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HOUSING ASPIRATIONS IN THE

"COLOURED" COMMUNITY OF DURBAN



S. Rankin

fact paper

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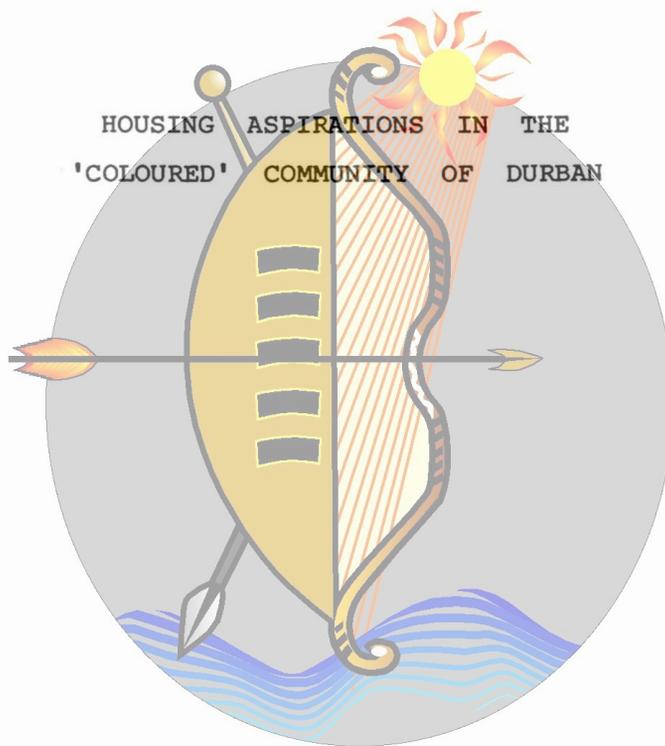
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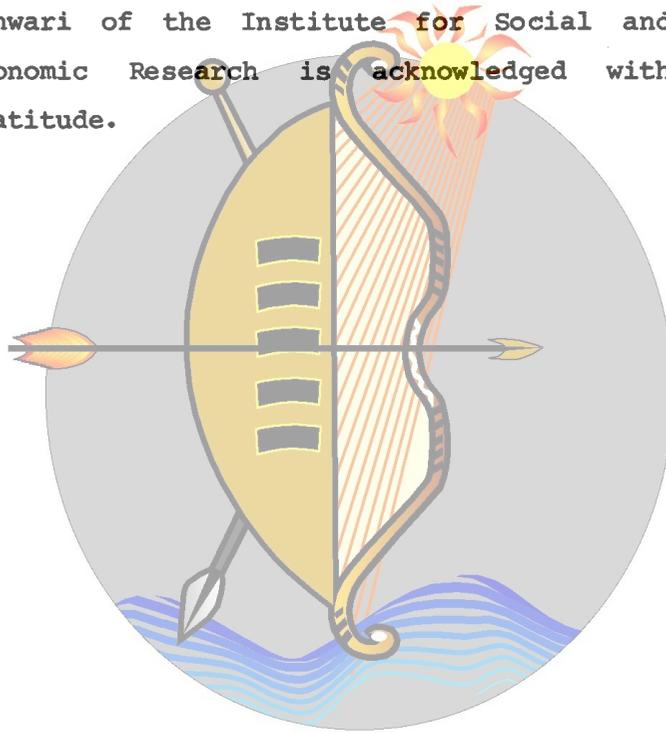
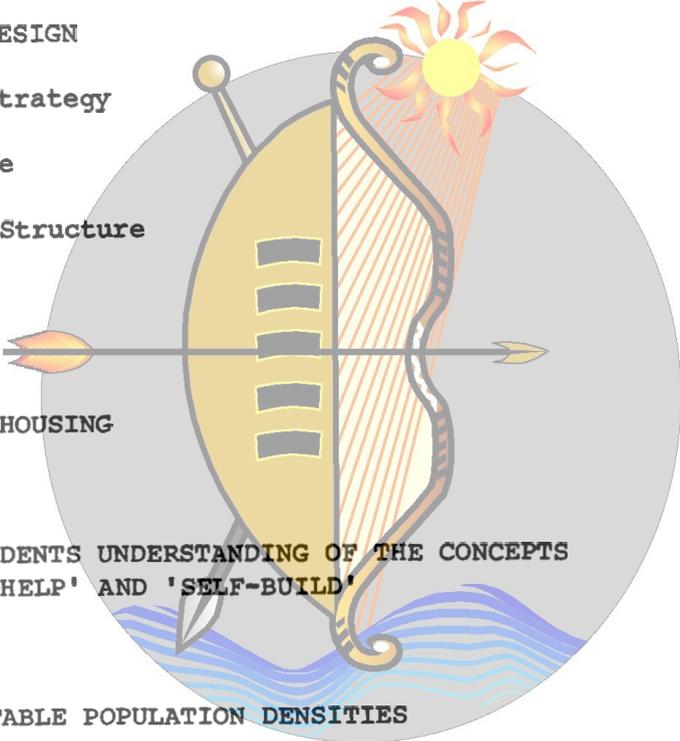


