences (Danziger, 1958b, 1963b; Hanson, 1994; Kerchhoff, 1976; Marini, 1978). However, little has been said about the *realistic* nature of the aspirations of the youth in different racial, gender and SES categories. There is a need for research which goes beyond a simple relative description of aspirations to a study that can investigate the nature of aspirations that are produced under these social and economic factors.

Danziger conducted his studies after major social and political changes in South. This includes institutionalisation of *apartheid* as the government political ideology. According to Danziger (1958a), apartheid laws had an impact on young people's aspirations about the future. The demise of apartheid could be expected to have brought major changes in the lives of young South Africans. The current research was firstly aimed at investigating the possible *effects*<sup>1</sup> of race, gender, school and SES on the aspirations of the youth. Secondly, it also examined the nature of aspirations which were produced as a result of race, gender, SES and school differences. In this analysis, the focus was on whether aspirations that young people held were *realistic* in the sense that they could be able to fulfil them given their existing social and economic conditions. Lastly, the research also investigated whether there were any changes in the pattern of aspirations as a result of the recent social and political transition in

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<sup>1</sup> Although the design of the study does not allow the researcher to fully investigate the "effects" of race, gender, school and SES, however the word *effect* is used to show how these variables impact on future *aspirations*.

South Africa compared to Danziger's (1958a, b; 1963a, b, c) studies. In other words, the current research examined the possibility that recent political developments in South Africa might have brought some changes in the aspirations of the South African youth.

### **1. 1. Research rationale**

The rationale of this study comes from the perceived important role that race, gender and SES play in shaping the youth's future being. It is said that aspirations are the product of early identity formation, and they are also a structuring agent of future identity development (Hall, 1996a). This means that research on aspirations can give us an insight as to the factors that influence people's future aspirations. Although it was a cross-sectional study, studying sources of aspirations is crucial because it can bring help social scientists to know how social and economic factors that prevail in early life of an individual impact on future life.

The study was aimed at investigating the effects of race, gender, school and SES on aspirations of black, white and Indian youth both in rural and urban areas. The investigation was based on the idea that differences in these variables may produce different aspirations among different groups of the youth. In addition, the study also investigated the nature of aspirations which can be generated as a result of these social and economic conditions. The study wanted to find out whether these social and economic variables could shape the nature of aspirations to reflect the category from which the youth emerged. Lastly, the research also investigated whether there was a significant shift in aspirations of the youth as a result of recent social and political changes in South Africa. The study was based on the hypothesis that aspirations are not stable, same, and identical over a period of time, but they change as a result of social, economic, and political changes.

## 1. 2. Description of the study

The study was based on Danziger's (1958a, b; 1963a, b, c) "future autobiography" method which was adopted from Allport and Gillepsie (1955). Five schools were used as a sample, one in rural areas and the other four in urban areas. Two hundred and sixty-seven matric students participated in the study, of which 144 were black, 44 were Indian, and 79 were white. These students were required to write essays about their future aspirations. They were also required to complete a short demographic questionnaire. Content analysis method recommended by Danziger (1958b; 1963c) was used. The data was then entered to the computer for statistical analysis.

## 1. 4. Research Questions

The research wanted to answer the following questions:

- Are there any effects of school, gender, race, and SES on the aspirations of South African youth?
- What is the *nature* of aspirations that are generated as a result of the differences in school, gender, race, and socio-economic status? Are they *realistic* or *unrealistic*?
- Is there any remarkable shift in aspirations of the youth as a result of recent major social and political transition in South Africa?

### 1. 3. Research Aims

The aims of this research project were as follows:

- To investigate the effects of school, gender, race and socio-economic status (SES) on future aspirations of the South African youth, as approaching adulthood.
- To examine the *nature* of aspirations that is generated by the youth from different racial, gender, school and SES categories.
- To examine possible shifts in aspirations of the South African youth as a result of the recent political transition.

### 1. 5. Definition of Terms

#### 1. 5. 1. Aspirations

*Aspirations* can be defined as wishes, desires, ideals, plans and perceptions that a person sets for himself or herself for the future (Weiss, 1961 in Tillery & Kildergaard, 1973). Aspirations also involve those expectations and ambitions which have or have no constraints on financial, intellectual, or other resources. They are also reality considerations and judgments or estimates of future performance and they are more affective, and they elicit desires, plans, or wishes concerning future performance (Tillery & Kildergaard, 1973).

Some aspirations can be *realistic* (e. g. After matric I would like to go to university) while others may be *unrealistic* (e. g. After matric I would go to university, and come back and buy ten hotels). It is important to note that the reality of any aspiration is relative and can be evaluated according to whether it is possible for an individual to achieve those aspirations given his or her existing social, political, economic and environmental conditions.

### **1. 5. 2. School location**

While a *school* is a place where young people receive education, location of the school means the physical environment in which the school is located. This could be an urban or rural area in which the school is physically located. The school location also involves neighbourhood, for example, surrounding communities, institutions, and other basic amenities like roads, water, electricity, clinics, etc. The environment in which the school is located is judged as either *urban* or *rural* according to the availability or non availability of some of these structures and/or resources. The lifestyle of the local communities also contributes to the description of the school location. For instance, a school can be regarded as rural because of the lifestyles of the local communities and/or the availability of other social services or resources which distinguish it from other schools. For instance, some schools may be located in those areas which enable them to have more resources and services than others.

### **1. 5. 3. Urban and rural areas**

*Urban* areas can be differentiated according to whether the area is in a township or a suburb. While a suburb can be an area with good services and expensive houses, a township in the South African context can be thought of as the residential area with poor services. Obviously, those communities in the suburb are better than those in the township. The difference here does not only involve services, but also involves strict enforcement of rules that govern the community. While suburbs are generally influenced by individualistic way of life, townships are much more communal. *Rural* areas, on the other hand, are characterized by extreme poverty and poor basic amenities. The lifestyle in rural areas is much more communal, traditional and collective in nature.

### **1. 5. 4. Socio-economic status (SES)**

*Socio-economic status* in this study refers to social and economic position of the individual youth who studies in a particular school. In a socially inequitable society like South Africa, differences in terms of social and economic positions among the youth groups is inevitable. It is important to note

that in this study the SES of the youth was judged according to the SES of the parents. In other words, the SES of the parents of the students was used as an indicator of the youth's SES. Some indicators of the SES could be whether the student's home had a house that was made of bricks, whether there was electricity at home, or whether there was a car at home (and the type of the car), and so forth.

#### **1. 5. 5. Race**

*Race* in the study refers to social and legal differences between *Indians, blacks* and whites before 1994. In South Africa, race has been used to determine who gets what, when and how. A central feature of racial division has been invariably demonstrated in political, economic and moral divisions. The insitutionalisation of racial division has be identified in a number of laws prevented certain racial groups from mixing themselves with others. It is said that these laws were formulated as a guise to "defense of (white) civilization against the corruption of, and possible assimilation with, the (black) 'Other'" (Dixon, Foster, Durrheim & Wilbraham, 1994, p.277-278). These laws also prohibited certain racial groups from moving into bigger cities, holding certain jobs, getting better opportunities as well as having access to better services. The institutionalization of racial division is said to have impacted negatively on the lives of young South Africans, especially those who felt racial segregation as directly limiting their future Danziger (1958a).

Although there are various changes which have taken place since apartheid was made official, its demise can bring about major changes in the lives of South Africans, particularly the youth. One can argue that when first multi-racial election took place, the feeling towards racial segregation could change. Equally important to note also that although apartheid laws were abolished when new democratic South Africa was born, but racial differences in terms of economic and social structures still exist but not as formalized structures. Against this backdrop, there might some influence of race to the aspirations of young South Africans.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Introduction

Studying aspirations of the youth has received considerable attention from many researchers in recent decades. There are two possible reasons for this. Firstly, research on aspirations has discovered that youth's aspirations mirror existing race, SES, and gender differences among adults (Campbell, 1995; Cook, Church, Ajanaka, William, Shadish, Kim & Cohen, 1998; De Varennes, 1996; Freeman, 1993; Haines & Wood, 1995; Hanson, 1994; Khuzwayo, 1990).

Secondly, aspirations do not only reflect race, SES and gender differences in the society, but they also function as anchors for identity, being both the product of early identity formation, and a structuring agent of future identity development (Hall, 1996b). According to Hall (1990), people of a common origin or a common structure of experience or both can be expected to share the same identity. Hall (1990) indicates that people who have grown up in the same geographical area and have a common structure of experience may be expected to have the same identity.

Identity cannot simply be formed in a vacuum, but it develops within well-established social institutions (Wetherell, 1996). These social institutions include family, school, church, and so forth. Since these institutions play a very important role in socializing young people, young people in these social institutions also become aware of their race, SES and gender (Giddens, 1973). In this way race, SES and gender then become integral part of their identity. Bourdieu (1973) states that people who share the same race, SES and gender may be expected to have similar aspirations. It is equally true to say that people in these phenomena can be expected to differ in their aspirations.

## 2. 2. The study of aspirations

Beginning with the work of Blau and Duncan (1967) and continuing in the Wisconsin model of attainment (Sewell, Haller, & Ohlendorf, 1970; Sewell, Haller, & Portes, 1969), research on future achievement and occupational attainment has relied primarily on a functionalist, socialization model. That is, the research has assumed that differences in achievement can best be understood by differences in learned skills and motives and thus the attainment system offers a fair system of rewards to the most talented.

Before the introduction of Blau and Duncan's status-attainment model, theoretical work in the United States and Europe focused on the structural factors that affect attainment, irrespective of individual merit (Kerckhoff, 1984). The inability of the status-attainment model to explain equally well the achievements of men and women and persons from different minority groups and social classes created a renewed interest in the structural impediments to achievement (Alexander and Eckland, 1975; Giddens, 1973; Portes and Wilson, 1976; Treiman and Terrell, 1975; Wright & Perrone, 1977).

Bourdieu (1973) argues that the import of non-individual factors in social mobility systems suggests that a considerable number of youths who are talented and motivated do not achieve because of their placement in the stratification system.

With the addition of motivation, such as expectations and aspirations, to the Wisconsin model of attainment, other researchers such as Sewell et al., (1969, 1970) assume that aspirations are attitudes which developed through socialization processes. The way in which young people are socialized form attitudes about the real world which, in turn, become part of their future aspirations.

However, later researchers such as Kerckhoff (1976) and others argue that aspirations are based on the knowledge of the real world. Although everyone may want to succeed, people in different strata have different aspirations of their chances of success. For youths in more disadvantaged social positions, these expectations may start out high, but tend to be lowered over time as the youths observe the successes and failures of others similar to themselves (Siegel, 1975; Kerckhoff, 1976).

In many societies race, SES and gender determine social positions in which individuals are strategically and ideologically placed. When individuals are placed into these social categories, they then behave according to their social categories, and they perceive themselves as members of these categories (Haines & Wood, 1995).

Bourdieu (1973) also indicates that the production of culture involves a selection process in educational systems that ensures the *status quo* of the system, and is based on categories, such as SES and race. In essence, educational systems involve allocation processes in which individuals are not free to achieve according to their talents, but are subject to social forces that "identify, select, process, classify, and assign individuals according to externally imposed criteria" (Kerckhoff, 1976, p. 369). Educational institutions are also used to "cool out" the ambition of the unsuccessful to avoid social conflicts (Hopper, 1973). Thus aspirations of the youth are then affected by these observed factors.

### **2. 2. 1. Variation in future aspirations**

Little empirical work has been done on the intersection between status in the stratification and future aspirations. Although studies have found that the status -attainment model works less for woman, blacks, and individuals of low socio-economic status they often have not explicitly looked at status and its effects on aspirations (Alexander & Eckland, 1975; Kerckhoff and Campbell, 1977; Portes & Wilson, 1976; Rosenfeld, 1980; Treiman & Hartman, 1981; Treiman & Terrell, 1975). The

following section reviews some studies which have attempted to describe the effects of SES, race and gender on aspirations.

#### **2. 2. 1. 1. The effect of SES on future aspirations**

A dominant theme in all discussions of the interplay between social stratification systems and individual attitudes is SES. Bourdieu (1973), Kerckhoff (1976), McClelland (1990) state that SES is one of the most cogent group characteristics in the allocation process. According to Bourdieu, education systems, for instance, are a major arena in which the structure of SES relations is perpetuated. When students from low SES enter the academic arena, they enter a cultural milieu in which they have few resources (cultural capital) to compete with others, and the values of dominant culture reign. Students then develop systems of attitudes, aspirations and activities (their *habitus*, or worldview) that reflect a realization of their opportunities and of the larger structure of social relations.

From the beginning, researchers who have modeled the educational achievement process have acknowledged that the effects of SES (family background) are above and beyond the effects of abilities (e. g. Sewell et al., 1969, 1970; Wright and Perrone, 1977). These researchers have established that SES normally determines whether children are successfully achieving their educational goals. Research on the mechanisms through which students from different SES backgrounds get sorted shows that selection into ability groups, placement in curricula, teachers' expectations, SES-segregated schools, and the resultant unequal resources, as well as bureaucratic control and an emphasis on competition, all work to fit youth into economic positions that are similar to their parents' (Alexander and Eckland, 1975; Giddens, 1973; Rist, 1970; Wright and Perone, 1977). When young people are put into these socio-economic positions, they usually lack motivation to succeed, and regard success as exclusively for those who are not in their category. Wright and Perone (1977) also mention that young people then feel worthless and powerless, being unable to control their future.

Hopper (1973) suggests that if researchers want to understand the effects of SES on aspiration, they should consider the relationship between early aspirations (what individuals aspired to achieve) and later achievements (what individuals actually achieved). He maintains that there is a discrepancy between what young people aspire to achieve and what they eventually achieve. Hopper (1973) also indicates that although young people may have some knowledge about the real world, things change when they actually have to put their aspirations into reality. For example, for youth in more disadvantaged social positions, although these aspirations may start out high, they tend to be lowered over time. In other words aspirations are shaped by what is possible and what is not possible.

