

1. INTRODUCTION

Constraints on the lifestyle of urban Black township dwellers include the inadequate provision of basic requirements relating to health, educational facilities, accommodation, and job opportunities. This report describes a study that relates stressful living conditions arising from these constraints to the school performance of a group of primary school pupils in Soweto. Findings indicate that school performance is influenced by a wide range of environmental factors that cannot be divorced from the prevailing beliefs and ideologies governing life in South Africa.

Soweto, a Black township approximately 15km from Johannesburg, is said to comprise South Africa's most sophisticated urban Black population. An official estimate of population size is 1,2 million but the large number of illegal residents probably increases the population by about 30% (Morris, 1980). A survey conducted by the Financial Mail (1983-03-25) found that Sowetans consider housing to be their greatest problem area, followed by crime, the educational facilities, the lack of electricity, and unemployment. At the heart of the problems in Soweto is the issue of urban

residence rights, that is, the right to live and work in an urban area. The government now acknowledges that urban Blacks are no longer 'temporary sojourners' in 'White areas'. This has led to greater security for Blacks having Section 10 rights, but has closed the doors to many families. Also, the shortage of housing in Soweto denies many legitimate workers the means of living in Soweto. The Viljoen Committee (Note 1) found that the housing backlog is approximately 35,000 units, growing at a rate of 400 annually. According to the Administration Board officials in control of the area, the average number of householders is eight, but a more realistic figure is nine to ten householders per dwelling.

The shortage of housing has led to residents subletting any available accommodation, such as garages and back rooms. Lodging in these rooms has caused confrontation between the Administration Board in control of the area, and the residents in cases where the rooms are made of corrugated iron. Officials have ordered the demolition of all corrugated iron shacks in an attempt to 'clean up the area'. Approximately 40% of the population of Soweto earns less than the Minimum Living Level calculated by the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce for November 1980 (Institute of Race Relations, 1981), so rentals from subletting provide a valuable source of income, desperately needed by many households.

Soweto has the highest incidence of violent crime in the country. Last year the murder toll was 1275, this representing a 28% increase from 1981 (Financial Mail, 1983-03-25).

The lack of electricity necessitates the use of open fires which may be related to the high incidence of respiratory diseases and tuberculosis (Horrell, 1982).

Statistics relating to illegitimacy, divorce, and maintenance claims obtained from the Department of Co-operation and Development illustrate that more than one half of the children in Soweto are illegitimate. This figure is very similar to the figure quoted by Sheena Duncan in the Financial Mail (1983-03-25). This high rate of illegitimacy, together with the fact that the ratio of marriages to divorces granted is approximately 2:1 indicates the probability of a high proportion of female heads of households. A survey of household structure in Diepkloof, a suburb of Soweto, found that almost a quarter of the families surveyed had only one parent (Morris, 1980). The stress level of these families is exacerbated by the number of fathers neglecting their children, as more than 11,000 maintenance claims were filed annually between 1977 and 1979. Work is essential for most of these women who therefore have

to leave their children to be cared for by others.

Only 6% of the total number of children of pre-school going age are accommodated by formal pre-school facilities (creches and nursery schools) because of the shortage of these services. Informal child minder systems cater for the remainder of the children who are looked after by relatives, neighbours, or paid childminders. These are often elderly women, many of whom are illiterate (Morris, 1980).

The last period of major unrest in Soweto was in 1976. Violence erupted between schoolchildren and police, the cause of the unrest ostensibly being the use of Afrikaans as a teaching medium. Elsa Joubert eloquently describes the riots in her book 'The Long Journey of Poppie Nongena' "...the children were fighting for more than not learning Afrikaans or not having this special Bantu Education thing. They were fighting because of their parents' unrest which came over them like a fever too" (Joubert, 1978).

Since 1976 the authorities have attempted to improve the quality of education, but many people regard these attempts as ineffectual. The Financial Mail investigated Black attitudes towards education after 1976, and found that only 42% of the respondents said it had improved (Financial Mail, 1983-03-25). This view is unfortunately given credence by

the statistics for pupil failure, dropout rate, and the continuing differences in the financial arrangements for Black and White school children. In the 1980/1981 financial year R140 was expended per Black pupil as against R913 per White pupil. According to A. Roukens de Lange (1981) future improvement in the quality of Black education is dependent upon expenditure levels. De Lange examined trends in Black education by devising a quality index based on factors relating to school enrolment, pass rate, pupil:teacher ratios, and teacher training. Findings are complex but indicate that the quality of school education has improved in recent years for primary schools but has dropped rapidly for secondary schools. A turning point for the secondary schools can only be expected after 1984. De Lange also maintains that despite the increased expenditure per pupil in recent years, it will have to more than double if the schools are to meet minimum standards based on the quality indices.

