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THE EFFECT OF POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER ON THE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE OF ADOLESCENTS

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Art, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg for the Degree Master of Art (Educational Psychology)

Johannesburg, 1999

YASEERA AMOD

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research report is my own work. It is being submitted for the degree Master of Arts (Educational Psychology) at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university.

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Y.Amod Date

DEDICATION

To my loving niece Zahra, who lost her life in a car accident. To Shamima Sheikh a dear friend who lost her fight against breast cancer. To my neighbour Zahrina Patel who also lost her battle against cancer. To my grandparents and my great grandmother who will always remain a part of my fondest childhood memories.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the following people for their assistance and I wish to express my sincere thanks to them for their contributions.

-Professor Mervyn Skuy, Professor of Specialized Education and Head of the Division of Specialized Education, University of Witwatersrand, my research supervisor, for his expertise, direction and encouragement.

-Peter Fridjhon, senior lecturer, Department of Statistics and Acturial Science, University of Witwatersrand , for his statistical advice and guidance.

-Mark Paiker, for his insight and statistical work on this study.

-The principal, staff and students at St Endas school for their contributions to this study.

-To Zeky, for his patience, understanding and standing by me.

-To my mum, dad, Ridwaan, Samiera, Amirah. To my brothers-in-law and Razia. To my nephews and nieces Nabeel, Ilhaam, Nashra and Sidra. To my family without whose support and encouragement this study would not have been possible.

-To my friends Nida and Saandeni for being there for me.

-The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development (HSRC, South Africa) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science and Development.

ABSTRACT

The aims of this study were: 1) To determine the relationship between Post Traumatic Stress and its impact on the school performance of adolescents. 2) To determine whether exposure to violence impacts on school performance. The level of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder was ascertained via a questionnaire. A performance questionnaire was administered to assess the levels of school performance. The questionnaires yielded quantitative and qualitative data from 79 standard seven pupils. The relationship between Post Traumatic Stress and school performance was not found to be significant. There appeared to be a lack of understanding of the concept of trauma and a general denial of experiences of trauma among the adolescent sample. The relationship between exposure to violence and school performance was however found to be significant.

Keywords: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Adolescence, School Performance, Violence

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CHAPTER 1:

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1. Introduction

This study explores the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on the school performance of adolescents. The study focuses on the social context of violence within which adolescents from disadvantaged communities are being educated. The issues of the impact of apartheid education and political violence that impacted on the youth of South Africa are also taken into account. In the study conducted by Amod (1997, p1) which serves as a backdrop to the present study, it was noted that: "the conditions that adolescents were faced with in 1976 when there was continuing unrest in schools and continuing unrest in 1986,1987 and 1988 and political upheaval in society at large, have not shifted sufficiently to ensure a safe and secure environment in which to learn."

Adolescents in South Africa who come from disadvantaged communities face a dismal future if something is not done to acknowledge the possible contributors to their poor academic performance. Simpson (1993) indicates that there is a lack of research in the South African context that focuses on the impact of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder on younger people. There is furthermore a tendency to rely heavily on research done overseas in terms of the impact of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder on school performance in younger people. This study aims to tease out issues relating to the impact of PTSD on youth that are specific to the South African context.

1.1. Literature review

The literature review aims to enter into a discussion on the problems of violence in South Africa in order to provide a background to manifestations of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in adolescents in this country. Secondly, a definition of adolescence and the impact of violence on youth and education aims to provide social and

historical perspectives on the effect of apartheid on education in South Africa. The definition and symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder are then discussed. Finally, the implications of PTSD for learning and school performance are considered.

1.2. Problems of Violence in South Africa

Degenaar (1990) defines violence as follows: "Violence means extreme force against X which violates X because it does not show respect for the value of X."(p11) Degenaar refers to different forms of violence as physical, psychological, structural, social and political Degenaar goes onto describe South Africa as a structurally violent society because, during the apartheid years it was the only society that legally enforced discrimination, resulting in injustice and inequality. A study conducted in South Africa by Hirchowitz & Orkin (1997) describes South Africa as having emerged from a period of large scale violence. Hirchowitz & Orkin (p169) sum up past violence as follows: "In the 1980's, resistance to apartheid claimed many lives and subjected unknown numbers of people to incidents of murder, bomb blasts, 'necklacing', burning property, police brutality, and other forms of politically motivated violence."

South African society also suffered the consequences of violence during the pre-election period. (Esprey, 1996) The type of violence, which is more a concern, however is criminal violence. Esprey 1996 cites the levels of criminal violence as follows: "In 1995 more than 800 000 violent crimes were reported, including 18 000 murders, 67 000 armed robberies, 150 000 assaults, and 31 000 rapes." (p1)

The effects of exposure to violence differ from one individual to the next. Some people may be resilient, whereas others may experience emotional reactions such as nervousness, anxiety, anger, outrage, shame, humiliation, self-blame, despair or fear, (Mckendrik & Hoffman, 1990). Other effects of violence include its negative impact on interpersonal relations, dehumanization by making killing acceptable, injury, phobias, depression, feelings of helplessness, denial or desensitization.

Exposure to violence and trauma may also result in the development of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. (Shaw, Applegate, Tanner, Rothe, Campo-Bowen & Lahey 1995: Mckendrik & Hoffman, 1990)

Hamber (1997) asserts that the historical impact of violence on workplaces, communities and schools will therefore not be over come if the nature of under-development is not addressed. Donald (1997) supports this notion and suggests that there is a lot of healing to be done at all levels including the school. Violence was a sanctioned means in the country of maintaining and attaining power.

Young people in South Africa did not escape the impact of violence. According to Swart & Levett (1989) it was found that between 1984 and 1986, 300 children were killed by police, 1,000 were wounded while 11,000 were detained without trial, 18,000 were arrested in relation to protests and 173,000 children were awaiting trial in police cells. Although political violence has decreased Hamber (1997) argues that the social and psychological needs of victims of criminal and political violence have not been met. Simpson (1993) describes South Africa as a "psychologically sick society" (p 603) and furthermore comments on the inequity of access to psychological services to the Black population who have been affected by the structural violence of the apartheid regime. Simpson (1996) however suggests that untreated victims of past violence can become perpetrators of violence for retribution, and perpetrators in displaced domestic and social violence. Unless efforts are made at the level of intervention or at a structural or political level, the spiral of violence will continue to negatively impact on the lives of South Africans.

It is in the consideration of these issues that a definition of adolescence is presented below.

1.3. Adolescence, Violence and Education

1.3.1. A definition of adolescence

According to Mwamwende (1995) p 63:"Adolescence stands out as a fascinating, interesting and challenging period of human growth and development. It is a period of

great physical, social, emotional, physiological and psychological change. The adolescent is neither a child nor an adult, but is on the threshold of adulthood. Adolescence is a period characterized by a search for and consolidation of identity."

Mwamwende (1995) describes the age range of adolescence as from 12 to approximately 21 years. Adolescents experience various physical changes with regard to their height, weight and secondary sex features. The adolescent is also more prone to negotiating their self-concept depending on how they are perceived by society. Not all adolescents develop at the same rate; they can be differentiated as early and late developers. The consolidation of identity in adolescence may be characterized by adolescents individuating from their parents, choosing careers and ideologies. Mwamwende's (1995) understanding of adolescents highlights identity issues, which Erikson considers central to adolescence. A study conducted by Westaway (1986) on Black and White adolescents in South Africa found Erikson's theory to be applicable to diverse cultures. One of the defining factors that resulted in differing psychosocial development was socio-economic status, (Westaway, 1986). Erikson's theory considers the effects of socialization and culture on the nature of the identity crisis negotiated in adolescence.

