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**STUDENTS' IMAGE OF THE ELEVEN PLUS:
Implications for Identity, Motivation, and Education Policy**

Dorian A. Barrow

This article seeks to add students' voices to the current discourse on the usefulness of narrowly focusing national assessment results on the establishment of merit as the basis for secondary school selection, and the impact that this practice has on students' image of schooling. This is in view of the fact that this practice remains a policy in many countries, including countries of the Anglophone Caribbean. Using a qualitative case study design and a framework that integrates motivation, identity, metaphor, and world view theories, this study solicited and analysed the views of 40 primary school students from Belize on their Eleven Plus examination experience. The study revealed that the students did not feel that the examination had the type of negative psychological effects on them that some parents and educators claim, partly because they did not perceive the national assessment as a high-stakes test. Instead, students used some entailments of the metaphor of the examination as a race—with the pain of training for, the anxieties of starting, and the joys of finishing the race—to make sense of their experiences in preparing for, writing, and receiving the results of the examination. The study also found that the Eleven Plus experience does, however, play a key role in motivating students to stay in school longer, and in the formation of a type of student identity that facilitates the integration of the students' view of self with such content universals as fear of failure and learned helplessness, as well as the Protestant temporal ethic of future orientation. There was no evidence, however, to suggest that the experience helped students to have a better sense of place or of what it means to be a postcolonial citizen in an independent Belize. It is recommended that more must be done to ensure that policymakers and parents listen to what students are saying and "take more serious notice."

Introduction

The Eleven Plus (11+) is an examination administered to students in the last year of primary school, which governs admission to various types of secondary school. The use of the examination as a policy tool for secondary school selection, and as a source of motivation for meaningful learning, has been controversial. On the one hand, policymakers claim that the examination is a fair test since it levels the playing field for all students and so motivates more students to become meaningfully engaged in the learning process. On the other hand, parents and some educators have criticized it for being restrictive, invalid, and unreliable, and for having overall negative psychological effects on students' identity or world view formation (Payne & Barker, 1986). De Lisle (2008) defines the Eleven Plus as an examination administered to some students in the last year of primary education, governing admission to various types of secondary schools, which significantly impacts on classroom curricular activities, especially in the last two years of primary schooling. At the heart of the controversy are students, whose views on the nature of the test, and of the experiences they have had in preparing for it, are hardly ever sought. Few stories have been told of the self-defining lived experiences that students have had with respect to coping in an educational environment with these conflicting claims while preparing for the Eleven Plus examination, and the part the experience plays in motivating students in meaningful learning or in identity formation—student identity being the students' sense of self and how that sense is influenced by their understandings and beliefs about schooling (Reeve, 2009).

Furthermore, when the stories of students' lived experiences are told, they are from the perspectives of "the Other," who are usually education researchers. Until recently, the voices of students simply have not been heard, even to describe what school really means to them, or the way in which their views of schooling in general differ from that of educators, policymakers, or their parents (Barone, 2001; Bennett de Marrias & LeCompte, 1999; Dryfoos, 1996; Marsh & Willis 2003; Nolan & Anyon, 2004). Seeking the views of students is important if we are going to better understand the conditions that prevent the attainment of acceptable quality in the education endeavour, or if we are going to be successful in improving the existing conditions in order to upgrade the quality of schooling.

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My interest in hearing more from students on these matters was reignited recently following initial work done, in collaboration with a colleague, on a supplementary tutoring project in Trinidad and Tobago. We found that how students actually feel about national assessments, which are sometimes high-stakes examinations, often differs widely from what educators, policymakers, or even parents would prefer (Lochan & Barrow, 2008). National assessments in the Anglophone Caribbean are administered to serve different purposes, including (a) to measure student achievement on country-specific standardized tests such as obtains with the National Tests in Trinidad and Tobago; (b) to hold schools accountable for the implementation of the national curriculum by year level, where the main priority is on closing the achievement gap of underperforming schools, such as obtains with the Junior Assessment Standardized Test in Belize; and (c) to establish merit as the basis for access to, or selection of, secondary schools, that is, some national tests are administered to determine, on the basis of merit, who gets access to a limited number of five-star secondary schools to which more students and parents would wish to have access than spaces are available (De Lisle, 2008). The Common Entrance Examination (CEE), or the Eleven Plus, was adopted across the region mainly to establish merit as the basis of student access to secondary schooling, and so functions as a high-stakes test for students in most of the countries of the Anglophone Caribbean. This paper is written from the perspective of someone who is an advocate for a greater student voice in education research, suggesting that I bring, as Donna Haraway (1996) says, “an optics [that] is a politics of positioning” (p. 257).

In this study there are three important potential questions that need our understanding in order to improve the quality of the learning experiences students have in primary schools, and to better align national curricular development goals with the teaching-learning activities in the primary school classroom:

1. What are students' perceptions of these national assessments, including the high-stakes examinations, and how meaningful are the examinations to them?
2. What overall purpose do these national examinations serve in motivating students to develop an appreciation for meaningful learning, and to what extent is this purpose being achieved?
3. What personal constraints do primary students face while receiving education in a school context that emphasizes national standardized assessments, including high-stakes testing; and how do these constraints impact on the logico-structural integration of

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self, or the students' personal identity, with views of national development as presented to them by teachers in the primary schools?

Using self-determination theory of motivation (Reeve, 2009), Kearney's (1984) world view theory, and metaphor analysis as theoretical lenses, this article reports on a qualitative case study in which 40 Belizean students gave their views on the Eleven Plus examination experience. These views may reflect issues and problems which exist in other countries that use this form of national assessment. The article seeks to add student voices to the current discourse on the usefulness of national assessment examination results as a criterion for secondary school selection, since this remains a policy in many countries, including countries of the Anglophone Caribbean. It also seeks to explore the impact the experience has on students' education identity formation and their motivation to learn in meaningful ways. The article begins with a brief description of the Belizean society and school system, followed by a brief review of the literature on the Eleven Plus examination as an instrument of secondary school selection—a significant external motivator that guides classroom curricular praxis and student identity formation. Specific research methods are then considered, and a brief explanation of the theoretical frameworks of motivation, Kearney's world view, and metaphor analysis is provided. This is followed by the students' image of their experiences with the examination, and, finally, an epilogue of the author's reflections on the students' world view and a presentation of the impact this national examination seems to have had on students' motivation for meaningful learning.

A Glimpse at Belizean Society, Education System, and Decolonization Project

Belize, like Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, is one of the 17 member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Like Guyana and Suriname, Belize is not an island-state, being situated on the Central American isthmus, east of Guatemala, north of Honduras, and south of Mexico. Its land mass is twice the size of Jamaica's, or about the size of the State of Maine, with a population of about 350,000 people. The population is comprised of two major ethnic groups, Creole and Mestizo; and two minor ones, Maya and Garifuna. The Creole and Garifuna peoples are ascendants¹ of the African diaspora; the former brought to Belize as slaves by the British to extract hardwood from the land for export to Europe, beginning in the mid-17th century. The latter

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immigrated to Belize as free Blacks from the island of St. Vincent, beginning around 1798. The Maya are the indigenous peoples of Belize, who are part of the indigenous peoples of southern Mexico and Central America. They were the first that the British forcibly engaged in the forest extraction enterprise, and though many died from diseases such as small pox and cholera, many also died from the exhausting nature of the forestry work; many also fled their British captors into neighbouring Guatemala. The Mestizos immigrated into Belize when their uprising against the Spanish conquistadores in southern Mexico in 1850 failed, after being defeated in what is known as the Caste Wars of Yucatan. Bolland (1997) has characterized the modern Belize society as follows:

The pluralistic society of Belize more closely resembles the unranked ethnic system in which “ethnic coexistence” has characterized the relations between ethnic groups through most of their history. Encapsulated within a colonial territory, these groups were subordinate to the British but remained virtual strangers in relation to each other and with decolonization no single group has attained hegemony over the others. (p. 513)

The decolonization project in Belize began at about the same time that it did in the rest of the Anglophone Caribbean—in the mid-1940s following World War II. According to Bennett (2008), decolonization implies that “there is an existing state of colonization in which a territory is controlled from a distance by a metropolitan country” and “at the middle of the twentieth century, Belize was still such a territory” (p. 128). The decolonization movement was an attempt to break away from a state of dependency on Great Britain, not only politically and economically, but also culturally and educationally. In the process of educational decolonization, the educational policy of an internally self-governing Belize (which was achieved in 1961) became increasingly focused on education for national development, notwithstanding the socio-economic and traditional deterrence “which tended to prevent real reform” (Bennett, 2008, p. 128). Though there was encouragement for innovation within the existing structures, many problems remained to be dealt with “in the final two decades of the twentieth century” (Bennett, 2008, p. 128). These included the issue of quality in Belizean education and educational infrastructure. But arguably the most salient missing link was an education policy framework consistent with the overall decolonization project, which would guide the formulation of an Education Act that would legally bind the education sector to national development.