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INTRODUCTION

Despite an increasing interest in the 'Coloured' community of Durban, especially in the area of social problems experienced, little has yet appeared relating to the aspirations of the community.

This study is intended to provide some information in this field, focussing specifically on the housing aspirations of the community. An attempt has been made to ensure that the study is as objective as circumstances permit. It must be emphasised that this study is part of a major research project which has as its main aim an investigation of an alternative housing strategy to solve the housing needs of the community.

It is true that, to some extent, the demands and aspirations of the community have in the past been made public by some representatives of the 'Coloured' community. However, this representation has only a limited forum within the confines of the Durban City Council. Thus appeals made on behalf of the community as well as pointers concerning their aspirations for life do not filter out to a wider audience, an audience which ought, perhaps, to be aware of these issues. Similarly the appeals and representations made have been incomplete, not only because they cannot indicate the details of the reactions of the individuals they represent, but also because a substantial proportion of the community holds views which are not reflected by the elected representatives.¹

1) The organisation referred to here is the Durban 'Coloured' Local Affairs Committee (L.A.C.). It can be said that within the extremely complex local and national political situation, the L.A.C. possibly enjoys only minimal support. In the last election only 15,8% of the electorate cast their votes for representatives in the five wards. Rankin (1983) details further information on the history and development of the organisation.

Aims of this Fact Paper

To clarify and place what follows in a framework, one may summarise the aims of this fact paper as follows:

- 1) To offer an indication of the attitude of the 'Coloured' community to various types of housing;
- 2) To assess levels of understanding of the concept of and demands regarding acceptable minimum standards;
- 3) To assess the community's understanding of the concepts 'Self-Help' and 'Self-Build'; and
- 4) To assess some preferences with respect to desired population densities.

Before discussing the findings presented here, it is worth clarifying the nature and definition of attitudes in order to provide a context within which the results may assume meaning for the reader.

Attitudes

Considering that the term 'attitude' is probably "the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary ... psychology" (Allport, 1968, p. 59), it is unfortunate that it should be characterised by considerable ambiguity and confusion. This is largely due to the lack of conceptual, definitional and experimental rigour by researchers who have employed the concept in their fields of interest. Evidence in support of this contention may be found in the fact that it has been used as an explanatory concept in areas of research as diverse as: absenteeism in industry, studies of voting trends, understanding consumer behaviour and attempts to understand discriminatory behaviour. The ambiguity surrounding the concept has led to a situation where not many investigators agree on an explicit definition of the term 'attitude'. Some of the many authors who

have attempted a definition include McGuire (1969), Elizur (1970) and Collins and Miller (1969). The great diversity of proposed definitions has also been made clear in reviews of the concept 'attitude' (Campbell, 1969; Greenwald, 1968).

A comprehensive definition of the term has been offered by Oskamp (1977, p. 9). He defines attitude as 'a mental or neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related'. In this study the concept 'attitude' is employed to connote the sum total of a person's inclinations, prejudices, ideas, fears, and convictions relating to the housing environment.

It is felt that in spite of the general ambiguity associated with the concept 'attitude', it remains useful in that it helps to lay bare the aspirations present within the community.

Attitude Measurement

One can conclude from the discussion above that attitudes are both complex and diverse. By comparison the logic of attitude measurement is simple, at least in fundamentals. Essentially measurement consists of gathering observations about stated intentions or behaviour, and allocating values to these observations according to certain rules.

Attitude measurement, like any other process of measurement, is unfortunately not an automatic process. The procedure adopted depends on a number of criteria viz. the investigator's theoretical assumptions about the nature of the attitude she/he is trying to measure, the nature of its relationship with behaviour, and upon its relationship with the rules which are used to assign values to these behavioural observations.

It has come to be accepted that most investigators intuitively select a particular measurement procedure that seems to fit their conception of attitudes, their consequent definition of realms and finally the purpose of their study (McGuire, 1969).

