

**IS CARIBBEAN HISTORY HISTORY? STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CARIBBEAN
HISTORY AT NORTH STAR SECONDARY SCHOOL**

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Abstract

There is currently limited research within the Trinidad and Tobago content on students' perceptions on Caribbean history. This phenomenological study attempts to investigate and analyze the students' perceptions of Caribbean History at North Star Secondary school, a suburban school in the St. George East Educational District of Trinidad. There are positive, negative and neutral perceptions which would have influenced students to choose Caribbean History for the CSEC examinations. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews of which the findings of the study discovered eight main themes: personal interest, appreciation, career path, subject content, family influence, resources, teaching influence/strategies and peer influence. From these findings, recommendations were made to the stakeholders.

Keywords: Caribbean History, students' perceptions, secondary school

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

“History is one of those subjects on the school curriculum that has consistently suffered from negative perceptions”. (Joseph, 2012. p. 1). It is therefore imperative that students be exposed to the subject so that comments that suggest history as being boring and irrelevant to

contemporary life can be limited. Educators also need to be committed to providing students with the outstanding concepts which needs to be learnt by History students. Despite negative reactions about the subject, History enables students to not only understand who they are as individuals but it offers a platform of issues both past and present to be interpreted.

Countries world-wide try to incorporate history into the teaching curriculum of schools. The literature shows these efforts made and how students are made to understand the importance of studying History in schools internationally, regionally, and locally. Unfortunately, in spite of these efforts, students often have to be encouraged to change their attitude towards the subject. History teachers especially at the secondary schools are faced with the attitudes of the students and their apparent lack of value for studying History. In some countries teachers are fortunate to have students with that passion and value for studying History. Generally, the teachers are the ones responsible to make the subject relevant and bring it alive so that more students can appreciate the study of Caribbean History.

Background

Mc Neil (1985) stated that “without individual memory, a person literally loses his or her identity, and would not know how to act in encounters with others. Ignorance of History can deprive an individual of the best available guide for public action, especially in encounters with outsiders, whether the outsiders are another nation, another civilization, or some special group within national borders.” Nonetheless there is an international view that the study of History is essential to understanding who one is as an individual. Stearns (1993) articulates this belief by explaining that History offers a warehouse of information about how people and societies behave. Schools in the United States promote History so that nationalism and patriotism are used to motivate the youths of America. In addition to this, Carr (1961) postulates that studying

History is a bridge for students to cross so that the gap between the past and present can be connected and point toward the road to the future. As such, internationally, schools recognize that students should understand the nature of humanity.

Interestingly, countries such as Canada endorse the study of History. Seixas (2009) states “the job of History education is to work in the fragments of thinking and develop them so that students have a better basis upon which to make sense of their own lives.” This can be seen in the Grade 11 syllabus where the History of Canada focuses on the core concept of citizenship and the commitment to the future of Canada. The Canadian education system also views studying History as important since students acquire historical knowledge and understanding based on historical significance, evidence, continuity and change, cause and consequence, historical perspectives and ethical dimensions (Seixas, 2009).

Likewise in New Zealand (Liu, Wilson, Mc Clure & Higgins, 1999) stated that students study History because they show interest in their ethnic origins because History relates to positions on current political issues and this relates to their social identity. Thus, in New Zealand the History curriculum is made applicable to the students by encompassing events occurring in New Zealand and/or global events involving or influencing New Zealanders. The New Zealand Curriculum also states that history programmes should reflect the concepts and methodologies of historical thinking that are socially relevant, therefore, History can play an explicit role in building or maintaining citizenship for students.

Similarly, in the Caribbean in which a rich and diverse environment exists, it is equally important that students understand the history of not only their culture but politics, economy and even technology. In a world that is prospering on business, technology and science based careers, the motivation for any other field seems to be lacking. Additionally, Brock (1985) explains that

in Grenada the education policy included the aftermath of the 1983 invasion so that students can have a clearer understanding of their identity as well as an appreciation for the country of Grenada. Thus, the importance of learning History for Caribbean students has proven that a sense of identity is needed which resulted in the inclusion of History into the curriculum. Erven (2006) also highlighted that cultural history is being taught in schools in Aruba because students need to be embraced within a broader, much more multicultural concept of what it means to be an Aruban.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the History curriculum began with the study of European History whereby the syllabus consisted of the history of European countries during the colonial times. This was so because the lower classes were made to feel inferior, so if learning had to take place it was about Europe and the European lifestyle and culture. Baldeosingh and Mahase (2011) postulate that educating the lower classes during the colonial times was viewed as unimportant since their only jobs were to be on the fields. Since Caribbean Examination Council (C.X.C) was established in 1972, a curriculum was administered for the English-speaking Caribbean. The C.X.C exams included Caribbean History. At the lower forms, Joseph (2012, p.3) stated that “many secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago do not begin formal instruction in History until the third or fourth year of a five year secondary education programme. Social Studies is generally taught in the early secondary school years as an alternative to History under the Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP). This means that students who select History as one of their examination options often have only two to three years to understand key historical concepts as well as develop an appreciation for the subject”. “Given the structure of social studies and the treatment of History as one of several components of the subjects, it is very

difficult to determine what students actually take away from social studies as historical knowledge” (Joseph, 2012, p. 3)

Based on the rationale of the CAPE History syllabus it states that it seeks to “enhance the interests, capabilities, skills and attitudes of students to enable them to develop as autonomous human beings capable of acting as rational and ethical individuals, and as responsible members of their community.”(History syllabus, CAPE, 2005, p. 7). It is therefore possible to conclude that students may not value the study of Caribbean History because they are not exposed enough to the subject to value it and the predominantly capitalist society seems to dictate to our students the dilemma of guarding against narrow mindedness and embracing what truly interests them.

At North Star Secondary, the Social Studies Forms 1 and 2 classes are exposed to three periods each. This curriculum at the lower forms consists of History in the Social Studies curriculum. However at the Form 3 level Social Studies and History are taught as separate subjects whereby they are both allotted two periods each per week. The school may have recognized that more time was needed for students to be exposed to the subject therefore it is being offered for that Form 3 academic year. The Form 3 History curriculum was designed by a senior teacher since the school was established in 2000. That curriculum has been in use since then. The core concepts focused for this level would be cause and consequence as well as continuity and change. Students are also taught to make linkages or relations to current issues in Trinidad and Tobago.

In addition to this, there is an apparent lack of value in studying History because of the manner it is being taught in schools. In some cases, History is presented to students as a compilation of facts and dates. The study of pupils’ perception of the nature of History is based on the teaching/learning activities. Students should be required to reconstruct the past on the

basis of series of data and detect the relationships between them rather than memorize opinions presented to them (Lewy, Wolff, & Shavit, 1974). To add to this notion, “teachers and students alike attach greater importance and a higher level of attractiveness to activities like comparing descriptions of the same event from different books than only learning the dates of important events” (Lewy et al., 1974). Peck (2005) postulates that content and pedagogy cannot be separated because historical knowledge develops mostly by doing History, that is, using historical tools to construct historical knowledge. Thus, History learning is viewed as an intellectual task.

Other factors such as factors outside the classroom play a major role in student perceptions of studying Caribbean History. These factors include the general perception of History being boring and having no relevance to their lives. Inclusive of this would be the view that studying History offers little job opportunities except for the field of teaching. This study serves the purpose of bringing to light whether this is true or not

School Context

The school under study is the North Star Secondary school, an all girls’ denominational school situated in a semi-urban area in the St. George East district. This school has been in existence since 2000 and the first group of students to write CSEC Caribbean History was in 2005. The school’s population consists of 370 students and a teaching staff of 23 including the principal and vice principal. The school is situated in a community whereby there is a mixture of intake of students from different socio-economic backgrounds.

This researcher has taught Forms two to five History and Social Studies at the school for eleven years. The contact time allocated for Form 1-3 History and Social Studies are two periods per week and four periods per week for Form 4 and 5. Thus, if the value of History is seen to

understanding the value of humanity, students should be taught these transferable skills such as evaluations, critical acquisition of a broad range of understandings and the gain of a sense of development.

Interestingly, there are 76 students currently writing the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examination at the school of which only 12 students will be writing Caribbean History. At the Form 4 level there are also 12 students who will be writing the CSEC examination in 2016. However there are two groups of form three level students of which both classes consist of seventy five students. At the Form 3 level the study of Caribbean History is compulsory and it is at the end of the academic year 2014-2015 students will choose subjects to enter into Form 4. Students at this level are allowed to choose three subjects apart from the five designated compulsory subjects. Caribbean History is one of these optional subjects which compete with Principles of Accounts and Chemistry in the same category. As a result, students often have doubts about their career paths versus the value of studying History.

At the school being studied, students at the Form 5 level have been passing the subject. It can then be suggested even though students are passing, other students may not see the value of the subject. The attitude of the students towards the subject is one that needs to be explored further.

As a teacher researcher at the North Star Secondary School, where I am presently one of the History teachers in the Modern Studies Department and like my counterparts at the school, I have encountered challenges in students' attitudes and behaviours towards Caribbean History. Due to these challenges, teaching/learning is also being affected. Furthermore there are influences which add to the attitudes and behaviours of the students when learning Caribbean History. However although students have previously expressed their feelings to me about

Caribbean History, some of the students agreed to share their experiences for this study. This study was therefore designed to help me understand the lived experiences of Form 4 students at the school so that their perceptions can shed light on the matter.

Refer to the table of results below.

Table 1.

Caribbean History CXC results (for passing grades I, II & III)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of students</u>	<u>%</u>
2012	19	79
2013	15	100
2014	15	100

Problem Statement

Over the past three years the schools performance in Caribbean History has been slowly improving but the in-take of students remains either stagnant or increases by one or two students. On the other hand, even though students are passing the subject at CXC, the phenomenon is that too few students are choosing Caribbean History at the Form 4 level. As such 16% of the Form 4 year group is doing Caribbean History.