A disproportionately high drop out rate has been calculated for Blacks (Marcum, 1982; Verwey, Weideman, and Wilkenson, 1983). Of the 600 000 Black students who began school in 1968, only 5% completed matric in 1980.

This summary of conditions in Soweto illustrates that there are areas of potential or real conflict and stress. It is proposed that if children are unable to cope with these

stresses, they may become anxious, as they are not able to reduce these stresses. It is likely that this anxiety will affect school performance.

2. ECOLOGICAL MODELS DESCRIBING THE SOCIALISATION PROCESS.

The socialisation process has been described as a system of reciprocal interaction between the child and the environment (Baumrind, 1980). Individuals are considered to play an active role in the socialisation process by selecting and modifying cues that may stem from ecological, cultural, and socio-economic sources.

Ecological models of the socialisation process have been drawn up by Berry (1975; 1976), Bronfenbrenner (1979), and Whiting (1977).

Whiting and Berry propose that there is a causal relationship between ecological, cultural, and behavioural variables. Whiting defines behaviour in terms of variables suggested by learning theory, attachment theory, and psychoanalysis, whereas Berry uses Witkin's model of psychological differentiation to describe behaviour (Witkin et al., 1962).

According to Berry, contact between two societies, one of which is technologically more advanced than the other, can lead to new behaviours (Berry, 1975; 1976). If these new behaviour patterns are in conflict with, or are not acceptable to members of the traditional society, acculturative stress may occur. An example of this is the schooling system in South Africa. This is based on a Western model of education that bears no relationship to education in traditional societies. According to Dreeben (1968) education in Western societies promotes independence and achievement. On the other hand, Uzoka (1980) claims that if education is to be relevant in Africa it must be based on morality, responsibility, and caring about relationships. A lack of understanding of the aims of the educational systems by the authorities on the one hand, and the teachers and scholars on the other, may lead to conflict and stress.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) offers a different theoretical perspective on human development, by considering the ecological environment to be a set of nested structures. The innermost level contains the immediate setting; this is known as the microsystem. The next level, the mesosystem, no longer looks at single settings but for relationships between them, such as the home and the school.

The exosystem, which is the third level of the ecological environment, no longer involves the individual as an active participant but can influence individual behaviour profoundly. For example, the parents' occupation can influence the child's behaviour at home and at school. The last level, the macrosystem, refers to consistencies in the form and content of the three lower order systems that result in similarities between the subsystems and differences between cultures. These consistencies are expressed in terms of the cultures belief systems or ideologies. Therefore the ecological environment extends far beyond the individual and his immediate situation. It links events in the child's life, the prevailing belief systems, and the ideology particular to the culture, to the organisation of its institutions.

A model of student performance has been drawn up on the basis of the ideas of Whiting, Berry, and Bronfenbrenner (See Figure 1). It also includes Centra and Potter's model (1980) of school and teacher effects on the educational process.

Figure 1 indicates that academic performance may be influenced by a number of variables. The first is, of course, students' cognitive ability, their level of basic skills, and their personality and emotional development. The