Straker (1990) in her st ıdy on the effects of diverse forms of political violence on the emotional and moral concerns of youth in this country found that black, working class youth living in contexts of conflict devote a lesser amount of energy to adolescent concerns. Their energy was found to be channeled towards negotiating physical safety and issues concerning social justice and civil rights. Straker's study confirms Tabin's (1995) study that suggests that situations such as war may press the adolescent into adulthood at a faster pace than society expects of them. Tabin highlights the impact of war and grotesque experiences on the normal course of development and the possibility of regressive modes of development under such conditions. Tabin (1995) cites the case of a 15 year old, South African male who was detained and tortured. He was formerly known as cheerful and generally normal, but was taken to psychiatric hospital after detention. He could barely sign his name and showed little recovery over a period of time.

Esprey (1996) relates the impact of violence on adolescent development in the South African context as follows: Looking at the culture of violence in which South African Black children have grown up, it is not presumptuous, in the light of Erikson's assertions, to suggest that township adolescents have internalized norms of violence which emerge behaviorally in adolescence and become instrumental in adult identity."(p 12) Gibson (1993) supports this assertion and expresses concern that exposure to violence results in children being socialized to find violence acceptable.

South African adolescents are described as being dehumanized in their exposure to violence, (Mckendrik & Hoffman, 1990). Simpson (1993) asserts that the moral development of children in South Africa was affected by having to ignore the immorality of the oppressive apartheid regime. Exposure to violence in South Africa seems to impact on moral development, (Simpson, 1993). Straker (1990) found that there was a relationship between exposure to violence and a tendency to demonstrate a lower level of moral reasoning.

While the concerns with regard to negative effects of violence on youth described above are valid, concern has also been shown for the negative portrayals of youth as resulting in secondary victimization, (Straker, 1998). Straker & Moosa (1988) suggest that their part in defending their communities should also be taken into account.

More recent research conducted by Levett (1990) has pointed out the factor of resilience as follows: "It is clear that some children are remarkably resilient in conditions of adversity and the reasons for this are likely to be a function of a number of factors including the child's physical robustness, temperament, and the existence of some supportive mechanism in the community " (p35). Dawes (1990) noted that the ideological orientation of youth as "fighters" as opposed to "victims".

One therefore needs to understand the socio-political context in which development occurs. The socio-political context in which youth in South Africa are raised has impacted on their development. The impact of violence on the education system and youth is considered below.

1.4. The Impact of Violence on Education

Gultig & Hart (1990) state the following with regard to the impact of violence on school students in Pietermaritzburg: "Clearly, then the majority of school children in the area have been characterized by severe disruption of their schooling and their personal lives. They have witnessed, initiated, and been involved in acts of violence on a large scale and their schooling has taken place in an atmosphere of fear, hostility and suspicion."(p11)

Mogano (1997) sheds light on the circumstances of schooling that Gultig & Hart (1990) describe. He describes the irony of the liberation struggle as having transformed the school yard into a place of political struggle. He points this out in order to contribute to our understanding of the impact of apartheid on education and violence. He provides historical perspective on the impact of violence on education, and points out that between 1953 and 1976 the proposal of the Eiselen Commission dictated the nature of the Black Education system. According to this proposal Black people would be trained to perform unskilled labour.

In 1976 student protests began in the revolt against the Bantu Education system. The 1980' s were characterized by attacks on teachers who were seen as the proponents of the apartheid government. Marks (1993) describes "militarized youth" as victims of political violence who have not been helped or acknowledged for their contributions. The youth in the nineties have few political opportunities with regard to their role in the transition process. Mogano (1997) does however caution that one cannot see the liberation struggle as the cause of violence in schools, but that one needs to be aware of the impact of the apartheid education system. Mogano describes the inadequate education system as a major structural cause of violence in the 1990's.

Mogano's (1997) concern is that two third of the youth are under the age of twenty six and have a minimum education level and have a bleak chance of being employed. The youth in the nineties have however inherited problems of extreme poverty, a lack of adequate educational facilities, and exposure to direct and indirect forms of violence. Students at schools in the 1990's are still being exposed to violence.

Griggs (1997) describes high levels of trauma that accompany modern schooling and found that 30% of school girls in schools in the Newlands area in Durban had been raped or sexually molested. Mokate (1997) describes the incident on the 21st of February in which a student was murdered on return from school by a boy of school going age. The girl was asked for a piece of tissue paper and her earrings. The boy shot into the air with a pistol and then through the girl's abdomen and rode off on his bicycle. This incident lead to an outbreak of violence leaving several houses burnt and students, as a result of the violence, stayed away from school.

The study conducted by Amod (1997) surveyed the levels of PTSD in a youth sample at a school in Soweto .The study found that the manifestations of PTSD due to exposure to violence had a significantly negative impact on school performance. Griggs (1988) makes the following comment on recent studies conducted in schools: "Unfortunately in this country, province, and city we have a huge problem with providing school security...The result is that many learners and educators are regularly subjected to violence and trauma resulting from intimidation, theft, robbery, assault, rape, vandalism, arson and other serious problems that undermine our efforts to bring up children in a normal healthy way." (p1)

The above scenario points to the fact that violence continues to negatively impact on the lives of South Africans.

1.5. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Mckendrik & Hoffman (1990, p38) describe South African society as being caught up in a repressive and revolutionary violence to the extent that violence is considered to be ordinary, normal and legitimate in solving conflict. Apart from the multiple manifestations of symptoms of violence described above, Hirschowitz & Orkin (1997) have described a large number of people as manifesting with one or more effects of PTSD in this country.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (Fourth Edition) 1994,p424, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is defined as follows:

"The essential symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stress or involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death, injury or a threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or close associate. The person's response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror or in children, the response to the event must involve disorganized or agitated behavior. The characteristic symptoms resulting from the exposure to extreme trauma include persistent re-experiencing of the traumatic event, persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness, and persistence of increased arousal." The symptoms described above must be present for a month and must create dysfunction at social, occupational and other levels of functioning." (p424)

These descriptions, according to Mukerji (1995), don't necessarily apply cross-culturally. In the South African context the symptomology may differ from that in Western cultures. Levett (1989) says the following in this regard: "In considering the effects of violence on black South African children's future social behavior, we cannot assume that western discourses of psychological trauma and childhood, tenacious and powerful as they are, will necessarily play a significant part ...Even if they do, the forms taken –the subjectivities which evolve –may vary, as is the case among girls and women who have experienced sexual abuse."(p28) The manifestation of psychological trauma in sexual abuse for example is described by Levett (1989, p22) as shaped by socio-cultural and socio-linguistic processes.

In the light of the above comment, Mukerji (1995) describes somatisation or the experience of bodily symptoms as more likely manifestations in non-Western cultures as opposed to emotional distress experienced in Western cultures. Amod (1997) found that adolescent comorbidity among Blacks manifested in somatic symptoms and anxiety more frequently than depression and social dysfunction in social interactions.

One also needs to be careful and take into consideration the developmental level of the adolescent as impacting on the manifestation of symptoms of PTSD. Frederick (1984) suggests that symptomology in adolescents should not be treated lightly, and

PTSD in younger age groups is often missed and this results in inappropriate treatment. Burgin (1990) cites PTSD responses in adolescents as "...internalizing and externalizing behaviors e.g. anxiety, dysphoria, decreased energy, aggressive behavior, substance abuse and acting out behavior"(p17). Acting out behaviour may include juvenile delinquency.

Frederick (1984, p73) describes the short-term effects of trauma on psychological and behavioral symptoms in adolescents and children as follows: "...sleep disorders, bad dreams, persistent thoughts of the trauma, belief that another event will occur, conduct disturbances, hyperalertness, avoidance of any stimulus or situation symbolic of the event, physiological disturbances."