As a teacher at the school, this researcher has noticed that the past few years, the student in-take for Caribbean History at Form 4 level has been 12 students or less, therefore the student's attitude towards the subject needs to be investigated. If this persists, there is a possibility of Caribbean History curriculum being phased out because too few students would be writing the examination. This has further implications as it relates to the job placement of the History teacher. By extension students could lose out on historical knowledge. Additionally, the school may have to revise the History syllabus so that the teachers in this field can still have job

security. Unless we explore the experiences of the students and how it influences their subject choice at the exam level, there may be the continued issue of small History classes. These implications have necessitated an investigation of the students to explain their notion of Caribbean History since there is a need to know the issue because little has been done in this area in the local context.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of students at North Star Secondary school with the aim of gaining invaluable insight into how students perceive Caribbean History. The student in-take at Form 4 Caribbean History are 12 students. It is hoped that the outcome of the investigation will shed light on the level of students' perceptions of Caribbean History which can lead to recommendations on teaching/learning strategies to encourage students to further study Caribbean History at the Form 4 level.

Refer to the table 2 of subject choice clusters available to students at North Star Secondary School.

Table 2.

Student subject choice clusters for Form 3 2014/2015

<u>Subject cluster I</u>	<u>Subject cluster II</u>	<u>Subject cluster III</u>	<u>Subject cluster IV</u>
1. History	1. Information Technology	1. Physics	1. English
2. Chemistry	2. Art**	2. Principles of	Literature
3. Principles of	3. Geography	Accounts	2. Additional
Business	4. Caribbean Vocational**	3. Social Studies	Mathematics

Qualification	3. Additional
	Classes*

* Additional classes consist of those students who are only doing the five compulsory subjects. These students are supervised by the compulsory subject teachers available for that period.

** Subject to space available in class.

Research Questions

1. What are students' experiences of studying Caribbean History?
2. To what extent have these experiences influenced their subject choice in Form 4?

Significance of Study

Phenomenological research leads to a greater understanding of the participant's experiences which may yield several results so that the researcher can be more sensitive to those involved in the said phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1989). The expected outcomes may also clear misconceptions about the phenomenon, therefore this study is of importance for several reasons namely to assist the administration and History teachers at North Star Secondary School, that is, this study to encourage new ways the History syllabus can be implemented, together with closely examining the subject choice groupings before entering Form 4 and in relation to what encourages students to pursue studying History at the CSEC level. Furthermore the study will assist in developing sensitivity and empathy to those involved in the experience. Finally, beyond the scope of this study, the findings may raise possible issues about shortcomings in the way Caribbean History is being taught, that is, the application of Caribbean History to the students and the real world.

Summary of chapter

This chapter attempted to highlight the international, regional and local background in which the study is set. The school context, the problem, and purpose of the study also come to light here. These are necessary for framing the context within which the research questions are to be answered.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review attempts to explore the association between sociological perspectives of educational practices at schools. This review was driven by theorists such as the *Functionalist* perspective of education, the theories connected to *Schema* and the model of *Decision Making*. Additionally the review seeks to address the two research questions by employing an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of student lack of value in Caribbean History and the arising concern of small classes at the Form 4 level. From the research questions, the importance of studying history will be investigated as well as students' opinions on their valuing of History.

Theoretical framework

Functionalist education theory.

Functionalist theorists make the assumption that society has certain functional prerequisites which are all essential for the smooth running of society. It is believed that society must be in order and cooperation and stability is maintained based on 'value consensus.' It is also believed that society is meritocratic and rewards are given to those who deserve them. As such, the functionalist philosophy have made contributions to the education system which is providing students with the equal opportunity to be educated so that they can be functional to society by playing different roles. Education allocates people to the most appropriate jobs for their talents, using examinations and qualifications (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000).

Schema theory.

Schema theory started to investigate how a child organizes his or her previous knowledge to relate to the world which includes objects, actions and theoretical concepts. The child's existing schema is capable of explaining any new information he or she is being taught. This theory which was developed by Piaget (1957), defines how individuals build their knowledge by relating new knowledge to the existing knowledge. In terms of teaching, it determines the equilibrium of new information received and how well it is understood. Concept schema is one that is determined by the information received or objects around us (Berger, 1991), thus, the new information must make sense to the receiver.

Decision Making Model

This model was utilized to highlight the factors that can influence student choices and therefore the set of options available to them. The child's tastes and preferences to subjects depend on how much they value their well-being in the present relative to the future (Jin, Muriel & Sibieta, 2010). Based on the model of rational decision-making it assumed that individuals make the best possible decision from the choices available to them. Therefore, due to the cluster of subjects available to students their decisions restrict their ability to make desirable choices at later ages (Jin et al, 2010).

Purpose of the theories

The sociological theory was utilized by the researcher as it aids in the understanding of the condition of contemporary education system and how this has affected students' decisions on subject choice. It also provided a foundation for the argument for the inclusion of the schema theory as an indicator as to the value students construct when they study History. The theory further explains how students make relevant of what they learn in History to their own lives.

Review of Literature

Functionalists view society as parts and each part of society is functional for the stability of the whole society. The different parts make up the institutions of society of which the education system is considered an institution. Durkheim (as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2000) expresses that “education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands” (p. 87-88). Parsons also has the position that “education was crucial for the selection of individuals for their future roles in society” (as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2000, p.780). Durkheim (as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2000) believes education, and in particular the teaching of History, provides this link between the individual and society. If the history of their society is brought alive to children, they will come to see that they are part of something larger than themselves: they will develop a sense of commitment to the social group.

Durkheim (as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2000) also has the views that these common educational curriculum has helped to instill shared norms and values in to immigrants from every country in Europe. He continues by explaining his belief that education teaches individuals specific skills necessary for their future occupations. Parsons on the other hand is of the view that “education was crucial for the selection of individuals for their future roles in society” (as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2000, p. 780).

With focus on the students’ perceptions of Caribbean History at North Star Secondary School, the opinions and findings of experts in the field of reasons for studying History is significant. Such reasons will include the value of studying Caribbean History, challenges in teaching History in the classroom, resources, and perceptions of the subject at various levels.

“History at the high school level is often thought as a boring subject where information is regurgitated during exams.”(Duthie, 1989, p.138). Furthermore, students become the receivers

of 'facts' and have failed to build on those same facts for their own personal development such as career choice. Duthie (1989) also proposed that for students to be more interested in History, there should be less regurgitated information. Functionalism advocates this view since the career choices of students depend on the existing job opportunities. Durkheim (as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2000) states that education teaches individuals specific skills necessary for their future occupations. He added that these functions are particularly important in industrial society.

Cooper (1992) states, learning about the past can teach children that there were different experiences. These experiences are important social and intellectual development, not solely to historical understanding. As such students would realize there is no 'right' answer because different arguments contain different supporting evidence. Furthermore, children would be capable of deductive reasoning and their problem solving skills are developed. Riddle (2011) explains that students should learn skills such as experienced-based decision-making, research, the ability to recognize multiple points of view and numerous others in order to develop a student to become responsible citizens. Based on the schema theory, Piaget (1957) states that students develop the units of knowledge about everything they experience and then form their own theories about reality, therefore, by developing their own schemata, students build on their comprehension skills when the information is received, their understanding changes. Joseph's (2012) study shows that students have varied views on historical concepts. Whereas student A may think of History as understanding events or persons, student B understand History to be the events that took place in our history. Thus, "students could not readily identify one single concept that they had learned in History class. Together with this notion, students generally believe that an event was caused by one particular factor rather than by a mix of different factors" (Joseph, 2012, p. 10).

From previous studies done by Joseph (2012) he recognized the impact of student perceptions on the whole teaching and learning process, that is, students had their own ideas of how teaching and learning should take place. Hallden (1986) investigates student beliefs about what constitutes an historical explanation. He argues that in order to understand the information presented in History lessons, students must first come to terms with what the information is supposed to explain (Hallden, 1986). If students, for example, base their understanding of History mainly on the actions of individuals, then the teacher is faced with a rather difficult task of bringing such students to a level of analyzing the historical event as a whole. Piaget (1957) explains that the theories and lessons are interpreted by creating our own schemata. This is known as our schemata are our knowledge.

Factors concerning the lack of value in studying History by researchers stems from the social context; family and friends of students, and the school environment, which includes the teachers. The society also plays a role in students' apparent lack of valuing History whereby History as one of the Arts subjects are not believed to be essential to society. As such, History does not serve a real purpose and its function to society is difficult to define than those of engineering or medicine. Functionalism advocates the roles to be fulfilled with those of necessary skills for future occupations. Furthermore, the Schema theory suggests that if students are unable to formulate new information taught, they cannot obtain the skills for their future jobs. Stearns (1993) says that by studying History, students improve on their basic writing and speaking skill which directly relates to analytical requirements for the public and private sectors. As such, History prepares students for the long haul of their careers through the skills obtained from studying History.

Students studying CSEC's Caribbean History should also understand the importance of the subject. That is, the individual empowerment which History provides in terms of personal identity. Stearns (1993) goes on to explain that history of one's family provides facts about genealogy and understanding of how the family has interacted with historical change, therefore, as Trinidadians and Tobagonians, Caribbean History provides the information about our ancestors and their origins. It gives us a sense of appreciation and patriotism to be part of a multicultural society. From this knowledge, it can aid in our understanding of present society and the changes being made such as the mixing of ethnic groups.

Studying Caribbean History can in fact be useful in the world of work. It helps in the creation of political leaders and other professionals a like. Stearns (1993) postulates that employers often deliberately seek students with the skill and capacity in which historical study promotes. These skills include research skills, the ability to find and evaluate sources of information, and the means to evaluate different interpretations. Thus students of North Star Secondary school studying of Caribbean History can not only develop in personal skill but also make themselves marketable for the world of work.

However, students of modern day may not see the need and relevance to studying Caribbean History. The idea of learning about the forces that arose in the past and continue to affect the modern world should spark curiosity. As Stearns (1993) postulates that this type of knowledge requires comprehension of national institutions and its trends. He further argues that historical understanding gives light to the key forces of the wider world by being able to fit into your personal context. The continuous tension between Christianity and Islam requires knowledge of what took place over 12 centuries ago. Thus, students at North Star Secondary

School should not only study Caribbean History because of personal identity but to also understand worldly matters and how it affects our context.