Karandikar, Mookherjee, Ray and Vego-Redondo (1998) studied children from different SES backgrounds and concluded that children's preferences for jobs, for instance, reflect their own SES and standing. These findings, firstly, suggest that children are aware of their SES, and this awareness can influence their aspirations they hold for the future. Secondly, the findings also suggest that when a child aspires to be a medical doctor, for instance, it is his or her SES position that pushes him or her towards being a doctor. In other words their career aspirations are shaped or they mirror their own SES.

Hanson (1994) studied the aspirations of the U.S. youth in the late high school and post-high school years. He investigated the extent to which, among other variables, SES, race, and gender affect future aspirations of the U. S. youth. The data of the study came from the senior cohort of the U. S. Nationally Representative High School and Beyond (HSB) Survey conducted by the National Centre for Education Statistics in 1986. The sampling design involved a multistage, stratified cluster sample of students in more than 1,100 schools. In addition to family SES, the family variables included mother's work status and mother's and father's educational expectations. Experiences in the family of procreation (marital and child rearing status) were also included. Individual variables included family-related attitudes (age expected to get married and have

children and number of children, as well as general attitudes measuring locus of control, occupational aspirations, and early educational expectations. Finally, schools-related variables were measures of effort (grades) and ability (scores on standardized reading and mathematics achievement tests) in high school program, and peer influence in school. Post-high school college and work experience were also included.

Hanson's (1994) study revealed that a considerable number of youth who were talented and motivated did not achieve because of their placement in the stratification system. The study also indicated that upper SES youths were less likely to experience lost talent than were low SES youths in their aspirations.

Hanson (1994) also included the explanation which involve 1) the unequal resources that the two groups had - resources that were important for the development of talent; and 2) the different effects of these resources on the loss of talent. Many key characteristics, such as father's educational expectations, early expectations about college, and grades, were significant for upper SES youths but not for low SES youths. Hanson concluded by saying that upper SES youths are able to convert characteristics, such as plans to marry and have children at an older age, early college attendance, avoidance of work and marital statuses in the early post-high school years, into aspirations that are not reduced over time.

Furthermore, McClelland (1990) studied the post-high school experiences of a sample of U.S. youths with high occupational aspirations. McClelland demonstrated that socio-economic status was strongly related to high school aspirations. He also reported that SES often worked indirectly, through marriage and attendance at universities (especially elite universities), to create a cumulative disadvantage among equally qualified low SES individuals. He concluded by saying that children in the low SES experience a disproportionate lowering of ambitions.

Tillery (1973) in a longitudinal study following male students from the eighth through the eleventh grade studied the relationship between educational aspirations and expectations and grade point average (an aggregate academic performance or marks of a learner in a school grade or SES) and SES. The study found that educational aspirations and educational plans were related to SES as well as grade point average. Very similar relationships were obtained when relating educational aspirations and educational plans to SES. Educational plans were more highly related to SES than educational aspirations and removing the variation of educational plans reduced the aspiration-SES relationship to essentially zero.

Moreover, McClelland (1990) states that the effects of SES (family background) is above and beyond the effects of abilities. The grade point average is important because when a student thinks of himself or herself as less intelligent, he or she is likely to set aspirations according to the potential he or she has to achieve that goal. At the same time, those individuals who think of themselves as intelligent tend to be given or be put into certain categories which automatically enhance their aspirations.

#### **2. 2. 1. 2. The effects of gender on future aspirations**

Research has shown that boys' future aspirations exceed those of girls and that there is a greater consistency between the aspirations of young men than of young women (Crowley & Shapiro, 1982; Marini, 1978). Some researchers have reported that women tend to adjust their aspirations, especially educational ones, downward over time, especially with the advent of marriage and children (Haggstrom, Kanouse, and Morison, 1986 in Hanson, 1994; Marini, 1984).

Hanson's (1994) study also indicated that young women were more likely than young men to have reduced educational aspirations. The study also revealed that there were differences between males and females in the aspirations about future careers and the number of children. Hanson (1994) reported other factors which affected the unequal aspirations and expectations of young

men but not of young women, included the mothers' and fathers' educational expectations, the age at which the young men expected their first child, and their grade point average.

On the other hand, Hanson's (1994) study also reported that effects that were significant in young women's aspirations but not in young men included locus of control, their friend's educational values, and their scores on standardized mathematics tests. It was also reported that most young women participants planned to marry and bear children earlier than did the young men. Hanson (1984) concluded by saying that young women's aspirations are affected by more family, individual, and school resources than are the case for young men.

Gaskell's (1985) study also showed how students' knowledge of school and work environments is integrated into students' attitudes and choices that reproduce the SES structure. In her interviews with young working-SES women, Gaskell (1985) examined one aspect of students' decision making: course selection. The study revealed that young women rejected academic schooling because it seemed irrelevant. Instead, they chose vocational courses because these courses were less regimented and confining and appeared to be more worthwhile in preparing them for clerical jobs, which they considered attractive because these jobs provided security, better working conditions than blue-collar jobs, and opportunities to be with other working-SES women. Thus the "choices" the students made reflected their knowledge of their school and of society and reproduced both SES and gender categories.

Mwaba's (1993) study of 92 BaTswana school children (49 boys and 43 girls) investigated whether there was any gender differences in career aspirations. Children were randomly drawn from two primary and two middle schools located in the Lehurutshe and the Molopo districts of the Bophuthatswana. The children were between 8 and 13 years of age ( $M$  age = 11.5). In 1990, children completed a questionnaire on which they were asked to indicate their choice of career. The children also asked to indicate whether they thought men, women, or both could best perform

each job on a list of 20 jobs. The children's ratings of the 20 occupations demonstrated traditional gender stereotyping for both the boys and the girls. Both gender groups thought women can best perform the jobs of house cleaner (94% boys, 98% girls), sweeper (86% boys, 96% girls), and nurse (49 % boys, 46% girls). The children also thought that men can best perform the following jobs: district governor (94% boys, 93% girls) and engineer (92% boys, 86% girls). Mwaba then concluded that in a developing African society, the perception that men are best suited to perform professional and prestigious jobs is shared among children. Although these children were very young and had limited knowledge about the gender relations, but the findings showed that children had different aspirations which were possibly influenced by their gender categories and their real life experiences.

In contrast to the foregoing research, the work by Mickelson's (1989) found few gender differences in two kinds of educational attitudes - abstract and concrete. Abstract attitudes are those attitudes based on ideologies about education and opportunity. These attitudes reflect the dominant belief systems of most Americans, including notions about working hard to get ahead and education as a resource for opportunities. Concrete attitudes, on the other hand, are indicators of beliefs about the empirical realities of the benefits of education. Mickelson studied college students in the US, and then argued that all students, both male and female, have positive abstract attitudes about education, but those who view inequitable opportunity structures in the labour market would have more negative concrete attitudes. The increasingly similar educational expectations and attainment of men and woman and the match between concrete and abstract educational attitudes among White males and females in her sample led Mickelson to conclude that young woman have not adjusted their educational expectations and behaviours downward. It is important to note that Mickelson used a sample of college students in the first world country where gender inequalities are often covert.

The studies on gender and aspirations suggest that although gender is associated with lowered educational aspirations, gender differences in aspirations have the potential to decrease (Hanson, 1994). The cause of this change could be attributed to major changes in gender relations. For instance, young people who grow up in a society where attitudes towards women have changed, their aspirations cannot be expected to reflect these differences. Beliefs that gender inequalities in the labour market, for instance, still exist seem to decrease.

### **2. 2. 1. 3. The effects of race on aspirations**

There has been considerable evidence of the positive educational attitudes of black youth - attitudes that often persist in the context of poor achievement. Sleeter and Grant (1987 in Hanson, 1994) investigated the aspirations of young people in America, and discovered that black youth had attitudes to achieve despite their poor achievement.

Mickelson (1984) also reported that, although black youth wanted to achieve, black youth was more likely than were white youth to have a mismatch between their abstract and concrete beliefs about education. But the incongruity of high educational expectations and low academic achievement among black youth was said to disappear when concrete, rather than abstract, attitudes about education are taken into account.

It has been said that children's aspirations, expectations, plans, and goals are not static but they are periodically updated according to payoff experience, and are occasionally subject to trembles (Karandikar, Mookherjee, Ray, D. & Vego-Redondo, 1998). Aspirations change as a result of the past experience. If a certain race, SES, or gender group, for instance, has a positive payoff experience, the members of the group are more likely to shape their experience according to these experiences. Ogbu (1978) contended that when groups face discrimination in the labour market, this information is channeled back to shape children's school achievement. In other words, aspirations are updated in each period, depending on the divergence of achieved payoffs from

aspirations from the previous period.

### **2. 3. Theoretical framework explaining the development of aspirations**

Researchers (University of Maine, 1994 in Plucker & Quaglia, 1998) have identified conditions under which aspirations develop. They said that young people are more likely to have higher future aspirations if the following conditions are satisfied. These conditions, which have both organisational and personal dimensions, include achievement, belonging, curiosity, empowerment, excitement, mentoring, risk-taking, and self-confidence. Although all these conditions are important, belonging, achievement and empowerment have been regarded as the most important factors which influence the development of aspirations.

#### **2. 3. 1. Social Belonging**

Since SES, race, and gender can influence aspirations, it is possible that young people who belong to these categories may have aspirations which reflect their social categories. Young people who belong to low SES, for instance, may feel powerless and unable to achieve in the future. According to social identity theory, individuals who identify themselves with members of a certain social group tend to have a sense of belonging. Individuals tend to identify themselves with social groups because they need to belong and to obtain emotional support and security (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). This need is satisfied by a feeling of solidarity with members of the same group.

Cherian (1992) conducted a study with children of monogamous and polygamous, families in the Eastern Cape. Cherian used children from the rural areas to investigate how their strong sense of belonging to their families influenced their aspirations about their academic achievement. He reported that children from both groups had higher educational aspirations as a result of parental expectations. In addition to this, children who had strong relationship to their parents had more realistic aspirations than those who were not. The study also revealed that in polygamous families, children had strong identity with their mothers than with their fathers which also influenced their

aspirations about their future academic achievements. In other words, parents' aspirations for their children's schooling and success undoubtedly influence the way they behave toward their children and the support they give their children while they were attending school (Cherian, 1992).

### **2. 3. 2. Empowerment**

Belonging can also be related to the feeling of empowerment. Empowerment is important especially when the society is characterised by explicit social inequality. One's wish of achievement can be determined by one's perception of the possibility of achieving that goal. If the members of a certain racial group perceive themselves as unable to achieve, maybe because of existing social factors, they are more likely to lower their future aspirations (Wetherell, 1996). This also involves one's self-confidence to achieve in the future. If the members of the group have a strong sense of belonging and they are empowered, they are more likely to have self-confidence about themselves.

### **2. 3. 3. Motivation**

Lapan & Jingeleski (1992) and Talley (1973) remarked that some young people do not have clear aspirations, whereas others for reasons to be found in their home backgrounds, have levels of aspiration that mobilize and direct activity toward such goal. Tilley (1973) observed that many students, particularly those in doubt about what to do and how to go about making decisions do not know what key people in their expectation in regard to their future achievements. Children need to have key persons in their lives whom they regard as their motivators. These people can also give them social and emotional support when they take decisions (Lapan & Jingeleski (1992). It is with no doubt that young people who have no one around them to give them this kind of support and motivation to succeed, they are likely to have blurred future aspirations.

#### **2. 4. Some South African studies of Aspirations**

The study of aspirations in South Africa has not differed dramatically from those conducted in other countries. The study of aspirations of young people has been characterized by its profound focus on social and political nature of aspirations. Some researchers have emphasized the role of social conditions, while others emphasized the role of political and economic factors. This section will turn the discussion to look at some studies which have been done locally.

##### **2. 4. 1. The Social and Political Nature of Aspirations**

Danziger's (1958a, b; 1963a, b) conducted a series of studies on aspirations of different racial groups in South Africa. Danziger studied future aspirations of South African youth using "future autobiography" method. The essays were collected during two periods: 1956-7 and 1960-2. Each participant was asked to write about his or her expectations, plans, and aspirations for the future.

In these studies, future autobiographies of students were rated on a number of variables which were thought to have some relationship to aspirations. Danziger (1963a) wanted to investigate how young people think about the future. Expert raters were called in to rate essays. Finally, seven variables (i. e. ego-reality statements, ego-fantasy statements, non-career values, economic interest, contingency statements, objective time reference, and time structuring) were obtained which could be used for assessing the degree of aspirations in any of the future autobiographies. Then in order to produce a final Index, these seven variables were scored and weighted in accordance to i) ego-reality statements, and ii) ego-fantasy statements. The Index was reported to have an inter-rater reliability and a test-retest reliability (after three months) of .8. The index also had some internal and external validity.

In general, the findings of the white students were concerned with purely private goals and satisfaction. The findings revealed that most black South African students tended to stress the social limitations on personal planning and hence to give much less space to the individual's

private aspirations and much more space to their socio-political aspirations than other students. Whereas the future autobiographies of white South African students tended to be entirely devoted to private matters (Danziger, 1963b), Black South African students' future autobiographies devoted an average of about one-third of their space to a discussion of social issues which, in the South African context, tended to take on an almost entirely political aspect.

Danziger (1963b) reported that 83% of the essays expressed complete opposition to the then government policies. Not a single black student clearly identified himself or herself with those policies, and no fewer than 46% foresaw the violent overthrow of the government system. Danziger (1963b) mentioned that the tendency to see the future in social rather than individual terms represents a reaction to the conditions of political oppression and social discrimination which govern the lives of these students.

Danziger (1963b) also indicated that the increasing frustration of individual goals by political restrictions lead to gradual redefinition of the psychological future in which the attempt at personal planning is progressively replaced by a concern with one's group's collective fate. Danziger (1963a) pointed out that the tendency to see the future in social rather than individual terms represented a reaction to the conditions of political oppression and social discrimination which governed the lives of these participants. Black students' aspirations were largely influenced by socio-political changes of the time. In other words, Black students mentioned aspirations to serve and bring benefits to their communities far more frequently (Danziger, 1963a).