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As part of the decolonization project, the people and government of Belize strove to put in place the infrastructure to enable the nation to become self-sustaining and to progress in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres. After 1962, formal education was given an important place in the development process. It was within this context that the Education Ordinance of 1962 was drafted and made the legal instrument to guide educational development in Belize. The ordinance was the legal manifestation of an education policy document that was built on the following three principles:

- Education is an investment and not merely expenditure on a service.
- The development process requires that efforts be made to provide a wide variety of human skills and knowledge.
- There should be equal opportunity for education for all the youth.

Out of these three principles the five pillars of the education policy document were constructed:

1. Determination to uphold the denominational school system and, within this framework, to speed up the primary school building programme.
2. Assistance, through loans, with the building of secondary schools, thus making secondary education available to a larger number of primary school students.
3. Adaptation of secondary education to the abilities and aptitudes of students.
4. Promotion of agricultural, technical, and vocational education.
5. Increasing training for technicians, artisans, and professionals so that the people of the country might play their rightful part in its development.

Armed with this policy framework and the accompanying legislation (Education Act 1962), in 1963 the Government of Belize approached Unesco to develop a model of schooling that would be a best fit to help Belize achieve its policy goals. The model was to take account of what existed in the country at the time. In 1964, this model was presented to the Parliament. It comprised six years of primary education providing basic compulsory education to students 5 to 11 years of age, followed by a three-cycle secondary system of varying lengths, which would be accessed according to the ability, aptitude, and interest of students, determined by their performance in appropriate national selection tests. The first cycle was a three-year junior secondary course of general

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education with some prevocational offering; the second cycle was a two-year senior secondary course during which instruction would become more specialized; and the third was a two-year post-secondary cycle that would offer sixth form/junior college studies. The Unesco model was adopted by the Parliament with some modifications. For example, the Government of Belize retained the 6- to 14-year-old primary school system that had been in place for over a century.

At the time the new system of schooling was adopted, however, there were no national tests in place to determine placement in secondary schools. Each secondary school conducted its own entrance examination and set its own criteria for entry. In Belize, the term *Eleven Plus* was never adopted for the secondary entrance examination, because the initial purposes of the examination, and the age at which students wrote it, were different from what obtained in Britain or elsewhere in the Anglophone Caribbean. Students' views of the examination and how they have responded to it over the years have therefore been very different from their counterparts elsewhere. J. Alexander Bennett (2008) claims that the original purpose of the examination in Belize was "to measure the academic achievement of primary school pupils upon their completion of the eight years of primary schooling" (p. 151). Over the period 1944–1978, the examination serving this purpose was called the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE), and comprised three papers in English, Mathematics, and General Knowledge. The reporting was pass/fail so that the standards achieved by students were not known. This led to changes in the structure and reporting on the examination in 1979. Students were then examined in English, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science and the reporting was done via a student subject profile using norm referencing (A = top 10%; B = next 20%; C = next 40%; D = next 20%; and E = last 10%).

Except for a name change in 1983 from Primary Education Certificate Examination (PECE) to the Belize National Selection Examination (BNSE), and a mandate from the Ministry of Education (MOE) for this examination to be the sole one for the certification of primary school leavers, the determination of scholarship winners, and the partial determination of secondary school entrance eligibility, this PECE structure and reporting format remained intact until 2000 when the examination was changed to a criterion-referenced examination. With this new configuration, the raw scores by subject constituted the student profiles, and the name was changed to the Primary School Examination (PSE). Students sit the PSE after eight years of primary schooling in order to transition from primary to the secondary level. The examination

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is administered over two days and tests students' achievement in four content areas, namely, language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. Two papers are administered for the mathematics and language arts examinations and one for science and social studies. The language arts Paper I tests grammar and comprehension in English at the Grade 6 level, while the Paper II assesses students' creative writing competencies against some Grade 6 level standards. The mathematics Paper I is a multiple-choice paper, which surveys students' algorithmic competences, and Paper II is a problem-solving (word problems) paper.

The admission policy for most secondary schools comprises three criteria: a cut-off PSE score, a positive evaluation of the applicant's primary school transcript, and a written recommendation from the primary school principal on the applicant's ability to cope at the secondary level. Because of this admission policy, the PSE, as a national assessment tool, is not a high-stakes test, since the student's score on the examination is not the sole determining factor for secondary school selection.

Literature Review

The Eleven Plus Exam Experience: History and Impact

The Eleven Plus examination, which was first administered in the Anglophone Caribbean almost two decades after it was introduced in Britain following the 1944 Butler Education Act (Taggart, 2008), has undergone several radical transformations, including changes in nomenclature, structure, function, the manner in which students' results are reported, how students perceive their grades, and the impact the experience has had on students' identity formation, that is, how students view themselves as educated citizens living in a postcolonial society, their sense of place in it, and how they view development. Criticisms during its 32 years (1944–1976) of dominance as a key feature of the British education system have taken several forms. Known from its early years as the Eleven Plus examination in England, it was an examination administered to some students in their last year of primary education, governing admission to various types of secondary schools. The name was derived from the age group for secondary entry: 11–12 years. The Eleven Plus examination was once used throughout the UK, but is now only used in a number of counties and boroughs in England and Northern Ireland, and was associated with a now abandoned tripartite system of secondary education (Taylor, 2005). The prevailing educational ideology at the time was that high-stakes testing was an effective way to identify

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the strand to which a child was most suited. The results of the examination were used to match a child's secondary school to his or her abilities and future career needs.

Critics of the Eleven Plus claimed that the proportions of students gaining places at a grammar school in England varied by location and gender, and that there was a strong class bias in the examination favouring male students coming from middle-class households (Szreter, 2004). These and other criticisms eventually contributed to the demise of the Eleven Plus examination as an integral part of the education system in England in 1976, and in Northern Ireland in 2008 (The Sutton Trust, 2008). It has, however, remained as a critical component of the education system in the Anglophone Caribbean, including Belize, and continues to impact significantly on the educational world view of the region's student population in ways that undermine the region's decolonization agenda; an agenda that, in part, requires teachers to (a) provide students with the type of education that would be relevant to both societal and personal needs, by guiding them to an understanding of the significance of their new postcolonial citizenship; (b) relate the world of work to the world of study; and (c) help to democratize education by embracing a policy of nurturing open and inquiring minds in students. The highly pressurized nature of the Eleven Plus examination, however, has made it difficult for teachers to embrace this aspect of the decolonization agenda in the ways intended by the political leadership of the region. As the Minister of Education of Belize made explicit to teachers at a 1990 teachers' convention:

For too long the approach to education in our schools has been authoritarian. The teachers have traditionally been the fountain of all wisdom, knowledge and understanding. The students did not dare to disagree. The call to democratize education and the policy to nurture open and enquiring minds in our children mean [sic] that freedom and the culture of inquisitiveness, discovery, dialogue and debate must grow in our schools. This is how we will build confidence and promote new and creative leadership in the future. This is how our children and our people will be motivated to become an active, enlightened citizenry imbued with national consciousness and positive attitude. (Bennett, 2008, p. 133)

Evidently, the processes and the product of Belize's educational system were not meeting the criteria against which to judge whether the country's youth were benefiting from the delivery of quality education in

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the schools. Parallel patterns have been observed in many countries in the region (Jules, 2011) and, as Bennett (2008) has pointed out, 20 years after the Belize Education Minister's 1990 speech, "the question of quality remains persistent" (p. 130).

Despite these concerns "primary schooling in most English-speaking Caribbean territories culminates at eleven in the Common Entrance examination (CEE)" (Payne & Barker 1986, p. 314). Though, in the region, the results of this examination are used primarily in the secondary school selection process, De Lisle (2008) points out that "by 2000, [national] assessments designed to monitor achievement standards were still relatively rare in the region, [and that] in the absence of such measures some policy makers have resorted to using data from high-stakes public examinations to evaluate achievement standards" (p. 72). The use of the Eleven Plus examination results by policymakers has therefore been expanded over the years to establish merit as the basis of access to secondary schooling; yet, students' views of the examination, and how they have responded to it, have not been queried.

In Belize, the purposes of and the age at which students write the Eleven Plus are different from other parts of the Commonwealth. Bennett (2008) claims that the original purpose of the examination in Belize was to measure the academic achievement of students upon completion of primary school. Belizean students' views of the examination were never sought in any systematic scholarly manner. This has contributed to a naïve perception of the impacts of this colonial legacy on the national consciousness, and on the country's education reform agenda over the past four decades (Hitchen, 2005).

In Barbados, the CEE was adopted in 1959 as an improvement on the existing uncoordinated system of secondary school admission. In Barbados, where 100% of Year 6 students write the CEE each year, securing a place at one of the nine older prestige secondary schools "remains a goal to which many children and most of their parents, fervently aspire" (Payne & Barker, 1986, p. 314). A wide gap in status and prestige exists between the nine older, formerly grammar, schools and the 12 newer comprehensive schools. However, the older schools offer only one-third of secondary places each year. The CEE was adopted mainly to establish merit as the basis of access to secondary schooling, and remains a highly pressurized assessment mechanism whose negative effects on schooling as a whole, "and on the individual children and their families" (Payne & Barker, 1986, p. 315), remain a source of serious concern to many educators (Jules, 2011).