Stearns (1993) added that student interest especially in History relies heavily on the students' perceptions of relevance to their lives. This has also been linked to personal motivation to be active in a task depends on the value placed on the task and its meaning to the person. Stearns (1993) continue to explain that the attitude of the student depends on their expectations for success. Riddle (2011) argues that the No Child Left Behind Act is squeezing History out of the classroom in favour of math and reading. He continued to make the connection of students failing and being okay with it because it has no real relevance to their own lives. Hence, if a student does not see the relevance of a subject area to their lives and career at North Star Secondary School, the students would exhibit less interest in studying History at the CSEC level.

Students' idea of the relevance of studying History also depends upon their attitudes towards the subject. Gardner (1985) explains that the learners themselves take the initiative in determining their success based on their attitudes and motivations. They get themselves involved in their learning. As such, the student gains great interest in their self-development and gains self-confidence.

However, the role of the teacher in valuing the subject is to be further explored. DiClementer (2014) offered that teachers should teach students to look beyond the words on the page and to teach students to discover the real meaning of people and events and show how they are linked. As such, teachers should change their behavior towards Caribbean History. Joseph (2012) explains that students shared their feelings on teacher methodology on History. Students expressed that History contains too much note taking and long lectures which affected their enjoyment of the subject. Additionally, students stated from Joseph's (2012) report that a need

for more “field trips, visual aids, and other graphic representations would stimulate greater interest in History” (p. 8). Other students responded that more personal attention and greater passion for the subject was needed.

Anya (2011) states that family obligations and peer pressure were also strong influential forces when it relates to studying a subject. This could be a possible influence for students at North Star Secondary School not pursuing Caribbean History at the CSEC level. When students at this school are required to choose subjects for CSEC Examinations, there is consultation with their parents. In addition, when the students are told which subjects they are writing, they often compare subject choices with their friends.

Joseph (2012) highlighted the impact of outside influences to student perceptions on studying History and it was revealed that information obtained outside the classroom was considered valuable to the students. On the other hand, History tends to be unpopular among their peers because their friends view History as being boring, therefore, due to the peer influences some students dropped the subject.

Akintade (2012) makes the link between student’s attitude and the role of the teacher in students’ selection of subjects whereby he states that the teacher’s role and attitude toward students has a significant impact on the student’s attitude towards a subject. He added that students select subjects on the basis of prestige and the demand for an occupation the subject leads to.

However, there are strategies that teachers can implement to encourage students to study Caribbean History. Riddle (2011) added that in order for students to improve in their performance, the way the subject is taught needs revisiting. That is the focus should be on the process rather than the content that is contained in over-sized History textbooks. Barton (2005)

suggests that teachers should illustrate to students that working with History is working with evidence. He further explains that teachers can use primary sources such as documents to engage students in a class. In this way student's understanding of the past is developed and appreciated. Jenkins (1991) added that new strategies away from the traditional classroom should be included in the teaching of History. This is done through the use of computers as the tools and students can be engaged in both primary and secondary sources as part of their investigations. Additionally, student performance was also viewed as a factor in relation to students not choosing Caribbean History at the CSEC level. However, if they are failing the subject they would have no zeal to continue along failure and there is inevitable failure in the subject.

Literature also suggests that decisions can be based on biases. That is, these biases may lead to individuals to make decisions which they later regret (Jin et al, 2010, p. 24). It is believed that these factors which influence their decisions may not be consciously aware of certain factors which may skew their decision making process. One factor would be that of enjoyment and ability in the subject. Adey and Biddulph (2001) identified that students who liked Geography and History decided not to continue with the subjects because they do not see the relevance in them. They further explained that the innate enjoyment of the subjects does not always drive the subject choices.

Additionally, the decision making model lends to idea that "soft" subjects such as Art & Design, Media Studies, Photography and Business Studies are for those students who are aspiring for practical or vocational institutions in the future. This idea relates to how peers may influence subject and career choices whereby students may want to do what their friends are doing. When it comes to education choices, the issue may not be so much one of risk but rather one where the pay-offs are either known or unknown to students because their choices are based

on their future careers. Therefore the concept of “present bias” applied to subject and course choices implies that students are mostly concerned about the immediate present such as studying hard, teacher personality or taking similar subjects to friends (Jin et al, 2010).

Jin et al (2010) when it comes to decision making it involves uncertainty. This bias is known as “over optimism” whereby students believe that the outcomes depend on their own skills, ability or knowledge. They may be over confident about their own ability and such incorrect beliefs may lead to suboptimal decisions. Thus, this over-optimism results in inappropriate decisions which leads to lower actual career prospects.

Fullarton and Ainley (2000) explains that students in Australia subject choice were influenced by access to higher education, vocational education and labour market outcomes. Studies show that students from higher socioeconomic background are more likely to participate in the courses that are linked to higher education and the professions. Students of lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to participate in vocational courses so that they can enter into the labour market without further training or formal education. Subject choice report in 1994 remained stable in English and Mathematics whereas enrolment in Social Studies and Environment declined with the exception of business studies. The Sciences enrolment increased as well as Computer Studies and Technical Studies.

Based on the literature presented by the experts of student perceptions of History, it would be fitting to interview these students so that their feelings and opinions can be shared. As such, the nature of the study leads to the phenomenology theoretical framework because students’ experiences will be gathered through semi-structured interviews. The researcher then has to use the interpretivist approach to examine this immediate phenomena. In this way the

researcher would be able to capture the lived experiences and put meaning of common responses from students and create new meaning to them.

Summary of chapter

Finally, according to the research and findings of experts, there is a relationship between the influences and the student perceptions when studying History. These findings would be the focus of my topic, informed my interview protocol and intensify my data analysis. The literature review increased my curiosity as to find out if the students' responses would correspond with the experts. If not, I am personally curious to discover what factors in particular led to my students not choosing History for the CSEC Examination.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, the phenomenological framework was selected since the experiences and meanings students ascribe to at North Star Secondary School. Data gathering methods included semi-structured interviews which were formulated from the research questions. The data analysis involved transcribing raw data, coding, axial coding and selective coding.

Design of Study

Researchers explain that in order to understand a phenomenon and to know how things happen or to understand the meaning of a situation, then a qualitative design is most appropriate to conduct the study. (Merriam, 2002). Since the focus of this study are the factors of Form 3 students lacking interest in choosing History at the CSEC level, the perceptions of students were gathered. Their behavior and the influences of the environment would also shed light upon the question of whether or not they choose History. Furthermore, the focus on multiple realities lies with the ontological assumptions that underlies with qualitative research.

Merriam (2002) explains that the phenomenon should be understood by the participants and not the researcher. This is where qualitative research becomes fitting to understand the perceptions of the students. The participants' responses will then be transcribed in the data so as to provide the study with the substantial details about their perceptions as it relates to studying Caribbean History.

Rationale for the research paradigm

This study concentrated on the student perceptions of studying Caribbean History at North Star Secondary, a semi-urban secondary school in East Trinidad. The phenomenon of this study was the lived experiences of the students studying History. In order to fully investigate this phenomenon, and extract rich, thick data from the students about their experiences, the researcher selected the qualitative research tradition of phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) described phenomenological research as identifying the essence of human experiences through the participants' description. This description consists of "what" they experienced and "how" they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). The philosophical assumptions lie on common grounds through the study of the lived experiences of persons, the view that these experiences are conscious ones (van Manen, 2002), and the development of descriptions of the essences of the lived experiences, not the explanations or analysis (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl (1970) explains the phenomenological approach as putting aside all judgments of the "natural attitude". This is described as the "epoche" (or bracket own experiences).

For the purpose of this study transcendental or psychological phenomenology would be applied by describing the experiences of the participants. In this way the researcher can set aside her experiences and take on a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher would then analyze the data by reducing the information to statements and then later statements into themes. Following this, textural descriptions of the experiences of participants and structural description of the experiences to convey an overall essence of the experiences.

A study of this nature merely attempts to use the experiences of the participants as well as their reflections. Crotty (1998) explains that phenomenological research is one where the

researcher constantly reviews the experiences of participants and emerge new meaning based on interpretation. This research thus went on to describe, explore and interpret the lived experiences of the participants.

In the attempt to understand the views of the students at North Star Secondary School, the ontological view of the multiple realities and meanings of the students was embraced by the researcher. The researcher further tried to make sense of the participants' experiences through interviews which were the primary source method of data collection. Furthermore, the experiences gathered had to be interpreted whereby Crotty (1998) explains that this consciousness of experiences gathered needs to be thought about carefully, "interpreting them or attributing any meaning to them" (p. 79). Crotty (1998) further explains the phenomenological method falls under the interpretivist views since researchers collecting data and analyzing data in way they do not prejudice their subjective character.

Sandberg (2005) explains too that an epistemological assumption can be used as a foundation for conducting a study. The epistemological assumption refers to the knowledge and the notion that the research work is supposed to make a contribution to knowledge itself (Hartley, 2006). The process is through which the researcher makes the knowledge claim. As such in the case of North Star Secondary School, the researcher is in the best location to the knower and the knowledge gatherer. Axiologically, the values of the researcher were guided by value judgment of both students and researcher. Therefore, there are to be expected biases from both participants and researcher which will be presented in the study. Therefore, the analysis would be based on interpretation of the researcher. The interpretivist paradigm linked to phenomenology would be the researcher's subjective meanings extracted from the experiences of the participants. From this, the researcher reconstructs, understands and builds on the knowledge obtained.

Justification for the research strategy

Creswell (2007) describes five approaches to qualitative research. This study follows the phenomenological research design because this researcher's focus is finding commonalities of the students' experiences with studying Caribbean History descriptions of "what" they experience and "how" they experienced Caribbean History.