Moreover, there was a distinction between plans and goals of these racial groups. Black students' autobiographies contained more fantasy than the autobiographies of their white counterparts. Danziger also made a distinction between plans and goals that were realistic in terms of existing possibilities and plans and goals that were on the level of fantasy. The results showed that 19.7% of black students had realistic plans whereas white students had 82.6%. In addition to that 24.5%

of black students had ego-fantasy which was more than their white counterparts, 9.7%. It was noted that in 1962, black students had less realistic personal planning and even more preoccupation with social conditions in these autobiographies than there was in 1950 (Danziger, 1963a).

Social pressures may not only produce a shift of interest from the personal to the collective future, they may also produce an internal effect on the organisation of individual time perspectives as such. Danziger (1958b) used objective temporal framework to investigate personal planning in terms of dates, of ages, and of time periods. Danziger (1958b) reported that black students manifested a much lower degree of temporal differentiation of their personal future than the whites. The difference was associated with a growing feeling of helplessness in the face of apparently arbitrary official interference in the individual's personal life.

If changes in the aspirations represent reactions to real social pressures one might expect that structural changes would be accompanied by changes in content. The content of aspirations is largely concerned with the individual's life goals and these in turn express the scheme of values by which he or she lives. This is true with Danziger's (1963a) study. Black students faced the contradiction of a simultaneous espousal of highly individualistic economic values and the values of the community service which reflected the real contradiction in the social position of black students who find themselves in process of transition from one social order to another. It is this kind of contradiction that black students seemed to face in their aspirations. Danziger (1963a) mentioned that black students showed more social values than their white counterparts.

He also reported that most of the black male students showed a characteristic preoccupation with politics, and they tend to define their aspirations in political terms. Although the female sample was regrettably small, certain marked sex differences merit some comment. In the first place, Danziger (1963a) indicated that political activity was obviously not an acceptable life goal for the middle SES African females - only two out of 54 students mention it. The study revealed that there was

evidence of an increase in political awareness among females. The study showed that while an increase in the space devoted to personal goals occurred for both sexes, the decline in realistic personal planning which was so marked for the males did not take place in the case of females but was replaced by a decline in the amount of personal fantasy. Danziger (1963a) commented saying that the difference was due to that African middle SES women may not feel the impact of official policies on their personal lives quite catastrophically as many of the men whose career aspirations are directly affected. Thus it was still possible for the woman to develop relatively realistic plans about their future marriage, home, and children, and the intensification of social restrictions merely leads them to abandon the more hopeful fantasies of an earlier period. Under these conditions, dreams of wealth and fame perhaps offer fewer compensations than a kind of "flight into reality" which promises a limited degree of personal autonomy in an area that is not as easily reached by the long arm of the government as the man's place of work (Danziger, 1963a 39).

The decline in the ideal of community service which seemed to be at least as marked among the women as it among the men would seem to support some such interpretation. The study revealed that the men, whose planning is more seriously disrupted on the reality level, continue to find an outlet on the "level of reality", so that by 1962 the sex difference in space devoted to ego fantasy is significant at the five percent level. At the same time the continued interest of the women in the everyday demands of middle SES respectability had not prevented an apparent rise in political consciousness, reflected in the fact that they then devoted almost one third of their future autobiographies to socio-political topics (Danziger, 1963a).

Another study on future aspirations was conducted by Haines and Wood (1995) to gauge the career hopes and related attitudes and perceptions of black matriculants in the Eastern Cape. These matriculants faced bleak job prospects ahead in a region with particularly high unemployment. A questionnaire survey was undertaken of a stratified random sample of black matriculants in Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth with respective sample sizes of 116 and 214.

Trained interviewers randomly selected respondents from the schools on the basis of classroom seating arrangement and using an accepted random sampling procedure to obtain a representative cross-section of students.

Haines and Wood's (1995) study revealed that aspirations of the South African youth were somewhat more modest than is popularly assumed and that these differed according to the immediate material circumstances and also the presence or absence of role models during the socialization process. It became clear that many South African youth in a region with unusually high unemployment and with a history of political activism do not have overly high aspirations. Rather, their hopes are grounded in a certain realism (e. g. high unemployment rate in Grahamstown than in Port Elizabeth) and they desire to make the best of unfavourable circumstances (Haines & Wood, 1995). These findings suggest that young people showed more realistic aspirations than expected. This study seems to contrast Danziger (1962a) who said that black students showed different aspirations simple due to differences in racial backgrounds.

Another study on aspirations of black youth in South Africa was also conducted by Khuzwayo (1990) in Durban. He investigated the perceptions, aspirations, hopes and needs of young blacks. Khuzwayo (1990) argues that "the views of black youth tend to be expressed, today, in ideological terms, particularly through youth organisations whose proclamations address core national political issues rather than changes in individuals' opinions" (p. 63). He further mentions that by then there were few studies which investigated the personal needs and aspirations of black youth.

Khuzwayo (1990) interviewed 30 young black people from Durban townships in groups of 10 each. Two of these groups were drawn from the pupils from two schools in a traditionally black township called Umlazi. One, where the outlook and political affinity could be said to be inclined toward Inkatha Freedom Party and the other, a high achieving school in the township. The third group was made up of 'comrades' (African National Congress supporters) from other traditionally black

townships called Clermont and Klaarwater.

Participants were asked to identify both expectations and aspirations regarding: their educational and future work; their residential circumstances; and their social lives. Firstly, when respondents were asked which personal goals they hoped to have achieved by the end of the decade, the prime aspiration that all three groups expressed both strongly was the yearning for knowledge and education. This desire showed that the respondents believe that knowledge and education were more essential tools for empowerment. This is also related to their personal career choices which showed that all respondents set themselves ambitious levels of academic achievement and of career goals. Almost all aspired to achieve full professional status and high academic qualifications.

Secondly, when respondents were asked about residential matters and preferred lifestyles, the large number of respondents expressed that they did not intend to leave their townships. Their bottom line rationale was that the general economic situation among blacks will have improved and only the individual's financial means will ultimately determine where he or she decides to live. In other words, SES as opposed to race seemed to determine residential areas.

Khuzwayo (1990) further indicates that the aspirations of black youth derived from their past as oppressed people and present life circumstances which is on the threshold of oppression, circumstances which they hope will rapidly change for the better. The respondents saw race and SES as barriers to achieve their aspirations, and when these barrier were to be taken away, they could be able to achieve their aspirations.

## 2. 5. Conclusion

It is clear that SES, race and gender play a very important role in aspirations. Different research studies have shown that young people' aspirations are influenced by their SES, racial category, and their gender positions. Most of the studies of aspirations (Hanson, 1994; Haines and Wood, 1995; Marini, 1984; McClelland, 1990) have demonstrated that there are possible effects of race, SES and gender on future aspirations of the youth. However, there is little that is known about the *nature* or *content* of aspirations that are produced as a result of these structural systems. Research does not show clearly how race, gender and SES can be related with the *realistic* or *unrealistic* nature of young people's aspirations. Research does not also show us whether these social variables individually or collectively affect the realistic or unrealistic nature young people's aspirations. Research is needed to demonstrate which ones of these variables significantly affect future the content of young people's aspirations.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3. 1. Sampling strategy

##### 3. 1. 1. Rationale for selecting the sample

Matric students were used in the study. They were selected rather than adults because aspirations are more expressible at this stage rather than other later stages of development (Hanson, 1994).

There are two reasons for this. Firstly, when young people are about to reach a stage of adulthood, they start to explicitly plan for the future. Secondly, matric students are about to go to the outside world and be forced to start fulfilling their wishes and their aspirations for the future. At this stage, young people tend to have more clear aspirations for the future than those in other preceding classes (Hanson, 1994).

##### 3. 1. 2. Rationale for selecting the schools

Five schools participated in this study. Four of these were selected within the Pietermaritzburg Transitional Local Council (TLC). The remaining school was selected from Kranskop, a rural area in the Midlands of KwaZulu-Natal. The schools were selected to represent the inequities rooted in South Africa's history. Certain schools, especially historically white schools have been at the receiving end of most of the resources and this made them very different from schools which were deprived of resources. Schools in black townships and those in rural areas have especially been the victims of the unjust distribution of resources. The background of the schools used in the current study reflected some of these social and economic inequalities.

##### 3. 1. 2. 1. Location of the schools

One school was selected from a middle class suburb on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg city. Although the majority of the students from this school came from the nearby suburbs, some of them came from the neighbouring local black townships and white-owned farms surrounding

Pietermaritzburg (See Table 1). In the past, the suburbs surrounding the school were restricted to white residents only, and other racial groups were excluded. The organisation and the culture of this school was influenced by white middle class codes of behaviour.

**Table 1: Percentages of the type of students' residences and electricity availability at home**

School	Current Residence	Electricity at home
<b>Historically white A</b>	Suburbs = 65.8%	Yes = 97.5%
	Township = 12.7%	No = 2.5%
	Rural = 11%	
<b>Rural</b>	Township = 2.6%	Yes = 16.9
	Semi-urban = 71.4%	No = 83.1%
	Rural = 26%	
<b>Township</b>	Suburbs = 12.9%	Yes = 96.8%
	Township = 58.1	No = 3.2%
	Semi-urban = 29%	
<b>Historically white B</b>	Suburbs = 61%	Yes = 95.1%
	Township = 17.1%	No = 4.9%
	Semi-urban = 14.6%	
	Rural = 7.3%	
<b>Former Indian</b>	Suburbs = 76.1%	Yes = 100%
	Township = 5.1%	
	Semi-urban = 15.4%	
	Rural = 2.6%	

Second school was selected from a rural area in KwaZulu-Natal. This school not only differed from the other schools in its geographical locality, but it differed in the life style and its community. It is assumed that many families surrounding this school were living a traditional Zulu life style which was, for instance, characterised by traditional practices like stick-fighting, traditional marriages (*izindwendwe*), and ancestral ceremonies (*imicimbi yamadlozi*). Local communities generally had

strong traditional codes of behaviour as well as strong gender restrictions. For instance, woman wearing trousers in public was taboo.

A third school was selected in one of the black townships in Pietermaritzburg area (See Table 1). Although the communities that lived around this school are black, they generally differed from the rural communities in their lifestyle. It is evident that access to technological resources and media in urban communities make urban communities very different from rural communities. Obviously the historically white schools have more access to technology and the media than the township schools and the rural schools virtually no such access. In addition, the black youth in many townships in South Africa are generally assumed to be influenced by the Western lifestyle. These advancements bring a remarkable difference between rural and urban communities. It was of importance to compare young people from urban areas with those in rural areas to see whether there were any significant differences in aspirations for the future which could be attributed to their differences in location. Knowing the social and economic history of South African society one can also expect socio-economic conditions, in townships, to differ from the suburbs.

A fourth school was also a historically white school situated in one of the most affluent suburbs of Pietermaritzburg. In the past, the suburbs were historically reserved for white middle class families, and most students came from these suburbs. The lifestyle in this area was generally assumed to be individualistic. Most of the community members in this area were business people and some of them had professional careers. These communities were assumed to obviously differ socio-economically from those in other areas in their socio-economic status. The school also differed substantially from the other historically white school because most children who were studying in this school were from rich families around the area.

The fifth school was located in a township which was historically reserved for Indian communities. The school was assumed to be influenced by a strong Hindu and Muslim culture and religion. Religion seemed to play a very important role in these communities to the extent that some children were expected to attend every Friday worship ceremonies. Many students in this school were from the local middle class families which made a living either by being employed mainly in Pietermaritzburg town or by owning big businesses there. Since the school was strongly influenced by Indian culture, the students' life style was assumed to be different to those of the four other schools.

### **3. 1. 2. 2. Description of sample**

Two hundred and sixty-seven matric students participated in the study (See Table 2). Race<sup>1</sup> was seen as another important variable because it would enable the researcher to establish if there were any significant differences between the aspirations of these three racial groups. Coloured students (only 6 students) were eliminated in the sample because the researcher could not get an adequate number for comparison.

**Table2: Number of participants per gender and race**

<b>School</b>	<b>No. of Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race<sup>1</sup></b>
<b>1. Historically white A</b>	79	Male = 56 Female = 23	Black = 16 Indian = 1 White = 61
<b>2. Rural</b>	77	Male = 29 Female = 48	Black = 77
<b>3. Township</b>	31	Male = 17 Female = 14	Black = 31
<b>4. Historically white B</b>	41	Male = 22 Female = 19	Black = 17 Indian = 6 White = 18
<b>5. Former Indian</b>	39	Male = 11 Female = 28	Black = 2 Indian = 37
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>Male = 135</b> <b>Female = 132</b>	<b>Black = 144</b> <b>Indian = 44</b> <b>White = 79</b>

The age range of the students in the five schools varied. This is clearly illustrated in Table 3 below. For instance, students in rural areas were, on average, older than the students in urban schools.

**Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of ages of students per school**

School	Age
Historically white A	Mean = 17.66 SD = 2.96
Rural	Mean = 19.14 SD = 1.71
Township	Mean = 17.74 SD = 1.03
Historically white B	Mean = 16.80 SD = 2.75
Former Indian	Mean = 16.97 SD = 2.74

### 3. 1. 2. 3. Economic status of the participants

As shown in Tables 4 and 5 students differed as to socio-economic status. Most of the students in the rural school, for instance, were from homes which had no electricity (Table 1), and one or two parents were unemployed (Table 4). It is assumed that some of the students in the rural school walked more than 10km from their homes to school everyday. Some students were unable to access electronic media like TV. Table 4 also shows that some of the participants, from the rural school, were not living with their parents perhaps because some of their family members and relatives were not educated and were migrant labourers in big cities like Johannesburg or Durban. The historically white school A and the historically white school B students indicated that they were living with their parents.

The social and economic difference between the participants was also illustrated by the type of residence from which many students came. Some students came from expensive suburbs whereas others were from semi-urban areas or townships. Table 4 shows that students from the rural

school and the former Indian school had a high rate of parents' unemployment, compared to other schools.