Attitudes may be measured by the use of a number of different strategies. The most common is the use of 'a priori' scales (Allport, 1967). These scales take the form of tests in which specific items are presented to an individual for categorization. The responses to the items are then allocated points along a continuum.

Examples of the various techniques of scaling are;

Bogardus' scale of social distance towards various ethnic groups,

Thurstone's method of equal-appearing intervals,

Likert's method of summated ratings (the most popular of all),

Guttman's Scalogram analysis method of constructing a unidimensional scale, and

Osgood's scale of connotative meaning, the Semantic Differential.

There are, of course, certain limitations associated with scales such as these. Allport (1967) argues that, when scales are used to measure attitudes, a particular mental construct is forced onto the respondent and thus violence is done to the unique structure of the respondent's mind. Further, the attitudes held by individuals are not absolute, and are given to changes with shifts in external influences. Attitudinal inquiry of this sort, then, may be invalidated either by lack of knowledge on the part of the investigator or due to an inability on the part of the respondent to understand the method being applied. With due care in the construction and interpretation of these scales, most of these problems can be overcome.

A second, less popular measurement strategy, is the use of unstructured, non-directive interviews. These interviews operate by allowing the respondent much greater freedom of expression than is possible with the use of structured interviews. In the course of an unstructured interview the interviewer may vary the form of the questions which are used, and can easily probe and follow up respondents' replies in ways which would be impossible with the use of a questionnaire. However, this facility limits the information which can be used in inferring his/her attitude during coding and analysis.

The strength of this technique lies in the freedom of expression it allows the respondents. It has, as its point of departure, the contention that no assumptions can be made about the respondents' attitudes. Consequently, the results which are obtained from the application of this technique reflects the strength and direction of the attitudes and aspirations held by the respondents.

As can be deduced from this discussion there are a number of problems associated with the use of attitude analysis in social research. Nevertheless, attitude research does have an important contribution to make with respect to understanding the lives of the inhabitants of the townships of the apartheid city. If care is taken to avoid the disadvantages of the various techniques, one may obtain a reasonably accurate reflection of the community's feelings towards the issue under investigation.

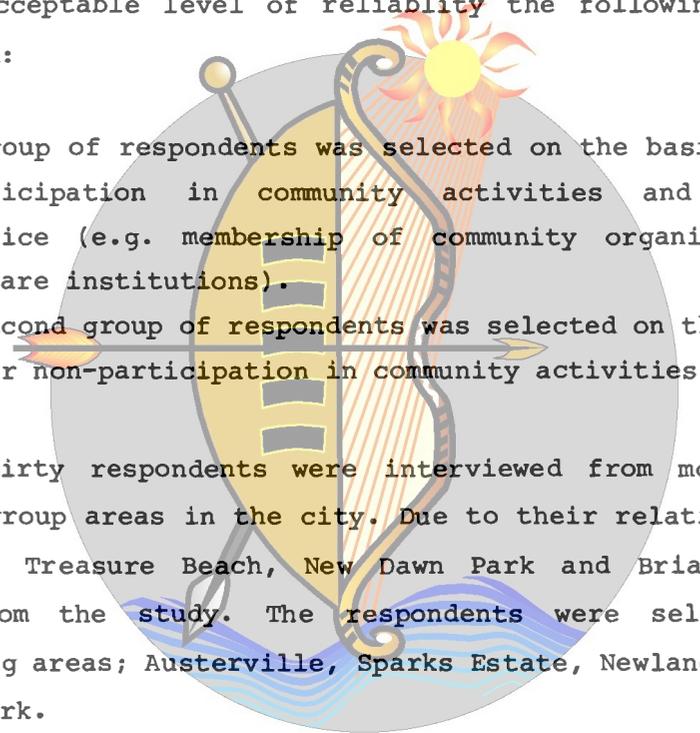
Essentially then, the primary role of attitude measurement within the social sciences, is to facilitate the understanding of the various motive forces within society, of which aspirations are one of the most important. The comprehension of these forces within the social-structural relationships which at this time constitute the milieu of our cities, may be of vital importance to both the planning and administration of the lives of the people who live in the under-privileged sections of our cities.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Due to time constraints and the urgency with which the results of this part of the study were needed, a small sample of respondents was selected.

Research Strategy

The method of data collection for this study was an unstructured non-directive interview within which attitudes of respondents in the 'Coloured' community of Durban were assessed. In order to ensure an acceptable level of reliability the following strategy was designed:

- 
- a) A group of respondents was selected on the basis of their participation in community activities and community service (e.g. membership of community organisations or welfare institutions).
 - b) A second group of respondents was selected on the basis of their non-participation in community activities.