Phenomenology is best suited to explore the issues to be investigated for this research paper. This study seeks to find out students' thoughts and feelings about the subject, possible strategies that teachers may use and other difficulties students encounter with Caribbean History. Participants will have their experiences to share as it uncovers their perspectives of Caribbean History.

Researcher's Role

Cohen (2007) states that researchers recognize three sources of bias which are, bias from the subject being interviewed, researchers themselves being biased and those arising from the subject-researcher interaction. This then made it clear to me that the biases of the interviewed participants in accordance with their experiences; and the biases from interaction between the students and myself as the researcher may exist, due to previous interactions at the school.

However, as the researcher I have recognized my biases to this research since (a) this issue is important to me because I am a History teacher currently at the school and two of the participants are my past students; (b) the interpretations are my own.

Sampling Method

Merriam (2002) stated that purposeful sampling is used for gathering information from those you can learn a great deal about issues of central importance. The researcher purposefully selected nine students of Form 4. Six of the Form 4 students are not studying Caribbean History and are not taught by the researcher. This is to prevent any bias from the participants. According to Richie and Lewis (2003) the selection of participants is one whereby the researcher can be provided the most relevant information for answering the research questions. As such, the use of purposeful sampling for this study was done.

Furthermore, small numbers in qualitative research are acceptable, so long as the sample is relevant to the subject matter. As Ritchie and Lewis (2003) argue that “all the key constituencies of relevance to the subject matter’ and the diversity of the group leads to optimize the chance of identifying the full range of factors or features that are associated with a phenomenon.”(p. 79).

The students were selected based on their subject choice grouping of History, Chemistry and Principles of Accounts. The Form 4 students are chosen based on their highest, middle and lowest scores of their Form 3 end of year report. The selection of the students was deliberate so as to include a variety of experiences which would contribute to the phenomenon being studied.

Selection of Participants

Participants were selected based on their selection of subjects at Form 4, three History students, three chemistry students and three principles of accounts students. All students would have been exposed to Caribbean History from Forms 1 to 3. The students were chosen based on their marks over the three terms during their Form 3 period. The interviews were conducted after school so that teaching and learning time would not have been lost. “Qualitative research requires standardization of procedures and random selection of participants to remove potential

influence of external variables and ensure generalizability of results”(Sargeant. 2012, p. 3). The participants were each assigned pseudonyms of their choice and interviewed in a setting that was most comfortable to them.

The Participants

Bernice

Bernice is 15 years old and she is studying Caribbean History in Form 4. She is from a single parent family and lives in Arima. Bernice has a passion for History but she is not performing well in the subject. Her marks are low but her History teacher expresses that she tries her best in class. Bernice is also well behaved and tends to be very helpful to the teachers of the school.

Josephine

Josephine is 15 years old and both her parents are employed. Josephine is currently one of the lower form school prefects and she is also the top performer throughout the school. She is very dedicated and she is studying Caribbean History at the Form 4 level. Both her mid-term and end of term marks reflect a percentage of 80%. She is a disciplined student. Josephine has an older sister who was a past student of this school and she has a younger brother. Her sister is currently on an open scholarship at a university in the United States of America.

Mabel

Mabel is 15 years old and she is a Caribbean History student. Mabel lives with both her parents who are employed. Mabel has an older brother who is also studying Caribbean History at the Form 4 level at another high school. However, Mabel is mediocre in Caribbean History and tries her best to participate. Mabel is a well behaved student and would often make the effort to do better. In class Mabel is very enthusiastic about Caribbean History.

Jessy

Jessy is a student who resides nearby by the school. She is 16 years old and she is the eldest of three siblings. Her father is the only one employed and her mother is a domestic helper. This student is currently studying subjects within the Modern Studies group together with five compulsory subjects. Her other subjects do not include Caribbean History. Jessy tries to pass her subjects student because her grades fluctuate each term. However she is willing and keeps trying and she is persistent.

Sasha

Sasha is 16 years old and lives with her grandparents, together with her younger brother, in San Juan because her father passed away when she was a baby and her mother lives in England, employed as a domestic worker. Sasha is an average Principles of Business student because her marks fluctuate for mid- term and end of term. This student tends to be rude to teachers and they often complain about this student not doing home-work.

Jessica

Jessica is 16 years old and she is studying Principles of Business. Currently, Jessica is considered a disciplined student and she is also being considered for a school prefect. Jessica currently lives with both her parents who are employed. Jessica has high aspirations of being the top accounting student but she is mediocre in the subject area. She often tries her best. However, due to her marks she did not get into the Accounting class but rather placed in the Business class.

Andrea

Andrea is also a 15 years old History student who lives in Arima and both her parents are employed. Andrea is the last of three siblings. She involves herself in school projects and is also being considered for a school prefect. Andrea usually performed very well in History classes but she tends to be absent frequently due to health issues. Her parents explained that they are in the process of running a series of tests to determine the cause of Andrea's ailments. She is not studying Caribbean History at the Form 4 level.

Ronnica

Ronnica is a 15 years old and she is studying Chemistry. She is an only child and she lives in the same district as the school. She also comes from a single parent home where her mother is a nurse. Ronnica is an excellent in both the Science and Modern Studies subjects and she is a disciplined student. Ronnica is also being considered for school prefect. The teachers expressed that Ronnica is an excellent student and has high hopes for her.

Keisha

Keisha lives in a nearby community close the school and she is 16 years old. She is the only child and both her parents are employed. Keisha is studying the Sciences together with seven other subjects. Keisha is considered to be one of the mediocre students in school since her grades fluctuate. Additionally, Keisha is very much involved in after school activities and is being considered for a school prefect.

Ethical requirements

According to Richie, Lewis and Elam (2003) considerations to a study must be observed before conducting the study, a letter of consent to the students, parents and the school investigated were initiated. The letter outlined the purpose of the study and requirements of the participants of the study. The letter included the title and purpose of the study. The accepted

participants were informed via a letter that they have been selected to part take in a study (see Appendix A). Arrangements would be made to conduct interviews with the Principal.

Bassey (1999) also adds that there must be respect for democracy, truth and people. As such, respect for people in this study would require permission to conduct the interview, to maintain confidentiality and publish the report. For this study permission was sought from persons to conduct the interviews and to be able to use the interview material as well as ensure confidentiality.

Data Collection and Procedure

The data collecting strategies of this study relied heavily upon the different sources of data to answer both RQ1 and RQ2. Three Form 4 students were selected and data would be collected. Focus group semi-structured interviews are best suited for this study since the researcher can be discreet about the order in which questions are asked and probes may be provided to ensure that the researcher covers the material. Semi- structured interviews are often used when the researcher wants to delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided.

Interviews

Patton (1982, p.169) postulates that ‘good questions should, at a minimum, be open-ended, neutral, sensitive and clear’. As such for this study, interviews will be conducted, consisting of semi-structured and open-ended questions so as to gather the information relating to the topic. The strategy should facilitate a more conversational type interview which should allow the participants feel comfortable to share their points of view openly.

The researcher decided to conduct interviews because they are considered the appropriate form of gathering information about the student perceptions (Patton, 1990). Therefore, the

researcher is of the belief that the selected students would be able to share their experiences and opinions on Caribbean History. This would further make the research valuable to the researcher. Patton (1990) adds that the point of interviewing participants is to allow the researcher to gain their thoughts about an issue. These experiences would be tape recorded via a recorder and stored away safely to ensure confidentiality of the respondents.

For this study, data was broken down whereby the information would be coded, categories will be formed and linked, a story will be built and theoretical propositions will be formed. Corbin and Stauss (2008) gave guidelines to the process whereby the data would be transcribed verbatim, coded and then categorized into themes. Merriam (2002) explains that the categories or themes reflect the purpose of the study by the grouped codes and the patterns which emerge. (See Appendix C). The comparison of data, data with category and category with other categories from which concepts and theories could emerge. The researcher would then have to use these themes to aid in providing answers to the research questions. Themes would be presented in a narrative style of reporting as well as use of excerpts from the participants. These would reflect the original language and opinions of the participants.

Field notes

For this study field notes would be used during and after the interviews for further analysis. The field notes taken from the interviews which related to both research questions would record the researcher's observations of the students' body language and emotions. Additionally their facial expressions would be noted. Arthur and Nazroo (as cited in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 132) explains that field notes would provide researchers information outside of the context of the interview. This would be beneficial at the analysis stage which can indicate the

advantage of the interviews. The opinions, feelings and emotions can be expressed throughout the interviews which could not be transcribed alone.

Narration of researcher's experience

The topic for the study was conceptualized during the course of the Masters in Education programme. Discussions with my colleagues guided me to the issue chosen. The interest was then peaked to find out the students' experiences of Caribbean History and determined to tell their stories from the data gathered in the interviews. All interviews were face to face and audio taped. Collection and transcription of data was done after each interview after which transcribing was done and sent to interviewees for verification and validation. The data was kept in the researcher's desk drawer where it was privately locked away. After completion of the study and upon being successful, the data would be discarded.

The analysis process began with verification of transcripts which were received from participants. Data analysis was done simultaneously with data collection. Minor challenges occurred such as having to re-interview students and meeting with all of them again since internal examinations were in progress. The most rewarding experience has been the knowledge gained from the participants and the literature. It was enlightening to discover that the students experiences had little do with not liking Caribbean History.

Nonetheless, the knowledge gathered from this study would be then used alongside the recommendations so that students' perceptions on Caribbean History can change.

Credibility/Trustworthiness

Maxwell (1996) postulates that the researcher must guard against invalidity by describing via transcribed data, and detailed notes the perspectives of the different participants by asking questions that will allow them to express themselves thoroughly. Maxwell (1996) also stated that

although methods and procedures do not guarantee validity, they are essential to the process of ruling out invalidity which therefore increases the credibility of conclusions made. For this study therefore, the researcher tried to enhance the credibility of this research by including peer review, member checking and observing triangulation processes to investigate RQ1 and RQ2.