**Table 4: Students' parents employment status**

School	Staying with parent(s)	Father Employed	Mother Employed
<b>Historically White A</b>	Yes = 94.9%	Yes = 67.1%	Yes = 70.9%
	No = 5.1%	No = 15.2%	No = 15.2%
		Self-employed = 14%	Self-employed = 13.9%
<b>Rural</b>	Yes = 80.1%	Yes = 40.3%	Yes = 42.9%
	No = 19.5%	No = 51.7%	No = 48.1%
		Self-employed = 7.8%	Self-employed = 9.1%
<b>Township</b>	Yes = 87.1%	Yes = 51.6%	Yes = 38.7%
	No = 12.9%	No = 22.6%	No = 35.5%
		Self-employed = 25.8%	Self-employed = 25.8%
<b>Historically White B</b>	Yes = 95.1%	Yes = 70.7%	Yes = 80.5%
	No = 4.9%	No = 12.2%	No = 12.2%
		Self-employed = 7.3%	Self-employed = 7.3%
<b>Former Indian</b>	Yes = 92.3%	Yes = 66.7%	Yes = 53.8%
	No = 7.7%	No = 25.6%	No = 38.5%
		Self-employed = 7.7%	Self-employed = 7.7%

Lastly the socio-economic difference was also evident from the assets of middle class school and lower class school students' parents (Table 5). These assets were regarded as the basic assets needed by families to qualify as middle class. For instance, most of the parents in historically white schools had cars, domestic workers, houses which were made of bricks, and healthy meals. Those

from peri-urban areas lacked most of these assets.

**Table 5 : Home facilities and services**

School	Car at home%	Domestic worker employed%	House made of bricks%
<b>Historically white A</b>	Yes=89.9 No=10.1	Yes=72.2 No=27.8	Yes=97.5 No=2.5
<b>Rural</b>	Yes=16.9 No=83.1	Yes=24.7 No=75.3	Yes= 32.5 No= 67.5
<b>Township</b>	Yes=54.8 No=45.2	Yes=38.7 No=61.3	Yes = 87.1 No= 12.9
<b>Historically white B</b>	Yes=92.7 No=7.3	Yes=63.4 No=36.6	Yes= 92.7 No= 7.3
<b>Former Indian</b>	Yes = 82.1 No = 17.9	Yes = 61.5 No = 38.5	Yes = 92.3 No = 7.7

### 3. 1. 2. 4. History of political activism

It has been said that many schools in black townships and a few in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal were victims of the political revolution in South Africa (Khuzwayo, 1990). Both the rural and the township schools had experienced a history of political activism. These schools participated very actively in political riots including the abolition of school fees riot in the late 1980s. The other three schools did not have any history of revolutionary political activism.

### 3. 1. 2. 5. School facilities and resources

The schools differed in the amount of facilities that they had. The historically white schools had better learning facilities such as modern high quality computer facilities, laboratories, teaching aids, and good playing fields. These schools also had qualified guidance teachers, and most of the

teaching staff was highly qualified. The former Indian school had some of the basic facilities such as a photocopier, a library, and a small laboratory, and it also had a qualified teaching staff. The township and the rural schools had poor resources compared to other three schools. They did not have qualified guidance teachers, highly qualified teaching staff or other learning facilities. They had electricity but no libraries, laboratories, nor good playing fields.

**3. 1. 2. 6. School curriculum specialization**

The schools seemed to differ in their curriculum specialization (Table 6). The historically white school A was a comprehensive school which was offering wide range of choices in both academic and technical subjects. The other schools were offering academic and some technical subjects.

**Table 6: Matric pass rate and school specialization**

School	Matric Pass Rate	Subject Specialisation
Historically white A	1997 – 100%	Technology
	1998 - 100%	Arts
	1999 - 98%	Commerce Science
Township	1997 - 59%	Arts
	1998 - 18%	Commerce
	1999 - 35%	Science
Rural	1997 - 54%	Arts
	1998 - 48%	Commerce
	1999 - 34%	Science
Historically white B	1997 - 99%	Technology
	1998 - 99%	Commerce
	1999 – 100%	Arts Science
Former Indian	1997 - 92%	Arts
	1998 - 93%	Technology
	1999 - 92%	Commerce Science

### 3. 2. Data collection method

#### 3. 2. 1. Rationale for the method

The choice of assessment technique was suggested by a cross-national study carried out by Allport and Gillespie (1955). In this study students from various countries were required to write essays about their plans, hopes, and aspirations for the future. A marked difference appeared between the essays of students from such countries as Mexico and Egypt and those from the countries of Western Europe and Northern America. The latter concentrated far more strongly on their personal aspirations, a pattern which the authors described as "privatistic". The essay writing

method in the Allport and Gillespie demonstrated its ability to differentiate between students with realistic and unrealistic aspirations. This method was also shown to be effective by Danziger (1958, 1963). Danziger used this method to study students from different racial groups in South Africa.

### **3. 2. 2. Projection of essays to the future**

The main reason for requiring the autobiography to be projected into the future was that thereby participants would have greater opportunity to discuss their lives in a wider social setting. Danziger (1963b) argued that the future autobiography method allows the participants to freely write about their expectations, plans, and aspirations for the future. Allport and Gillespie (1955) in their cross-national comparisons claimed that projecting essays to the future might be useful for the study of long-term trends. Danziger, (1963b) found that the essay method had the advantage of not imposing an artificial framework on the participant's response; but allowing respondents a good deal of latitude to write about their aspirations for the future.

### **3. 2. 3. Research procedure**

Two instruments were used: an autobiography projected into the future and a demographic questionnaire. Following the work of Allport and Gillespie (1955) and Danziger (1958, 1963) matric students were given instructions (See Appendix B) write essays about their future "autobiographies". Besides the essay, the students were required to complete a short demographic questionnaire (See Appendix C). The short demographic questionnaire was designed by the researcher of the current study, and it was not piloted because the instrument was used only to get the background information about the participants.

The essays were collected between May and August 2000. The instructions on how to write essays and to complete a questionnaire were given to English teachers. The researcher explained the procedure that teachers should follow instructing the students. No information was given other than what was on the instruction sheet. Each participant was given a copy of the instructions before the

teacher explained. Teachers were also told to inform the participants that the material was required for research purposes, and that participants were allowed to respond in their mother tongues. They were also told that all information was to be treated strictly confidentially. The students' parents were asked to sign an informed consent form before their children participated. Each completed questionnaire was stapled together with its respective essay before it was handed in.

### **3. 3. Data analysis**

#### **3. 3. 1. Definition of content analysis**

Content analysis can be defined as a research methodology that utilizes a set of procedures to make valid and replicable inferences by systematically and objectively specified characters from the data or text (Krippendoff, 1980; Stone, Dunphy, Smith & Ogilvie, 1969, 1966; Weber, 1987). This definition suggests that content analysis is a research technique which is used to generate valid and replicable analysis of the text by adopting an objective and systematic approach to data. By an objective approach, we mean an analysis which is undistorted by emotion or personal bias, feelings, or interpretations. By systematic approach, we mean that the technique adopts well-ordered, purposive, analytic, precise and rule-governed techniques for drawing inferences from text. It is important to start by considering some important issues in content analysis.

#### **3. 3. 2. Issues in content analysis**

A central idea in content analysis is that the many words of the text are classified into far fewer content categories (Weber, 1987). Words, phrases, or units of the text classified in the same category are assumed to have a shared meaning as opposed to a private understanding. This similarity may be based on words sharing similar connotations, such as grouping together several words implying a category. This kind of analysis, as indicated above, follows systematic and objective procedures to make sure that the analysis is replicable.

### **3. 3. 3. Analysis procedure**

The standard procedure of content analysis (Berelson, 1952; Holsti, 1969, both in Weber, 1987) was employed to classify each essay along the dimensions which will be discussed later.

#### **3. 3. 3. 1. Define the recording units**

The units of analysis differed from one category to another. In some categories sentences were used as units of analysis while in others the essay as a whole was a unit of analysis. The use of sentences as unit of analysis was adopted because the researcher was interested in words and phrases that occurred together. Holsti (1969) warns that using the whole text as a unit of analysis makes it difficult to achieve reliability, but he believes that using the whole text for analysis is appropriate when the whole text is short. Since the average length of the essays was 1.5 pages, to use the whole text as unit of analysis was inadequate. This problem was resolved by means of giving clear descriptions of the categories which would help the coders to classify their essays.

#### **3. 3. 3. 2. Define the categories**

In creating categories, it was important to make two important decisions. The first was to decide whether or not the categories were to be mutually exclusive. Most statistical procedures require variables that are not confounded. Although the researcher tried to make sure that the categories were independent of one another, it was difficult to arrive at mutually exclusive categories. Durrheim and Mokeki (1997) warn that when there is a fuzzy kind of boundary between the categories, it is essential to use explicit descriptions of each category prototype to and have clear-cut rules for decision making to ensure systematic classification. The procedure was carried out in the categories which used the whole essay as a unit of analysis, but those which used sentences as units of analysis did not have this problem. The second choice was to decide about how narrow or broad the categories were to be. Some categories were narrow so that they could show a difference between the groups, while others were broad in the sense that they had many entries.

### 3. 3. 3. 3. Reliability

In order to draw valid inferences from the essays, it was important that the classification procedure used be reliable to ensure that the analysis was objective and replicable. To ensure that there was reliability, each essay was coded independently by two different coders (one white female and one black male). This kind of coding was done to compute inter-rater or inter-coder reliability. Two coders from two different language, racial, and gender groups were used to code the essays to ensure that the final classification of essays into categories did not reflect particular racialised perceptions. All instances of disagreement between the raters were discussed at length between the two coders and a third researcher, and consensus was reached.

### 3. 3. 3. 4. Coding and scoring of Categories

The autobiographies were coded according to a number of categories thought to have some relationship to aspirations. The first seven categories were drawn from Danziger's (1963b) study of aspirations. The remaining categories were designed by the researcher. These aimed at analysing: a) the realistic and unrealistic nature of aspirations that young people had about their future; b) non-career values that young people hold for themselves; c) the economic nature of their aspirations; d) their time structuring for achieving these goals; and e) the role of race, SES, and gender in their aspirations. These categories can be outlined as follows:

- **Ego-reality statements**

Ego-reality statements can be defined as realistic statements about the writer's specific plans and intentions regarding his or her personal future. The coders had to analyse statements in this category which included: a) *realistic statements*, i. e. refer to events which were not highly impossible given the existing socio-economic conditions of the time. These statements included events that the essay writer expected to see in future. In other words, these might include general plans, expectations, and goals for the future. The reality of the statement was judged according to the SES of the essay writers which would enable them to achieve their goal. The coders had firstly

read the essay and to look at the narrative sequence which led to the achievement of the particular goal. This means that students' essays were analysed according to what they could realistically achieve given their historical and socio-economic context, e. g. "Everybody was successful in our country, and I had to strive in order to be successful in life". In this category, the realistic value of the statement was evaluated by the likelihood that the expectation(s) would be realised given the existing conditions.

The second category analysed b) *personal statements*, i. e. refer to the writer's goals and expectations for the future and not to his or her social environment. This means that the focus was on analysing writers' personal goals for the future. The category focussed on personal plans, goals, and expectations about the future, e. g. "My goal was to be a successful person in life" or "It was difficult for me to find a good person to marry."

The third one focussed on c) *specific statements*, i. e. refer to definite plans for the self and not to general precepts or vague generalisation about the future. as such. The focus here was on what plans were to be achieved within a specific period. The analysis here recorded any reference to a specific goal, e.g. "I bought a white BMW-ZA3 car" or "I was earning R100 000 per month". To score these subcategories, the coders were to record every reference to these statements. Then, at the end of each essay, the coders were to record the actual number of these statements in the essay as a whole.

- **Ego-fantasy statements**

Ego-fantasy statements can be defined as statements about the writer's future which refer to events that are highly improbable under the existing social and economic conditions. These were aims or expectations which were regarded as very unlikely to be realised or fulfilled within a specific period and age. In this category the analysis was based on the statements where the essay writers referred to achievements that were highly improbable because of existing social,

economic, and ideological conditions. The coders were to analyse the statements according to whether an essay writer could achieve those goals within a specific *time, age, and economic and social* backgrounds. e. g. "When I was 25 I had bought four expensive cars, and owned a big hotel". Some of these statements might be expressed in the form of *luck, chance, or fortune*. The coders had to look at the source through which these goals were expected to be achieved, e. g. "Luckily I won a Lotto prize of R4 million" or "I got a bursary to study overseas". To score this category, the coders had to record every reference to these statements. At the end of the essay the coders were to record the actual number of these statements.

- **Non-career aspirations**

Non-career aspirations are those the aspirations that the essay writers viewed as major achievements in their lives given their socio-economic conditions. The following subcategories were analysed: a) *artistic aspirations*, i. e. refer to those artistic achievements like music, sports, and other activities which involve art and creativity. These achievement included statements like, "I became a musician". The second subcategory was: b) *religious aspirations*, i. e. these are the religious achievements that the essay writer wishes to achieve in the future. Achievement in such field were expressed in the statements like: "Eventually I was appointed as a bishop of my church". Another subcategory was: c) *political aspirations*, i. e. these are the statements about political achievements that one wants to achieve in life, these may include political activism, e. g. "I was elected as the first female president of this country." Another category was: d) *social aspirations*, i. e. these are the statements about the social goals that the writer planned to achieve in life, e. g. "Having finished my studies, I had to come back and serve my communities, and I won the prize as a community builder of the year". The focus here was not on whether they are realistic or not but the focus was on the type of achievement.

Danziger (1963) said that young people tended to express a low degree of concern with aspirations that are irrelevant to personal success in a career. In other words, "ego motivation" and not "task motivation" tended to predominate. To score this category, the coders had to record every reference to non-career aspirations. At the end of the essay they were to record the total number of these aspirations expressed in the essay.

- **Economic interest**

In this category, the analysis was of expressed interest in investment and profitable activities. Again the focus here was not on whether the aspirations were realistic or not but was on the type of economic achievement desired by the essay writer. There were two subcategories of statements: a) *job income*, namely, interest in the income or the salary anticipated from the essay writer's future job situation, expressed for example as "I was employed as a managing director of Unilever and I was getting a lot of money". The second one was: b) *business interests*, i. e. these are the interests that the essay writer plans to achieve in the future, e. g. "When I was 35, I decided to start my own business".

To score this category, the coders had as in the case of the category of non-career values, to record every reference to these interests. Again as above, at the end of the essay they were to record the total number of these statements in the.