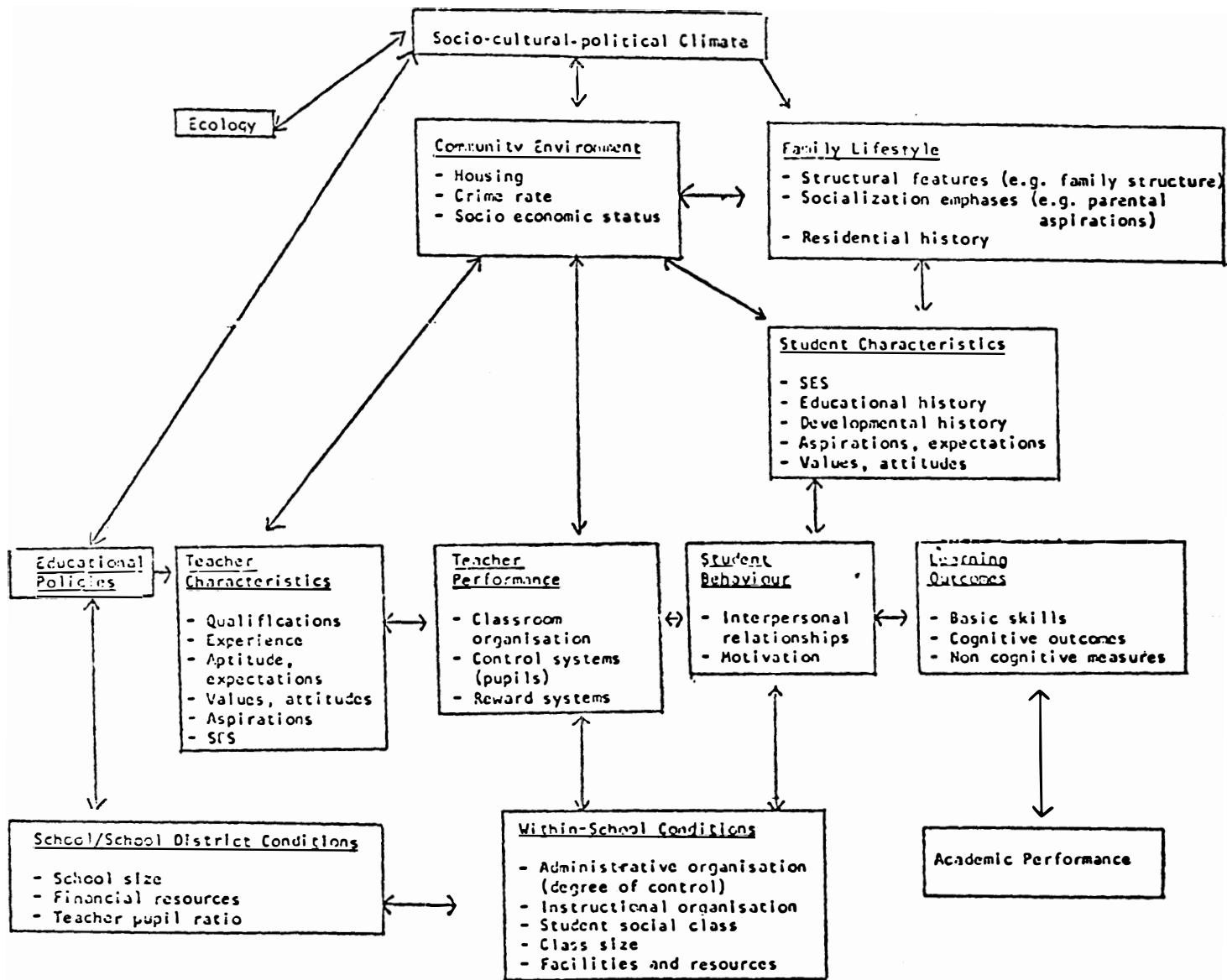


FIGURE ONE: Antecedents of academic performance.

second concerns the nature of the educational system, its structural features, and supporting infrastructure. The third is the environmental exigencies that can affect the cognitive development and emotional responses of the students. All these factors can influence, and are influenced by, the prevailing cultural, political, and economic climate, that in turn may be modified by the ecology of the area.

The description of life in Soweto presented earlier provides an account of the potential difficulties faced by Sowetans. This study uses variables selected on the basis of this description and examines their effect on the pupil's school performance. Variables used are family lifestyle, based on household structure and composition; the family's residential history; and the pattern of contact between the child and his parents. Traumas relating to separation from major caregivers are used in the analysis, as well as socio-economic status (SES) indicators such as parents' educational and occupational status. The child's educational history is also included in the analysis. Two measures of self concept are obtained, the one pertaining to the child's sense of inferiority in the home, and the other to a more generalised anxiety and insecurity.

3. METHOD.

The examination marks of the 1980 Sub A (grade 1) intake of pupils (N=163) from a lower primary school in Soweto were collected annually over a period of three years. In the first year of study, an analysis was done of the pupils educational history. This revealed that the pupils could be classified into one of three groups:

- pupils who had never attended school
- pupils who were repeating Sub A
- pupils who had attended a pregrade class at the school the previous year.

The achievement patterns of these pupils were examined at the end of Sub A. A two-way MANOVA was done using sex and school experience as independent variables, and the pupils' mathematics marks and a language score (obtained by summing their English, Zulu, and Afrikaans scores) as measurement variables. Results for school experience were significant for mathematics ($F = 11,5$; $df = 2,156$; $p < ,001$) and language ($F = 20,0$; $df = 2,156$; $p < ,001$). The children who had attended the pregrade classes obtained the highest scores, followed by the pupils repeating the year. The complete findings of this study are reported in Gordon and Goduka,

1981 (Note 2).