Member checking

Member checking has been described as a process whereby the “the actor is asked to review the material for accuracy and palatability” and that he/she “may be encouraged to provide alternative language or interpretation” (Stake, 1995, p. 115). Patton (1980) added that researchers should have their participants read their cases and comment on its accuracy. Meanwhile Maxwell (1996) recommends feedback from the interviewees so that misinterpretation can be ruled out and their perspective can have meaning to what is going on. Thus for this study, the participants were invited to review their transcribed interviews as a means of corroboration of the data collected via the interviews.

Triangulation

According to Patton (1980), triangulation allows the researcher to guard against that a study can be a single method or single data source. This can however lead to investigator bias. Maxwell (1996, p.93) postulates that triangulation ‘reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only of systematic biases due to a specific method and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that are developed’. As such, for this study the findings were compared from the different sources.

Data analysis

The method used for data analysis of this study was based on the principles of the Grounded Theory Methodology whereby the interviews would be coded, formulated into categories and finally building on the “story” or connecting the categories (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Process of data analysis

The interviewees were audio taped in which this data were carefully transcribed to arrive at written data (verbatim). This is done so that the participants’ thoughts and expressions could be captured. The process would involve listening to the audio tapes several times followed by writing every word of the participants (see Appendix D). Audio tapes would be listened to a second time to insure the data were transcribed correctly. Names of participants would be omitted so that confidentiality can be maintained between researcher and participants.

Next would be the open coding, which is examining each transcript to develop codes for the different experiences of the participants (Appendix D). The codes would represent core issues from the data which will be captured ‘in vivo’ (the participants’ actual words). The coding would be done line by line whereby Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain that coding is broken down data which are conceptualized then put back together to form new concepts. Thus this is the process in which theories are built.

The axial coding is the second portion of the process whereby the codes were arranged into categories based on the similarity of the concept. These categories would be further grouped into main themes. Finally, the selective coding would be the last stage where the themes and categories would be used to build on a story.

Rigour

In order to guarantee this research study was carried out with rigour, a pilot study was conducted on a non-participant. This ensured that the interview questions elicited suitable responses about the phenomenon of the participants. The interviews were also audio taped with the permission of the participants to ensure vital information was captured and to also assist with the transcribing process. Finally, the transcripts were affirmed by the participants so that further corroboration of the results can be accumulated.

Delimitations

Due to the fact that the study was delimited to the perceptions of the students at one school, the results cannot be applied to other students or schools.

Limitations

There is the possibility that the students may not be honest in their responses and the challenge would be to maintain objectivity by the researcher since this researcher is a teacher at the school under study. Personal biases about the phenomenon emerged, thus this researcher struggled to withhold assent or dissent which means in phenomenological research, an “*epoche*”. As such, this researcher had to do a lot of self- reflection based on the participants’ responses. It was a constant reminder that these experiences were for valid data only.

Summary of chapter

The chapter outlines the procedural manner in which the study was conducted. Phenomenology is the tradition used to research a phenomenon. The profiles of the nine participants were highlighted, as well as the research site and the procedure to conduct the study. The data collection and analysis procedure was described and lastly, the chapter outlined the limitations, delimitations and ethical considerations involved in the study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This study explored the lived experiences of students at North Star Secondary School and their perceptions of studying Caribbean History. It attempted to give voice to those students having them tell their stories about how they experience Caribbean History at the school with the aim to obtain valuable information. Having done the first interview the researcher realized more information was needed. As such more probing was necessary. The researcher had to immerse herself into the transcripts thereafter and code responses to clearly understand the experiences of the participants in the study. After which the codes were categorized so the research questions can be answered.

The research was therefore guided by two research questions namely:

- (1) What are students' experiences of studying Caribbean History?
- (2) To what extent have these experiences influenced their subject choice in Form 4?

The process ensured the codes from the transcripts were categorized into themes which brought to light the research questions. This chapter therefore presents a detailed analysis of the discoveries which emerged from the research. The following themes are arranged in order for discussion (see Figure 2).

Student perceptions on Caribbean History

Figure 2: Eight Main Themes of Students' perceptions of Caribbean History

Eight main themes emerged from the student's experiences at North Star Secondary School (see Figure 2). The eight themes were arranged in order for discussion (1) Personal interest (2) Appreciation (3) Career path (4) Subject Content (5) Family influence (6) Resources (7) Teaching influence/strategies (8) Peer influence. Each main theme is accompanied with categories (see Table 3) with supporting quotes and vignettes. The line numbers are listed at the end of each quote from the transcript from where the participant's quotes were taken. (See Appendix E)

Findings for Research Question 1: What are the students' experiences of studying Caribbean History?

Personal interest /Appreciation

The participants expressed that their personal interest and appreciation for Caribbean History was one of the experiences shared. Bernice explained that she admired one of the revolt leaders because of who he was and what he did, "...in this world that's your goal to become

someone. Coming from a slave, he came far” (Lines 14-15). Other participants such as Josephine expressed that she liked performing for the children and it is a memorable experience for her by stating that “...I like expressing myself and in front the children too, that experience or day itself you can’t forget” (Lines 16-17). Others expressed their appreciation for History so that the knowledge can benefit them later on in life whereby Jessy explained: “I wanted to travel and in order to appreciate a place you have to understand a place, what it is, to fully appreciate a place” (Lines 50-51). Additionally, Ronnica was able to make links to appreciate her country by stating “I definitely appreciate my country because other countries have one type of race and here have different races and we try to make things equal for all and I appreciate my country since other places don’t have different races” (Lines 192-194). On the other hand there was one student who did not care at all about History or to learn History whether or not the teacher tried different strategies to reach students learning potential. Sasha said “Miss no matter what she did I just didn’t like History whether the movies or the plays I just didn’t care to learn about those things. I was just present in class” (Lines 61-62).

Content

In terms of experiences on Caribbean History, students also expressed their thoughts about the content of the subject. One participant stated that she was not interested in certain topics but due to the way the teacher taught that particular content she was able to appreciate it. Ronnica, being a science student and one of the excellent performing students, stated that “I didn’t like certain topics like slavery because it was too harsh and I wasn’t interested in knowing about pain but I saw the movies and I looked at it differently” (Lines 92-94). However both Bernice a weak student at History and Mabel a mediocre student at History both stated that the readings were a bit overwhelming. Bernice expressed that “It’s just a lot and you have to read an

entire chapter...”(Line178) and Mabel also expressed similar sentiments by stating that “some of the content is difficult...”(Line 362). On the other hand Ronnica, being the highest performing student in History at the lower form, also stated that there was content she was not comfortable with by stating that “...just certain topics but I will still study my work” (Line 97). This same student further explained that she would study her work because she was interested in doing well by saying “getting an overall good percentage. Just trying my best” (Line 100).

Strategies

Other factors such as teacher strategy were also highlighted by the participants as part of their experience of Caribbean History. Jessy stated that “...I had liked that we had to create a different project from the other groups so it won’t be the same and when you do the different plays I remembered quicker especially since I started to drift away from the reading. The plays helped me to remember certain things. (Lines 40-43). Mabel, being a History student, expressed that she appreciated her teacher’s efforts by saying “she would teach and had her unique strategies and then she would see that some not understanding this topic properly so she would draw on the board or carry us to watch a movie because, certain children, the movie did not appeal to them so she wanted to use the other strategies” (Lines 132-135). On the other hand Jessy and Ronnica shared the same sentiments when they expressed that “...she started to give objectives after objectives and every morning we had to rush and get the answer and if you didn’t finish you were put out of class and even then you still don’t understand” (Lines 147-149). Participants highlighted though that their experiences now in History class is different by explaining “...Miss would give us “Charades” and “Pictionary” and through that we are covering the objectives and when we take that down in our books it easy to remember...” (Lines 255-257). However, another participant stated that “she use to try to get the children involved but if

she didn't she would pick up our books to see if we did the work but Miss tried her best to do it by force if we didn't want to do it" (Lines 144-145).

Resources

Participants made it clear as well that there were resources available to aid in their understanding of the content or to keep abreast with the information. Some participants stated that the teacher helped by giving handouts when they stated that "I preferred the handouts too because it's easier" (Line 238). It was also mentioned that they would not have done any further research on their own unless it was necessary when Ronnica said "I never researched anything because Miss gave us handouts and we never really had any research to do on our own so it was easier to get the answers from the handouts" (Lines 236-237). Jessica, who was one of the weak students and did not get into History, explained that she did her research because of her own personal interest and stated that "...As they always say History tells us about the present and the present predicts your future so we would want to read whether it was linked or not. I researched a lot of videos or movies to make links to the books about what we know from class" (Lines 240-242).

Findings for Research Question 2: To what extent did these experiences influence subject choice in Form 4?

Personal interest / Appreciation of those students who did not choose History.

Students' perceptions varied from their experiences in studying Caribbean History. All of the students identified similar experiences while studying History at Form 3. The number of students interviewed was nine in total. Students identified interest as their first indicator for studying Caribbean History.

Participants stated that History inspires them to travel in the future. Keisha stated that “History has also inspired me because when we were learning about the world, the Mayans and the Aztecs, its then I wanted to go to Mexico and see the pyramids and Machu Picchu” (Lines 114-116). Keisha continued to state that “when I’m travelling I would like to know more about these places I would really like to know about it so History would have helped me”(Lines 193-194). However, other participants expressed that the general knowledge of History can be useful when having conversations. Ronnica explained that “... for general knowledge because you would obviously want to tell other people about how things was long time and make the connection of how things were and how it is now” (Line 195-196).

Additionally, participants stated that History makes you appreciate where you come from and you learn to appreciate what you have. Jessy stated that “History makes you appreciate stuff too sometimes like the way you live right now...(Line 311). Sasha added that the information you gain from History makes you aware of your History and for general knowledge where she stated that “History gave me information about things that I was supposed to know and information made me aware so like to expand my knowledge” (Lines 324-325). Jessica identified that History is interesting as well because she is able to appreciate her culture and country more. She stated that doing History in schools is important because “the teenagers can change their mindset about how things change and how things were back then to now” (Lines 315-316). Jessy added that “History makes you appreciate stuff too sometimes like the way you live right now although things might be hard for you, you can look back then and things were way worse so then it makes you appreciate some things in life sometimes” (Lines 312-314).