The belief that another traumatic event will occur is illustrated by Nzimande & Thusi (1991), in which a South African student relates the loss of a classmate: "In my class there is a desk that has been empty for the past three months ...That desk used to seat one of my classmates who was attacked and hacked to death by Inkatha just outside the schoolyard. Everyone of us is afraid to occupy that desk, because you don't want to feel like you going to be the next in line " (p58). Pynoos & Nader (1984) found that younger people are more likely to manifest with avoidant behaviors as opposed to the psychic numbing that occurs frequently in adults.

Adolescents with PTSD may become less verbal than they were prior to a traumatic event. Adolescents may in addition experience problems in relation to their sexual self concept and may need assurance with regard to their masculinity or femininity. These PTSD symptoms therefore need to be viewed in relation to age, culture and developmental level.

Having established the symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder the implications of post traumatic stress disorder on learning and school performance are considered in the next section.

1.6. Implications of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on Learning and School Performance

1.6.1. Effects of PTSD on Cognitive Functioning

Wilson & Raphael (1993) sum up the impact of PTSD's basic impairment to be the brain and central nervous system, which encompasses the neurophysiological mechanisms that govern memory, affect, thought and sociability. (p 3) Pynoos and Nader (1984) in addition found that the impact of trauma on Central American children and adolescents resulted in a decline in their cognitive and school functioning.

Pynoos & Nader, furthermore teased out developmental lag resulting from exposure to trauma, which in turn impacts on cognitive abilities. Gordon & Wraith (1993) suggest that the impact of traumatic events has both age-related and stage-related consequences. They describe "...personality changes, school failure, poor interpersonal relationships and a struggle with identity and ideological views" (p528) as a few examples of developmental issues. Udwin (1992) further describes adolescents as being affected by PTSD in terms of not being able to plan their careers and develop long term relationships.

Barrett, Green, Morris, Giles & Croft (1996) provide an association between PTSD and cognitive functioning. Barrett et al mention other studies that have found deficits in verbal memory; impaired monitoring of memory information and a bias in processing of disaster –specific information. The veterans in the study also experienced deficits in tasks which required concept formation and problem-solving.

Terr (1984) in his study of children who had experienced trauma while gathered together between the ages of 6-14 had difficulties with their perception of time and tended to distort time. Terr described the problem these children experienced as going beyond developmental immaturity predicted by Piaget. These children experienced the need to turn back time or move forward into the future. This is illustrated in the following descriptions by a young boy: I used to be 17. I turned back to four."(p 62)

Yehuda, Keefe, Harvey, Levengood, Gerber, Geni & Siever (1995) reported that individuals with PTSD had specific deficits in the monitoring and regulation of memory information. According to Yehuda et al (1995) although memory-related disturbances occur in PTSD, few neurological reports have been published with regard to the performance of patients on neuropsychological tests of memory, attention and learning processes.

1.6.2. Effects of PTSD on School Performance

Frederick (1984) suggests that young people who have been exposed to a traumatic event may experience problems at home for example sleep disorders which may translate into conduct problems at school. Frederick cites sleep disorders as manifesting as apathy, weariness, loss of concentration and irritability at school.

The above findings are consistent with studies done in the South African context. The study conducted by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation cited the exposure to direct and indirect forms of violence as negatively impacting on school performance. Donald (1997, p291) generally acknowledges the impact of emotional difficulties on school work in the South African context. A study conducted by Nzimande & Thusi (1991) on high school students found that 10,2 percent mentioned having experienced loss of concentration at school as a result of their exposure to violent events. Twenty nine percent of the sample in Nzimande & Thusi's sample experienced learning difficulties and poor school performance as a result of their exposure to traumatic experiences and seemed to feel insufficiently prepared to write examinations.

Nzimande & Thusi (1991) furthermore found that due to violence 46,6 % of African matriculants repeated a class in their high school careers. Gultig & Hart (1990) conducted a study on the impact of violence in schools in Pietermaritzburg found that, although no accurate figure exists to point out the link between violence and the school drop-out rate, their research did indicate that violence had a marked effect on the school drop-out rate.

More specific classroom behaviors related to PTSD are misconduct at school after a few weeks of having been exposed to a traumatic event. Macksoud, Dyregrov & Raudalen (1993) in their study of Cambodian children who encountered extreme suffering found that the classroom behavior suffered. They did not participate in class discussions, were withdrawn in class and spent a significant amount of time day-dreaming. Pynoos & Spencer (1984) point out that the intrusive imagery associated with affect may interfere with a young person's ability to handle precise learning. Pynoos & Nader (1984,p24) cite the following description by a young person to illustrate this: "I hear everything at school, and then its gone because what I saw happen to my Mommy comes right back to me." Macksoud, Dyregrov & Raudalen (1993) found a similar trend in students exposed to Central American warfare who suffered with impaired school performance due to intrusive memories of past traumatic events.

Shaw, Applegate, Tanner, Perez, Rothe Campo-Bowen & Lahey describe the following effects of PTSD on school performance: specific fears, recollections of images, posttraumatic play, behavioral re-enactments, regressive behavior, avoidance of reminders of the event, school problems, changed attitudes and somatic symptoms. Udwin's (1992) findings support Shaw et al (1995) in terms of PTSD's impact on school performance. Udwin (1992) however teases out concentration difficulties, memory impairment, reduced motivation to do school work, poor impulse control and classroom behavior (for e.g. mood, interpersonal relations and memory) as specific manifestations of PTSD in relation to school work. Pynoos & Nader (1984) found that children and adolescents who had exposure to traumatic events in Central American civil unrest were often unable to sequence traumatic events and their exposure to multiple trauma caused long term impairment on remote memory. These children and adolescents also experienced a decline in school performance and cognitive functioning. Some of these children and adolescents also experienced poor impulse control.

However as Amod (1997) reported, there is a lack of research in the South African context on the specific impacts of PTSD on aspects of school performance such as cognitive memory and concentration problems. Simpson (1993, p531) seems to echo this concern and states the following in this regard: " So little research has been done,

and so little of this is well done, or useful, or justifies the weight of the conclusions that may be based on it. Most of the literature on disasters, coma war and posttraumatic disorders simply ignores children and adolescents." Pynoos & Nader (1984) request more specific training and research in the area of trauma among young people. Hope & Madhere (1996) express the view that there has been few efforts to connect children's exposure to violence, specifically domestic and community violence, with school performance.

1.7. Summary

The literature review considers the problems of violence in South Africa as a background to understanding the impact of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on school performance. The different types of violence are outlined and the wide spread nature of violence during the apartheid era, pre-election period and the present criminal violence have been considered. The implications of the effects of violence on the people and possible interventions that need to be conducted in order to prevent victims of violence from becoming perpetrators have been discussed, (Simpson, 1993). An understanding of adolescence as a developmental stage dealing with issues of identity and self-concept has been explored using Erikson's theory and Mwamwende's description of adolescence. The impact of violence on youth has been discussed by looking at the possibility that widespread exposure to violence may result in youth finding violence acceptable, (Esprey 1996, Gibson 1990, Mckendrik & Hoffman 1990). The resilience of youth in the face of violence has been briefly explored. A background on apartheid era's impact on youth and education in which Mogano (1997) details the lack of adequate facilities and the contribution of the political struggle to the disruption of schooling has been documented. The present lack of safe and secure environments for schooling was considered, (Griggs, 1998).