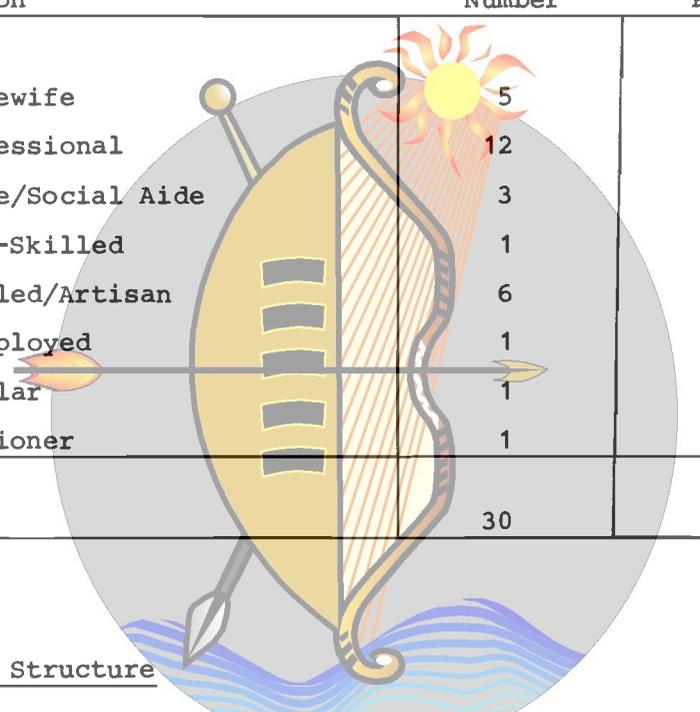
In total thirty respondents were interviewed from most of the 'Coloured' group areas in the city. Due to their relatively small populations, Treasure Beach, New Dawn Park and Briardene were omitted from the study. The respondents were selected from the following areas; Austerville, Sparks Estate, Newlands East and Greenwood Park.

The Sample

Since the primary aim of the investigation was an assessment of housing aspirations within the community, it seemed best to interview respondents from all socio-economic strata in the community. An effort was also made to ensure that almost equal numbers of males and females were interviewed. In fact, many variables, such as education, occupation and age were controlled to ensure minimum bias.

As can be seen from the table below, members of the following occupational groups were approached for interviews: housewives, teachers, artisans, semi-skilled workers and pensioners. People not economically active at the time of the survey were included since it was felt that they also reflect some of the attitudes to be found within the community.

Table 1. Occupation of Respondents



Occupation	Number	Percentage
Housewife	5	17
Professional	12	40
Nurse/Social Aide	3	10
Semi-Skilled	1	3
Skilled/Artisan	6	20
Unemployed	1	3
Scholar	1	3
Pensioner	1	3
Total	30	99

Interview Structure

The structure of the interview was in part dictated by the absence of similar work done in the community. This situation meant that no assumptions could be made regarding the aspirations of the community. This consideration required the use of a questioning strategy which gave the respondents maximum freedom of expression in the opening stages of the interview. To achieve this end a free-response interview was used. In this type of interview, the respondent is encouraged to build his/her replies around a

number of sources of orientation provided by the researcher. However, the emphasis in interviews of this type is that the respondent should ... 'describe his/her attitudes and feelings in a context in which they are meaningful to him/her' (Lemon 1973, p.62).

As the interview progressed, specific issues (as noted in the section dealing with the aims of this project) were raised. A number of open-ended questions were put to the respondents. First, their conceptions of ideal housing were enquired after. Secondly, they were asked to describe what they considered were acceptable minimum standards. Thirdly, they were asked to define Self-Help and Self-Build.

Finally, the respondents were asked to rate their attitudes towards various population densities which were typified by different types of housing already encountered in the 'Coloured' areas.