Structured interviews were held with the primary caregiver of 74 pupils in 1981. Questions in the interview related to:

- biographical details of parents and children;
- socio-economic indicators relating to parents' occupational and educational history and the number of wage-earners in the household;
- household structure and composition;
- details of the child's separation experiences from parents and major caregivers.

Interviews were conducted by a teacher and a trained social worker, both of whom were living in Soweto. Twenty-seven of the pupils had attended the pregrade class, 18 had repeated Sub A and 29 had had no preschool experience.

The following year (1982) the Kinetic Family Drawing Test (KFD) was administered to the pupils. The KFD was devised by Burns and Kaufman (1972) as a means of assessing disturbed family relations. According to Koppitz (1968), family drawings reveal a child's attitude towards other members of the family, as well as his perception of his role in the

family.

The subjective nature of drawings, and hence the difficulties inherent in deriving quantitative data, is illustrated by many studies (for example, McPhee and Wegner, 1976; Myers, 1978). Despite these difficulties, carefully interpreted drawings are thought to be of great clinical value, revealing the child's attitude towards his family (Klepsch and Logie, 1982). Details of the KFD, and the procedure used to administer the test to the present sample, are described by Ngwane (1983). Ngwane compared the elicited drawings with the responses obtained from the structured interviews held with the primary caregivers. He found that the information obtained from the drawings was a useful supplement to the questionnaire as it clarified the child's perception of his role in the household, and his relationship with other household members.

In this study, KFD responses were used to provide two measures of self concept.

Self Concept 1 (SC₁). Bodwin and Bruck (1960) used the responses to the Draw-a-Person test to develop a scale of self concept. These authors defined their scale as measuring self confidence, freedom to express appropriate feelings, liking for oneself, and satisfaction with one's attainments.

Findings indicated that drawings judged for certain characteristics correlated significantly with a psychiatric interview. These characteristics are reinforcement, erasures, sketchy lines, transparencies, distortions, incomplete features, opposite sex identification, primitiveness (crude, roughly drawn figures) and immaturity.

A scale of 0 to 3 was used; 0 indicated that the characteristic was not present, 1 that less than one-half of the figures had that characteristic, 2 that more than one-half had the characteristic and 3 that all the figures had the characteristic.

Self Concept 2. (SC₂). Ogden (1977) found that unusually small figures indicate generalized discontent, feelings of inferiority, ineffectiveness, inadequacy, and insecurity. If the child's drawing revealed that the child's size was disproportionately small relative to other figures in the drawing, a score of 1 was given. A score of 2 indicated no size discrepancies.

At the end of the third year year of study (1982) 22 children from the sample had left the school. Six of these had been interviewed but KFDs had not been obtained. It is unfortunate that schools do not keep detailed records of pupils who have left, as this information would be extremely

useful in view of the high dropout rate from Black schools.

4. RESULTS.

A list of the variables used in the study is given in Appendix A.

Intergroup differences were analysed using chi-squared frequency tables for categorical data and regression analyses and a correlation matrix for interval data.

At the end of the third year it had become apparent that comparisons between pupils could not be made on the basis of their school examination scores because of the high failure rate. Table 1 illustrates that 63% of the pupils failed at least once. The group of repeats had been at school for four years by the end of the third year's study whereas the rest of the pupils had been at school for three years. As a result of this failure rate, pupils were no longer one homogeneous group as far as grade was concerned, but ranged from Sub A to Standard 1. Therefore a comparison of marks was not feasible, and it was decided to use failure rate as the dependent variable. For the remainder of the analyses pupils are divided on the basis of the number of times they had failed.

- Group 0 indicates the pupils who have never failed.
- Group 1 indicates the pupils who have failed once.
- Group 2 indicates the pupils who have failed twice or three times.

TABLE 1. Failure rate for the first three or four years of schooling. (N = 141).

Number of Failures	N	Percent
0	52	36,9
1	61	43,3
2	26	18,4
3	2	1,4

Table 2 illustrates that more than 30% of the sample failed Sub A at least once.

TABLE 2. Percentage of pupils failing Grade 1. (N=154).

Number of times failed	Number of pupils	%
0	99	64,3
1	49	31,8
2	4	2,6
3	2	1,3

The correlation matrix in Table 3 indicates that failure rate correlates significantly with the child's separation experiences, SC_2 , and father's job. The insignificant correlation between failure rate and other socio-economic indicators used in the study may reflect a need to develop indicators more appropriate to the type of population considered here. This will be discussed further in Section 5.

Preschool experience correlated significantly with parents' job level, but negatively with household numbers. Thus parents with good jobs, possibly living in a nuclear family system, tended to use the preschool facilities.