The diagnostic criteria for PTSD according to the DSM IV has been documented. The discussion included the symptoms of PTSD, which are specific to adolescents. These symptoms included symptoms commonly experienced by adolescents; for example, avoidant behaviours, fear of recurrence of traumatic event, physiological and behavioral disturbances. Cultural differences were explored: for example, the

tendency to somatise was found to be more to non Western cultures as opposed to Western cultures. The impact of PTSD on cognitive functioning was discussed. Studies on the effects of PTSD and violence on school performance in South Africa have also been documented .The paucity of research on the impact of PTSD on school performance in this country was noted.

CHAPTER 2

2. THE STUDY

2.1. Rationale

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a widely researched area internationally. However studies have focused primarily on adults and given very little attention to children and adolescents. In South Africa particularly there is a lack of research on the impact of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder on adolescents. It was therefore decided that it would be useful to explore this aspect here.

More importantly, very few, if any, studies reflect the impact of PTSD on specific aspects of school performance and learning. There tends to be an over-reliance on international studies in this regard. It was therefore decided that it would be useful to explore the impact of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder on the school performance of adolescents in the South African context. The specific impact of PTSD on school performance is teased out by exploring the cognitive functioning, memory related disturbances, scholastic performance as well as developmental lags.

This study revisited the considerations of the few studies on PTSD that have been conducted in the South African context in order to grasp the historical background of violence and PTSD. The broader context of violence as well as the nature of violent events encountered is considered. This gives insight into how violence may impact differently on different individuals as well as how the severity of violent events may differ from one situation to the next. This study explores the effect of violence on education. The sociopolitical contribution to the effect of violence is explored as a background to the study. These aspects of the study give a more indepth understanding of the impact of PTSD on adolescents that is specific to the South African context.

The previous study conducted by Amod (1997) serves as a backdrop to this study. The latter study is informed by the limitations of the previous study. Thus, the Amod (1997) study did not provide an in-depth analysis of the relationship between PTSD

and specific aspects of scholastic performance. This study involves an in-depth analysis of the relationship between PTSD and specific aspects of school performance. Amod (1997) also utilised the Horowitz Impact of Events scale and the Dimensions of Exposure scale utilised in this study. The General Health questionnaire utilised previously by Amod (1997) was not utilised in this study. However it serves to inform the present study of the somatic, social and emotional aspects of PTSD in adolescents.

As suggested in the literature review, once traumatised through exposure to violence the school performance of adolescents will be expected to suffer, due to inadequate levels of concentration.

2.2. Aims and Hypotheses

The aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between PTSD and School Performance.

2.2.1. General Hypotheses

2.2.1.1.There will be a direct relationship between Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and school performance.

2.2.1.2.There will be a direct relationship between exposure to violence and school performance.

2.2.2. Specific Hypotheses

2.2.2.1.
There will be a direct relationship between symptoms of PTSD and academic indices or scholastic measures.

2.2.2.2.

There will be a direct relationship between symptoms of PTSD and number of violent events documented.

2.2.2.3

a)There will be a direct relationship between number of events documented and the self constructed performance measure

b)There will be a direct relationship between the Dimensions of Exposure (number of events documented) and scholastic measures

2.3. Sample

The sample was constituted from St Endas High School, which is situated in the Hillbrow area, in Johannesburg. The school consists of a predominantly Black population of students that reside in township areas (80 %) and in surrounding areas of the school. The sample included 79 standard seven students. Their age range was between 13-18 years of age. There were 36 females and 42 males in the sample. The predominant languages spoken by the sample are South Sotho, Zulu and Tswana. A very small percentage of the sample spoke North Sotho, English, Xhosa, Venda, Pedi and Swazi. The sample does not constitute a grouping from a high socio-economic population. Although most of the parents of children that attend the school are teachers, they are from a relatively low socio-economic status compared to the white population in South Africa.

2.3.1. Descriptive Statistical Table of Biographical Data

	Mean	Mode		
Age	14.8	15		
Sex	Frequency	Percent		
Male	36	46.2		
Female	42	53.8		
Total	78			
Language			Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
S.Sotho	25	32.1	25	32.1
Zulu	21	26.9	46	59.0
Tswana	15	19.2	61	78.2
N.Sotho	5	6.4	66	84.6
English	2	2.6	68	87.2
Xhosa	4	5.1	72	92.3
Venda	1	1.3	73	93.6
Sotho	3	3.8	76	97.4
Pedi	1	1.3	77	98.7
Swazi	1	1.3	78	100.0
Area				
Urban	12	16.0	12	16.0
Rural	63	84.0	75	100.0
Total Sharing house with				
Parents	73	96.1	73	96.1
Siblings	3	3.9	76	100.0

2.4. Measures

Two questionnaires were administered. The Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Questionnaire and the performance questionnaire. The PTSD Questionnaire consisted of three sections. The post traumatic stress disorder questionnaire was used in a previous study conducted by Amod (1997), which serves as a backdrop to the present study. The Performance Questionnaire consisted of four sections. Both the

questionnaires were submitted to a researcher and a psychologist for comments and suggestions. On the basis of these judgements, the questionnaires were reworked and the relevant changes were made. (See appendix B & C for copies of the questionnaires).

2.4.1. Format of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Questionnaire

The Post Traumatic Stress Disorder questionnaire consists of three sections. The sections discussed below are the demographic details, Horowitz Impact of Events Scale and the Dimensions of Exposure Scale. Separate scores were yielded for the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder measure and the Dimensions of Exposure measure.

2.4.1.1. Demographic Details:

The demographic data comprised eight items. The demographic data consisted of questions relating to age, sex, language, area and living conditions. Three questions relating to the nature of traumatic events were also included in this section. These questions were developed to gain a more in-depth understanding of the nature, extent and perceptions of violence experienced by the adolescents. The open–ended questions were as follows: " Describe each of your experiences of trauma or violence" and "Have you received any help for the above? Specify."

2.4.1.2. Horowitz Impact of Events Scale

The Impact of Events Scale was designed by Horowitz (1979) as a scale of the current degree of subjective impact related to a specific event. It consists of 15 items. Additive scores were yielded for this measure. The Impact of Events Scale is considered to be a generic measure of the stress response syndrome and does not have any formal cut-offs (Esprey, 1997). The scale serves as a measure of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The measure uses a four point scale on which subjects rate their responses. The choices range from "not at all" to "often" depending on the number of times they experienced the symptoms soon after the traumatic event. The choices are scored 0,1,3 and 5.

The split half reliability of the Impact of Events Scale is 0,86 and the test retest reliability is 0,87. (Esprey, 1996) The Impact of Events scale has been widely used in South Africa (e.g. Amod 1997, Esprey 1996). The scale has been used by people from different backgrounds. Yule and Udwin (1991) found the Impact of Events Scale to be useful in their work with younger people who had experienced a traumatic event.

2.4.1.3. Dimensions of Exposure Scale

This Scale consists of 46 items, which was adapted by Esprey (1996) to measure the nature and extent of traumatic life events. Additive scores were yielded for this measure. The Scale consists of statements describing traumatic events and the subject is meant to tick either "yes" or "no". For example a statement may read "I observed people hurting others". A score of zero was allocated to negative responses and positive responses were allocated a score of one. The total score was obtained by adding up the positive responses. The scale was used in the South African context by Esprey (1996) and Amod (1997).

2.4.2. Performance Questionnaire

The performance measure consisted of open-ended questions on performance, a self constructed performance measure and test marks.

2.4.2.1. Open–ended questions on Performance

The open-ended questions included in the study tapped into whether the students had received any help with regard to the problems they were experiencing at school. The

questions also aimed to establish the specific nature of the problems experienced. Open–ended questions also aimed to tap into possible contributors to either good or bad performance.

For example one of the questions was as follows "Please describe areas of strength and weakness in terms of your functioning at school at present ". Other questions were "What is causing you to do well" and "What is causing you to do badly".