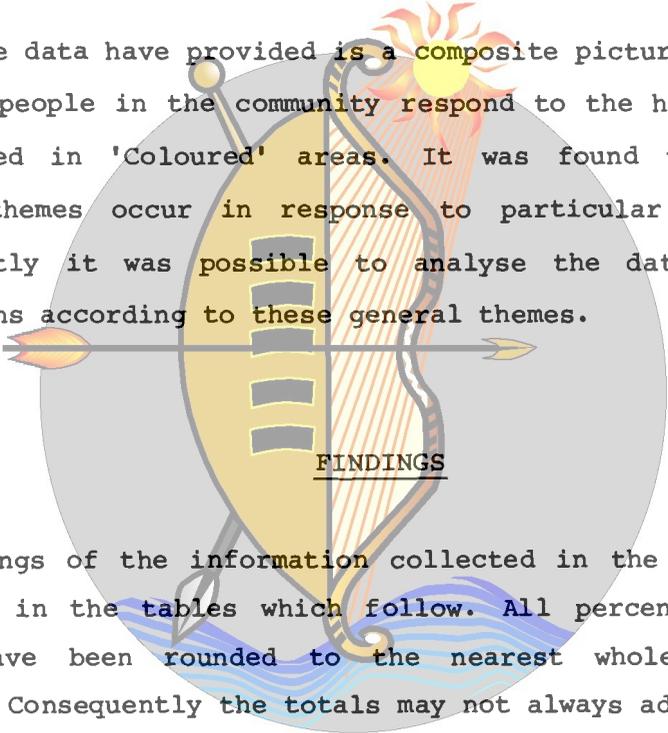
To overcome suspicion and allay fears all subjects were informed that their names would not be mentioned whilst reporting on the findings nor recorded on the interview schedule. For the most part little difficulty was experienced in gaining the respondents' co-operation once this point had been made clear. In fact, it appears that the survey provided many with an opportunity to express views which, they felt, were given little recognition in the course of everyday life.

Thus although the sample selected is small, it does seem that the spread of the total sample, coupled with the other precautions adopted in the research design, may have been wide enough to have elicited a large cross-section of the views of the community.

Analysis

The detailed nature of the responses and more importantly the small size of the sample, raises an important problem with respect to analysis of the data. To apply conventional methods of statistical analysis to data gathered on this basis would have been cumbersome and possibly misleading. These methods are largely designed to test quantitative material drawn from samples which are statistically significant or whose deficiencies can be measured with reasonable accuracy.

What these data have provided is a composite picture of the manner in which people in the community respond to the housing problems experienced in 'Coloured' areas. It was found that groups of similar themes occur in response to particular questions and consequently it was possible to analyse the data and to draw conclusions according to these general themes.



FINDINGS

The findings of the information collected in the interviews are reflected in the tables which follow. All percentages in these tables have been rounded to the nearest whole number where feasible. Consequently the totals may not always add up to 100%.

The findings are presented in four sections:

- A. Ideal Housing, which includes a discussion on minimum standards;
- B. Definitions of Self-Help and Self-Build;
- C. Acceptable Population Densities; and
- D. Preferred Administrators.

Section A: Ideal Housing.

The tables which follow contain the responses of the interviewees to questions regarding the type of housing which they regard as ideal. It must be pointed out that respondents were not presented with any categories or closed responses. The results found in the tables below reflect the categories which the respondents used to articulate their aspirations and feelings.

Table 2. Ideal Type of Housing

	Number	Percentage
Brick Duplexes	3	10
Single Dwelling Unit - Brick, with Large Garden	9	30
Single Dwelling Unit - Well Constructed, Hollow Block	5	17
Don't Know	2	6
Total	30	100

It is interesting to note that a total of 84% of the respondents identified a single dwelling unit per plot as the ideal type of dwelling unit. Well constructed buildings, preferably single dwellings, of hollow blocks were identified as ideal by 17% of the respondents. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents identified a substantial brick and tile house as their ideal. Almost all these respondents defined a substantial house as having at least three bedrooms. Only 10% of the respondents thought that duplexes were ideal dwellings for themselves or the community.

Table 3. Acceptable Minimum Standards

	Number	Percentage
Accept Hollow Blocks	15	50
Double Course Brick Walls	6	20
Single Course Brick Walls - Dwelling Unit must be Extendable	7	23
Don't Know	2	7
Total	30	100

Fifty percent of the respondents were prepared to accept Hollow Blocks as the minimum standard for their dwelling unit. A further 43% identified Brick as their minimum standard. It is striking to note that the respondents were able to give reasons for these responses viz. they believed that buildings built with these materials possess desired qualities of being easily extended, and are durable.

Table 4. Acceptability of Wood and Iron

	Number	Percentage
Unacceptable - Too Dangerous	9	30
Acceptable - Only as a Starter Option	9	30
Acceptable as Final Finish	11	37
Don't Know	1	3
Total	30	100

Thirty percent of the respondents would not entertain the thought of wood and iron as building material for their houses. They were all of the opinion that wood and iron would prove too hazardous for everyday use. On the other hand, two-thirds (67%) of the respondents were prepared to accept wood and iron. Of these, one-third, (37%) were quite prepared to accept wood and iron as the final finish for their homes.

Table 5. Acceptability of Wattle and Daub.