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In Trinidad and Tobago, the CEE was replaced by another high-stakes examination, the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA), in 2000, which has remained as highly selective and pressurized an assessment mechanism as the CEE it replaced. Its negative effects on individual children and their families are similar to those experienced in Barbados (De Lisle, Keller, Jules, & Smith, 2008). In this twin-island state where 100% of Year 5 students write the SEA each year, securing a place in one of the 42 prestige, mostly single-sex, denominational secondary schools is the goal to which many secondary school-aged children and their parents aspire (Campbell, 1992). A wide gap in status and prestige is perceived to exist between the 42 mostly denominational schools and the 101 newer government schools, which further adds to the attractiveness of these 42 schools. As in Barbados, these schools have the capacity to accommodate only 28% of the SEA pool. The SEA was also adopted mainly to establish merit as the basis of access to the prestige denominational secondary schools. Parallel patterns have been observed in Jamaica (Barnes, 2000), Guyana (Teelucksingh, 2008), and St. Lucia (Jules, 2011).

The Anglophone Caribbean's experience is common in Commonwealth countries that were former colonies of Britain, where there is a status hierarchy among post-primary institutions (Foodun, 1992). For example, in Malta, in Year 6, an Eleven Plus examination is given to students at age 11 to determine placement in secondary schools. In 2010, 73% of the 11-year-olds in Malta sat the Eleven Plus exam, but only 54% of them passed (Malta, 2010). Students achieving success in the Eleven Plus examination go on to attend prestigious junior lyceums during their secondary years, while those who do not pass attend area secondary schools.

But even in Britain, the victory of replacing the tripartite system by a comprehensive system of secondary schooling in the 1970s might have been pyrrhic, in the sense that grammar schools in England still persist today, as has the Eleven Plus examination selection test (The Sutton Trust, 2008), even though "grammars [today] have a widespread, low-level, impact on pupil enrollments across the sector" (p. 3). However, a recent promotion for the "Summit Saturday School Eleven Plus online Summer Courses" described the current demand for the examination in England differently:

For decades various governments have attempted to abolish or discredit the eleven plus examination system but it remains as popular as ever. Parents are desperate for their child to have access to the level of traditional teaching, exemplary facilities,

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controlled environment and opportunities that this level of education at a top grammar school or private school can bring. (Summit Saturday School, 2011)

It might be fair to say that the Eleven Plus examination has ballooned, not only in England, but also into a global online assessment industry on a scale comparable to the Scholastic Aptitude Test (The Sutton Trust, 2008). The results of the test continue to be used as part of the selection process by grammar and private schools in Britain, as well as in many other countries in the world, including Nigeria, South Africa, Hong Kong, and Australia. Because of the high-stakes nature of the Eleven Plus examination, obtaining a high score on the test is more important than a critical deep understanding of the curricular materials presented. Therefore, there is a high incidence of tutors “teaching to the test,” thereby contributing to washback effects in the scores (De Lisle, 2008). Furthermore, as Tobin and McRobbie (1996) point out in the case of Australia, in these high-stakes classroom learning environments, the cultural myths about the nature of education that the teachers share, not only constrain the enacted classroom curriculum, but also impact significantly on the students’ education identity formation.

Student Identity

The notion of identity as conceptualized by George, Mohammed, and Quamina-Aiyejina (2003) was used as a framework to conceptualize student identity in this study. George et al. (2003), based on propositions from Bullough and Gitlin (1994), Crow (1987), and Weinstein (1989), contend that “teachers’ perceptions of their roles are likely to be shaped by their core beliefs and images of teaching. These beliefs and images have been referred to as the *identity of the teacher*..., and they are said to be ‘biographically embedded private theories which are generally taken for granted’” (p. 191). They go on to say that the beginning teacher identity is portrayed as images and metaphors. In this article, student identity is defined as the students’ perceptions of their roles as these have been shaped by their core beliefs and images of primary schooling. The article explores the extent to which the experience of preparing for the Eleven Plus examination helped to shape students’ core beliefs and images of schooling and meaningful learning. The principal analytic tool used to guide this exploration was Michael Kearney’s (1984) world view theory. This theory was selected as the theoretical lens in this study for several reasons, including the fact that it has been used extensively to guide researchers, in recent related studies, with their analysis of logico-structural integration of self, time, and students’ indigenous knowledge

in classrooms where modern western science is taught. Some of these studies include those carried out by Cobern (1991), Cobern and Aikenhead (1998), George (1995), and Herbert (2008).

Motivation: The Self-Determination Theory

The component of the theoretical framework used in this study contends that the motivating styles used by teachers have strong implications for the subsequent motivation, engagement, development, and psychological well-being of the students they try to motivate (Reeve, 2009). One's motivating style is a typology that situates one on a continuum between the extremes of autonomy motivating and control motivating styles. It essentially describes one's approach to motivating others in terms of the type of support one lends in the motivation activity. Motivation support is categorized in four ways, namely, 1) the extent to which you nurture the inner motivational resources of the other; 2) the extent to which you rely on informal language; 3) the extent to which you provide explanatory rationales for the need of the other to embrace the task; and 4) the extent to which you acknowledge and accept negative criticism, since this will affect others working on the task. The theory holds that there are three types of motivation, namely, 1) a-motivation, that is, no motivation at the non-self-determination end of the spectrum; 2) extrinsic motivation in the middle region; and 3) intrinsic motivation at the self-determination end of the spectrum. Interest, being a topic-specific motivational state, is a salient construct in this theory.

World View: Structure, Content, and Integration

Like motivation, the world view construct forms a significant component of the theoretical framework utilized in this study. Cultural anthropologists contend that how people think about themselves, about their environment, space, time, and so forth, is their world view (Cobern, 1991). There are several world view models in the literature that address the major issues related to the nature and role of culturally organized macro-thought, that is, "those dynamically interrelated basic cognitive assumptions about a people that determine much of their behavior and decision making" (Kearney, 1984, p. 1). Kearney's model, as used in this paper, comprises of what he calls world view universals (Self, Other, Relationship, Classification, Causality, Space, and Time), which, he argues, are necessary aspects of any human world view. According to this model, there are two aspects of a world view—content and structure. The structure of the world view is the basic categories of thought or the universal presuppositions, which are integrated both logically and

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structurally, and which are common to all human world views. What then distinguishes different groups is the empirical content of these world view universals, as well as how well the presuppositions are integrated. Based on this model, the world view structures of a British physician and a Tobago medicine woman are the same, but the content of their world views are different, as well as how the universals are integrated. They would attribute causes [Causality] of the common cold to different external agents; the British physician would attribute it to a virus, while the Tobago medicine woman would attribute it to the exposure of the body to a rapid change in temperature, such as getting out of bed in the morning and going straight to the shower.

The content of the world view universals can be sourced from another culture according to some principles of intercultural borrowing (Cobern & Aikenhead, 1998). Autonomous acculturation is the process of intercultural borrowing of attractive content of another world view and incorporating it into one's own. An example of this is George's (1995) case study of a Trinidadian woman who combined aspects of Western medicine with her indigenous folk medicine. Encapsulation (Zais, 1976), assimilation, and enculturation are multiple avenues of acquiring empirical ideas that comprise the content of one's world view (Cobern, 1991). Enculturation occurs when the newly acquired content integrates smoothly into existing content. Whereas assimilation occurs when the new content conflicts with existing ones, encapsulation occurs when the newly acquired content ideas are only partial or distorted constructs, and are not fully integrated to the point where the student's "outlook on life" is distorted (Cobern, 1991; Kearney, 1984; Zais, 1976).

Furthermore, the philosophical basis of Kearney's world view model is "rationalism modified with a strong dose of what might be called dialectical constructionism or interactionism, which proceeds ... by the interaction between subject (Self) and the object (Other)" (Kearney 1984, p. 2). Hence in this model, while the structure of the world view universals are to a great extent systematically and logically integrated, the content of these universals are also in various ways interdependent, making it what Kearney calls a logico-structural model. Though rational and structural in its orientation, Kearney's world view model does not make idealist or nominalist assumptions about the relationships between thought and the environment; however, it does have "a mentalist bias in its pragmatic insistence that the best immediate understanding of behavior is offered by understanding the thoughts that underlie the behavior ... In the short run people's behaviors are best explained by the ideas they have in their heads" (p. 4).