- **Contingency statements**

Contingency statements are statements which refer to those achievements which may possible, but not certainly because of the role chance or uncontrollable circumstances. Danziger (1963a) mentions that there is a tendency for participants who adopt a realistic and calculating attitude to life's possibilities to point out that certain aspects of their life plans are contingent on the fulfilment of certain conditions. Such statements may be detected in the autobiographies because of the use of characteristic terms such as "provided that", "presuming that", "whether", "if" "depending on",

"dependent on", "in spite of", "provisional", etc. Again also in scoring this category, the coders had to record all the relevant references, finally reading the total number of these statements.

- **Objective time reference**

Objective time reference applies to the use of time within specific social and economic conditions. This was assessed according to the way participants' use of a strict time reference for their activities. These references were divided into three subcategories: a) *date reference*, namely, the references to series of dates over time e. g. "In 2010, my first child was born"; b) *age references*, namely, the references that essay writers make about their future goals, e. g. "When I was 30 I got married", and c) *time periods*, namely, the periods that the students set for themselves, e. g. "I stayed overseas for three years". Danziger (1963) says these references need not to be altogether precise. What is important is the use of quantitative a reference system which is independent of status of feeling and which indicates some attempt at the rational utilization of time. To score this category, the coders yet again recorded the total number of the statements.

- **Time structure**

This refers to the way essay writers tend to structure the future in terms of temporally distinct, successive phases in a well-ordered manner. A poor time structuring will be characterized by poor time sequence and unclear distinction between certain periods. A good time structure will be characterised by stages ranging from matric to graduation. Stages will follow each other realistically in an order such as: junior position in a firm; setting up one's own business; branching out on new investment; retirement and public activity. To score this category, the coders were to read the whole of the essay first and then give 0 for no time structure, 1 for *poor* time structuring, and 2 for *good* time structure. At the end of the essay they recorded the total number of these statements in the essay.

- **Spatial reference**

Spatial reference refers to statements that the essay writers use to show the places in which they want to achieve their future goals. Spatial references could be: a) *writers' current locality* as the one which they want to achieve their aspirations. A score of 1 was given when essay writers aimed at achieving their aspirations in their current place; b) *any place within South Africa other than the writers' current locality*. A score of 2 was recorded for essay writers who indicated that they wanted to achieve their goals in any place in South Africa other than the one in which they were currently resident; and c) *any place outside South Africa*. It could be a place in a neighbouring country e. g. Mozambique, Swaziland, Lesotho, or further afield on the African continent or abroad, such as in the USA, UK, France, etc. A score of 3 was given when essay writers indicated that they would like to achieve their aspirations outside the Republic of South Africa. A score of 4 was given to writers who mentioned two or three of these places, e. g. "After my studies I came back to my local place....after some years I bought a house in Durban where I stayed with my family for ten years, and then I left the country". A score of 0 was given if there was had no spatial reference whatever in the essay.

- **Return after migration**

The coders were to note whether the essay writers who aspired to leave the country eventually come back or not. Those who wanted to migrate and *not* come back to South Africa were given a score of 1; those who migrated but came back were given a score of 2; those who indicated that they did not want to migrate were given a score of 0.

- **Racial constraints**

Racial constraints refer to statements which refer to race as an enabling or disabling factor in achieving one's goals. The felt constraints might be *manifest*, readily seen or understood, e. g. "White people had no place in the New South Africa" or "As black people we had to come together and fight against poverty". Sometimes, however the sense of constraint could be *latent*, not readily

evident or realized because of the way they are presented, e. g. "Although we were away, our wedding was a traditional Indian wedding" or "It was not easy, as an African, to convince Europeans as an African". Some of these statements might be made when the essay writers spoke about the government's policies e.g. Affirmative Action, Employment Equity Act. All references were recorded and totalled.

- **Economic constraints**

Economic constraints refer to statements which make economic conditions *enabling* or *disabling* factors for achieving success, e. g. "I had to find a job before I went to university". Some essay writers might refer to their family's economic situation rather than to themselves, e.g. "My family couldn't afford my education expenses." To score this category, all references and their total number had to be recorded.

- **Gender constraints**

Gender constraints refer to statements which use gender as an enabling or disabling factor reaching success, e. g. "As a woman I had to work hard" or "I had to come back and get married so that I would become a mother". To score this category, the coders were to record every reference to these statements. Then at the end of the essay they have to record the actual number of these statements in the essay.

- **Kinds of jobs**

The coders have to record all kinds of jobs that the essay writer wanted to do. The scoring is as follows:

- 0 = No reference to job aspirations in the whole essay
- 1 = No profession, but self-employment e. g. starting your own business, or becoming an artist or musician, or becoming a criminal.
- 2 = Professional jobs with some university credits, e. g. a teacher, a doctor, an engineer,

- 3= Technical jobs, e.g. a technician, a fashion designer, a soldier.
- 4= Other job categories which do not fall to any of the above categories.

- **Marital status**

There are two subcategories that the coders had to record: a) they were to identify whether the essay writer *did not wish to get married (0), wished to get married (1), or wished to get married and divorced (2)*; b) they were to record the *age* at which the essay writers wished to get married. To score this, the coders were to record the actual age of the essay writer.

- **Number of Children expected**

There were two subcategories. The coders were required to record: a) the *number* of children that the essay writer wished to have whether married or not; b) the *gender* of the children that the essay writer wished to have. The coders were to score 1 for males, 2 for females, 3 for both male and female children.

All the coded data were entered on the SPSS programme for analysis. The inter-rater reliability among the coders was found to be .95 (See Appendix A for more details). The following chapter will focus on the analysis which was produced using this programme.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

The analysis was done to try to answer the questions asked at the beginning of the research project. To begin with, the analysis was started by checking whether there was any significant association between some of the major variables which were to be used in almost the entire analysis.

#### 4. 1. Association between race and SES

Since the socio-economic status of the students could not be easily studied simply by asking students to gauge their SES, a short demographic questionnaire was used (See Appendix C). This questionnaire consisted of a set of questions (i. e. Section A: Questions 5, 6, and 8. Section B: Questions 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11) which were thought to be good measures of SES. To form an SES measure only those items in Section B of the demographic questionnaire were used.

Questions 5, 6, and 8 were eliminated because they did not use "Yes" or "No" responses which made it impossible to include them in the calculation of the SES measurement. Then these items were summed up. Using standard deviation and the mean, the total score of the SES items was divided into Low, Middle and Upper SES. To check the reliability of items, Cronbach's alpha was calculated after the analysis had been conducted, and it was found to be .74 which is an acceptable item reliability value (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996).

Using the SES measure, the associations between race and SES was then investigated. The hypothesis was that there was no significant association between race and SES. The Chi-square test was performed and the results are reported in the Table 7.

**Table 7: Association between race and SES**

		Low	Middle	Upper	df	Chi-square	p value
<b>Black</b>	Count	54	56	34	4	103.064	.000
	Residual	24.9	12.9	-37.7			
	Std. Residual	4.6	2.0	-4.5			
<b>White</b>	Count	11	10	23			
	Residual	-16.0	-13.7	29.6			
	Std. Residual	-4.0	-2.8	4.2			
<b>Indian</b>	Count	5	10	59			
	Residual	-8.9	.8	8.1			
	Std. Residual	-3.0	.2	1.7			

*Cramer's V = .439*

Table 7 shows that the hypothesis is rejected, and we can conclude that there is a significant association between the race of the students and their SES. Race thus served as a determining factor of the SES of the students. Follow up test shows that there is a difference between Indian and black students, between white students and black students and between Indian students and white students.

#### **4. 2. School and SES**

Since counts in some cells do not allow a Chi-square analysis of the association between students' schools and their SES, only the percentages of the schools and SES distribution are reported in Table 8.

**Table 8: School and SES**

	Low%	Middle%	High%
Historically white A	1.3	19	79.7
Rural	63.6	29.9	6.5
Township	6.5	54.8	38.7
Historically white B	4.9	24.4	70.7
Former Indian	20.2	30	49

Table 8 shows that most students from historically white schools belong to high SES compared to other schools. The results also shows that 80% of the students who are in the historically white schools are in the upper SES whereas the majority of those who attend the other three schools belong either to middle or low SES. What is also interesting is that most of the rural school students are in the low SES whereas only a few of the township school students belong to the low SES. Lastly, there are more former Indian school students who are in the low SES than township school students. There are, however, more former Indian school students in the upper SES than township school students.

#### **4. 3. Association between gender and SES**

To determine whether there was any association between gender and SES, a Chi-square test was performed. The hypothesis was that there was no significant association between gender and SES. The results are summarised in Table 9.

**Table 9: Association between gender and SES**

	Low%	Middle%	Upper%	df	Chi-square	p value
Male	18.5	25.2	56.3	2	4.777	.092
Female	22	34.8	43.2			

Cramer's V = .134

The results show that the null hypothesis should be accepted. This means that there is no significant association between gender and SES. Students' gender could not be associated with their socio-economic status.

#### 4. 4. Correlation of the major dependent variables

##### 4. 4. 1. Correlation between *realistic* and *ego-fantasy* statements

The relationship between the major dependent variables was investigated to determine any significant relationship between *realistic* statements and *ego-fantasy* (unrealistic) statements.

**Table 10: Correlation between variables of aspirations**

	Realistic statements	Personal statements	Specific statements	Ego fantasy statements
Realistic statements		.624 <sup>1</sup>	.357 <sup>1</sup>	-.204 <sup>2</sup>
Personal statements			.353 <sup>1</sup>	-.074 <sup>3</sup>
Specific statements				.064 <sup>4</sup>
Ego fantasy				

<sup>1</sup>p = .000      <sup>2</sup>p = .001      <sup>3</sup>p = .225      <sup>4</sup>p = .301

Table 10 shows that there is a significant correlation between personal statements and realistic statements. There is also a significant correlation between social statements and realistic statements, and between social statements and personal statements. What is interesting is a significant negative correlation between ego-fantasy (unrealistic) statements and realistic statements. This negative relationship shows that the more the respondents have ego-fantasy statements, the fewer the realistic statements they make, vice versa. The correlation between ego-

fantasy statements and personal statements, and the correlation between ego-fantasy statements and social statements is, however, not statistically significant.

#### 4. 4. 2. Correlation between realistic, ego-fantasy, and date reference statements

The variables which are measures of *realistic* aspirations were added up and correlated with the sum of the variables which were found to measures of date, period or time that the students set for themselves to achieve their future aspirations.

Table 11: Correlation between realistic, ego-fantasy, and date reference statements

	Realistic statements	Value statements	Contingency statements	Date/Time statements	Ego-fantasy statements
Realistic statements		.158 <sup>1</sup>	.222 <sup>2</sup>	.385 <sup>2</sup>	-.135 <sup>3</sup>
Value statements			.150 <sup>1</sup>	.202 <sup>2</sup>	.204 <sup>4</sup>
Contingency statements				.173 <sup>1</sup>	-.046 <sup>5</sup>
Date/Time statements					-.039 <sup>5</sup>
Ego-fantasy statements					

<sup>1</sup>p = .010    <sup>2</sup>p = .000    <sup>3</sup>p = .025    <sup>4</sup>p = .001    <sup>5</sup>p = .453

The results show that there is a significant correlation between economic value statements and realistic statements, and between contingency statements and realistic statements. There is a strong correlation between date or time references and realistic statements. The respondents who made more realistic statements showed more date references than those respondents who did not. However, the relationship between ego fantasy statements and contingency statements is not statistically significant.

#### **4. 5. Effects of SES, race and gender on aspirations**

The effects of SES, race and gender on aspirations were analysed. Since there was no equal distribution of students in different schools, running ANOVA using school as an independent variable would violate the assumptions of the test. As a result, the school was eliminated in the analysis. The analysis was aimed at looking at the effects of race, gender and SES on the realistic aspirations.

##### **4. 5. 1. Effects of SES, gender and race on realistic aspirations**

To check any significant differences in aspirations as a result of SES, race and gender, the ANOVA test was performed. Before the test was applied, three realistic aspirations variables were added up to form one response variable of the realistic aspirations. To check normality of the dependent variable, a histogram was plotted (See Appendix E). To check the equality of the variance across all groups, Levene's test was performed. The test showed that there was equality of variance ( $F=1.410$ ,  $df_1=13$ ,  $df_2=253$ ,  $p=.155$ ). The results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12a: Effects of SES, gender and race on realistic aspirations

Descriptive statistics

Gender	Race	SES	Mean	SD	N
Male	Black	Low	2.8667	1.4035	25
		Middle	3.2692	1.9855	26
		High	3.6146	2.1053	16
		Total	3.2015	1.8173	67
	Indian	Middle	3.3333	1.7401	3
		High	3.2308	1.8578	13
		Total	3.2500	1.7795	16
	White	Middle	3.9000	2.1877	5
		High	4.1454	2.3064	47
		Total	4.1218	2.2757	52
	Total	Low	2.8667	1.4035	25
		Middle	3.3676	1.9496	34
		High	3.8772	2.1985	76
		Total	3.5617	2.0373	135
	Female	Black	Low	2.9310	1.6771
Middle			3.0944	1.6492	30
High			2.7037	1.2401	18
Total			2.9416	1.5622	77
Indian		Middle	3.4545	1.0384	11
		High	3.5294	1.3885	17
		Total	3.5000	1.2423	28
White		Middle	3.6667	1.4767	5
		High	3.8106	2.2732	22
		Total	3.7840	2.1242	27
Total		Low	2.9310	1.6771	29
		Middle	3.2428	1.4939	46
		High	3.3772	1.7838	57
		Total	3.2323	1.6605	132
Total		Black	Low	2.9012	1.5424
	Middle		3.1756	1.7983	56
	High		3.1324	1.7378	34
	Total		3.0625	1.6847	144
	Indian	Middle	3.4286	1.1393	14
		High	3.4000	1.5857	30
		Total	3.4091	1.4451	44
	White	Middle	3.7833	1.7639	10
		High	4.0386	2.2845	69
		Total	4.0063	2.2173	79
	Total	Low	2.9012	1.5424	54
		Middle	3.2958	1.6920	80
		High	3.6629	2.0391	133
		Total	3.3989	1.8644	267

### Main Effects

	F value	df	p value
SES	3.442	2	.033
Gender	2.092	1	.149
Race	6.824	2	.001

N = 267

Table 12 shows that students in different SES have a significant difference in the reality of students' aspirations. Bonferroni's test shows a statistically significant difference between students in the upper SES and those in the low SES. When the means are analysed, they show that students in the upper SES have more realistic aspirations than those in other levels of SES. (See Appendix D), while those students who belong to the middle SES also have more realistic aspirations than those in the low SES.