	Number	Percentage
Acceptable as Starter Option	1	3
Totally Unacceptable	28	94
Acceptable as Starter Option	1	3
Don't Know	1	3
Total	30	100

Almost all the respondents (94%) were unwilling to accept wattle and daub as an adequate building system for their homes. Only one person was prepared to accept this material as a starter option.

Summary.

One cannot but remark on the well articulated ideals held by the community. In response to the questions relating to minimum standards and ideal types dwelling units, the respondents were able to adequately answer these questions, without any prompting on the part of the interviewer. Four-fifths of the respondents (84%) identified a single dwelling unit per plot as their ideal. Only 10% of the respondents identified brick duplexes as their ideal.

Similarly, virtually all of the respondents were capable of articulating their ideas with respect to acceptable minimum standards. One-half (50%) of the respondents were prepared to accept hollow concrete blocks as a building material. That all the unprompted answers relate to standards affecting the physical aspects of the individual dwelling unit and not the entire neighbourhood is worthy of comment. It is indicative, in the writer's opinion, of a sharp awareness of the economic value of a dwelling unit within the community. Thus given any choice in the matter, the respondents would demand an investment which could yield good returns.

A secondary factor affecting their unwillingness to accept lowered minimum standards reflects a wariness on the part of the community generated by their experiences to date. The extremely high building standards required by the municipality have created concomitantly high aspirations and expectations. This research has shown that the community is not open to a substantial lowering of building standards, and may in fact interpret this action as a form of overt discrimination. There was an overwhelming rejection of wattle and daub as an acceptable building material. Only one respondent in the survey, after some discussion, was prepared to accept wattle and daub as a starter option. It is important to mark that over two-thirds of the respondents (67%) were prepared to accept wood and iron as a building material.

Section B: Respondents Understanding of the Concepts 'Self-Help' and 'Self-Build'.

The following tables reflect the respondents' definitions of the terms 'Self-Help' and 'Self-Build'.

Table 6. Understanding of the Concept 'Self-Help'

	Number	Percentage
Individuals help themselves	18	60
Members of groups act to help each other	9	30
People helped by outsiders to help themselves (Individually)	1	3
Don't Know	2	7
Total	30	100

It is important to note that nearly two-thirds (63%) of the respondents defined 'Self-Help' in terms of individuals working on their own. The remaining one-third (30%) defined 'Self-Help' in terms of group co-operation.

Table 7. Understanding of the Concept 'Self-Build'

	Number	Percentage
People Build as Individuals (Owner Builder)	25	83
People Helped by Friends	4	13
Don't Know	1	3
Total	30	99

The vast majority of respondents (83%) defined 'self-build' in terms of owner builder, i.e. the individual engaged in the act of

erecting his/her own dwelling unit. Only 13% defined this term as including friends in the building process.

Summary

It must be noted that a high proportion of the respondents in this survey defined 'self-help' (60%) and 'self-build' (83%) in terms of individuals working on their own to solve their problems. These responses reflect the impoverished nature of the social networks to be found within the community. This finding indicates the extent of community re-orientation which would be necessary to ensure the success of any housing strategy which requires maximum community participation.

Section C: Acceptable Population Densities

The following section contains the results of the questions dealing with acceptable population densities. In an effort to ascertain their attitudes towards various population densities, the respondents were asked to rate their preparedness to accept flats, duplexes, semi-detached houses and detached houses as dwelling units. It was carefully explained to the respondents that the interviewer sought to discover their attitudes towards various population densities, and thus the housing types mentioned were merely illustrations of these densities.

Table 8. Acceptability of Flats (High Density)

	Number	Percentage
Totally Acceptable	0	0
Acceptable	1	3
Don't Know	1	3
Unacceptable	5	17
Totally Unacceptable	23	77
Total	30	100

Over three-quarters of the respondents (77%) believed that flats were totally unacceptable. Seventeen percent thought that flats were unacceptable and only 3% answered that they would accept flats. In total, the overwhelming majority (94%) of the respondents were unwilling to accept flats as form of high density housing.

Table 9. Acceptability of Duplexes (Medium High Density)

	Number	Percentage
Totally Acceptable	4	13
Acceptable	6	20
Don't Know	2	6
Unacceptable	11	37
Totally Unacceptable	7	23
Total	30	99

Just under two-thirds (60%) of the respondents answered that they found duplexes unacceptable, while one-third (33%) were prepared to accept a duplex as a dwelling unit. Six percent of the respondents were uncertain in their responses.