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The model therefore assumes that the primary forces shaping ideas are non-mental external social and environmental realities that the perceiving mind responds to. According to Kearney (1984), a world view is linked to reality in two ways: “first by regarding it, by forming more or less accurate images of it, images that mirror the world, and second by testing these images through using them to guide action” (p. 5). He concludes the description of the model by saying that “this dialectical relation [of forming mental images and testing it by way of action] operates not only at the level of macro-thought and macro-behavior but at the most primary level of perception” (p. 5). Hence the model can be used to compare the world view content/structure integration of different societies as well as different groups within a society, such as primary school students and education policymakers.

Metaphor Analysis

Prior to the 1990s, research on thought and action in many developed countries centred mainly on how students were behaving in the classroom and play field, and how well students were learning (Cameron, 2002). Since then, the emphasis has shifted to an exploration of the internal world of students, including their thoughts, perspectives, knowledge, and values (Ornstein, 2003). By the mid-1990s, narrative techniques and storytelling were being used to analyse learning and student thinking (Behar-Horenstein, 1999). The use of narrative analysis techniques to better understand how teachers teach, and how learners learn, revealed that metaphors have been used in guiding the search for best teaching and learning strategies (Cameron, 2002).

A metaphor is a way of thinking, an image that once captured by the mind can guide an action to its completion, that is, it is a way of coming “to know” something (Elliott, 2009). Metaphors can be understood as a way of expressing or conceptualizing something esoteric, abstruse, and/or abstract in terms of things that are well known or familiar (Tobin & Tippins, 1996). Metaphors can therefore make an idea more transparent and easy to understand. A metaphor about learning expresses, in the form of images or analogies, the work that students do, as Gurney (1995) illustrates in this example of a metaphor statement on teaching and learning: “Learning is like a journey that never ends, and teaching is like road signs, maps and other navigational aids, like the guy at the gas station who could make the directions very easy or very difficult” (Gurney, 1995, p. 28). Since metaphors about schooling are used by students to conceptualize what is going on in daily activities,

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understanding the metaphors the student uses offers a glimpse of the ideas of the person (Ornstein, 2003).

There are many critical entailments or attributes of the learning metaphor that students use in their classroom (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Gurney (1995) suggests at least three such attributes, namely, image, mood, and theme. *Image* refers to how the mental representation of the metaphor is classified, for example, as “some version of ‘journeys’ ... ‘horticulture’ ... ‘finding treasure’” (p. 8); *Mood* is the subjective characteristic of a metaphor that requires some interpretation on the part of the reader and has three dimensions, identified as Effort (active/passive), Affect (positive/negative), and Control (teacher-centred/learner-centred); and Theme, which refers to “the fundamental and primitive images or root concepts in Wittgenstein’s ‘first language’ or Dewey’s ‘original meaning.’ A theme is derived, and distilled, from images. In so doing, themes forge the basic common links between diverse metaphoric statements” (p. 12). Gurney uses this pair of metaphoric statements to illustrate:

ABSORPTION (Theme)

- Students and knowledge are like sponges and water respectively. Under the right conditions they will soak up everything, but lean on them too hard and it is all lost.
- Sun rays radiating to the planets where the sun is the teacher and the rays are ideas and concepts being projected to the planets and them being absorbed by each planet. Some planets will absorb more than others. (p. 25)

The image of the learner is that of a received knower, that is, learning seems to occur without any effort on the part of the learner, and the student seems to have no control over it. The absorption theme links the two metaphoric statements in that in both statements knowledge is delivered to the learner. These three attributes of metaphors therefore aid the construction of analytic relationships, and in so doing may help in facilitating a deeper understanding of a reported experience.

Furthermore, Tobin and Tippins (1996) have pointed out that metaphors also serve as a link between what is known and what is unknown, and provide a connection between images and language. These two qualities, they argue, may allow the student to build new knowledge and construct better insights of their lived experiences. Hence the strongest justification for the use of metaphors in an analysis like this one lies in their ability to stimulate critical self-reflection on the lived experiences of others.

Theoretical Framework

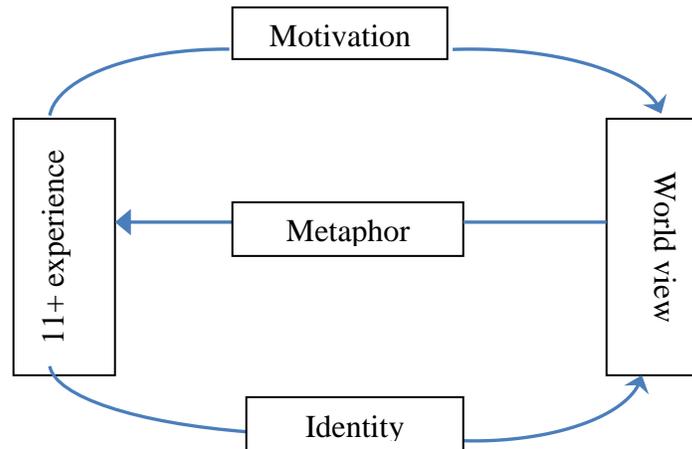


Figure 1. Functional linkages between knowledge domains.

The world view of a people is their way of looking at reality. It consists of basic assumptions and images that provide a more or less coherent, though not necessarily accurate, way of thinking about the world. A world view comprises images of Self and all that is recognized as not-self, plus ideas about relationships between them, as well as other ideas. (Kearney, 1984, p. 40)

An integral part of Schutz's concept of "the paramount reality" in human experience is that of personhood or personal identity, which is comparable to the world-view universal of Self. (Kearney, 1984, p. 135)

Figure 1 diagrammatically summarizes the interconnection between the five domains of the literature reviewed above by using the lines to indicate the main functional linkages between the domains. In one sense, the lines represent just an intuitively logical connection between the various constructs presented in the literature reviewed. But they also represent the main influences at any given point in the life of the metaphor the student is constructing to represent the Eleven Plus experience. The figure depicts how the Eleven Plus experience students have while in primary school helps to sculpture their world view, and how their world view in turn helps, through their image or metaphor, to shape the Eleven Plus classroom environment. As Reeve (2009) suggests, "the motivating styles teachers use can have strong

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implications for the subsequent motivation ... [and] learning ... of the students they try to motivate” (p. 152). Hence, how teachers teach the primary school curriculum will impact on the students’ motivation. Furthermore, as Deci and Ryan (1985) point out, when we engage in a task with a level of difficulty and complexity that is precisely right for our current skills and talents, we feel competent, that is, our competence needs are being met. This suggests that what teachers teach in primary schools will impact on how students view their competence, that is, their personal identities or efficacies. In Kearney’s model, “personal identity ... is comparable to the world-view universal of Self.” Therefore, this framework has as its backbone the opposition and integration of the Self (world view) and the Other (the Eleven Plus experience) and can be used as a viable lens to gain some insights into how students’ school experiences help to shape their view of the world.

In summary, the literature surveyed above suggests that the Eleven Plus examination, which had its origins in Britain in 1944, continues to persist as a national assessment tool and remains a highly pressurized assessment mechanism in many Commonwealth countries, including some countries in the Anglophone Caribbean, where it has been adopted mainly to establish merit as the basis of access to secondary schooling. It was abandoned in most Local Education Authorities in Britain in 1976 under the weight of criticisms about its restricting influence, its validity and reliability, and the overall negative psychological effects it had on teachers, parents, and, ultimately, on students. It has, however, typically persisted most in those countries where there are still insufficient secondary places for those completing primary school. Because of its highly selective nature, success in the examination is viewed as a guarantee of a place in one of the top-quality secondary schools in the country. This has been important to parents as it helps to determine their children’s access to higher education and to future careers. A large proportion of the students who prepare for and write the examination, however, do not succeed in scoring above the cut-off mark required for entry into these “five-star” secondary schools. Unsuccessful students are relegated to second and third tier secondary schools of lesser quality than their first choice school. In most cases, the first choice is usually grammar-type secondary schools. There is a dearth of literature on students’ perceptions of being a part of these highly selective educational environments or on how these high-stakes learning environments shape their core beliefs and images about schooling. A framework is proposed that infuses elements of world view theory which suggest that the primary forces shaping ideas, including those of students, are “non-

mental external social and environmental realities that the perceiving mind responds to" (Kearney, 1984, p. 5). It also includes motivation and identity theories to suggest how metaphors are constructed to concretely represent the ideas formed by the students based on their Eleven Plus experience. The framework is designed to give voice to some students' ideas and images of schooling.

Research Methods and Methodology

Data Collection

Fieldwork was conducted from June through July 2010. Data were collected from 40 students, who had been screened by the school principals for participation in the focus group interviews. Each of the four principals, identified by an Education Officer in the Research Division of the Ministry of Education, selected 10 students using the following screening criteria

- All students in the sample must have recently sat the PSE examination.
- Students should be chosen only from the Standard 6 class.
- Only students willing to articulate their views on the PSE programme should be included.
- No more than one student should be selected per household.
- A proportional mix of male and female students should be included in the group.
- Students who had performed at various levels in the examination should be selected.
- As far as practicable, the 10 students selected should be a representation of the racial/ethnic mix of the Standard 6 cohort.