Table 12a also reveals a statistically significant difference among the groups from three racial groups in relation to their realistic aspirations. A significant difference is also found between the means of white (4.0063), Indian (3.4091), and black (3.0625). White students have more realistic aspirations than their Indian and black counterparts.

To determine where the difference lies, Bonferroni's test was performed. The results show that the mean differences between white students and black students (mean = .9438) and the differences between the means of white students and Indian students (mean = .5972) is statistically significant. The difference between the means of black students and Indian students (mean difference = .3466) is also statistically significant.

In addition, race is found to have a significant effect on specific aspirations. The means of the three racial groups are as follows: white = 2.1821, Indian = 1.9156, and black = 1.2871. White students show more specific aspirations than their Indian and black counterparts. Bonferroni's test reveals that the difference between white students and black students (mean difference = .6877) is

statistically significant. But the mean difference between Indian students and white students (mean difference = .5643) and the difference between Indian students and black students (mean difference = .1234) are not statistically significant.

There is no significant difference between the means of the two gender groups. This is evident in their means: Male = 2.0373 and Female = 1.6605. While male students seem to have more realistic aspirations than the female students, the difference is not statistically significant.

The significant effect of race, gender and SES was also investigated using backward multiple regression. The results are summarised in Table 12.

**Table 12: Effects of SES, gender, school and race on the reality aspirations**

Model	Unstandardized	Std. Error	Standardized	T	Sig.
	Coefficients Beta		Coefficients Beta		
<b>1 Gender</b>	4.937	.216	.013	.228	.820
<b>Race</b>	.191	.098	.139	1.952	.052
<b>SES</b>	.267	.170	.112	1.569	.118
<b>2 Race</b>	.281	.074	.205	3.638	.000
<b>SES</b>	.201	.077	.221	3.789	.000

The results show that when race, gender and SES are put together, they show no significant effects on the reality of aspirations. However, when gender is eliminated, race and SES have significant effects on the reality of aspirations.

**4. 5. 2. Effects of school, SES, race and gender on ego-fantasy statements**

There was an analysis to check any significant differences in ego-fantasy statements as a result of school, SES, gender and race. The hypothesis was that students of different schools, SES, race and gender would not differ in their ego fantasy statements. Since our dependent variable was not normally distributed, Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests were used, and the results are summarised in Table 13.

**Table 13: Effects of school, gender, race, and SES on ego-fantasy (unrealistic) statements**

**Analysis of gender using Kruskal-Wallis test**

	School	N	Mean rank
<b>Ego fantasy statements</b>	Historically white School A	79	96.14
	Rural school	77	165.12
	Township school	31	164.50
	Historically white school B	41	110.70
	Indian school	39	124.99

**Test statistics**

	Ego-fantasy statements
<b>Chi-square</b>	39.738
<b>Df</b>	4
<b>Sig.</b>	.000

**Analysis of gender using Mann-Whitney**

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean rank</b>	<b>Sum of ranks</b>
<b>Sum of ego fantasy statements</b>	Male	135	129.73	17513.00
	Female	132	138.37	18265.00
	Total	267		

**Test statistics**

		<b>Sum of ego fantasy statements</b>
<b>Mann-Whitney U</b>		8333.00
<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>		.354

**Analysis of SES using Kruskal-Wallis test**

	<b>SES</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean rank</b>
<b>Sum of ego fantasy statements</b>	Low	54	162.38
	Middle	80	143.62
	High	133	116.69

**Test statistics**

		<b>Sum of ego fantasy statements</b>
<b>Chi-square</b>		15.638
<b>Df</b>		2
<b>Sig.</b>		.000

**Analysis of race using Kruskal-Wallis test**

	Race	N	Mean rank
<b>Sum of ego fantasy statements</b>	Black	144	157.38
	Indian	44	145.03
	White	79	97.89

**Test statistics**

<b>Ego-fantasy statements</b>	
<b>Chi-square</b>	25.551
<b>Df</b>	2
<b>Sig.</b>	.000

Table 13 shows that there is a significant difference between the students in different schools in relation to their ego-fantasy statements. Looking at their means the results show that the rural and township school students have more ego-fantasy statements than the other students.

Table 13 also shows no significant difference between students of different gender groups. This is also evident in their means which seem to be slightly different.

The results also reveal that there is a significant effect of SES on the production of ego-fantasy (unrealistic) aspirations. Looking at the mean differences, the results demonstrate that there is a difference between the students in the low SES and those in the upper SES, and between those in the upper SES and those in the middle SES. There is also a difference between the students in the low SES and those in the middle SES.

The results also demonstrate that students in different racial group have different degrees of unrealistic aspirations. The analysis reveals that black students have more unrealistic aspirations than white and Indian students. What is remarkable is a slight difference between Indian and black students.

#### **4. 5. 3. Differences in 'non-career' aspirations**

Four non-career aspirations were investigated, namely, social, artistic, religious, and political aspirations. The analysis was done to determine any significant effect of school, SES, race, and gender on 'non-career' aspirations.

**Table 14: Effects of school, race, SES and gender on 'no career' aspirations**

	Chi-square value	df	p value
<b>Artistic aspirations</b>			
School	20.831	4	.000
SES	2.693	2	.260
Gender	7954.000		.016
Race	6.678	2	.035
<b>Political aspirations</b>			
School	6.401	4	.171
SES	1.138	2	.566
Gender	8720.000		.551
Race	.079	2	.778
<b>Social aspirations</b>			
School	33.147	4	.000
SES	9.434	2	.009
Gender	8715.000		.711
Race	5.205	2	.023
<b>Religious aspirations</b>			
School	25.167	4	.000
SES	1.438	2	.487
Gender	8591.000		.370
Race	24.765	2	.000

Table 14 shows that students differ in their artistic aspirations in as a result of different schools, racial and gender categories. Looking at the means, Kruskal-Wallis test shows that historically white school A (mean = 147.67) and historically white school B (mean = 150.77) have more artistic aspirations than the rural school (mean = 120.71), township school (mean = 127.40), and Indian school (mean = 120.17). White students (mean = 145.73) have more artistic aspirations than Indian (mean = 130.86) and black (mean = 128.52) students. Mann-Whitney test reveals that there are more male students (mean = 141.08) who have artistic aspirations than female students

(mean = 126.76).

Using Kruskal-Wallis test, the results show that there is no significant effect of SES, school, race and gender on political aspirations.

Kruskal-Wallis test, once again, shows a significant difference among students in different schools in relation to their social aspirations. The differences between the means revealed that the students in the rural school (mean = 162.94) hold more social aspirations than the township (mean = 154.65), the former Indian (mean = 122.82), the historically white school A (mean = 118.48), and the historically white school B (mean = 104.51). Interestingly, however, the township school and the rural school had very similar scores on social aspirations. The test also shows a significant difference in social aspirations as a result of different racial categories. The differences between the means show that black students (mean = 147.98) have more social aspirations than Indian (mean = 121.20) and white (mean = 115.65) students. The results show a significant difference in social aspirations of students in different SES. When the means of these groups were compared, one could see that students in the lower SES (mean = 152.03) tend to have more social aspirations than their middle SES (mean = 140.96) and upper SES (mean = 122.50) counterparts. However, the effect of gender on social aspirations is found to be statistically not significant.

Lastly, our results show that there is a significant difference between schools in religious aspirations. The former Indian school (mean = 162.73) seem to have more religious aspirations than the historically white school A (mean = 136.91), the rural school (mean = 124.96), the township school (mean = 118), and the historically white school B (130.73). There is also a significant difference between the students of different racial groups. However, the results show no significant difference between male and female students, and between students of different SES in their religious aspirations.

#### 4. 5. 4. Differences in economic interests

There was an analysis of the effects of school, gender, race and SES on the economic aspirations that students aspired to achieve in their future. The hypothesis was that there was a no difference between the students in their economic interest. The dependent variable did not meet the assumptions of normality and the homogeneity of variance. Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests were used instead, and the results are summarised in Table 15.

**Table 15: Effects of race, gender and SES on economic interest**

	Chi-square	Df	p value
School	22.622	4	.000
Gender	8115.500		.157
Race	6.992	2	.001
SES	3.437	2	.179

The results show that there is a significant difference in economic interests of the students in different schools. Analysis of the means reveals that students in the historically white school A (mean = 164.22) have more economic interests than the rural (mean = 133.47), township (mean = 105.90), historically white school B (mean = 115.90) and Indian (mean = 115.21) schools. The results also showed that there is a significant difference between the three racial groups in their economic aspirations. Analysis of the means shows that white students (mean = 157.08) have more economic interests than black (mean = 125.40) and Indian (mean = 120.70) students. However, the results show no significant difference between the groups in different SES and gender groups. The SES to which the students belonged seemed to have no effect on their economic aspirations. The same is the case with gender where being a male or a female has no statistically significant effect on the economic aspirations.

#### 4. 5. 5. Uncertainty about the future

There was an investigation into whether the school, SES, race and gender had effects on contingency statements. The hypothesis was that there was no significant difference between the groups as a result of their different schools, race, gender and SES. Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis, were used. The results are summarised in Table 16.

**Table 16: Effects of race, gender, SES and school on contingency statements**

	Mean	Chi-square	Df	p value
<b>School</b>				
Historically white A	122.08	48.263	4	.000
Rural	155.51			
Township	135.21			
Historically white B	75.91			
Former Indian	175.78			
<b>Race</b>				
Black	161.41	25.296	2	.000
Indian	143.73			
White	100.99			
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	133.74	8875.000		.953
Female	134.27			
<b>SES</b>				
Low	152.47	11.377	2	.003
Middle	142.63			
Upper	119.39			

Kruskal-Wallis' test shows a significant difference between the schools as to their contingency statements. Kruskal-Wallis' test also reveals that there is a significant difference between the three racial groups. The mean differences show that more black students made contingency statements than was the case with the two other racial groups. Indian students seem to make more

contingency statements than white students. Further, using Mann-Whitney's test, the results show no significant effect of gender on contingency statements. This is also evident when the means of the gender groups are inspected. Finally, Kruskal-Wallis' test also shows that there is a significant effect of SES on contingency statements. The means show that students in the lower SES tend to make more contingency statements than their middle and upper SES counterparts.

#### **4. 5. 6. Differences in time references**

By time reference, once again, we mean the times at which students refer to date, age and time period. The study aimed at determining the significant difference between students from different schools, racial groups, gender and SES in their reference to time. Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests were used to determine the difference. The results are summarised in Table 17.

**Table 17: Effects of school, SES, race, gender and race on time reference**

	<b>F value</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>p value</b>
<b>School</b>			
Date reference	12.511	4	.014
Age reference	21.818	4	.000
Time period reference	27.599	4	.000
<b>Race</b>			
Date reference	.161	2	.688
Age reference	4.016	2	.045
Time period reference	6.919	2	.001
<b>SES</b>			
Date reference	3.807	2	.149
Age reference	3.511	2	.042
Time period reference	2.280	2	.131
<b>Gender</b>			
Date reference	8589.500		.585
Age reference	8210.500		.256
Time period reference	8083.000		.188

Firstly, the results show that there is a significant difference between the schools in their date references, age references, and time period references. The results show that historically white school A (mean = 150.90) has more date references than rural (mean = 131.86), township (mean = 130.53), historically white B (mean = 102.79), and Indian (mean = 139.56) schools. Historically white school A (mean = 153.70) and Indian school (mean = 157.68) have more age references than rural school (mean = 105.32), township school (mean = 141.76) and historically white school B (mean = 121.52). Historically white school A (mean = 166.47) and Indian school (mean = 149.62) have more time period references than rural school (mean = 113.42), historically white school B (mean = 119.18) and Indian school (mean = 106.62).

Secondly, the results show that there is no significant difference in date references as a result of different racial categories. The difference that is related to racial categories is only found in age references and time period references. Looking at the means, one can see that there are differences in age between black (mean = 125.67), Indian (mean = 138.92), and white (mean = 152.42). There are also mean differences in time references between black (mean = 119.93), Indian (mean = 139.77), and white (mean = 156.44). This shows that although students do not differ significantly in date reference, but white students are much more certain than black and Indian students about age and time period at which they want to achieve their aspirations.

Thirdly, Kruskal-Wallis test reveals that there are no significant differences between students of different SES in relation to date references and time period references. The only difference that is related to different SES is found in age references. The means show that students in high SES (mean = 143.44) have more age references than middle SES (mean = 134.39) and low SES (mean = 110.18) students.

Lastly, Mann-Whitney test shows that students do not differ in their date, age and time period references in relation to their gender differences. Gender does not make any difference to these students in term of their date and time in which they wish to fulfil their aspirations.

#### **4. 5. 7. Association between school, SES, race, gender and school and time structure**

Time structure refers to the way students structure their time to achieve their future aspirations. To investigate whether there was a significant association between school, SES, race and gender and time structure, a Chi-Square test was performed. The results are reported in Table 18.

**Table 18: Association between school, SES, race, and gender and time structure**

	Chi-square	Df	p value	Cramer's V
<b>School</b>	19.521	8	.021	.191
<b>Race</b>	14.636	4	.006	.166
<b>SES</b>	.895	4	.925	.041
<b>Gender</b>	.335	2	.846	.035

The results show that there is a strong association between school and time structure, and between race and time structure. This is evident when one looks at the percentage in time structure of these schools. For instance, 15.4% of the middle SES schools have students who have poor time structure. But 50.6% of the rural school students were regarded as having poor time structure in their aspirations. The township school is next with 44.3% of the students showing poor time structure. There is a huge difference in time structure between black students (43.8%) and white students (18.2%) and Indian (35.4%). The results show, however, that there was no significant association between students' SES and gender and time structure.