The negative correlation between educational level of the father and the number of houses in which the child has lived, possibly indicates that a more settled lifestyle is less disruptive to schooling than a number of residential changes, which are likely to result in school change.

A significant result that may illustrate trends in the urbanisation process is that pupils with older parents have fewer separation experiences and more contact with their fathers. In other words, young fathers appear to leave their children. This is likely in view of the high divorce rate

described in Section 1.

Household number correlates significantly with number of wage-earners. Therefore the difficulties encountered by overcrowding may be offset by the increase in the income level of the household.

The significant correlation between SC_1 and sex indicates that boys are more insecure than girls. This finding is consistent with recent studies of school referrals to remedial clinics. Workers in the field ascribe the greater proportion of boys referred to these clinics to social and adjustment problems, rather than to learning difficulties. It has been proposed that parents exert greater pressure on boys than on girls, resulting in anxiety and lowered levels of self esteem (Gregory, 1977). This interpretation may not be valid in a sample of urban Black boys as their lowered levels of self concept may be due to other factors. For example, father absence caused by the high divorce rate, may have a greater effect on boys than on girls of this age.

An encouraging finding is the significant correlation ($r = -.52$) between the two measures of self concept. This illustrates that there is a relationship between the two variables, despite difficulties encountered when deriving quantitative data from drawings. Therefore self concept, as measured by Bodwin and Bruck's scale (1960) relates to

Ogden's (1977) index represented by disproportionately small drawings of self.

TABLE 3. Correlations among self concept, biographical variables, educational history, and lifestyle variables.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.	20.	21.
1. Sex																					
2. Age																					
3. School Experience		,38																			
4. Failure Rate			-,31																		
5. Mother's Education			,27																		
6. Father's Education																					
7. Mother's Age					-,34																
8. Father's Age						-,30	,61														
9. Mother's Job			,37		,29																
10. Father's Job		,40		-,30		,45			,51												
11. Number of Householders																					
12. Number of Wage-earners											,52										
13. Rentals																					
14. Lodgers		,28									,32		,25								
15. Contact with Mother		,25									,43										
16. Contact with Father					-,27			-,37			,34			,31							
17. Separation Experiences				,24			-,24				,24			,23		,40					
18. Years attending Creche									,32	,35	-,25		,28								
19. Number of Houses						-,27								-,35							
20. Self Concept 2			,24	-,27																	
21. Self Concept 1	,25														,24						-,52

p < ,05
 p < ,01
 p < ,001

Note: Non-significant correlations are omitted.

An expected result that did not reach significance is the correlation between father's and mother's educational level. Upon examination, it appeared that the values given for the mother's level of education were high. Therefore it is possible that mothers answering the questionnaire thought it would make a better impression if they gave elevated scores for their educational level.

A t-test was done to examine the significance of differences between the means of different groups on SC₁. The pupils were divided into two groups: those who had never failed and those who had failed. The result (Table 4) is highly significant ($t = -2,9$; $df = 1,66$; $p < ,01$).

TABLE 4. Mean of Self concept 1 by Failure rate.

	Never failed	Failed
Mean	5,96	8,27
Std Deviation	3,08	3,23
N	23	45

$t = -2,9$
 $df = 1,66$
 $p < 0,01$

The effects of marital history, household type, and school experience were examined using two-way frequency tables (Tables 5, 6, and 7).

Table 5 shows that the difference between the marital history of parents of children who had failed and of those who had not failed is significant ($\chi^2 = 3,8$; $df = 1$; $p = ,05$). Therefore a disrupted home life predisposed children to failure at school.

TABLE 5. Two-way frequency table : Failure rate by Parents' marital history.

Marital History	Failure Rate		Total
	Never failed	Failed	
Married	21	28	49
Not married	<u>5</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>25</u>
Total	26	48	74

$$\chi^2 = 3,8$$

$$df = 1$$

$$p < 0,05$$

The difference between the household types for the two groups of pupils is not significant (Table 6), although more children (58%) who had not failed live with both parents than the children who had failed (44%).

TABLE 6. Two-way frequency table : Failure rate by Household type.

Household type	Failure Rate		Total
	Never failed	Failed	
Nuclear - both parents	9	13	22
Nuclear - mother only	1	2	3
Extended - both parents	6	8	14
Extended - mother only	4	12	16
Nuclear - grandparents	0	1	1
Extended -grandparents	5	4	9
Extended - foster parents	1	1	2
Other categories: e.g. relatives/father only	<u>0</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>
Total	26	48	74

$$\chi^2 = 7,59$$

$$df = 7$$

$$p \leq 0,4$$

Table 7 presents the results of the frequency table, failure rate by school experience. The difference between the three groups is highly significant ($\chi^2 = 47,7$; $df = 4$; $p < ,001$) indicating that attending a pregrade class reduced failure rate significantly.