The month of June was chosen to collect data from students because it was the last month of the school year, and students would have already received their Eleven Plus examination results and been placed in a secondary school. It was felt that at that time in the school year students would be in a better position to reflect on their entire Eleven Plus primary school experience, including the preparation phase; their experience with writing the examination; how they felt on receiving their results; and how they went about selecting the secondary school they would attend in the next school year.

The main approach to fieldwork was focus groups interviews (Krueger, 1988), in which conversations were held about the PSE

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experience. The 40 students selected were from primary schools in four of the six education districts in the country—one school each from the northern, southern, eastern, and western education districts. The students were organized into four focus groups with 10 students per group/school, and the students in each focus group had some level of familiarity with each other. The focus group sessions, which were moderated by the researcher, were carried out at each of the four school sites, with each session conducted on a separate day. Sessions ran for about two hours each, with approximately equal time allotted to each member to speak. All interviews were audiotaped and the tapes were reviewed immediately following the interviews. The audio tape recordings were later transcribed.

In terms of research methodology, this study employs the case study inquiry, more specifically the collective case study design (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003), since one issue was addressed—the Eleven Plus examination experience—and multiple groups were selected—four focus groups with 10 students per group—to show different perspectives on the issue. Using the collective case study inquiry, the researcher interrogated the nature of the dominant lived experiences of students, through which they have shaped their understandings of the purpose and importance of the Eleven Plus examination, and created their world views on schooling. In this study, a holistic analysis (Yin, 2003) of the entire case was undertaken. Beginning with thorough reading and re-reading of each set of transcripts, categories were created from the raw text and quotations that best illustrated the categories were extracted. The data were further reduced by combining categories that had similar meanings and eliminating those categories that were not common to all the cases. From this holistic analysis of the data, a detailed description of the case emerged. After this description, the author focused on some of the key issues, or analysis of themes, to better understand the complexity of the case (Stake, 1995).

Data Analysis

In this article, the students share their views of the PSE examination—how they went about preparing for it, its importance and purpose for them, and the role that the examination played in selecting the secondary school they would be attending. Though the structure of the students' image of their Eleven Plus experience is the same as that of policymakers, the empirical content and how the structural presuppositions are integrated can be assumed to be different. In order to

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describe the content and levels of integration of these presuppositions, the moderator posed five questions to each of the four focus groups. The questions relate to how the Self (the students) perceive various aspects of the Other (the Eleven Plus experience), specifically the preparations for the examination, writing the examination, and the results of their performance. The responses of each group were analysed. In the open coding phase of analysis, significant coded responses were extracted from the transcripts. In phase two of the analysis (axial coding), the coded responses were categorized, and a summary description of the categories established for each question was then generated (Krueger, 1988). The final level of analysis was the interpretation of the category responses in terms of the theoretical framework to distil the students' "outlook" on their Eleven Plus experience, and the labeling of categories using both theoretical and in vivo labels. The three levels of analyses of the responses to the first question are outlined in detail in the results section of the paper.

Results:

The Content of Students' Image of the Eleven Plus Experience

What Are Your Perceptions of the PSE (11+) Examinations?

Level-one analysis: Significant statements

Typical significant responses to this question by students from all four focus groups include:

- *The PSE wasn't so hard. All that it required was for you to study and do your best on test-day. Those of us who followed this simple formula, I think, found the PSE exams easy.* (Easra, June 23)
- *Well, for me, the PSE was easy, even though the math, the problem solving paper II, was challenging.* (Naim, June 23)
- *The math paper was kind-a hard, but I thought the science was easy, the English paper was ok, and the social studies paper was like the science, easy!* (Julien, June 23)
- *Math was a little shaky and science a little complicated, but other than that it was good. I found the PSE quite easy.* (Larsha, June 21)
- *To me the PSE was easy. The math II was extremely challenging. But overall, I found it was easy.* (Darrell, June 21)

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- *I found the PSE was really easy. It was not complicated at all for me and the easiest one was the math.* (Marsha, June, 21)

Level-two analysis: Summary description of responses

In each of the group sessions, students gave their perceptions of the PSE examination. Even though only about half the students who sit the examinations each year perform at a satisfactory level (average scores of 63% or better), most participants perceived the examination as being “easy.” Furthermore, most participants agreed that the mathematics Paper II (the problem-solving paper) was challenging, and of the remaining three papers they agreed that the science paper was the easiest. There is an apparent mismatch between the students’ perception of the level of difficulty of the examination and their performance, with the PSE examinations being much more difficult than students perceive it to be.

Level-three analysis: Formulated meanings of significant statements and generation of categories

From these significant statements we get our first insight into how students (the Self) perceive this aspect of the PSE experience—writing the examination (the Other)—where we see the assumption, *math is difficult*, laid over the Eleven Plus examination. This aspect of the image is that of an obstacle in a path [Darrell: *the math II was extremely challenging*] that was otherwise obstacle free [Larsha: *but other than that it was good*]. The obstacle is a form of math anxiety, that is, a defused fear of mathematics that students acquire as a result of a deficit in the organizational stage of test preparation and past failures in the subject. Because they have learned to entertain these habitual, irrelevant, negative attitudes about mathematics, the anxiety is referred to as being a learned helplessness (Sarason, 1983). These significant statements are therefore categorized under the theoretical label: **Learned Helplessness**.

How Did You Go About Preparing for the PSE (11+) Examination?

In each of the focus groups, participants were eager to describe how they went about preparing for the PSE. For the overwhelming majority of the participants, the preparation strategy most frequently cited comprised three planks: the first being an attempt to extend the school day to create the prevailing tone of them living in a timeless present; the second was in engaging in endless drill and practice exercises to arrest or restrict their fear of failure; and the third being the retention of their childhood through deferring some of the adolescent gratifications they would have

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normally enjoyed, if passing the PSE examination was not an obstacle that they had to overcome.

Their efforts to extend the school day took many forms, with an hour and a half of extra-lessons given by the class teacher each school day and three hours on Saturdays being the most frequently cited. This alone extended the students' school week by 10 hours. In addition, some students were further engaged in another two hours per day of private supplementary tutoring provided by another tutor, whose services they would usually pay for. While, at home, they would study for another two to three hours at night before they eventually went to bed. To restrict their fear of failure they would fill the content of their extended school day with mostly drill and practice exercises. There were teachers who directed drill and practice exercises that students were expected to complete on a daily basis. Less frequently, students, by themselves, in study groups, or with family members, would direct their own drill and practice exercises, usually going over past examination papers. The final plank in the strategy most students adopted when preparing for the Eleven Plus examination was to defer some of the adolescent gratifications that they would have normally experienced as part of a natural childhood. This retention of childhood experience takes many forms; the most cited ones being: giving up television and sporting activities; stopping the "hanging out" with friends; and spending less quality time with family members, which could lead ultimately to alienation from home communities.

Typical comments by these students include:

Category 2: Childhood Retentive

- *In preparing for the PSE I had to make a lot of sacrifices. Morning classes, afternoon classes, evening classes. Go home and do homework. I had some late nights going to bed after 12:00 midnight. On different nights you had to study different subjects and on weekends you had to make sacrifices as well. For example, instead of playing ball with your friends, or hanging out with your friends, you had to stay inside and read a book, write a story, or study something. You also had to prepare yourself by eating the correct foods; you could not eat a lot of junk foods any more. I really had to sacrifice a lot in preparing for the PSE. (Richard, June 22)*
- *Well, in preparing for the PSE I took morning classes, afternoon classes, evening classes and when I got home I still had to study. At home I would use the books "Lets Pass Math" and "Lets Pass*

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Science” and I would work it. The next day I would give my teacher the work to check, who would tell me what was wrong and what was correct. Then it was doing that all over again the next day. (Trevor, June 22)

- *Well, preparing for the PSE was extremely hard. I really had to push myself to the limit. Taking all the extra-classes, evening classes. Going home and study, study, study non-stop and really pushing myself to the limit. And all the things I loved doing I couldn't have done over this entire period. (Darrel, June 22)*
- *I prepared for the PSE with my sister. We would stay back in the evening for evening classes. Our teachers really pushed and put their all into helping us and they provided all the help we needed. I took evening classes and sometimes at home I would pick-up a book. But most of all I had to sacrifice most of the things I loved. (Larsha, June 22)*
- *In preparing for the PSE I would stay back for evening classes here at school, would come to Saturday classes and I studied at home for a few hours each night. I also received a lot of help from my friends, especially with the math paper II, the problem solving paper. We would together work past papers by doing the examples. But I found that doing that did not help much in solving problems that you were seeing for the first time. (Julien, June 23)*

Here we see the temporal presupposition, *future orientation world view*, guiding the preparation process. To have a future orientation means that one thinks of future events and conditions that have not yet come to pass more than one considers the immediacy of events that are actually occurring. Kearney (1984) points out that this temporal orientation “appears to have been strongly developed among the Calvinist ... hard work, success in business, and austere living were ways in which future salvation was to be demonstrated” (p. 95). Freud, as cited in Kearney, described a personality type characteristic of this temporal orientation that Freud referred to as:

anal retentive, arguing that even the pleasure of defecation is deferred to a later time by such a personality. Similarly, it is compatible with scholastic achievement in that such a student is more able to resist immediate distractions and focus energies towards distant goals – good grades, degrees, etc. (Kearney, 1984, p. 95)

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A generated category which captures this aspect of the Other that has been integrated into the Self presupposition is childhood retention. The aspect of the image that is gleaned from these responses is that the period of preparation to sit the Eleven Plus examination is long and tough, even with help and guidance from the teacher. The teacher, whose learning activities included a large dose of drill and practice exercises, seems to function more as coach of a cycling team training for a future event than as an educator who is trying to teach children how to think critically.