#### **4. 5. 8. Differences in spatial references**

Spatial reference refers to the place in which the students wanted to achieve their future aspirations. Whether within the Republic of South Africa, or elsewhere in Africa or abroad. There was an investigation to determine any significant association between students' race, schools, SES and gender and their spatial references. The Chi-square test was performed and the results are shown in the table below.

**Table 19: Association between SES, race, gender, and school on spatial reference**

		No spatial reference%	Local place of writer%	Any place in RSA%	Outside RSA%
<b>School<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Historically white A</b>	24.1	7.6	7.6	60.8
	<b>Rural</b>	11.7	33.8	33.8	20.8
	<b>Township</b>	6.5	9.7	74.2	9.7
	<b>Historically white B</b>	14.6	12.2	24.4	48
	<b>Former Indian</b>	12.8	17.9	10.3	59
<b>Race<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Black</b>	18.1	20.8	39.6	21.5
	<b>Indian</b>	13.6	15.9	11.4	59.1
	<b>White</b>	11.4	12.7	8.9	67.1
<b>SES<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Lower</b>	16.7	27.8	35.2	20.4
	<b>Middle</b>	16.3	20	32.5	31.3
	<b>Higher</b>	14.3	12	18	35.6
<b>Gender<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>Male</b>	20.7	14.8	18.5	45.9
	<b>Female</b>	9.8	20.5	33.3	36.4

<sup>1</sup>Chi-square = 94.017 df = 12 p < .000 Cramer's V = .381

<sup>2</sup>Chi-square = 56.302 df = 6 p < .000 Cramer's V = .325

<sup>3</sup>Chi-square = 26.650 df = 6 p < .000 Cramer's V = .223

<sup>4</sup>Chi-square = 13.512 df = 3 p < .004 Cramer's V = .225

The results show a significant association between school, race, gender and SES and spatial references. The above table also gives us the percentages of students who want to pursue their aspirations in their own locality, elsewhere in South Africa and outside South Africa. It is clear that most of the students in the rural school want to achieve their aspirations in their own locality or somewhere in South Africa. Students in the historically white school A, former Indian school, and the historically white school B, however, wish to achieve their goals outside South Africa. The

students in the township school like those in the rural school, wish to realise their aspirations in South Africa. But unlike the other groups, they do not wish to realise their aspirations in their own localities but elsewhere.

The analysis also reveal that there is a significant association between race and spatial reference. This means that what students aspired for their future lives was shaped by their racial category. The results show, percentage-wise, that most of the white students and the Indian students want to leave the country in order to fulfil their aspirations. Black students want to fulfil their goals either in their own localities or elsewhere in South Africa. There is no doubt that SES and race can be used to explain these differences in spatial aspirations.

The results show that most of the upper SES students want to achieve their aspirations outside South Africa. The low SES and the middle SES students want to achieve their aspirations either in their local places or anywhere within the RSA. Finally, the results show a significant association between gender and spatial reference. The results show us that most of the male students want to go abroad, while most of the female students want to achieve their aspirations either in their own localities or elsewhere in SA.

#### **4. 5. 9. Differences in perception of social and economic constraints**

Gender, racial and economic constraints were reported by the students to be main barriers or obstacles against their desired aspirations. The investigations tried to determine any feelings of constraint could indeed be significantly influenced by students' SES, race, gender, and the schools they attended. The results are reported in Table 20.

**Table 20: Effects of SES, race, gender and school on social and economic achievement**

	Chi-square	Df	p value
<b>School</b>			
Gender constraint	2.963	4	.564
Economic constraint	25.687	4	.000
Racial	15.702	4	.003
<b>SES</b>			
Gender constraint	2.840	2	.242
Economic constraint	14.316	2	.001
Racial	1.543	2	.462
<b>Race</b>			
Gender constraint	7.219	2	.027
Economic constraint	3.204	2	.201
Racial	13.071	2	.001
<b>Gender</b>			
Gender constraint	7961.000		.002
Economic constraint	8471.500		.456
Racial	8624.500		.379

Kruskal-Wallis' test show, firstly, that the school has a significant effect. The means of the five schools reveal that the rural school (mean = 159.69) have more references to economic constraints than do the students in the township school (mean = 137.35), the historically white school A (mean = 132.24), the former Indian school (mean = 131.12), and the historically white school B (mean = 89.35). Looking at how the students from the different schools differ in their feelings of racial constraint, the results show that the former Indian school (mean = 152.09) report more racial constraints than the others. The students in the rural school (mean = 140.06) also have more references to racial constraints than the historically white school B (mean = 127.29), the historically white school A (mean = 126.11), and the township school (mean = 125.16). The results are not however statistically significant.

Again, using Kruskal-Wallis' test, the results show that there is a significant effect of the SES on the students' feelings of economic constraints. The students who belong to the lower SES students (mean = 153.08) and the middle SES students (mean = 148.86) have more feelings of economic constraints than their upper SES (mean = 117.31) counterparts. However, the results show no significant difference among three different SES groups as to their feelings of gender constraints and racial constraints.

The effect of race on feelings of gender and racial constraint are found to be statistically significant. Kruskal-Wallis' test reveals that there is a significant difference between the groups. Analysis of the means reveals that black (mean = 137.90) and Indian (mean = 137.99) students have experienced greater feelings of gender constraints than white students (mean 124.66). On the other hand, the analysis of the means in relation to the feelings of racial constraints reveals that there are more Indian students (mean = 151.49) than black (mean = 133.88) and white (mean = 124.48) students who report racial constraints as barriers towards the achievement of their aspirations. Overall, however, the results show that race does not have a statistically significant effect on the students' feelings of economic constraints.

Lastly, using Mann-Whitney, the results reveal that there is a significant effect of gender on the feelings of gender constraints. An analysis of the means reveal that there are more female students (mean = 141.19) than male students (mean = 126.95) who report gender constraints in their aspirations. But gender is not found to have a significant effect on feelings of economic and racial constraints.

#### **4. 5. 10. Expected family structure**

An analysis was done on the students' expected family structures. The analysis focussed on whether the students aspire to get married, the age at which they wished to get married, and the number of children they anticipated having. An investigation was conducted to determine any

significant association between students' expected family structures and their SES, gender, and race. The Chi-square test was employed, and the results are summarised in Table 2.

**Table 21: Association between SES, race, gender and school and marital status**

	Chi-square	Df	p value	Cramer's V
Race	6.812	4	.146	.113
SES	8.440	4	.077	.126
Gender	1.174	2	.558	.066
School	2.134	4	.112	.121

The results show that there is no significant association between SES, gender, race and school and marriage aspirations.

An investigation of the possible association of gender, race, school and SES with the gender of expected children was also investigated. A Chi-square test was performed and the results are shown in Table 22.

**Table 22: Association between school, gender, race and SES and gender of expected child(ren)**

	Chi-square	Df	p value	Cramer's V
School	40.290	12	.000	.224
Gender	9.410	3	.024	.188
Race	8.977	6	.175	.130
SES	5.732	6	.454	.104

Table 22 reveals that there is a significant association between the school of students and the gender of expected children. A significant association is found also between gender of the students and the gender of the expected children. But, there is no significant association between the race of the students and the gender of the expected child(ren), or between the SES of the students and the gender of the expected children.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 5. 1. Introduction

South Africa has a democracy, with widely recognized social inequality. Although South Africa is now free from apartheid and colonialism, the legacy of past social inequalities still lingers in most social and economic institutions; and it will remain with us for some time. The legacy of the discriminatory laws still prevails, and it is clearly manifested. Education was one of the social institutions at the core of the apartheid regime (Danziger, 1963a). It cannot be separated from SES, and there is no doubt that in the past discriminatory laws pushed certain racial groups into inferior social and economic positions where, according to Danziger (1963b) they were expected to develop separately. These social and economic inequalities cannot be expected to evaporate simply because of the new dispensation. They are interconnected with social and economic structures. They are not only a problem for adults, but they still seem to shape the future lives of the youth.

The strong association between SES and race in the current study indicates that race still serves as a core determinant of a young person's social and economic position. The fact that many black students belonged to low SES compared with their Indian and white counterparts, shows that race still serves as a good predictor of young people's future status, despite the extinction of discriminatory laws. If most black youth belong to low SES, it means that almost half of the South African youth stills falls below the poverty line. If race and SES can have an impact on aspirations, there is no doubt that one may anticipate major differences in aspirations.

Although there is no statistically significant association which has been established between race and school but the percentages of black students in historically black schools, for instance, shows the enduring social and economic inequality among different racial groups in South Africa. It is

also an indicator of the legacy of the past social and political system. This perception is based on the evidence that if race can determine SES, then it is reasonable enough to say that race and SES determine the type of school which young South Africans are strategically allocated to. This perception is supported by Kerckhoff (1976) who says that in some societies, race and SES determine which types of school that young individuals are to attend. In these societies individuals are not free to achieve according to their talents, but are subject to social forces that identity and assign individuals according to externally imposed criteria Kerckhoff (1976). Kerckhoff's claim is applicable in South Africa where race and SES seem to be associated extensively with the type of the school that young people attend and the type of education they get from these schools which are to equip them for the future.

#### **5. 2. Relationship between *realistic* and *unrealistic* nature of aspirations**

The strong correlation between realistic statements and personal (but realistic) aspirations indicate that when young people have strong realistic aspirations, they also hold strong personal aspirations. This means that young people become more realistic because they refer to those plans that are personal rather than general and misty aspirations about their future aspirations. The positive correlation between realistic and specific aspirations further indicates that young people tend to be specific when they set plans that are realistic.

The significant correlation between realistic aspirations and value aspirations shows that the reality of young people's aspirations can be related to the value aspirations they make about their lives. What is also interesting is that the young people who have realistic aspirations tend to have a good time and date reference. This is obviously true that when people refer to those things they are sure and confident about them, they tend to be more exact than when they refer to those things which they are not certain about.

The study has further revealed that there is an inverse relationship between realistic and

unrealistic aspirations, and between time/date references and unrealistic aspirations. This is true because an individual is unlikely to have realistic aspirations while having many unrealistic aspirations. Danziger (1963) observes that young people who are unsure about the future tend to have more unrealistic aspirations and a poor time and date structure. He also observed that a highly structured autobiography tends to structure the future in terms of temporally distinct, successive phases in a well-ordered way. This means that some young people have a blurred, shapeless, and misty future while others have a well-structured one. Although this correlation tells us that there are relationships among the variables, it does not tell us which group of young people have realistic or unrealistic aspirations, and what makes one group differ from the other.

### **5. 3. Effects of SES, race and gender on realistic aspirations**

The significant effect of socio-economic status on realistic aspirations seems to support Wright and Perrone (1977) who indicate that young people are classified according to their SES, and think in terms of their social and economic stratification. These findings further support the idea that young people tend to think according to their knowledge or perception of the real world (Gaskell, 1955; McClelland, 1990). When young people are placed into certain SES categories, they then shape their thoughts and feelings to reflect these categories, hence their future aspirations. In this study the youth who belong to low SES show lesser realistic aspirations than those in the middle and upper SES. It can be argued that those young people who see themselves as unable to achieve because of their disabling social and economic backgrounds, they tend to think about anything they think is expected from them as future adults, and they think that by "luck" they can be able to achieve those future goals, despite their existing SES. In this way, they start to have more unrealistic aspirations than realistic aspirations. The SES of the youth serves as a shaping agent of their future aspirations.

The significant effect of SES on realistic aspirations means that SES still determines the future of young South Africans. Bourdieu (1973) states that educational systems are a major arena in which the structure of SES relations is perpetuated. According to Kerckhoff (1976), when students are classified according to externally imposed criteria, their aspirations for their future are affected by these observed constraints. The significant effect of SES on young people's aspirations suggests that young people in certain SES tend to develop systems of attitudes and perceptions that reflect the degree of realization of their future plans. Students from low SES, for instance, may think that their school is unable to equip them to fulfil their aspirations as a result their aspirations are affected.

It is noted that there is a significant effect of race on the reality of aspirations. The tendency of young white people to have more realistic aspirations than their Indian and black counterparts is firstly reported by Danziger (1963b) as early as 1963. It can be argued that the differences between white, Indian and black students in their realistic aspirations probably results from their encounter with the world to which they are exposed. Black youth, for instance, are aware of many social, political and economic constraints which might hinder their expectations about the future. Unlike the white youth, some black youth do not have 'significant others' whom they can think of them as their immediate role models for future achievements.

The insignificance of gender could mean that although gender could an important phenomenon in the lives of young people, but there are not statistically significant differences in their perception of it as a potential barrier in their future lives. This is contrary to Marini's (1984) and Denziger's (1958a; 1963b) claim that gender had a significant effect on the aspirations of the youth. These researchers that gender could bring differences in young people's future aspirations. These study has found similar findings to Mickelson's (1989) study which reported that there was no major significant effect of gender on aspirations. Mickelson also observed that the importance of gender in aspirations may be thought of as a problem only of older generations. This is true in the context

of the new South Africa where the issue of women's rights has become a major topic of social and political discussion. The youth growing up now may not see any restrictions which can be imposed by gender.

#### **5. 4. Effects of SES, school, race and gender on unrealistic aspirations**

SES, race and school significantly affect the nature of aspirations. The results of this study show that unrealistic aspirations are understood in terms of these factors. The evidence is that young people in the rural school tend to have more unrealistic aspirations than the youth in the urban schools. It can be argued that the rural youth is not exposed to the realities to which they aspire. It is also important to note that all the students in the rural school are black and they belong to low SES. This leads us to conclude that race, school and SES can, in certain degrees, be expected to influence the reality of aspirations in the South African context. The implication is that young people who are uncertain about the future tend to have more unrealistic aspirations than those who are certain. The reason for difference in aspirations is probably that black students believe that apartheid has disappeared, and that they will be able to achieve their aspirations regardless of their social and economic background. In other words, black students have great expectations that are unrelated to their existing socio-economic status. White and Indian students, on the other hand, do not have many unrealistic aspiration perhaps because they have not seen any change affecting them as a result of political transition.

In contradiction with the findings of other researchers (e. g. Crowley and Shapiro, 1982; Danziger, 1963; Marini, 1984) who reported that woman showed more unrealistic aspirations than men, gender seems to, according to our findings, have no major effects on unrealistic aspirations.