In addition to student perceptions influencing their subject choice in Form 4, participants identified interest in the subject as one of the areas for their subject choice. Andrea

included that students may have a mind block to the subject because they have to do it in lower forms. She stated that, “If somebody really likes the subject they will put their mind to it rather than if they were forced to do it they would not perform in it. They may have a mind block towards it and they may not like it and they find it boring and just too much to memorize that will be just too much for them to learn” (Lines 59-62). Jessica explains her situation as one where she was persuaded not to get into the subject even though she expressed wanting to do the subject at Form 4. When asked if she was interested in the subject because of the influence of her sister she said, “No. I had really liked History but when we were picking subjects I did not do good enough to get in. Miss said it’s a real heavy subject so I don’t think you should do it if you know this is what you getting into. So I was like okay” (Lines 111-113).

However, other participants identified that they had no interest in History because of how much memorizing it required. For instance Sasha stated “I have no interest to be honest, it’s just too much reading and dates to memorize” (Line 24). Ronnica shared that there is a level of dedication to do History. She noted that, “...if you don’t have a passion then you should not do it because it takes dedication to do all the reading and research” (Lines 35-36).

Personal interest/appreciation of those students who chose History.

Mabel expressed her passion for learning about History, “...I always loved History since I entered Form 1” (Line 130). According to Josephine “I think it’s interesting to see how people back then were like say how the white people and the black people and how they interacted...” (Lines 17 and 18).

On the other hand, Josephine expressed that she was better at the memorizing of historical details than mathematical equations. She said, “I am good at memorizing so it was good for me and I think people don’t like to write essays so it can be a bit overwhelming for

them they might prefer to do an equation or something rather than a whole 15 mark essay. That's what probably drove them away".(Lines 37-39).

Mabel also added that History can be applied to everyday life "...up to Form 3 at least have some kinda knowledge so it does have an impact on a person because now you can go around and if you go somewhere you could be like 'aye you know that was back then and this was this way'"(Lines 309-311).

Career path

The students expressed that career was the main reason for choosing their subjects. When students were asked about studying along the path that would make them happy, they said that they had based their life decision on their career paths. Keisha expressed that "I enjoyed History but I really like Sciences" (Line 70). Additionally, Sasha explained that "Miss I think that it's your career subjects that control what you want to do because You can focus on what you like but more focus on the subjects that can benefit you in the future and what would open more opportunities for you" (Line 71-73). Josephine also pointed out that her friends were motivated to do well in History because of their career paths. She stated that "well, ok. So I know my friends really like History, two of them have a career path that would require them to do History" (Line 165-166). She continued to say that as a History student she believes that studying History can help with her career path by stating that, "... Ok, so for career wise that will help me to get a career since History is one of the required subjects to get into the career path I want to do" (Line 291-292).

Participants also emphasized their feelings about History when it came to their future and their employment opportunities. Both Mabel and Sasha shared their views about this whereby Mabel stated that, "some people want to know why it is necessary to learn about back

then, why not just focus on now so they have that idea just forget about it. We weren't there so move on. It's totally unnecessary especially if your career has nothing to do with historical facts or opinions" (Lines 49-51). Sasha also explained that "my career does not require History or any historical background. When I am an accountant I don't need to know about Caribs and Arawaks. Miss, History and sciences just don't mix to me, they just don't mesh" (Lines 54-56). Sasha continued to express that, "I don't see the purpose of History in my future for my career path" (Line 188). When asked by the researcher if she would not be interested in learning the historical background of her field of study, Sasha replied "No, not really." (Line 192).

Subject Content

Other participants identified that the content in History was too much and overwhelming for them. When asked the question about choosing History at CSEC level Jessica expressed that "it's a heavy subject"(Line 34). Ronnica added that "I think for you to do History you have to be dedicated to it..."(Line 35). Jessy on the other hand stated that it is overwhelming even though her subject choices relates to History. She stated that "History was too much for me and I wanted to do Art so it would have been too much to put out..."(Lines 89-90), as well as "...I have to do the art piece and then learn the History behind it, it would have been too much for me and I have to learn Biology too so it would have been too much" (Lines 92-94).

Teaching Strategies

Another area noted by the participants was that of the teaching strategies used. Sasha for instance explained that "the teacher had creative ways. She would get us to do stuff like the presentations, like us doing the work for ourselves" (Line 229-230). Jessy also added that "I wasn't into the History classes after a while but the plays had me remembering what I did for exams" (Lines 231-232). On the other hand other students pointed out the size of the class

intimidated them to participate in discussions together with the teacher focusing on specific groups. Additionally Sasha stated "...that group of students would interact with the teacher and talk to the teacher and the rest of students didn't really care. The teacher would try to ask them questions" (Lines 247-248). However, Mabel expressed that "to be quite honest I enjoy History class now because of how small it is. Before, I felt intimidated to raise my hand because everyone else their eyes on you and if you have a wrong answer you kinda feel like people judging you. So I like the small classes" (Lines 235-237). Keisha however stated that topics were very long "Miss when we were stuck on one topic for too long, the topic eventually got boring so like the really long topics yeah I really didn't like that" (Lines 240-241).

Teaching strategies were also highlighted when students were asked about their perceptions of History when they were choosing subjects to enter into Form 4. Students thought that the strategies used by the teachers can possibly encourage students to choose History for CSEC Examinations especially when each student's learning needs being met. Mabel highlighted that "I think the teachers could find other learning ways apart from just throwing things for children to read and I'm not saying that because you let us watch movies and stuff but that may not be always helpful to all. Some might pick up on the reading, some might pick up in movies but you get the idea of how children learn better instead of just coming in class and putting down objectives and making them write down the objectives. If they can once in a while have conversations relating to a topic and oral discussions that could help and let them write down their notes on what they understand" (Lines 207-213). Josephine also added that more Caribbean content in History needs to be added together with more field trips whereby she stated, "Well you can have more field trips. That's always fun to see. So say like we can go to St. Joseph to see the first capital, things like that and also there aren't a lot of movies with Caribbean History, there

are more with American and European history so I think what is useful is the plays that we do. That is a really good teaching strategy” (Lines 216-219).

Family influence

Participants also highlighted that their family played a role in their perceptions of History and their subject choice in Form 4. Keisha expressed that “...my aunt did History for CXC and she really liked it. She got awards for it. When I started History it was hard for me to understand and she was the one who helped me. She read over the chapter with me and she explained a lot to me” (Lines 75-77). She added too “...but I knew what I wanted to be and I enjoyed my sciences”(Line 79). Mabel enthusiastically added that “my uncles love History and they have this passion for History so any time I have a question I can go to them and they will help me. Choosing History in Form 4 was all my choice though” (Line 80-82).

On the other hand other participants made it clear that, even though their family members liked History it still did not influence them to choose History at Form 4. Jessy can identify with this whereby she stated “my sister recently started doing History in her school and she loves History because things on TV she understands more especially when they make History references. She is in Form 2” (Lines 86-88).

Other participants such as Josephine included that “The majority of my family are really into sciences. I remember when I had to choose subjects in Form 3 and I was talking to one of my cousins and he is doing sciences at University now and he was really encouraging me to do Sciences and I was like ‘No’. It was overwhelming, I didn’t want to do that. I really knew I wanted to do History even though they didn’t do it” (Line 101-104). Finally, some participants pointed out that there was no support from family members so they were hesitant in choosing the subject. Sasha recalled that her family was not supportive of her doing History when she stated,

“Miss I think it’s like I didn’t have that support system to push me to like the History because most of the people in my family doing sciences so like when I was studying History they’d be like ‘what yuh studying deh?’ and I would be like History and they would be like ‘ugh I can’t help you there’ and they would just leave me to do it by myself and I already wasn’t too excited about the subject so it was like torture for me” (Like 153-157).

FINDINGS

The findings of the research are presented in relation to the research questions which guided the study as seen in Table 3.

Table 3

Summary of research findings

Research question 1: What are students’ experiences of studying Caribbean History?		
Codes	Categories	Findings
1. Personal Interest/ Appreciation	Positive	Because in this world that’s your goal to become someone. Coming from as a slave he came far. I wanted to travel and in order to appreciate a place you have to understand the place what it is so to fully appreciate a place
	Negative	Whether the movies or the plays I just didn’t care to learn about those things.
2. Subject content	Negative	I didn’t like certain topics like slavery because it was too harsh. Some of the content is difficult.
3. Teaching strategies	Positive	I had liked we had to create a different project from the other groups so it won’t be the

	Negative	<p>same and when you do the different way of plays I remember quicker.</p> <p>She started to give objectives after objectives and every morning we had to rush and get the answer and if you didn't finish you get put out and then you still don't understand.</p>
4. Resources	Positive	<p>I preferred the handouts too because it's easier.</p> <p>I research a lot videos or movies to make links to the books about what we know from class.</p>
Research question 2: To what extent did these experiences influence subject choice in Form 4?		
1. Career path	Neutral	<p>Miss I think that it's your career subjects that control what you want to do because you can focus on what you like but more focus on the subjects that can benefit you in the future and what would open more opportunities for you.</p> <p>...ok so I know my friends really like History, two of them have a career path that would require them to do History, so career.</p> <p>Your career is a valid reason why students don't do History because you have a choice between 8 subjects and you have to choose either your career or what you like although I real like History but</p>

		I had to choose sciences.
2. Subject content	Positive	It's boring. It's a heavy subject.
	Negative	I just don't like History in general, the whole reading and memorizing this and that.
3. Personal Interest/Appreciation	Positive	History has also inspired me because when we were learning about the world, the Mayans and the Aztecs, its then I wanted to go to Mexico and see the pyramids and Machu Pichu.
	Neutral	Just for general knowledge because you would obviously want to tell other people about how things was long time and make the connection of how things were and how it is now.
4. Interest	Negative	...They may have a mind block towards it and they may not like and they find it boring and just too much to memorize that will be just too much for them to learn. I have no interest to be honest, it's just too much reading and dates to memorise.
	Positive	Interesting it's like you want to learn more about it and it open up your mind and you can't stop reading about it because it's interesting.
5. Teaching Strategies/Influence	Positive	The teacher had creative ways she would get us to do stuff like the presentations like us doing the work for ourselves.
	Negative	I wasn't into the History

		“ugh I can’t help you there” and they would just leave me to do it by myself and I already wasn’t too excited about the subject so it was like torture for me.
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Summary of chapter

This chapter presented the data which was carefully analyzed using narratives consisting of quotes and vignettes from the participants’ transcripts. The eight main themes emerged: (1) Personal interest (2) Appreciation (3) Career path (4) Subject content (5) Family influence (6) Resources (7) Teaching influence/strategies (8) Peer influence. The themes were discussed using the relevant subthemes.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research study was to explore the students' perceptions of Caribbean History at North Star Secondary School and the extent to which these perceptions may have influenced subject choice. The findings are presented under the headings of the themes which came out from the coding and categorizing that was obtained from the students. The students' perceptions were revealed while they answered the two research questions: 1. What are students' experiences of studying Caribbean History?