2.4.2.2. Self-Constructed Performance Measure

The Self Constructed Performance Measure consists of 8 items. The self-constructed questionnaire was constructed by the writer, it is thus called the self-constructed measure. The self-constructed performance measure consisted of statements put together through an extensive literature search (Pynoos & Nader (1984), Udwin (1992), Terr (1984), Frederick (1984), Wilson & Raphael (1993), Yehuda (1995) which aimed to locate possible problem areas with regard to PTSD and school performance. These statements were scored according to a four point scale, the scores obtained on each were added to obtain the overall score.

To establish whether the measure possessed sufficient internal consistency for the total to be used for meaningful comparisons, the internal consistency of the self-constructed measure was investigated. This was done by checking the Cronbach's coefficient alpha, which was found to be at a 0.4 level, which reflected acceptable internal consistency.

2.4.2.3. Test Marks

This section was not filled in by the pupils but was obtained from the principal. The subject marks for mathematics, English and a vernacular language were obtained from the school. The three vernacular languages in the sample were either South Sotho, Zulu or Afrikaans. The test marks gave an indication of the students' performance in

the above subjects over three school terms. These marks were received in the form of a computer printout from the principal of the school.

2.5. Procedure

A letter was sent to the school and permission was obtained from the principal of the School (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was administered during school hours.

A pilot questionnaire or the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder questionnaire was administered initially. The Post Traumatic Stress Disorder questionnaire was administered to all the standard seven pupils at the same time in the presence of the researcher and a teacher of the school who assisted in explaining the purpose of the study. The nature of the study and the definition of trauma were discussed with the students before the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder questionnaire was administered. The students were, however not forthcoming with regard to questions or a discussion of trauma or the nature of the study. The students were not allowed to confer with each other about the contents of the questionnaire. All questionnaires were then collected.

Once this questionnaire was analysed in terms of the prevalence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, the performance questionnaire was then dropped off at the school. Students were handed the performance questionnaires by their teachers during their registration period. The questionnaires were then collected by teachers and handed to the Head Master of the school. Questionnaires that were outstanding were then collected from the school at a later stage.

2.6. Research Design

2.6.1. Analysis of Descriptive Statistics

The scores were described by the use of means, frequencies and percentages.
Frequencies were used to analyze the biographical data. For questions to which a positive or negative response was given, frequency tables were used to analyze the

responses to the questions, for example , "Have you been involved in trauma or violence? (or involved in a shocking experience like being a witness or victim of violence for example rape, being attacked etc)". Percentages were also used to establish the nature and the incidence of various symptoms and violent events documented by the sample. Percentages were used to determine the incidence of positive responses to particular symptoms of PTSD and the exposure to violence experienced by the sample.

2.6.2. Analysis of Qualitative Information

A content analysis was performed on the answers given by subjects to the open-ended questions. According to Rosenthal & Rosnow (1996) content analysis is defined as the classification of parts of a text into content categories. Content analysis is an additional method of categorising subjective information based on the frequency of occurrence of the information.

Responses on the performance measure were formed into themes and were reported within the framework of each of the questions. The number of responses were then counted and expressed as percentages of the number of respondents to that theme and to the sample. The content analysis tested the relationship between PTSD and school performance and exposure to violence and school performance.

2.6.3. Analysis of the Relationship between Variables

According to Howell (1995), the Spearman's correlation is generally used for ranked data. The ranked scores yielded in the study could be best analyzed by the use of the Spearman's correlation. The Spearman's correlation was therefore employed extensively in the study as part of the hypothesis testing.

The Spearman's correlation was utilized to analyze the following correlations:

a) The correlation between symptoms of PTSD and academic indices or scholastic measures.

b) The correlation between symptoms of PTSD and number of violent events documented.

c) The correlation between number of events documented and the self constructed Performance Measure

d) The correlation between the Dimensions of Exposure (number of events documented) and scholastic measures

e) The correlation between the self constructed Performance Measure and scholastic indices

CHAPTER 3

3. RESULTS

In this chapter, the results are presented according to the measures used. This in turn followed by an analysis and presentation of the results in terms of each of the hypotheses.

3.1. The Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Measure:

3.1.1. The Horowitz Impact of Events Scale:

The mean score obtained on the Horowitz Impact of Events Scale (see Appendix B) was 14,7. The median obtained on the Horowitz Impact of Events Scale was 11. This is low compared to 39,5 which was the mean total stress score received on the scale on initial administration. (Horowitz, 1979)

On the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Measure the response that was "most often experienced" was "I tried to remove it from my memory". 13 percent of the sample "often experienced " this symptom. The second "most often experienced" response noted was : "I tried not to think about it". This symptom was "often experienced" by 12,5 percent of the population. These responses suggest that one of the trends in the sample was to block traumatic events from memory.

The response to the open-ended question : "Have you been involved in trauma or violence? (or involved in a shocking experience like being a witness or victim of violence for example rape, being attacked etc)" was minimal. 14 students responded "yes" ,and they constituted 17,9% of the sample. 64 students responded "no" and they constituted 82,2 % of the sample.

3.1.2. The Dimensions of Exposure Scale:

On the Dimensions of Exposure Scale the mean score was 8,89. The median on the Dimensions of Exposure Scale was 8. The sample experienced a significant amount of violent events. The following table reflects the percentage of experiences reported by the sample on the Dimensions of Exposure Scale:

TABLE 1

Percentage of experiences on the Dimensions of Exposure Scale

Event	Number	Percent of the sample that experienced the event
I saw a dead body.	**20**	**39.2%**
I saw the dead body of someone I knew.	**11**	**21.6%**
I saw badly injured people.	**22**	**44.0%**
I saw someone I knew who was badly injured.	**11**	**22.0%**
People were attacked.	**12**	**24.5%**
People I knew were attacked.	**10**	**19.6%**
I observed people hurting others.	**18**	**35.3%**
I could hear sounds of pain and panic.	**11**	**23.9%**
A close friend or relative died.	**17**	**36.2%**
I saw a close friend or relative who was badly hurt.	**14**	**29,8%**

As can be seen from the Table 1 , people being badly injured constitutes the event experienced most frequently by members of the sample. The item "I saw badly injured people" was the most frequently experienced event, and and affected just under half of the sample.

3.2. The Performance Measure

To the question "Have you experienced any other problems in relation to school and your school work?" the students were either allowed to answer "yes" or "no". 70 students (97,2% of the sample) responded "no". The sample in general did not seem to think that they were experiencing any problems at school.

For the item : "I found that my marks at school were not as good as I expected them to be" on the self constructed Performance Measure 39 students (53,4 % of the sample) responded "agree". Although the sample did not acknowledge experiencing difficulty with their schoolwork, they did find that they were not performing as well as they had expected to perform. This scale may have been more effective in presenting more accurate attitudes to their school performance. The question :"Have you experienced

any other problems in relation to school and your school work?" may have been too limiting.

3.3. Content Analysis

In the Table 2 below the content analysis of the open-ended questions in the PTSD and Performance Questionnaire is presented. The table reports the number of responses per theme, the percentage of respondents per theme and the percentage of the sample that responded. The themes of trauma , violence and school performance are discussed below. (refer sections to 3.3.1. and 3.3.2.)