TABLE 7. Two-way frequency table : Failure rate by School experience.

School Experience	Failure Rate			Total
	Never	Once	Twice or more	
None	28	40	12	80
Repeat	0	8	15	23
Pregrade	<u>24</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>39</u>
	52	62	28	142

$$\chi^2 = 47,65$$

$$df = 4$$

$$p < 0,001$$

Stepwise regression analyses were done on the separate groups to illustrate inter-group differences (Table 8) as well as on the whole group (Table 9). Variables entering the regression equation for Groups 0 and 1 are the two measures of self concept, and three socio-economic indicators (rentals, wage-earners, and father's level of education). The entry of both SC_1 and SC_2 into the regression equation is surprising in view of their high mutual correlation. It appears that these two variables function differently with respect to failure rate for Groups 0 and 1 as compared with the other Groups and the full sample. The correlation coefficient between failure rate and SC_1 is 0,33 ($p < ,01$) and failure rate and SC_2 is 0,01 (N5). It seems that there are pupils whose insecurities about their home life do not affect school performance--in fact these pupils may have a "don't-care" attitude towards school. There also may be pupils who are hardworking and conscientious, who do well at school but are still very anxious about their work.

The greatest difference between the Groups 0 and 2 is attributable to father's level of education, a result consistent with Blau's (1981) White sample. There are more lodgers amongst Group 0 children than in Group 2, but as there are only nine lodgers in the full sample, this result must be interpreted with caution. This issue will be discussed in Section 5.

Separation experiences, SC_2 , mother's level of education, and the child's age account for the major part of the variance in the equation for Groups 1 and 2. Mothers of pupils in Group 2 have in fact reached higher levels of education than mothers of Group 1 children. As we have already discussed, results relating to mother's educational level do not appear to be entirely correct. If they are, it may indicate that the pupils in Group 2 are not getting the stimulation from their mothers commensurate with the mothers' education, as well educated parents may have high level, demanding jobs that prevent the parents from devoting sufficient time to their families. On the other hand failure may be due to other factors, such as learning problems, cognitive deficits and so on. Immaturity appears to be a cause of failure as pupils in Group 2 are younger than those in Group 1.

The school experience of pupils in 1980 was included in the regression for the whole sample to see its contribution in relation to the other variables. It entered the equation first and made the greatest contribution to the variance. The other variables entering the equation were the pupil's separation experiences, SC_2 , SES variables associated with the father, and the child's interaction with the mother.

TABLE 8. Regression: Failure rate with Biographical and Lifestyle variables. (Intergroup differences).

Variables	Standard Error of Coefficient	Standardized Regression Coefficient	F Ratio
<u>Groups 0,1. (N=50; DF=5,45).</u>			
Self Concept 1	,02	,53	14,3***
Self Concept 2	,21	,42	8,4***
Rentals	,08	,29	5,8***
Wage Earners	,06	-,33	7,5***
Father's Level of Education	,03	-,27	5,1**
Y ₂ -intercept: -.76			
R ² : 40%			
<u>Groups 0,2. (N=46; DF=6,40).</u>			
Self Concept 1	,02	,27	4,3**
Father's Level of Education	,07	-,69	6,4***
Child's Age	,07	-,28	4,3**
Wage Earners	,06	-,25	3,5**
Lodgers	,21	,31	4,0**
Contact with Father	,06	-,42	2,2
Y-intercept: 1,03			
R ² : 36%			
<u>Groups 1,2. (N=46; DF=5,41).</u>			
Child's Age	,08	-,30	5,1**
Self Concept 2	,16	-,31	5,6***
Separation Experiences	,08	,31	4,7**
Mother's Level of Education'	,10	,29	4,4**
Sex	,17	-,23	2,6*
Y-intercept: 1,10			
R ² : 30%			

* p < ,05

** p < ,01

*** p < ,001

This equation yields results that are fairly consistent with those in Table 8; failure is associated with lowered levels of self concept, a younger father who has less education and a lower level job than fathers of children who did not fail. The structured pregrade class was able to overcome some of the pupils' difficulties.