2. To what extent have these experiences influenced their subject choice in Form 4?

In understanding the phenomenon, each research question and the findings that are applicable to it are discussed together with relevant literature. Finally, recommendations are made based on the findings and then proposed in a listed form. The intent is to aid both teachers and students in building a greater appreciation for Caribbean History.

Teaching strategy

Findings also showed that the strategy used by the teacher can influence subject choice. These findings seem to suggest that students may possibly value studying Caribbean History more if varied strategies were used. Duthie (1989) explained this by stating that students become receivers of information and those students do not know how to build on the information for their own personal development such as career choice. He continued that for students to be more interested in History there should be less regurgitated information. Joseph (2012) also recognized that students have their own perceptions on teaching and learning. This relates to the findings whereby students identified that strategies should be made to reach the different learning abilities of each student. Students from each area identified that they appreciated the different strategies

used by the teacher. As such, their value for the subject increased and in this way students were able to control their learning as Jenkins (1991) stated that students should be given the opportunity to take control of their learning.

However, Gardner (1985) explains that learners themselves take initiative in determining their success based on their attitudes and motivations, therefore, the teacher strategy influenced subjects' perceptions of the Form 4 students. Additionally, students expressed that teachers were able to allow students to learn on their own through the presentations when given as assignments. Halden (1986) explains that students need to come to terms with the information first before they can understand what the information is supposed to explain. Furthermore, Piaget (1952) states that this builds on the students' own schema through their own interpretation. Therefore students can create their own theories based on what they have learnt. Thus, teachers are able to make the subject relevant to their own lives and experiences (Lomas, 2005). One commonality among the mediocre students was that of too much note taking and not much interaction in class, which Joseph (2011) highlighted that the feelings students share about teacher methodology may affect their enjoyment of the subject.

Stearns (1993) included that through studying History students can improve on their writing and speaking skills which would eventually relate to the public and private sector. Hence if the right teaching strategies used to teach students they may have a better understanding of the subject and possibly choose the subject at Form 4.

Career path

All the students who participated in the study identified career as one of their reasons for not choosing Caribbean History at Form 4 level. Students expressed concerns about their future and employment opportunities rather than choosing a subject that they appreciate. Haralambos

and Holborn (2000) stated that education allocates people to most appropriate jobs for their talents, using examinations and qualifications. Parsons (as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2000) highlighted that education is crucial for the selection of individuals for their future roles in society. Jin et al (2010) added that the child's tastes and preferences to subjects depend on how much they value their well-being in the present relative to the future. As such, this would have influenced subject choice for the Form 4 students at North Star Secondary School.

Education teaches individuals specific skills necessary for their future occupations (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000). Functionalists, such as Parsons, also indicated that "education was crucial for the selection of individuals for their future roles in society" (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000). As such, when choosing subjects at the Form 3 level students would have possibly considered their future roles and occupation. This was evident by the science student's responses whereby they expressed that their career guided their subject choice for the future. However, they explained that they have no qualms studying History or even reading about it later on in their lives.

Additionally, students' perceptions about Caribbean History also highlighted that their decisions are based on the best possible decision from the choices available to them. Jin et al (2010) made the link between available subjects and the student desirable choices. As such the clusters available to students to make their choice are restricted. Since Functionalists believe that education teaches specific skills for future occupations and roles in society then there should be a range of options for students to choose from so that they can make an informed life decision.

Family influence

The participants highlighted that career is a major factor for their subject choice in Form 4. The students at North Star Secondary identified that career controls what subjects you choose to do in CSEC examination because it is dependent on your future opportunities. Functionalists such as Durkheim (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2000) explains that education teaches individuals specific skills necessary for their future occupations.

Findings also indicated that the career path motivates students to do well in History because they have clear in their minds what they want to do in the future. With the exception of one student who stated that her mother chose her subjects for her and she was comfortable with her mother's decision since the student had no personal preference.

Joseph (2012) highlighted the impact of outside influences to student perceptions on study History. One such influence which emerged from the study was the influence of friends and family whereby students may want to do what their friends are doing. Based on the findings, students tend to choose subjects based on what their family can help them with or what their family had previously studied.

Teacher influence

However, Akintade (2012) makes the link that student's attitude in choosing a subject is based on the teachers' attitude toward the students. He added that students select subjects on the basis of prestige and the demand for the occupations that the subject leads to. On the other hand, Jin et al (2010) suggests that individuals may also make a decision based on their own biases, whereby students who would have expressed their understanding of the value of History they still chose other subjects based on their possible careers. Piaget (1957) added that students develop units of knowledge about everything they experience, thus, students subject choice would have been influenced due to the teacher's influence.

Personal interest

Three of the participants expressed that the teaching strategies may possibly influence subject choice and learning strategies whereby they stated that there should be more oral discussions to aid in writing notes for themselves so that they can understand what they have learnt. Due to the strategies used it would have influenced the personal interest of the students. Lomas (2005) states that if students change their strategies to one whereby they can make the subject relevant to their life and experiences. Therefore, they may have more value and interest in furthering their studies in that subject area.

Duthie (1989) also pointed out that History at high school is often thought as a boring subject where information is regurgitated during exams, thus, for students to have a greater interest in the subject there should be less regurgitated information and more relevance to their lives. Cooper (1992) added for student perceptions of a subject to change, there should be learning about their past so they can learn about different experiences.

In addition to this, students pointed out that the teaching strategies can improve interest and value for History if more field trips were implemented. This was mostly suggested by the History students. It was included that greater appreciation for the subject can be the outcome since students are able to make the connections to their lives. Furthermore, the appreciation of the subject can build on our patriotism as Trinidadians and Tobagonians. Stearns (1993) again states that History explains one's family history and it provides facts about genealogy and understanding of how the family has interacted with historical change. Despite the fact that most students perceive the subject as valuable they did not choose the subject mostly because of career options, personal choice and teacher influence.

Recommendations

These recommendations arose out of the findings and it is hoped they would assist the teachers at North Star Secondary School to better understand the experiences of their History.

Administration

1. Pay attention to the cluster of subjects offered at the school so that students can be equipped with fair subject choices for their future.
2. Give students the choice of their interest rather than the teacher or school choosing the paths of students.
3. At Career Day or Form 3 Parents day, teachers can make students and parents aware of the possible careers available with History.
4. Caribbean History can possibly be offered at Form 3 rather than Form 1 when students are more mature to appreciate the subject.

Teachers

5. Develop pedagogies that incorporate the Multiple Intelligences approach to teaching and learning. In order to encourage to students to value Caribbean History the interviewed students suggested that more field trips, writing of own notes, more plays and more oral discussions in the class should be implemented
6. Greater teacher collaboration when revamping strategies for students. Such collaboration can contribute to possible greater value of the subject to the students.

Parents

7. Parents can also need to encourage their daughters to appreciate the subject instead of influencing them based on only future pay-offs.

Students

8. The bias when choosing subjects needs to be removed from the minds of the students rather than being concerned about taking subjects similar to family members, teacher personality or career choice.

Conclusion

The study presented the notion that students of North Star Secondary School has different perceptions of Caribbean History. It was identified that even though students did not choose History for the CSEC examinations, they still had a personal interest in the subject. It can then be concluded that other factors were responsible for students choosing other subjects other than History.

Teachers, administration and parents all have their role to play in the influence of students' perceptions of a subject. Given that students expressed they wish to study History later on their lives, the teachers must continue to find innovative ways to maintain the student's interest in the subject. Greater collaboration among stakeholders is also necessary for the sake of the students so that they can make decisions which may lead to their possible careers.

Summary of chapter

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to what the literature states about the phenomenon. It compares and contrasts the views of other researcher concerning the value of studying History. It highlights the differences in experiences of the students of North Star as compared to those discussed in the literature. These experiences were either positive, negative or neutral in the areas of their personal interest, subject content, teaching strategies and the resources available. The study also highlighted the extent to which these experiences influenced students' subject choice at Form 4. The findings suggests that career path, subject content, teaching strategies and family influence were factors influencing subject choice at Form 4. Additionally, strategic recommendations were made to the administration, teachers, parents and students themselves which may help understand the phenomena at the school under study. It is hoped that furtherance of this research can occur.

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Appendix A
 Participant’s solicitation letter

.....

Dear Participant,

As part of the Ministry of Education (M. Ed.) programme which I am currently pursuing at the University of the West Indies, I am required to complete a Research Project focusing on a topic of interest in the field of education. I have chosen as my topic for study;

“Is Caribbean History history? Students’ perceptions of Caribbean History”

This project entails in-depth interviews with several students who were exposed to learning History at the school in order to elicit from their direct experiences and views of their learning experiences at the school. This letter is therefore a request for volunteers for the study. As a participant in this study, you will be required to take part in one such interview which is scheduled at your convenience in the near future.

If you decide to volunteer, please do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study either before participating or during your participation. You are ensured complete anonymity if you choose to participate in the study. In fact pseudonyms will be used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the research site as well as the participants.