How Important Was the PSE to You and Why?

In each of the group sessions, an overwhelming majority of the students felt that the PSE was important because of its “banking” value, that is, because of the variety of ways in which the results (viewed as capital) could be deployed, with the three most cited being as a paycheck for their labours, as a reserve fund that they could draw on should the need arise, and as bragging rights for quantity of capital (scores on the test) accumulated. As bragging rights, the PSE results were important because it was an occasion available to many of the students to show appreciation to parents who had supported them over the many years of preparation for the examination. Many of the students who did well on the examination saw their achievement as payment for the many hours of hard work they had expended in preparation for the examination, and also as an indication of the amount of capital they had accumulated (knowledge, skills, and attitudes that they would use in secondary school and even later in adult life). On the other hand, those students who had struggled through the examination preparation process, and were yet to secure a confirmed place in a secondary school, saw the PSE results as important in helping them to secure a place in their first choice school. To these students, the examination results served as a “reserve fund” that they could draw down on to “pay” their way into their first choice school if the fund (the score on the test) was adequate to meet any such “payment.”

Typical comments by these students include:

Category 3: Fear of Failure

- *It is somewhat true that if you don't get a good grade on the PSE you won't get into a good high school. It wasn't true for me however, as I had gotten into my preferred high school long before I had even written the PSE exam. So the real reason for taking the PSE was because I wanted to get a good grade so that I can look good as an individual. (Richard, June 21)*

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- *The PSE examination was very important to me. It was a way to show my teacher, my Mom and my family what I could do with their help and I did it!* (Easra, June 23)
- *Well, the PSE was very important. It was important mainly because you can show all the people that sometimes without their help you won't be able to do it. And you know it really shows sometimes, the high school too that you can do it over there.* (Niam, June 23)
- *The PSE was very important because the information you picked up over the years is going to pay off later on by helping you in getting a job and even in succeeding at high school.* (Julian, June 23)
- *Though the PSE was challenging, I knew how important it was for me to get a good grade like a B. I knew it was very important because I would need it to get into a high school of my choice. So on test-day, I was banking on doing well enough to at least secure an overall grade of a B.* (Arnold, June 23)
- *The PSE was important to me because as the others said you really need it to secure a place in a good high school, especially if you are on the waiting list. If your primary school grades are not really good, the PSE can bring you up and help you to get into that high school.* (Keyana, June 22)

Here we see the deeply embedded Causal presupposition, *the harder you work the more successful you will become*, influencing the students' predictive capacity. The Eleven Plus experience provided many opportunities for the Self to test this "learning is effort" hypothesis, but did so in a very controlled human environment, which constrained its predictive capacities. Keyanna, for example, predicted that "*if your primary school grades are not really good, the PSE can bring you up.*" Though this prediction might be valid in a school context on a two-week unit test, that is, you can cram the night before the test and do better on the test than you did on the coursework; this type of cramming would be impossible to do for an examination like the Eleven Plus, which covers eight years of curricular content. As Kearney (1984) has pointed out, images of causalities are, on the one hand, the results of past experience and, on the other, "they shape strategies for interacting with social and physical aspects of the other" (p. 86). Students worked hard in preparing for this examination because they did not want to face the embarrassment of failure since the results are published. This fear of failure was one way

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that the Self was linked to this aspect of the Other, and it shaped the “work harder” strategy for interacting with the Other.

Furthermore, an aspect of the image gleaned from these responses is that the Eleven Plus experience is one phase that prepares you for another phase of the educational experience. Access to that second phase requires some level of success at the first phase. Additionally, the students' fear of failure makes the first phase more competitive than collaborative, as only those students who compete well in this phase of the experience will be rewarded. Finally, the responses suggested that the first phase of the experience is a period of a Self becoming, that is, of the Self developing a social identity and learning how to think abstractly, for example, how to generalize from particulars (Piaget, 1970).

What Role Did the PSE Actually Play in the Process of Deciding the High School You Will Be Attending?

The decision on the choice of secondary school is made exclusively by the parents of most of the participants. In a few cases, the parents' decision is made in consultation with the student. Very rarely do students choose the secondary school on their own. In virtually all the cases, the decision on the choice of secondary school is made before the PSE results are published and, in this sense, the results do not feature to any great extent in the decision-making process. Though, as suggested earlier, many students still value their results as a form of reserve capital that they can draw down on should the need arise, this well-established practice of securing a place in the secondary school of their choice, using other cultural resources available to them, suggests that for most students, the PSE is not the high-stakes test that policymakers intended it to be. It further illustrates how students, with the help of parents and secondary school principals, resist the imposition by the state of a high-stakes examination policy that many of them find constraining.

What then are the prevailing factors that determine secondary school choice in Belize? Participants in the four focus groups cited several, with the most salient being the reputation of the school and the family's history with the school. Two other factors, cited to a lesser extent than the first two, were convenience and if the school offered training in specific careers. Students judged the reputation of a school by the quality of the programme it offers, the perceived level of discipline of its students and teachers, its performance in the high-stakes Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) examinations², and the quality of the leadership at the school. The choice of the school is enhanced if the student's family had a history with the school, that is, if a family member

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was attending or had attended the school, and if the students had friends who were also attending the school. To a lesser extent, secondary schools are chosen if they are conveniently located relative to the community where the students reside, which would minimize the need and expense of travelling, or if the school curriculum is vocationally oriented and the school offers training in specific careers that are of interest to the student.

Typical comments by students in response to this question include:

Category 4: Locus of the Self

- *Whatever my Mom decided I think is good because she wants the best for me. She chose Western Nazarine High School because at that school you will learn a lot and there are more good people there who will guide you and help you, than bad people who will influence you in negative ways. (Sadee, June 24)*
- *My high school was already decided for me. It was either SCA or Pallotti. I am Indian from India living in Belize, and the Indian mentality here is that 'if you are not accepted at SCA or Pallotti that means that you are a dog!' So I had to get into either SCA or Pallotti to prove that I wasn't. The problem was that I wanted to go to SCA, but my parents wanted me to go to Pallotti because Pallotti is strict. I wanted to go to SCA because it has a really good academic programme. So I spoke to my friends who were at SCA and they taught me how to strategize. After a long battle with my parents, they eventually compromised and decided to take the change with me going to SCA. (Marcia, June 22)*
- *My parents and I had looked at Mount Carmel High School. But the fact that my family had no history with the school and I had no friends there helped us to eliminate that one as a possible high school choice. (Student Y, June 24)*
- *The high school I am going to is the Center for Employment Training (CET), because I want to study cooking and sewing and you can learn a lot more about that at CET than you can at the other high schools in this area. (Tacarma, June 24)*
- *Though I was accepted at two high schools, Sacred Heart College and Mount Carmel High School, my parents decided on Mount Carmel, which is right here in the community. Sacred Heart, although a better school, my father said was too far away from home. (Krystal, June 24)*

Kearney (1984) speaks of how some Native American cultures have world views in which the Self exists conterminously with animals, which

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he says accounts for the belief that members of these cultures share that they know when certain animals are wounded, endangered, or ill because the animal with whom they share the coterminous Self is thus affected. Some Christians who talk about the Soul (Self) leaving the body at the time of death also have this world view of a mobile Self. Here we are possibly seeing parallel assumptions about the Self, where aspects of the Self not coextensive with the student's body influence the secondary school selection process. It is the parents who ultimately decide on the school that will be selected. In households headed by a single parent, that parent is usually a woman. Women therefore have a significant voice in the decisions about school choice for their children. Hence, factors such as family ties to the school, safety, and convenience are given considerable weight in the decision-making process; qualities associated with women ways of knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). At this stage in their development, students are not trusted with making important decisions. In this regard, the image of the relationship between the Self and the Other is that aspects of the Self are coterminous with the Self of the parent, usually the mother, and that it is this latter locus of the Self that is the decision maker. Though safety and convenience are important considerations in school choice, this coterminous locus of the Self has a dark underside that prevents some students from accessing the better secondary schools, which Krystal clearly recognizes: "*Sacred Heart College, although a better school, my father suggested that it was too far away from home, and my Mom concurred*" (Krystal, June 24).