TABLE 9. Regression: Failure rate with Biographical and Lifestyle variables:

(N=72; DF=7,65):

Variables	Standard Error of Coefficient	Standardized Regression Coefficient	F Ratio
School Experience	,11	-,32	8,5***
Separation Experiences	,10	,27	6,6***
Self Concept 2	,23	-,26	6,5***
Father's Job	,09	-,13	1,3
Father's Age	,13	-,31	8,2***
Contact with Mother	,06	-,22	4,3***
Father's Level of Education	,10	-,19	2,4*
Y-intercept	: 4,71		
R ²	: 37%		

* p < ,05
 *** p < ,001

5. DISCUSSION.

The first point to be made is that the data quoted in this paper are all taken from one school in Soweto and may not apply to other schools. This does not seem likely since although data may vary from school to school, the overall pattern of results is likely to remain more or less consistent as the school does not appear to differ from other lower primary schools in Soweto.

The major finding of this study is that a model of development, based on the ecological approach proposed in this paper, is consistent with empirical data. Variables found to affect school performance related to

- elements of the microsystem (the child's educational history and family structure);
- elements of the mesosystem (the effect of separation experiences and the contact between the parent and child on school performance);

- elements of the exosystem (SES indicators such as the parents' level of education and occupational status, and income accruing to the household);
- elements of the macrosystem (housing policy; crime rates; lack of pre-school facilities).

The extremely high failure rate in the first three years at school is disturbing in view of the negative connotations of failure. Figures documenting failure rate for Standard 5, the Junior Certificate (JC) and matriculation exemption are known to be high; for example the JC failure rate in Alexandra and Soweto was 57% in 1982 (Financial Mail, 1983). Despite this, there is little reason to accept a failure rate of 30% in Grade 1. The wide range of ages resulting from repeated failure, in conjunction with large classes, and insufficient text books and equipment makes the teacher's task an even more exacting one. Discussions held with teachers at the school revealed that they endorsed failure in the grades; they claimed that pupils benefitted from failure because of their added maturity. The history of the Sub A repeats in this study refutes this statement.

An interesting side issue is parental perceptions of failure. Do parents get disheartened if their child fails?

Is failure a link in the chain to the child dropping out of school?

A further question relates to official attitudes towards failure in the grades. Should not the teachers be asked to fail fewer pupils and instead offer remedial instruction to borderline cases? This solution would not be difficult to put into effect as the Department of Education and Training has initiated an upgrading programme that includes remedial tuition on an individual basis (Kritzinger, 1983). This policy may result in the lowering of the dropout rate and also promote positive attitudes towards schooling.

Pregrade readiness programmes do not offer a total solution to the problem of school failure as 38% of the pregrade pupils failed at least once in the three years. Although this figure is a significant improvement when compared with the results of the other groups, it is still high, indicating that the introduction of a readiness programme is only a partial solution to the problem of poor school performance and does not negate other environmental pressures on the child.

The use of occupational and educational levels as indicators of SES (Hollingshead and Redlich, 1958) is problematical in newly industrialised and urbanised

communities. This is particularly the case in Black townships in South Africa because of the restrictions on educational and work opportunities for Blacks. Despite this difficulty some of these indicators did relate significantly to academic achievement. Blau (1981) in her study that compared the cognitive ability of Black and White American children, found that a more realistic comparison of SES between the two groups was to use socio-economic origin, as well as parents' social milieu, in addition to the parents' educational and occupational status. She found that social milieu was the strongest predictor of IQ in Black children: even if Black parents had the same educational and occupational status as Whites, they did not have the same opportunities for associating with others of similar status. It is probable that this situation occurs in South Africa because of the restriction on the movement of Blacks, even in pursuing leisuretime activities. The movement of Blacks to the cities, and problems related to adjusting to city life, might make socio-economic origins a significant predictor of school performance in future studies.

The finding that young parents are more likely to have children who fail is not unexpected. Teenage pregnancies are common in Soweto and the probability of inadequate caregiving is high for these children because of the inadequacy of the formal and informal pre-school facilities in Soweto. These

children may be sent to school as early as possible, where they are likely to be cognitively and emotionally immature for school because of their unstimulating home environment as well as their age.

An interesting situation emerges if one considers the lodgers. Of the nine families who lodged, four of the children had never failed, three had failed once, and two twice. Eight of the families were nuclear units and one was an extended family having both parents present. It is possible that the negative connotations of lodging are offset by the fact that the family is intact. An in-depth study of these families might reveal why only some of these children perform badly at school.