#### **5. 5. Effects of school, SES, gender and race on 'non-career' aspirations**

Before these effects are discussed, it is important to note that these 'non-career aspirations' were not evaluated according to their degree of reality, but what was important was the reference to

these aspirations. In this sense, having more of these aspirations does not necessarily mean that the young person is more realistic or not, but it only indicates that he or she has many of non-career aspirations. The effects of school and gender variables on artistic aspirations show that the schools that young people attend bring different value systems into their lives. It can be argued that the factor which causes students in the rural and Indian schools to have more non-career aspirations than those in the other three schools is that these schools engage in many cultural activities which promote artistic skills. Another possible explanation is that since the young people perceive that they cannot afford tertiary education, they resort to aspirations which do not require them to go to tertiary institutions. Thirdly, when one looks at the results it becomes clear that male youths have more non-career aspirations than female ones. Possibly, this is the case because in traditional Indian and rural families artistic achievement are normally expected from boy children rather than girl children. And some of these artistic aspirations may reflect this kind of stereotype. Since the possible explanation of these significant differences could be attributed to cultural differences which are promoted in these schools, SES and race variables do not have any significant effects.

The non significant effect of SES, school, race and gender on political aspirations means young people do not differ significantly in their political aspirations. This is contrary to what Allport and Gillepsie (1955) and Danziger (1958; 1963) reported about the South Africa youth. The current lack of difference in political interest shows that there has been a shift in the aspirations of the South African youth.

The results show, on the other hand, that there are significant effects of school, SES and race variables on social value aspirations. Rural youth are found to have a greater interest in social aspirations than the other youth groups. This is the case because of the communal lifestyle of most families in rural areas - a life style that promotes a desire in young people to serve their local communities. As was indicated when the issue of SES was discussed, race is an important

variable. Race, SES and school are inseparable in South Africa. The significant effect of race on social aspirations with black students having more social aspirations, shows that race still serves as an important variable in aspirations. These findings are similar to those of Danziger (1963) who reported that most black youth wanted to serve their communities. It appears therefore that there has not been change in black youth's aspirations of social aspirations, despite political changes that have recently taken place. However, as it was indicated, gender seems now to have no significant effect on social aspirations, and this finding is contrary to Danziger's (1963) who reported that more male than female students wanted to serve their communities.

Although it cannot be asserted that schools influence religious aspirations, but it is noted that Indian students have more religious aspirations than other groups. This is probably the case because of strong religious affiliation in Indian communities, where religion also helps to form personal identity.

#### **5. 6. Differences in economic interests**

Differences in economic interests can be explained by looking at the racial inequalities which characterise many communities in South Africa. The findings show that school and race variables influence the economic interests that young people aspire often. Historically white school A seems to have more economic interests than those at the other schools. This is probably because the historically white schools promote business-related career, and students believe that they will have the opportunities to fulfil their aspirations. White students feel themselves capable of achieving their economic ambitions because of their background resources. Indian and black students, on the contrary, see themselves as unable to achieve theirs because of their relatively deprived existing social and economic conditions. These racial differences in economic aspirations are similar to what Danziger (1963a) reported when he found a difference between black students and the white students' economic constraints. The non-significant effect of SES and gender, however, show that when students think about their future, race becomes more important than gender and SES.

### **5. 7. Uncertainty about the future**

The study has revealed that young people show different levels of certainty about the future. Firstly, the significant effect of school on contingency statements reveals that the kind of school that young people attend makes them differ in their levels of certainty about the future. This is evident in the former black schools where students show extremely high levels of contingency statements. This means that these young people are not sure about the future, but hoped that their future aspirations would be achieved provided other conditions such as access to environmental resources, usually not under their control, have been met. The significant effect of race also serves as evidence that black students seem to be uncertain about the future. Not only race, but students' belonging to low SES also influences their certainty or uncertainty. Since race, school and SES variables cannot be interrelated, one might suggest that race is the most important factor in these groups. These findings are contrary to Danziger's (1963b) study which reported that white students showed more contingency statements than black students.

### **5. 8. Differences in time references**

The results show that school, race and SES variables have significant effects on time reference. The rural school always remains the lowest in all time reference variables. This means that the students are not sure about the exact time at which they want to achieve their aspirations. In addition to that, black students are reported as having fewer time references than the other two racial groups. The low SES students are also reported as having fewer time references when compared with middle and high SES students. Danziger (1963c) found that young people who are uncertain about the future tend to have poor or no clear time references. The findings support Danziger's observation that black students showed fewer time references in their aspirations. The reason could be that the social and economic conditions in which they find themselves living in may not enable them to be sure about the time they can achieve their aspirations. This idea can also be related to what was discussed above that black students are uncertain about the future. However, the findings do not report any significant effect of gender. This shows that young people

do not differ significantly in the way they perceive gender as a determinant of their success in the future.

The relationship between SES and time structure, and between race and time structuring reveals that school and race are important variables in aspirations. The large percentage of the rural and the township school students who show poor time structure is also influenced by race of the students. This is true because almost half of the black students show poor time structure. The results supported what Danziger (1963c) said that there were more white students who showed good time structuring than the black students. The Indian students also showed poor time structuring when they are compared to white students. This shows that uncertainty about the future influences young people's time structure.

#### **5. 9. Differences in spatial references**

The association between school, race, SES and gender and spatial references shows that these variables are important if one wants to understand aspirations. What is interesting in this association is that there are differences in percentages among the groups. As it has been said there are more rural students than other students who want to serve their communities. This means that if young people feel that they have some means of leaving the country, they are more likely to have aspirations which reflect this potential. The results show that there are fewer students from the low SES who want to leave the country than in the upper SES. This serves as an indication that SES plays a very important role in shaping future aspirations of the South African youth.

#### **5. 10. Differences in perception of social and economic constraints**

The results show that the school attend have a significant effect on economic and racial constraints mentioned by students in their essays. Rural and township school students reported more economic constraints than the other three schools. This is probably because of their feelings about

their existing economic status which would not allow them to achieve their aspirations. These findings supported the idea, discussed earlier, that the perceived economic and social constraints hinder young people's aspirations. The significant effect of SES on perceived economic constraints also serves as evidence that those in the low SES tend to think of themselves as unable to achieve because of their social and economic conditions.

The results also show that race and gender imposed constraints upon young people. For instance, black students felt more racial constraints than the other two groups. This might be because the perception of racial discrimination against them had not disappeared among the black youth. They still thought that their context could not allow them to fulfil their aspirations. Indian students on the other hand, perceived more gender constraints than the other two groups. This is obviously because Indian culture does not allow women to hold "male" positions.

#### **5. 11. Expected family structure**

The results showed that there is no significant association between SES, school and gender variables and young people's expectations about getting children married or not. This is of interest because it shows that young people are not influenced by SES, school and gender when planning their future family structures. This is contrary to Hanson (1994) who reported that SES, race and gender can influence family structures.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

#### 6. 1. Concluding remarks

It has become clear that young people's aspirations are normally rooted in their daily social experiences. The study has shown that despite other factors, social systems such as race, school, gender and SES serve as important determinants of the nature of the aspirations that young people hold for their future. It has shown also in the context of South Africa, where race and socio-economic status still entrench differences, one cannot expect young people from different race and socio-economic groups to have similar aspirations. The findings are consistent with the current literature which indicates that differences in these social variables may be expected to bring differences in young people's aspirations.

Furthermore, the results show that even in the post-apartheid era, young people still differ in their aspirations for the future. The research findings show that there are very few similarities in young people's aspirations in the three racial groups. Indeed more differences than similarities were discovered. Although political changes have brought new perspectives to many people, young people still largely differ in their expectations of the future.

The results have, however, shown a significant change in the role of gender. Gender was found to have only a minor effect on aspirations. These findings on gender show a remarkable change in the post-apartheid era.

Another remarkable shift was found in aspirations. The reality and lack of reality of aspirations has been identified in the aspirations of black, white and Indian youth. Despite the fact that there has not been a huge difference in youth aspirations since Danziger's groundbreaking research, but there are some emergent changes.

## 6. 2. Research limitations

Although the study could be seen as the beginning of more comprehensive research on aspiration, the focus of the present study is limited to an investigation of the relationship between race, gender, SES and school and the aspirations that are held by the youth. Since it is a prospective study, there may be a lack congruency between what young people aspire to achieve and what they actually achieve in future. Although the background was used as a perceived determinant of the future, it was difficult to distinguish exactly between what they think they can achieve and what they will eventually achieve.

The essay method seems to be a good method to study aspirations. This is because young people could freely tell their life stories without being confined by pre-existing categories. The analysis in this method, however, depended on the personal judgements of the coder. This method poses threats to objectivity because an essay coder might judge a statement according to his or her personal experience.

The instructions for writing the essays were given to the English teachers and the students. These teachers were instructed by the researcher not to give any other information except that in the instruction sheet. It was difficult, however, to make sure that all the teachers followed the same guidelines in explaining these instructions to the students. Another threat to the credibility of the findings could be that some students could have asked their friends, classmates, and/or parents to help them in writing the essays.

In addition, the study design could not allow us to confidently study the "effects" of race, school, race and gender between they could be other variable unknown to the researcher which can be attributed to the results. However the word effect should be interpreted cautiously in the study because it is used loosely to show the influence of these variables to the dependent variables. The sampling strategy in the study could not allow a normal distribution of subjects. As a result, the

researcher could not use advanced statistical analysis. The study simply used non-parametric statistics as an alternative to this problem. The researcher was fully aware of *un-robustness* of the statistical methods adopted in the study.

Lastly, the study reports a lot of findings of which some of them do not have a direct relationship to the research questions. However, the researcher found it important to include them because they are indirectly related to the aspirations that young people set for the future.

Further research is required to try to minimise some of these limitations that have been identified above. For instance, a longitudinal research is recommended where young people would be studied over a longer period of time. This will allow the researcher to control some of the confounders. This will also help the researcher to see whether there has been any change in the aspirations as a result of major social, political and economic changes. This may include an investigation of a possible effect of variables such as age and technological advancement. In this kind of study, a more objective tool would be required in order to minimise any researcher bias.

### **6. 3. Research Implications**

These research findings may be of great importance not only to behavioural scientists, but also to teachers, NGOs and policy makers. For behavioural scientists, the research may provide insight into the effects of race, school and SES on young people's aspirations. This may help them to understand why certain youth groups are less motivated to achieve than others. Additionally, the research may help them device a theoretically informed action to solve social problems.

Teachers and the community at large may also find the research useful. Teachers and parents might come to understand that lower social and economic positions may have detrimental effects on children's future development. In gaining a greater understanding of children, parents, teachers, and NGOs may influence policy makers to deal with this social and economic disparity. It

is the responsibility of everyone to make young people feel confident in their future self-fulfilment.

#### 6. 4. Summary

The current study has studied the possible effects of race, gender, SES and school on the future aspirations of the South African youth. Five schools were selected of which four were from urban areas and the remaining one from a rural area. The students from these schools differed as to their social, cultural and economic backgrounds. Using Allport and Gillespie's (1955) and Danziger's (1958, 1963) essay writing method, the students were required to write essays about their future aspirations. In addition, they were requested to complete a short demographic questionnaire. The written essays were transcribed into machine-readable format, and the content analysis method of data analysis was used.

The findings revealed that there were associations between race and SES, and between race and school. There was no significant association between gender and SES, nor between gender and school. The findings further showed significant effects of SES, school, and race on the *nature* of the aspirations of the youth. The results confirmed the idea that differences in race, SES and school could be associated with differences in future aspirations of the youth. The study, however, failed to find any significant association between gender and future aspirations of the youth. Since it was a prospective study, further longitudinal research is suggested to investigate whether there is congruence between what the youth's aspirations and their actual achievements.

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## APPENDIX A

Category	Reliability value
Realistic statements	.953
Personal statements	.925
Specific statements	.906
Ego-fantasy	.947
Artistic aspirations	.952
Religious aspirations	.940
Political aspirations	.935
Social aspirations	.941
Job income	.922
Business interest	.964
Contingency statements	.924
Date reference	.988
Age reference	.989
Time reference	.939
Time structuring	.904
Spatial reference	.968
Return after migration	.956
Racial constraint	.939
Economic constraint	.949
Gender constraint	.962
Kind of job	.920
Marital status	.964
Age of marriage	.986
Number of children	.994
Gender of children	.988
Average reliability	.950

## APPENDIX B

### Instructions to Participants

In this essay you are required to write your autobiography. But imagine that you are writing it in 50 years' time when you are an old person looking back over your life. The assignment assumes, of course, that you will be in the year 2050, when you will be presumably be about 70 years of age. Beginning at the present (your past life history, up to now, need not be told) write a few pages (There is no required length for these essays: anything from 2 to 4 pages or about 500 to 1000 words would be quite acceptable) concerning your expectations, plans, and aspirations for the future. So you would write something about the part of your life that, at the moment, still lies in the future, the part you have not yet lived through, the next 50 years. Remember, you are an old person writing your autobiography 50 years from now.

## APPENDIX C

### Demographic Questionnaire

Name of the School that you attend at present \_\_\_\_\_

#### Section A

Please put a "X" next to the appropriate response

1. Gender: Male  Female
2. Race: Black  Coloured   
Indian  White   
Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Home language: Afrikaans  English   
Zulu  Xhosa   
Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
5. Current place of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Are you staying in: Suburbs  Township   
Semi-urban area  Rural area
7. How long have you been staying there?  
less than a year  1 year to 5 year   
5 years to 10 years  more than ten years
8. Previous place of residence (if any): \_\_\_\_\_
9. Were you staying in: Suburbs  Township   
Semi-urban area  Rural area
10. How long did you stay there? less than a year  1 year to 5 years   
5 years to 10 years  more than ten years



9. If yes, what kind of programmes do you normally watch? Give at least three.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

10. What kind of music do you normally play at home? Give at least three.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

11. Do you have someone to clean at home? Yes  No

12. How many times per week do you eat meat or soya products?

Once a week

Everyday

I don't eat it

My parents cannot afford it

APPENDIX D

SES	N	Mean
Low	54	2.9012
Middle	80	3.2954
Upper	133	3.6624

APPENDIX E

Graph 1