Table 10. Acceptability of Semi-Detached Houses (Medium Low Density)

	Number	Percentage
Totally Acceptable	9	30
Acceptable	12	40
Don't Know	1	3
Unacceptable	6	20
Totally Unacceptable	2	6
Total	30	99

Well over two-thirds (70%) of the respondents answered that they were prepared to live in semi-detached houses. Only 6% replied that semi-detached houses were totally unacceptable and 20% said they were unwilling to accept them. Only one person was uncertain as to how to respond.

Table 11. Acceptability of Detached Houses (Low Density)

	Number	Percentage
Totally Acceptable	30	100
Acceptable	0	0
Don't Know	0	0
Unacceptable	0	0
Totally Unacceptable	0	0
Total	30	100

Detached houses proved to be the most acceptable form of housing for every respondent questioned in this survey.

Table 12. Comparison of the Various Housing Densities

Acceptability	Density			
	High	Medium High	Medium Low	Low
Totally Acceptable	0	13	30	100
Acceptable	3	20	40	0
Don't Know	3	6	3	0
Unacceptable	17	37	20	0
Totally Unacceptable	77	23	6	0

The substantial majority of respondents (94%) were of the opinion that high density residential environments were unsuited to their needs. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (60%) were not in favour of medium-high density housing. Seventy percent of the respondents were quite prepared to accept medium-low density housing, and all the respondents were prepared to accept low density housing.

Summary

As was indicated in the tables above, single dwelling units are the most esteemed form of housing within the community. Nevertheless, there is a trend within these findings which indicates a preparedness on the part of the community to accept middle-density housing. Well over two-thirds of the respondents (70%) found semi-detached houses acceptable and nearly one-third (33%) were prepared to accept duplexes.

The vast majority of respondents (94%) were unwilling to accept flats. Only one respondent (3%) was in favour of a flat. This is not unusual, especially when one considers that almost all of the respondents were aware of conditions which prevail in housing scheme flats. These flats suffer from poor and unimaginative design, low quality building materials and inadequate facilities. Butler-Adam and Venter (1982), in their work on Indian housing, give a cogent description of a typical housing scheme flat. It is worth quoting from their work at length to illustrate this point.

While housing scheme flats provided a roof under which their occupants could shelter, then, they provided little more than that. And if it is recalled that nearly two-thirds of the households which lived in these flats did so because they had been moved into them as a result of official action (65%), then it is clear that many of the occupants had probably fared poorly in their housing experiences (p. 133).

Another factor affecting the rejection of flats as an acceptable form of housing by the respondents illustrates the community's awareness of the negative effects accruing from this form of high density residential environments. The most serious impact of high external density in human populations is on the nature and quality of social life, which may have serious social and psychological implications. Consequently the power of informal social control mechanisms declines and gives way to increased formal control -- the control of law, police, jails, regulations and orders. The breakdown of informal social controls has been shown to be largely responsible for increased personal disorganization, as manifested in juvenile delinquency, crime, prostitution, alcoholism, drug addiction, mental illness, suicide, and social instability (Hauser, 1968).

It is worth noting that the only effective curbs on crime to date in Austerville, a 'Coloured' township in Durban, has been the imposition of threats of eviction and the increased enforcement of law. The community then, displays a marked awareness of the genesis of the problems which confront them, and seeks, if given the opportunity, to solve these problems at their root.

Section D : Preferred Administrators

The following tables reflect the respondents' preferences with respect to administrators of their residential areas.

Table 11. Preferred Administrators of Residential Areas

	Number	Percentage
The Community	9	30
The Durban City Corporation	21	70
The Department of Community Development	0	0
Total	30	100

The majority of respondents (70%) in this survey felt that their interests would best be served by having the Durban Corporation administer their housing environment, while 30% felt that they would prefer to do the task themselves. It is important to note that not one of the respondents felt that their needs were served by having the Department of Community Development administer their residential area.

CONCLUSIONS

The housing aspirations of the 'Coloured' community of Durban are extremely complex, so much so that over-simplification is inevitable without the understanding that ought to be provided by anthropological, sociological and psychological studies. The material elicited in this study does, nevertheless, suggest a number of conclusions about these aspirations, although as was stated, they cannot be regarded as comprehensive.

Three points emerge as being vitally important to the issue of housing in the 'Coloured' community of Durban.

First, with respect to ideal types of housing, including aspirations, it seems apparent from this study that the 'Coloured' community sees a substantial brick and tile dwelling on a plot large enough to accommodate a garden as being the ideal type of house. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents posited this as their ideal house. If one includes those who were prepared to accept a substantial uouse even though it was built of hollow blocks, one finds that 84% of the respondents aspire towards a single dwelling unit per plot.