TABLE 2
Content Analysis of open-ended questions in the PTSD and Performance Questionnaire:

Question: Describe each of your experiences of trauma or violence. N=10	No.	% per theme	% of the sample
Themes:			
1.Rape	3	30	3,8
2.Experiencing a person being shot	6	60	7,6
3.Kidnapping &Burglary	1	10	1,3
Question: Have you received help?			
4 responses : police , sisters ,yes and no			
Question: What do you think is causing you to do badly at school? N=25			
Themes:			
1.Not Studying	4	16	5.06
2.Not listening, noise	5	20	6.32
3.Not understanding	7	28	8.86
32% other reasons: laziness, violence, t.v, friends, sick, late to school, lack of time, talkative, unclear response.	8	32	10.1
Question : Describe your present performance at school? N=74			
Theme:			
1.Improving performance	17	22.9	21.5
2.Doing badly	26	35	32.9
3.Doing well	14	18.9	17.7
4.Not understanding	5	6.8	6.3
5.Inbetween performance	14	18,9	17.7
Question: Have you received counseling, psychological assessment or remedial help?			
3 yes responses , 2 responded Dr Norman			

Content Analysis of Questions in the PTSD and Performance Questionnaire (Table 2 continued)

Question: Describe strengths and weaknesses. N=74	No.	% per theme	% of total
Theme:			
1.Listed subjects that were either a strength or a weakness	45	61	56.9
2.Sports\ recreation as a strength or weakness	21	28.7	26.5
3.Concentration as a strength	6	8,2	7.59
4.Concentration as a weakness	4	5.47	5.06
Question: What is causing you to do well? N=68			
Theme:			
1.Studying,working hard	29	42.6	36.7
2.Understanding	16	23.5	20.2
3.Concentrating	14	20.5	17.7
Question: What is causing you to do badly?	61		
1.Not understanding	20	32.7	25.3
2.Noise,not concentrating	17	27.8	27.8
3.Not studying	14	22.9	17.7
4.Difficulties with teacher	14	22.9	17.7
Question: Describe Problems ?			
I response , violence as impacting on schoolwork			

3.3.1. Trauma and Violence

In response to the open –ended question regarding experiences of trauma or violence six students (7,6 % of the sample) experienced a person being shot. Other responses included having experienced rape, a kidnapping and a burglary. A very small proportion of the sample described their experience of trauma. This indicates a possible lack of understanding of the concept of trauma. There was also a lack of understanding of the nature and purpose of the study, although attempts were made to explain the study, the students were not forthcoming with questions.

A very small percentage of the sample had received help. The police and a student's sister were cited as having helped after the experience of trauma or violence.

A small percentage of the sample received interventions. There were three responses to this category. Two students had received help from one of the members of staff at the school.

3.3.2. School Performance

Seven students (8,86% of the sample) described themselves as doing badly as a result of not understanding information taught to them in class. Other responses included not listening and noise. Some examples of the more general responses to doing badly at school included laziness, violence, television and friends.

The sample described their present performance as needing to be improved, experiencing an in-between level of performance and not understanding. Only 14 students (17,7 % of the sample) described themselves as "doing well". 26 students in the sample (32,9 % of the sample) described their present performance as "doing badly" in response to their present performance at school. This does not tally with more restricted questions on performance such as "Have you experienced any other problems in relation to your school work?", in which students had to answer either "yes" or "no". The difficulties with school performance are more evident in the open-ended responses tapped by the content analysis.

45 students (56,7% of the sample) listed subjects at school that were areas of strength or weakness. Sports and recreation were also listed as either an area of strength or weakness. Concentration was listed as strength and as a weakness. 6 students (7,59% of the sample) noted concentration as strength. 4 students (5,06 % of the sample) described concentration as an area of weakness.

In response to the open-ended question regarding issues that may relate to students doing well at school "studying and working hard" was cited by 29 students which constitutes 36,7 % of the sample. Concentrating and understanding were also described as reasons for doing well at school.

Reasons cited for doing badly at school included not understanding, not studying, and difficulties with the teacher. 27,8 % of the sample reported noise and not concentrating as a reason for what was causing bad performance at school.

The students in the sample tended not to relate their performance to exposure to violence or trauma. Only one student described their problem at school as related to violence.

The answers to the open-ended questions also tended to be concrete , in terms of the students inability to tease out more detailed responses regarding the factors causing them to do badly at school. There was a tendency to ascribe adequate or inadequate school performance to concentrating, understanding and teaching methods.

3.4. Correlational Analysis

Hypothesis 1: There will be a direct relationship between symptoms of PTSD and academic indices or scholastic measures.

3.4.1. Correlation between the Self Constructed Measure and PTSD

The correlation for the relationship between PTSD and the self constructed performance measure is negligible. (r = -0,00262 and p = 0,98) This suggests that there is no direct relationship between the between the symptoms of PTSD and academic indices or scholastic measures.

The table below presents the number of observations, the correlation co-effecients and p-values on the Spearman's Correlation for the relationship between PTSD and academic indices.

TABLE 3

3.4.2 Correlation between PTSD and School Marks

	PTSD		
	No. of observations	**Correlation Coefficients**	**p-values**
Maths T1	**20**	**0,12**	**0,55**
Maths T2	**29**	**0,53**	**0,78**
Maths T3	**29**	**0,12**	**0,95**
English T1	**63**	**-0,02**	**0,89**
English T2	**63**	**-0,70**	**0,58**
English T3	**63**	**-0,07**	**0,58**
Vernacular T1	**28**	**0,34**	**0,81**
Vernacular T2	**29**	**0,04**	**0,86**
Vernacular T3	**29**	**0,24**	**0,21**

As can be seen from the table the correlations for the relationship between PTSD and scholastic measures are not significant. This suggests that there is no relationship between symptoms of PTSD and scholastic measures.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a direct relationship between symptoms of PTSD and of violent events documented.

3.4.3. Correlation between PTSD and Dimensions of Exposure

The correlation for the relationship between PTSD and Dimensions of Exposure is moderate, and approaches significance. ($r = 0,43$ and $p = 0,06$) This suggests that the relationship between symptoms of PTSD and events documented tends towards significance.

Hypothesis 3 a: There will be a direct relationship between number of events documented and the Self Constructed Performance Measure.

3.4.4. Correlation between Dimensions of Exposure and the Self Constructed Measure

The correlation for the relationship between dimensions of exposure and performance is highly significant. ($r = 0,46$ and $p < .01$) This suggests that there is a direct relationship between Dimensions of Exposure (number of events documented) and the self constructed Performance measure.

Hypothesis 3 b: There will be a direct relationship between the Dimensions of Exposure (number of events documented) and scholastic measures.

The table below presents the p-values for the relationship between Dimensions of Exposure and marks (scholastic measures).

TABLE 4

3.4.5. Correlation between Dimensions of Exposure and School Marks

Dimensions of Exposure			
	Number of observations	**Correlation Co-efficient**	**p-values**
Maths T1	**35**	**0,01**	**0,95**
Maths T2	**35**	**-0,19**	**0,28**
Maths T3	**35**	**-0,19**	**0,29**
English T1	**35**	**-0,04**	**0,83**
English T2	**35**	**0,14**	**0,43**
English T3	**35**	**0,08**	**0,66**
Vernacular T1	**34**	**-0,06**	**0,75**
Vernacular T2	**35**	**-0,06**	**0,71**
Vernacular T3	**35**	**0,12**	**0,49**

The correlations in the above table are not significant. This suggests that there is no relationship between Dimensions of Exposure (number of events documented) and scholastic measures.

Hypothesis 3 c: There will be a direct relationship between the Self Constructed Performance Measure and scholastic indices.

The table below presents the relationship between the Self Constructed performance measure and marks.