In these responses we see that the two-stage aspect of the image is intensified and brought more clearly into focus. We also begin to get insights into the boundaries of the Eleven Plus examination, including its relatively minor role in the secondary school selection process.

What Overall Purpose Does the PSE (11+) Serve?

In each of the focus group sessions, an overwhelming majority of students felt strongly that the PSE served very useful purposes; the three most frequently cited being: peer socialization, legitimization, and future orientation. In preparing for the PSE, students had to spend a lot more time together at school in the evenings and on Saturdays for extra-lessons. Some students even visited other students' homes where they would form study groups. The additional time produced more opportunities for students to interact with each other as part of the peer socialization process, during which peer group norms and values became firmly established. Furthermore, the PSE as a high-stakes examination

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tested the curriculum content standards and so directly measured the extent to which students had met those standards. But, at the same time, it indirectly indicated the extent to which satisfactory levels of teaching and learning were occurring in the primary schools. In so doing, the PSE functions as an instrument of legitimization of the country's system of primary schooling. Comments such as Maileen's provided insights into the images of the legitimization relationships that the Self (students) has with the Other (the Eleven Plus experience):

- *The PSE is good because the results tell you if the teachers were putting in effort to teach the children and you can also see if the children were putting in the necessary effort to perform well on the test. (Maileen, June 24)*

Furthermore, by evaluating how well students were prepared academically to transition from the primary to the secondary level, the PSE was orienting these prospective secondary school students to the future. For contributing directly or indirectly to these three functions, the majority of the students in all four focus groups felt that the PSE is serving a very useful purpose.

Typical comments by students include:

Category 5: Dominant and Painful

- *Well it mostly just socializes. In my case it created a social space for me and my friends to meet. Overall, it brings people together in the evenings and on Saturdays at school and sometimes even in our homes in study groups. Yes most of the time we spend studying, but some of time is also spent on getting to know each other better. (Naim, June 23)*
- *I think the PSE is good because you get more time to spend with your friends at school, sometimes just simply hanging out together. (Javier, June 23)*
- *It helps you get away from your domestic chores at home and to spend more time with your friends at school. (Maileen, June 24)*
- *The PSE helps to show if students are serious about their school work and if they have been putting in the effort towards learning while at schools. (Kernesha, June 24)*
- *I sometimes agree that the PSE is serving a useful purpose and is a good thing, and sometimes I disagree. So I have two minds on the usefulness of the exam. I agree because in many ways the time we spend in school preparing for it helps us to be better and you get to know things that you did not know. It also helps to*

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prepare you to get into the high school of your choice and it is an experience that we will remember for the rest of our lives. But I think they should not grade the exam. I think that all students who make the effort to write the exam should have passed it, all of them! Because they would have tried their best. Even though some of them may not have been good at academic school work, I think they all deserve to have a chance to go to high school. (Student X, male, June 24)

- *Well, personally, I don't think the PSE is a good thing or a bad, so I am a little ambivalent about its overall usefulness. On the day of the exam when I was in the room, I felt positive and said to myself, this exam is very easy. I know all of this, as most of what was being examined we had recently learned in class. The PSE results come out and everybody say "Marcia your grade is good, your grade is good." So I am happy until they tell me what my actual grade is. Though I got an A, I was still mad, and this is also why I think the PSE is not such a good thing. I got a high, high grade but still did not make it to the top ten in the country. So I cried my eyes out. I cried all day that day. Everybody tried to convince me that this was only one exam, and that you will have lots of more opportunities to prove yourself in high school, to step up your game. I cried because throughout primary school you push yourself, push yourself, pushed yourself, believing that with hard work you will make the top ten in the country. Then this, other people just made one or two points more than you are in the top ten, and that makes you feel small. (Marcia, June 22)*

Here we see the relationship presupposition, *life is full of disappointments*, being validated by the Eleven Plus experience. Though at times the mood of the experience was active, where the students felt consciously involved in their own learning, and were persistent and optimistic even in the face of setbacks; at many other points it was frustrating and painful, and there was no way to control either mood, as Marcia's response demonstrates. Another aspect of the image, apart from dominance and pain, gleaned from these responses is that schools are social institutions which should prepare you to handle life's expectations. The experience with the system of schooling, however, did not prepare them well to deal with life's disappointments.

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Students' Metaphoric Statement: Like a Staged Race on an Obstacle Course ...

In summarizing the students' responses, what evolves is a picture of a Self (students) integrated with the Other (the Eleven Plus experience) in a highly complex manner, engendering an image of schooling that is both active and passive, positive and negative, and at the same time controlling and liberating. The experience oriented the students to the future, taught them the value of hard work, and helped to embed in their psyche some critical social competencies. But the experience also provided the context in which the Self acquired some unwarranted anxieties, such as the fear of mathematics and the fear of failure. Additionally, it led them to develop a very mechanical view of learning as effort, to value competition over collaboration, and did not teach them how to handle some of life's disappointments well. It is difficult to think of a single analogy that would capture all the active, passive, positive, and negative entailments of the mood, as well as the sub-themes enlightenment, disappointment, and personal sacrifice of this complex image, or world view, of schooling that the Eleven Plus experience engendered in students. Gurney (1990) suggests that the use of a metaphoric statement would be a more realistic option.

Kearney (1984) has suggested that one way to represent people's world view is through the use of analogies such as metaphors. Metaphors can be understood as a way of expressing or conceptualizing something esoteric, abstruse, or abstract by that which is well known or familiar (Tobin & Tippins, 1996). Gurney (1990), for example, cites how one student in his study used a metaphoric statement to describe her view of teaching and learning: "teaching is like road signs, maps and other navigational aids; learning is like a journey that never ends" (p. 28). But a metaphor is also a way of thinking, "an image that once captured in the mind can guide action to its completion" (Elliot, 2009, p. 285). It is the image that a metaphor statement conjures which gives it its power and makes it more or less synonymous with world view assumptions.

Image is used herein with two meanings. One is the more literal sense of a visual representation in the mind, such as, for example, an image of the earth as an island floating in an immense sea above which are suspended the stars and the planets. Mental images may also be experienced in words, or in sensory modalities other than vision, such as auditory or tactile images. The visual imagery is thus only one form of mental representation, but it is no doubt a major one. Thus, we say "I

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see” to refer to an intellectual “insight” in any mode of representation, and use a metaphor such as “world view” to sum up a general “outlook” on life. (Kearney, 1984, p. 47)

An interpretation of the narrative generated in the focus groups suggests that, as a result of the interactions the students had over the eight years of immersion in a primary school system that prepared them to sit the Eleven Plus examination, the complex image of the experience they may have constructed could be summed up by this metaphoric statement:

The Eleven Plus experience is like stage one of a two-stage cycle race on an obstacle course with one huge obstacle (math). Riding competitively in this stage of the race is important, because if you finish in the top ten you will become a rich celebrity or if you get a consolation prize you will be allowed to ride the next stage, but if you don't place in prize range you are out of the race. To be able to ride competitively in stage one, preparation is long and tough, even with a good trainer; on the way, however, one experiences many good times and many difficult times, some painful others enjoyable, but all valuable even if you don't finish the race in prize range.

The image of the Eleven Plus experience that occurred frequently in this sample was a version of a ceremonial two-stage race on a difficult course, for which one has to prepare intensely if one is going to be competitive enough to finish the first stage of the race in prize range. The mood of the experience is active, sometimes positive, other times negative, but learner-centred. Most significantly, the metaphoric statement suggests that the sub-theme which most permeated the experience is enlightenment, in that some valuable knowledge, as well as some hidden potential of the students themselves, becomes revealed through the experience.

Epilogue: Reflections on the Students' Image

Bennett (2008) claims that the original purpose of the Eleven Plus (PSE) examination in Belize was “to measure the academic achievement of primary school pupils upon completion of the eight years of primary school” (p. 15). This historic legitimization or certification function of the examination has been expanded to include two other functions, namely, (1) a reward function, whereby students who do well on the examination are awarded a secondary school scholarship that covers the

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cost of books and institutional fees; and (2) a secondary school selection function, which requires all government-funded secondary schools to use the examination scores as part of their admission policy. The majority of the students in this study indicated that they had been admitted to their first choice secondary school long before the results of the Eleven Plus examination had been published. In this regard, the examination was not very significant to students in the secondary school selection process and so is not serving that intended purpose. The question therefore arises as to what purposes it serves and what are the real variables that influence secondary school choice.