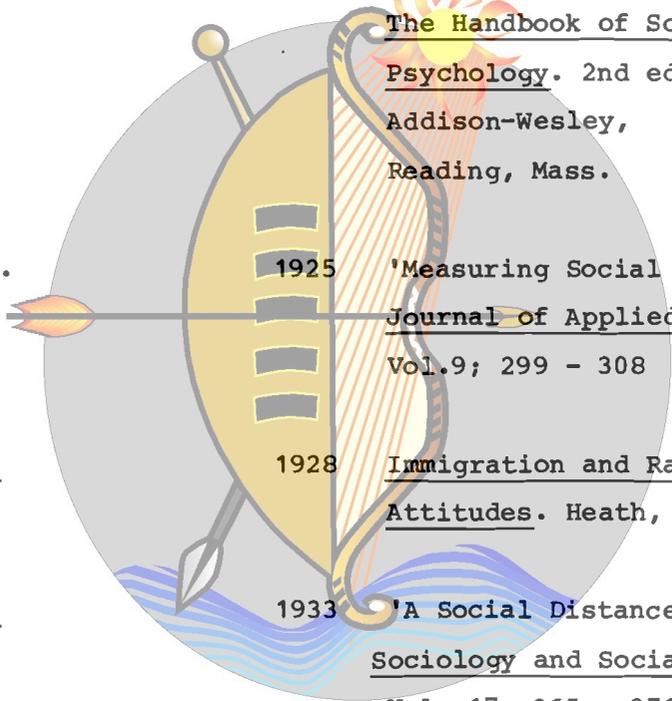
It may be argued that this aspiration is unrealistic, given the shortage of land in the 'Coloured' areas. However, one ought to bear in mind the mechanism whereby aspirations are generated. It could safely be argued that the community is subject to certain stimuli which depict this type of house as the ideal. An important source of stimulation is the type of housing to be found in surrounding White residential areas, where this type of housing is almost standard.

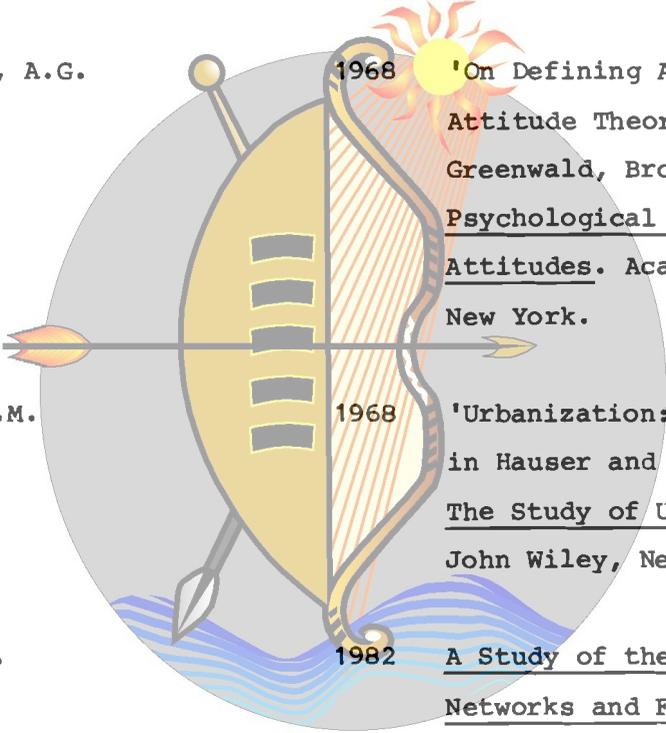
This leads one to the next important conclusion, that the respondents reject flats as an adequate solution to their housing needs. Ninety-four per cent of the respondents found flats unacceptable as a means of housing. The author feels compelled to caution against the apparent success of the block of high-rise flats known as Sydenham Heights. The apparent success of this block of flats may be related to its location rather than to the fact that it is a high-rise block. In a survey carried out in 1982 Jewell found that Sydenham Heights is well-situated in relation to shopping, medical and community facilities, as well as having a reliable transport service. It must be noted that similar positive aspects are not apparent in the remaining 'Coloured' townships in Durban, with the result that people are not prepared to suffer the ills of life in a high rise block of flats in those areas.

Finally, it must be noted that a high proportion of the respondents in this survey defined 'self-help' (60%) and 'self-build' (83%) in terms of individuals working on their own to solve their problems. This finding indicates the extent of community re-orientation which would be necessary to ensure the success of any housing strategy which requires maximum community participation.

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