TABLE 5

3.4.6. Correlation between Self Constructed Performance Measure and School Marks

Self Constructed Performance Measure			
	Number of Observations	**Correlation Co-efficient**	**p-values**
Maths T1	**63**	**-0,21**	**0,09**
Maths T2	**63**	**-0,19**	**0,16**
Maths T3	**63**	**-0,25**	**0,05**
English T1	**63**	**-0.02**	**0,10**
English T2	**63**	**-0,07**	**0,59**
English T3	**63**	**-0,07**	**0,58**
Vernacular T1	**62**	**-0,64**	**0,62**
Vernacular T2	**63**	**-0,07**	**0,10**
Vernacular T3	**63**	**-0,01**	**0,92**

The p-values in the table above where not found to be significant. This suggests that there is no relationship between the Self Constructed Performance measure and school marks.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In general the study aimed to investigate the relationship between PTSD and school performance, hypothesizing a negative impact of PTSD on performance. The relationship between symptoms of PTSD and exposure to violence has also been an aim of the investigation. The relationship between exposure to violence and school performance has also been analyzed. The outcome of the study and its hypotheses are discussed below.

4.2. Measures (PTSD Measure and Dimensions of Exposure Measure)

The results of the study reveal that the majority of the adolescent sample denies having experienced trauma or violence. This finding is consistent with the findings of Amod (1997) in which there was also a tendency in adolescents to deny having experienced trauma. Support for the possibility of denial is provided by the fact that the most common symptom of PTSD identified in this sample was the need to forget or block from the memory the traumatic experience.

There is also the consideration by Esprey (1996) that the adolescents may not have understood the concept of trauma. They seemed to be able to relate to more concrete examples of trauma as opposed to the more abstract concept of "trauma". This may be the reason for a large number of the sample denying having experienced trauma. Thus in contrast, a large proportion of the sample indicated having been exposed to a number of violent events on the Dimensions of Exposure Scale. An explanation for this might be found in the concern expressed by Gibson (1991) that young people in South Africa are being socialised to find violence acceptable and therefore tend not to define experiences of violence as traumatic events.

One also needs to consider the possibility that there are cultural manifestations of trauma. In the Mollica, Poore, Son, Murray & Tor (1997) study on Cambodian youth it was found that adolescents were more likely to manifest with somatic complaints after having experienced trauma. The issue of somatisation was found by Amod (1997) to be common in Black South African youth. This is consistent with the literature that describes non-Western cultures as more likely to manifest with somatic complaints as compared to the Western culture (Mukererji, 1995).

4.3. Relationship between PTSD and School Performance

Hypothesis 1 : There will be a direct relationship between symptoms of PTSD and academic indices and scholastic measures.

The study has found that there is no relationship between post traumatic stress disorder and school performance. This finding is consistent with Terr 's assertion that PTSD does not necessarily have a negative impact on school performance. Everstine (1993) adds a different perspective to the impact of PTSD on school performance and suggests that, although a drop in school results is more likely, PTSD should be seen as having both a positive and negative effect on school performance. Everstine (1993) does not, however, specify what the positive effects on school performance are.

4.4. Relationship between PTSD and Dimensions of Exposure

Hypothesis 2: There will be a direct relationship between symptoms of PTSD and the number of violent events documented.

The study furthermore found that there was no relationship between PTSD and the number of violent incidents that the sample were exposed to. The possibility exists that there is a level of resilience in the response to trauma and a tendency to find violence acceptable. Dawes & Tredoux (1989) say the following in this regard: "It is clear that some children are remarkably resilient in conditions of adversity and the reasons for this are likely to be a function of a number of factors including the child's

physical robustness, temperament and the existence of some supportive mechanism in the community."(p35)

This level of resilience may have contributed to the low levels of PTSD manifestation in the sample, although a large proportion of the sample had been exposed to various sequellae of violent events. Newcombe (1990) suggests that: "Adverse conditions may 'steel' an individual, making future adversity more manageable and certain maladaptive development e.g., antisocial personality, may ameliorate the distress of environmental hazards."(p 45). Antisocial personality disorder may then occur instead of PTSD in adolescents. The manifestation of anti-social personality disorder may arise out of the acceptance of violence. Newcombe does however, suggest that adolescent perceptions of themselves as freedom fighters as opposed to victims fueled resilience. Positive action to cope with the threat may reduce psychological distress and create group cohesion. This was revealed in studies conducted in Northern Ireland (Newcombe, 1990). The low levels of PTSD may be a result of how adolescents perceived their experiences of violence.

4.5. Relationship between Dimensions of Exposure and School Performance

Hypothesis 3a: There will be a direct relationship between number of events documented and the self constructed measure

Hypothesis 3b: There will be a direct relationship between the Dimensions of Exposure (number of events documented) and scholastic measures.

The study found that there was a relationship between the number of violent events experienced and the self constructed measure of school performance. The possibility of violence and crime disrupting the school environment still continues to be a problem. According to Griggs (1998) our schools are not sufficiently secured and theft, robbery, assault, vandalism continue to negatively impact the schoolyard. Children are therefore not safe at school and on their way to school. Their unsafe learning environment may contribute to their poor performance at school. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Nzimande & Thusi in which 42%

of matric students repeated a class in their high school careers due to the impact and interference that political violence had on schooling. Some of the students in this study described themselves as inadequately prepared for examinations due to the levels of violence in their community.

4.6. General Implications of the Study

Adolescents who have had experiences of violence appear to have a tendency to find violence, or exposure to violence acceptable and do not seem to describe such events as traumatic events. This may be a result of the widespread violence experienced in the South African context which seems to have resulted in a culture of passive acceptance of violent and traumatic events.

Trauma or violence does not necessarily result in PTSD. Factors such as resilience, perceptions of violence and the meanings that adolescents ascribed to violence or trauma may decrease the occurrence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Specific studies on children and adolescents need to be given a greater amount of attention. There appears to be an over-reliance on overseas research in this regard. This tends to result in the generalizing of symptoms to Black South African adolescents which may not be appropriate or accurate. Issues such as denial of trauma, somatisation or the lack of understanding of the concept of trauma appear to be more likely in Black South African adolescents.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder does not seem to have a negative impact on school performance. The minimal amount of trauma experienced in the sample resulted in little opportunity to find a correlation in such a small sample. The assumption that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder would have a negative effect on school performance needs to be further investigated using more specific measures of school performance, as there appears to be the possibility that a positive effect may be likely. Exposure to violence does, however seem to significantly impact on school performance.

4.7. Limitations of the Study

One of the methodological problems in the study, with regard to the questionnaire may have been that the children in the study are second language English speakers and may have had difficulty responding on this measure. They would not have had this problem had the questionnaire been translated to the language spoken by the majority of the students. Open-ended questions may have been better answered in the primary medium of communication.

Interviews would have provided more insight into the experiences and impact of trauma on the adolescents. Interviews where not however possible due to logistical problems experienced with regard to creating times for children to be interviewed. Various times were scheduled but students where not properly informed and did not arrive for interviews.

Further, a measure isolating specific issues like concentration may have been more beneficial than school marks alone in providing an indication of the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and violence on scholastic and cognitive functioning.

An intervention such as providing a st ıdent group dealing with trauma may have been more useful in establishing a more in-depth understanding of the impact of PTSD on school performance. A group intervention could have provided a trusting environment in which the students may have felt more comfortable in sharing their experiences of trauma. The questionnaire on trauma may not have provided a sufficiently trusting atmosphere for students to share their experiences.

A larger sample size, obtained from a number of schools rather than one, as was the case in this study, could have been involved.

Although attempts were made to explain the nature and purpose of the study students where not forthcoming with questions and this seemed to have contributed to a less-than - adequate response with regard to open-ended questions.

4.8. Suggestions for Further Research

More research needs to be conducted on the specific aspects or symptoms of PTSD that are specific to adolescents in the South African context.

Looking at cognitive functions rather than school performance in a broader sense maybe more useful in isolating and linking more specific effects of trauma on learning. Thus, for example memory, attention and learning processes could be explored in greater detail.