A variable not considered in this study is the effect of discrimination on achievement. Ogbu (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), in a study of school failure in a predominantly Black and Mexican-American area of California, found that "school failure is an adaptation to discrimination and attendant barriers to occupational and social achievement in adult life." An aspect of his study of relevance to South Africa has to do with his findings on parental expectations of success. He found that parents had high occupational and educational hopes for their children, and he witnessed the ways in which they urged their children to perform well at

school. On the other hand, the parents also told their children that they were going to be victims of discrimination and that their most strenuous efforts would be frustrated. It was this second message that led children to doubt that they would attain their goals.

In South Africa, inequalities in the quality of schooling for Blacks and Whites undoubtedly result in differences in performance, but it is also likely that Black parents, consciously or unconsciously, pass on their own frustrations to their children. By so doing, children may become demotivated when they realise that their efforts may not be rewarded.

These findings have illustrated that any study of underachievement at school cannot limit itself to factors such as the child's level of ability, or classroom or school organization. Cognisance must be taken of the policies relating not only to education, but also to community life, family lifestyle, and the economic factors influencing household income. Acculturative stress, caused by the lack of congruence between different cultural value systems, also needs to be examined in the context of the educational system.

There is no short-term solution to these difficulties. A first step may be to prevent or reduce acculturative stress by giving different groups of people the option to make educational choices according to their own needs and beliefs, and not according to an educational system devised by a different group of people that has its own set of needs, values, attitudes, and priorities.

We also cannot afford to misread the insecurity and low level of self concept present in many of the children studied. According to Rutter (1972) a link between broken homes and delinquency has been established. Other missing links in this progression may be failure at school, insecurity, and feelings of inadequacy.

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VARIABLES USED IN THE STUDY

1. Failure Rate

Pupils were divided into three groups on the basis of failure rate,

i.e. Group 0

Group 1

Group 2

2. Biographical Details of Pupil

2.1 Age of pupil as calculated on 1980/01/01.

The pupils were subdivided into 4 age categories on the basis of a frequency distribution of the ages.

1. Younger than 72 months.
2. Between 72 and 84 months.
3. 84 to 90 months.
4. Older than 90 months.

2.2 Sex

2.3 Educational history.

2.3.1 Number of years the child attended a creche or nursery school.

2.3.2 School experience in 1980. Three groups were present:

- pupils who had attended the pregrade class
- pupils who were repeating Sub. A
- pupils who were attending school for the first time.

3. Parents' Biographical Details.. .

3.1 Age of parents. The parents' ages were categorised on the following basis:

2. 20 - 29 years
3. 30 - 39 years
4. 40 - 49 years
5. 50 - 59 years
6. 60 - 69 years
7. 70 - 79 years

4. S.E.S. Variables

4.1 Parents' level of education. The highest school standard reached was subdivided into 5 groups:

0. No schooling
1. Grade 1, Grade 2, Std 1
2. Std 2, 3, and 4
3. Std 5, 6, and 7
4. Std 8, 9, and 10.

4.2 Parents' job level. Seven categories were used, based on the index devised by Hollingshead and Redlich (1958):

1. Unskilled.
2. Semiskilled.
3. Skilled.
4. Owners of little businesses, clerical, and sales workers, technicians.
5. Administrative personnel of large concerns, owners of small independent businesses, semi-professionals.
6. Lesser professionals.
7. Professionals, executives.

4.3 Number of wage-earners in the house.

4.4 Rentals accruing to the household. Each family, of part thereof, was included as one unit.

5. Variables Describing Household Composition and Structure.

5.1 Number of householders.

5.2 Household type. The following categories were used:

1. Nuclear - both parents
2. Nuclear - mother only
3. Extended - both parents
4. Extended - mother only
5. Nuclear - grandparents
6. Extended - grandparents
7. Nuclear - foster parents
8. Extended - foster parents
9. Other categories (some children lived with relatives, and two children lived with the father)

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5.3 Parents' marital history. The following categories were used:

1. Married
2. Never married
3. Separated
4. Divorced
5. Engaged
6. Remarried
7. One or both parents deceased.

5.4 Child's contact with the parents. The following categories were devised:

1. Lives with
2. Visits more than three times a week
3. Visits on a weekly basis
4. Visits on a monthly basis or during school holidays
5. Sporadically
6. Never sees parent.

5.5 Child's separation experiences. The number of separation experiences were noted. Only parents and primary caregivers were included.

6. Residential History.

6.1 No. of houses in which the child has lived.

6.2 Does the family lodge in someone else's house?

7. Self Concept.

1. Self Concept 1: A measure derived from Bodwin and Bruck's (1960) definition of self concept.
2. Self Concept 2: Disproportionately small size of self in KFD.

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