From the students' responses, there are four salient factors that impact on secondary school selection. The most significant is the reputation of the school. Schools that are perceived as having strong academic programmes, high levels of discipline, doing well on the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) and Caribbean Advanced Proficiency (CAPE) examinations, and which have strong leadership, tend to be first choice schools for most students. Secondly, secondary schools with which the student's family has had a history are preferred, that is, if family members have attended or are attending the school, it will be given serious attention in the decision-making process. To a lesser extent, secondary schools that are conveniently located in or near to the community, or those that offer training in a special vocational-technical area in which the parents of the student have a special interest, would be selected as first choice schools. That the Eleven Plus examination results do not feature significantly in this secondary school selection process suggests that it is the other two relatively soft subjective criteria, namely, the student's primary school transcript and the principal's recommendation, that are driving the selection process. Yet, it is the Eleven Plus primary school curricula that are driving the teaching and learning processes in the primary schools. This conflict has some implications for policy.

One of the challenges this situation poses for policymakers is how best to complement the other two criteria with an alternative form of assessment to the PSE, which would be a credible way to not only certify successful completion of education at the primary level and reward academic excellence, but also to ensure a more seamless and transparent transition of students from the primary to the secondary level. In this regard, there are two options in the region that might be worth exploring. The first is the Continuous Assessment Programme (CAP) that is being developed in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T). This programme makes the assumption that assessment should be a primary tool to facilitate teaching

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and learning, and should therefore be done skilfully, on a continuous basis, and in a very systematic manner. To achieve this, some principals and teachers were trained in assessment for learning techniques, in student monitoring, and in how to generate comprehensive reports on student growth on a regular and timely basis. All of this is done in an effort to make the student's education experience in transitioning from one level to the next more seamless. De Lisle, Secharan, and Ayodike (2010) did an evaluation of this programme and found that "despite various concerns and contextual difficulties as the lack of resources and support, teachers were able to complete most CAP tasks in schools with strong, informed leadership" (p. 163). Even though many challenges still exist in the institutionalization of all aspects of the programme, several medium-achievement schools also reported relatively high programme strength when leadership was effective. It must therefore be noted that this option is viable only for those schools with strong informed leadership, for once an innovation like CAP is installed, "the pathways to change are variable and sometimes even regressive, strongly dependent upon the quality of leadership and key organizational characteristics" (De Lisle et al., 2010, p. 161).

The second is the alternative assessment programme currently in place in Jamaica. Though this programme has elements that overlap with the CAP, it has enough unique features to make it both qualitatively and substantively different from the CAP in operation in T&T. Prior to 1999, Jamaica used the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) to assess students' ability to qualify for entrance to selected secondary schools in Jamaica (Barnes, 2000). The CEE or Eleven Plus examination was a summative examination written over two days. The Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) that replaced it in 1999 is an examination "that marks the end of months of on-going assessment of students in year-six of primary school" (Barnes, 2000, p. 1). In this assessment programme, students' primary school achievement is measured over the entire Grade 6 academic year. These monthly scores are then combined with their GSAT score to determine their final achievement scores. The Government considers this assessment programme to be an instrument that has brought "equity to the distribution of students to the secondary school" (Barnes, 2000, p. 2). For example, under the previous CEE system, the Ministry of Education would find places in secondary and comprehensive schools for only the top 30% of the more than 50,000 students who took the examination annually. The rest had to make their way into the technical and all-age schools or to private institutions. Under the GSAT, the Ministry is now placing 100% of the children in

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secondary schools as promotion from primary to the secondary level is now automatic. The additional places were created for students by upgrading some all-age and junior secondary schools to high school level (Barnes, 2000).

Though both CAP and GSAT have received positive reviews, they both have their critics. For example, Professor Errol Miller, of the Institute of Education at the Mona Campus of The University of the West Indies (UWI), contends that replacing the CEE with the GSAT is sending the wrong signal to the Jamaican student: “Automatic promotion from the primary to the secondary level without the requirement of meeting some performance standards [as the CEE endeavoured to set] is not the best use of scarce resources and sends the wrong signal to our young people” (as cited in Barnes, 2000, p. 2). Professor Miller further asserts that “where students in primary schools do not merit places in secondary schools [that is, fail the CEE], they should be placed in all-age or junior high schools” (as cited in Barnes, 2000, p. 3). Though Miller’s assertions have some merit and should therefore be considered by policymakers, I couldn’t help but recall the comments made by the 11-year-old student, Student X, in one of the focus groups.

The views of Miller and Student X highlight the conflicting images on the use of national assessment data to establish merit as the basis for access to secondary schooling, as represented by those who have power to influence policy, like Miller, and those for whom the policy is made. The two perspectives are world views apart. The two views also suggest that the Eleven Plus experience helped to shape some of the core beliefs and images Student X held about schooling: *“I think they should not grade the exam. I think all those students who make the effort to write the exam should have passed it ... I think all [students] deserve to have a chance to go to high school,”* including beliefs about the role of assessment in schooling, a view of learning as effort, and a strong position on the issue of equity in education. Clearly, his Eleven Plus experience helped to shape this student’s education identity.

Even though the Eleven Plus examination does not play a significant role in the secondary school selection process in Belize, this study suggests that the experience the students had, especially with preparing for the examination, did play a major role in shaping their core beliefs and images of schooling, that is, in the formation of the students’ education identities. Teachers also seem to have done a fair job of motivating students to go on to secondary school—the second stage of the race—as all the students interviewed indicated that they were going on to secondary school in September. What is significant is that most of

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the students realized that a good transcript and a strong recommendation from the principal carried more weight than their PSE results. This may have assisted in motivating them to stay in school and work hard at their school tasks, even when the tasks themselves may not have been as relevant to them as they would have liked. Being together with their friends for extended periods of time may have also been an added source of motivation for the students to stay in school.

Finally, it can be argued that some of these beliefs and images, such as future orientation and a mobile locus of self, are constructive, in the sense that they have the potential to contribute in a positive way to students' further engagement in education. Having a future orientation, for example, can motivate students to stay longer in the formal education system, and so may lead to greater lifetime earnings and greater social mobility. However, some of the views that the experience engendered in students, such as learned helplessness and fear of failure, are images that undermine such important education ideals as lifelong learning. Furthermore, our schools are expected to produce students who are able to make skilful decisions about actions involving acceptable levels of risk, if we are going to survive and enjoy "the good life" in the future. A fear of failure could lead to us to be unwilling to take any risk at all, even with ventures where the risk of failure might be small (Nolan & Anyon, 2004). It is therefore important to provide more opportunities for students to share their views on the education that we are providing them, so that we can become more aware of the adjustments we, as educators, may have to make to better ensure that the education we say we are providing them is a better match to the education they receive, that is, we need to ensure that the implemented and the received curriculum are in better alignment (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004).

In this article, I have presented some students' image of their Eleven Plus experience, employing motivation and identity theories, Kearney's world view model, and Gurney's metaphoric framework as my analytic lens. I have also offered my reflections on the students' image and have suggested how that image is different from that of an educator who continues to have influence on education assessment policy in the Anglophone Caribbean. The experience provided a context in which students acquired, as part of their education identities, some unwarranted anxieties, such as the fear of mathematics and the fear of failure. It also led them to develop a very mechanical view of learning as effort, to value competition over collaboration, and did not teach them how to handle some of life's disappointments well.

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Although this is a synopsis of the experiences students in Belize have while coping with an educational environment managed by policymakers who favour the use of national assessment mainly to establish merit as the basis of the selection process at the secondary level, it could be considered as a metaphoric statement on possible lived experiences of students in other countries where high-stakes examinations are also used for this purpose. Though the students in this study found the experience enlightening, there were those many difficult times, some painful! Barnes (2000) points out that in Jamaica it was “not until the suicide of a 12 year old Jamaican boy for not doing well on the [11+] Examination ... that more serious notice was taken on the tremendous strain [the 11+ experience had] on children” (p. 1). My hope is that more of our policymakers listen to the voices of our children and take “more serious notice” of what they are saying. By deliberately ensuring greater student voice in their research, education researchers, especially those who advise policymakers, can help to bridge the gap between these two divergent world views by advising policymakers on what the students are saying. Furthermore, since it is in the primary schools that these two cultures—student and policymaker—clash, teacher education programmes that orient student teachers on how to recognize social aspects of teaching and learning, and train them to be cultural brokers (Cobern & Aikenhead, 1998) could also form part of the strategy to bridge the gap between the two world views. Finally, the political ramifications of these differences in world view, especially with regards to the importance and purpose of the Eleven Plus examination, warrants urgent attention from education researchers.

Notes

1. In the spirit of the epistemic nature and power of language discussed by Asante (1988), Kohain Hahlevi, a Hebrew Israelite rabbi, uses the term *African ascendants* to describe people of African heritage. In contrast to the commonly used term *descendent*, he argues that African ascendant more accurately describes the upward and forward moving nature of African people throughout the diaspora as well as on the African continent herself. Like Cynthia B. Dillard (Dillard, 2008), I subscribe to this notion.
2. At the secondary level, the Anglophone Caribbean standardized the student achievement examinations in 1979. At the Form 5 level, students sit the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate Examinations (CSEC) and at the Form 6 level they do the Caribbean Advance Proficiency Examinations (CAPE). The agency charged with developing and administering these examinations is the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC).

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