Future studies may need to consider issues of comorbidity such as depression, anxiety, social functioning and somatisation which accompanies PTSD in order to gain an indepth understanding of the wide spectrum of manifestations of PTSD.

One needs to translate instruments when working with second language English speakers in order to obtain more detailed and appropriate responses with regard to experiences, symptoms and effects of traumatic experiences.

One needs to look at factors such as resilience rather than adopting models that are more based on locating pathology. Newcombe (1990) says the following in this regard: "...the focus of future research may need to shift, as it has done in Northern Ireland, to an examination of the factors which contribute to this population group coping so well under such adverse circumstances"(p76). A study on temperament conducted by Skuy, Westaway & Snell (1986) found a significant relationship between temperament and academic achievement in a group of Black South African children. Future research could be aimed towards investigating the effect of temperament on the manifestations of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the interacting effect of these factors on school performance of adolescents.

Finally, as Dawes (1990) suggests, more longitudinal studies are necessary in order to have a grasp of the long term effects of political violence in the South African context.

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Appendix A

Division of Specialized Education
University of Witwatersrand

05 June 1997
The Principal
St Endas School

Dear Sir\Madam

Masters Dissertation

I am a Masters in Education Psychology student and currently in the process of beginning my dissertation on the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder on school performance. I would like to request your permission to conduct my research on a sample of students from your school.

I would like to administer a study, which estimates the prevalence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and a questionnaire on school performance.

I trust this is the information you require and hope that it will enable you to approve my request. Should you have any further queries, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Yours faithfully,
Yaseera Amod.
Tel. 356 0728
356 0749

Appendix B

Students

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Questionnannaire.

I am a Psychology Masters student and would appreciate your support in filling out this questionnaire.The questionnaire aims to establish the prevalence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder at your school.

Please attempt all questions in the questionnaire.Your responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION

What is your name?.....

How old are you? .....

Sex : Male:.....
Female:.....

Standard: Std 6:..... Std 7:..... Std 8:.....
Std 9:..... Std 10:.....

Teacher's Name: .....

Home Language: .....

What area do you live in?.....

Who do you share your house with: Parents:..... Friends:.....
Siblings:..... Others:.....

Have you been involved in trauma or violence?(or involved in a shocking experience like being a witness or victim of violence for example rape, being attacked etc.) : Yes:..... No:.....
If yes, how many times?.....

Describe each of your experiences of trauma or violence?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Have you received help for any of the above ,specify?

.....
.....

This section deals with feelings experienced after being exposed to trauma or violence.

Please note that this section refers to any form of trauma or violence that you were exposed to.

Please tick the ( ) the relevant columns below where " it" refers to the violent\ traumatic event or events you experienced.

(0) = not at all
(1) = rarely experienced
(2) = sometimes experienced
(3) = often experienced

EVENTS		0	1	2	3
1.	Thought about it when I did not mean to.				
2.	Avoided letting myself get upset when I thought about it or was reminded of it.				
3.	I tried to remove it from my memory.				
4.	I had trouble falling asleep or staying awake.				
5.	I had waves of strong feeling about it.				
6.	I had dreams about it.				
7.	I stayed away from reminders of it.				
8.	I felt as if it had not happened or it was not real.				
9.	I tried not to talk about it.				
10.	Pictures about it popped in my mind.				
11.	Other things kept making me think about it.				
12.	I was aware that I still had a lot of feelings about it.				
13.	I tried not to think about it.				
14.	Any reminder brought back feelings about it.				
15.	My feelings about it were kind of numb.				

DIMENSIONS OF EXPOSURE SCALE

If you have recently experienced traumatic events which may have changed your life in several ways then listed below are several experiences which you may have gone through.

Please indicate which of these experiences apply to you by ticking yes if it did occur and ticking no if it did not occur.

EVENT	YES	NO
1. My life was threatened.		
2. I had to flee for my life.		
3. I was badly harmed or injured.		
4. I was forced to do something against my will.		
5. I was attacked.		
6. I was intentionally harmed.		
7. I saw a dead body.		
8. I saw the dead body of someone I knew.		
9. I observed people dying.		
10. I observed children dying.		
11. I saw badly injured people.		
12. I saw someone I knew who was badly injured.		
13. I observed children being injured.		
14. People were attacked.		
15. People I knew were attacked.		
16. I watched people being mutilated.		
17. I watched people I knew being mutilated.		
18. I saw people I knew who had been badly mutilated.		
19. I saw badly mutilated people.		
20. I observed people hurting others.		
21. I observed people killing others.		
22. I witnessed abusive violence.		
23. I helped give first aid to the injured.		

	EVENT	YES	NO
24.	I helped move dead bodies.		
25.	I helped move the dead bodies of people I knew.		
26.	I could smell burnt flesh.		
27.	I could hear sounds of pain and panic.		
28.	I saw the dead body of a close friend or relative.		
29.	A close friend or relative was killed.		
30.	A close friend or relative died.		
31.	I saw a close friend or relative who was badly injured.		
32.	I heard about a close friend or relative who had been badly injured.		
33.	I observed a close friend or relative being hurt.		
34.	I observed a close fried or relative being killed.		
35.	I observed a close friend or relative dying.		
36.	My family was threatened.		
37.	A close friend or relative was threatened.		
38.	A close friend or relative was in imminent danger.		
39.	I helped move the body of a close friend or relative.		
40.	I saw a close friend or relative who was being mutilated.		
41.	A close friend or relative was attacked.		
42.	I received information about something shocking which happened to a close friend or relative.		
43.	I killed someone.		
44.	I injured someone.		
45.	I participated in killing someone.		
46.	I participated in injuring someone.		

Appendix C

School Performance Measure

The questionnaire aims to see how you have felt in the past ,and how you are feeling now about your school performance.

Please attempt all questions in the questionnaire that say "To be filled in by student".

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION.

SECTION A (TO BE FILLED IN BY STUDENT)

What is your name ?.....

How old are you?.....

Sex: Male:..... Female:.....

Standard: .....

Teacher's Name:.....

Have you repeated one or more classes at school? Yes..... No.....

If yes, please specify which:

Class Repeated Year Repeated

(1).....

(2).....

(3).....

Have you received any counseling ,psychological assessment or remedial help? Specify for what ?

.....

.....

.....

If yes, from whom did you receive help?.....

.....

.....

What do you think caused you to do badly at school?.....

.....

.....

SECTION B (TO BE FILLED IN BY STUDENT)

After being exposed to trauma or violence, did you experience any of the following problems at school:

Please circle the correct response.

1.Did you have trouble remembering information that you learnt?

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

2.I had difficulty concentrating during class?

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

3.Did you find it difficult to get along with your teachers and your classmates?

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

4.I gave up easily on tasks that I found difficult?

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

5.Was keeping up with school work difficult for you?

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

6.I found that my marks at school were not as good as I expected them to be?

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

7.Did you easily lose interest in the information you were learning?

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

8.I found that I did my work inaccurately and impulsively?

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Have you experienced any other problems in relation to school and your school work?
Yes.....
No.....

If yes ,please describe this problem\these problems and specify how it\they affected your school work?

Problem:
Effect:
Problem:
Effect:
Problem:
Effect:

Please describe your performance at school presently ?.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Please describe possible areas of strength and weakness in terms of your functioning at school at present?

Strengths :
Weaknesses :

What do you think is causing you to do well ? .....
.....
.....

What do you think is causing you to do badly? .....
.....
.....

SECTION C
(NOT TO BE FILLED IN BY STUDENTS)

MARCH RESULTS

OVERALL RESULT (MARCH)

JUNE EXAMINATION RESULTS

OVERALL RESULT (JUNE)