The expected benefits associated with your participation are the opportunity for you to help in the expansion of knowledge about the best practices in the areas of teaching/learning at schools like yours in very adverse contexts.

Thank you for your support and kind consideration of this request.

Yours respectfully,

.....
SALMA RAHMAN
History/Social Studies Teacher.

Appendix B
Participant’s acceptance letter

.....
.....

Dear Participant,

I am pleased to inform you that you have been selected to be a participant in the research study;

“Is Caribbean History history? Students’ perceptions of Caribbean History”

As a participant in this study you will be required to take part in a face-to-face interview which will take place at a venue and time most suitable for you. I want to assure you that your anonymity will be protected and no information shared will be used to incriminate you in any way. You are free to withhold your comment in the event that there are any questions or topics that make you feel comfortable.

I look forward to meeting with you soon. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. You can feel free to contact me at-..... if you have any questions or concerns.

Yours respectfully,

.....
SALMA RAHMAN
History/Social Studies Teacher.

.....
NAME OF STUDENT..... NAME OF PARENT.....

I consent, do not consent for my daughter to be part of the interview.

.....
Parent/Guardian Signature

Appendix C
Interview Protocol
1st Interview

Research question 2: To what extent these experiences influenced subject choice in Form 4?
Name: Salma Rahman
Date: 26/3/2015
Location: School's Lab

Welcome statement: Good day ladies, I am doing this interview for the purpose of research. I thank you for taking the time to with me and I let me assure you that your identities will remain anonymous as well as your responses remain confidential. Shall we begin?

Interview Protocol
2nd Interview

Research question 1: What are the students' experiences of studying Caribbean History?

Name: Salma Rahman

Date: 22/5/2015

Location: Classroom

Welcome statement: Good afternoon ladies, I am doing this interview for the purpose of research as I had asked you last time. I thank you for taking the time to with me again to provide some additional information to enrich my research. I let me assure you that your identities will remain anonymous as well as your responses remain confidential. Let us begin.

Appendix D
Categories and codes

Codes

Personal interest

Appreciation

Career path

Subject content

Teacher strategies

Teacher influence

Resources

Family influence

Categories

Positive and negative

Positive and neutral

Neutral

Positive, negative, neutral

Positive, negative, neutral

Positive, negative, neutral

Positive

Negative

Appendix E

Sample of transcripts

Research question: What are students' experiences of studying Caribbean History?

(H)Josephine: I am good at memorizing so it was good for me and I think people don't like to write essays so it can be a bit overwhelming for them they might prefer to do an equation or something rather than a whole 15 mark essay. That probably drove them away.

R: You don't think you have to memorize the equations too? The dates and equations are same figures and numbers you would be working with.

Laughter...

R: but when you talk among your friends in choosing subjects and you tell them you are doing Caribbean History what are their reactions?

(SCI)Keisha: You going to read all that?

(POB)Jessy: Some of them try to change the topic.

R: Oh so they change the topic! So they don't want to talk about Caribbean history at all.

Laughter

(H)Mabel: Some people want to know why it is necessary to learn about back then why not just focus on now so they have that idea just forget about it, we weren't there so move on. It's totally unnecessary especially if your career has nothing to do with historical facts or opinions.

R: as a teacher I get that a lot, like why do we need to learn history. *Turns towards Brown, do you feel that way? *Laughter*

(POB)Sasha: Yes! My career does not require history or any historical background. When I am an accountant I don't need to know about Caribs and Arawaks. Miss, history and sciences just don't mix to me, they just don't mesh.

R.To what extent do you believe these reasons to be valid ones for not studying Caribbean History.

(SCI)Andrea: If somebody really like the subject they will put their mind to it rather than if they were forced to do it they would not perform in it. They may have a mind block towards it and they may not like it and they find it boring and just too much to memorize that will be just too much for them to learn.

(SCI)Ronnica: your career is a valid reason why students don't do history because you have a choice between 8 subjects and you have to choose either your career or what you like although I real like history and I had to choose sciences.

R: So if you were given more options to choose possibly you would have done history?
Some students said Yes some said no.

R: So would you say then your life is based on your career choice rather than what you like to do? What makes you happy?

(SCI)Keisha: I enjoyed History but I really like Sciences

(SCI)Sasha: Miss I think that it's your career subjects that control what you want to do because You can focus on what you like but more focus on the subjects that can benefit you in the future and what would open more opportunities for you.

R.To your knowledge, does anyone in your family like History? Why?

(SCI)Keisha: Yes my aunt did history for CXC and she really liked it she got awards for it. When I started history it was hard for me to understand and she was the one who helped me, she read over the chapter with me and she explained a lot to me.

R: when you were choosing subjects, did she encourage you to do history?

(SCI)Keisha: Yes but I knew what I wanted to be and I enjoyed my sciences.

(H)Mabel: My uncles love History and they have this passion for history so any time I have a question I can go to them and they will help me. Choosing History in form 4 was all my choice though.

R: when you were choosing subjects, did they influence you or you made the choice on your own?

(H)Mabel: No it was all me. History was my choice because I loved it and I wanted to do it.

(POB)Jessy: My sister recently started doing history in her school and she loves history because things on tv she understands more especially when they make history references. She is in form 2.

R: so she is able to make a link between what she learns and what is seen on tv?

(POB)Jessy: Yes. History was too much for me and I wanted to do art so it would have been too much to put out.

R: You wanted to do art? But in art there is a lot of history?

(POB)Jessy: Yes Keisha: Especially the renaissance era. Jessy: But then I have to do the art piece and then learn the history behind it, it would have been too much for me and I have to learn Biology too so it would have been too much.

(SCI)Ronnica: No one in my family likes history but I would be watching these documentaries and they would be like "Krystal why you watching that for, it so boring, no body cares about Hitler". No body likes history in my family but I like it.

R: So you were considered the boring one in the family because you like history. You were the outsider. *laughter*

(H)Josephine: The majority of my family are really into sciences. I remember when I had to choose subjects in form 3 and I was talking to one of my cousins and he is doing sciences at University now and he was really encouraging me to do sciences and I was like "No". It was overwhelming, I didn't want to do that I really knew I wanted to do history even though they didn't do it.

R: how they reacted when you told them you were doing history?

(H)Josephine: It was pretty normal. My immediate family, my father didn't mind at all because he really wants one of his children to be a lawyer. So he was all for me doing history but my cousins who lived nearby they prefer the sciences.

Research question: To what extent have these experiences influenced their subject choice in Form 4?

R: What do you think about the subject itself?

(H)Mabel: I was excited and it have so much I don't know and history brought it to life to me and it was intriguing subject to me. Yes it have certain topics that you lose interest in because it doesn't fit your liking because I don't think children want to learn about nowadays and long time. They don't see the relevance to society and what happened in past affect now so they think it's a waste of time. So for me history teaches me about past generations so that future generations can make a change and have a different experience. History overall for me is intriguing and fun subject.

(POB)Jessica: I agree Miss certain topics were really nice and interesting especially slavery and indentureship.

(POB)Jessy: I like History but just when Miss came to class I was not interested at all but I do like History. I like being involved in the plays and assignments because I remembered that way

(SCI)Keisha: I think History is awesome and I liked the discussions we had in class. Miss made it fun at times. Maybe she was in a good mood those days *Laughs*

R: have you ever encouraged your friends to study history?

(H)Mabel: Yes I have but they made up their mind to do their sciences. I want to believe its because of their career path and then history is a lot of reading and they don't like to read.

(H)Bernice: I have my own passion for history and I guess they have theirs for their subjects but yes they know how I feel about history through our lunchtime debates

(H)Josephine: Miss of course by helping them and doing work with them.

(POB)Jessy: but somehow that didn't help I just wanted the answers.

(POB)Sasha: Nobody could have changed my mind about history I made up my mind from early since I realized it wasn't for me in form 1

(SCI)Keisha: My aunt would have encouraged me and funny enough I was the one to talk about History in class and sound like I was going to do history but I want to do Medicine

R: what about the relationship you had with you teacher?

(H)Mabel: she would teach and had her unique strategies and then she would see that some not understanding this topic properly so she would draw on the board or carry us to watch a movie because certain children the movie did not appeal to them so she wanted to use the other strategies.

(H)Josephine: I always loved history itself. I loved the content I loved the reading but now it's a little bit challenging because of more reading we have to do. I like to analyse and make the links to what was done before because history is just clear to me and I use to answer in class and try to get involved.

(POB)Jessy: I don't agree because Miss knew the sections of the class who wanted to do it and she said that if she is teaching and its up to us to pay attention so whoever put up their hand she would teach who want to learn and who don't want to learn and I was one of them who didn't want to learn.

(sci)Ronnica: I agree with Jessy although I put my hand up in class as one of those who wanted to learn.

(H)Bernice: I was in between but according to the topic, if I know something she wouldn't choose me but the time I don't know is when she never really paid attention to those who didn't know.

(PoB)Andrea: She use to try to get the children involved but if she didn't she would pick up our books to see if we did the work but miss tried her best to do it by force if we didnt want to do it

(POB)Jessy: She gave us a lot of questions. it was Questions after questions and little bit of time to participate I preferred doing activities like we had in form one and then she started to give objectives after objectives and every morning we had to rush and get the answer. And if you didn't finish you get put out and if then you still don't understand.

(H)Bernice: the only time she would take up the books was when we got a lot of home work and we weren't expecting her to take the books but other than that she never paid attention to those who never volunteered.

(sci)Ronnica: then she would give us the objectives and we had to read the book to find the answers and sometimes we wouldn't really get the answer so you had to write out the correct answer but if she use to come with the topic and objectives and explain what was going on it would have been better. It was like a comprehension passage all the time and you had to write over the answer all over the again. The textbooks had the answers but sometimes not all children will read the book and understand what they have find in the book so they end up not doing it or doing the wrong thing and still end up wasting time.

(sci) Sasha: I was also not participating in class because to me Miss only cared about those who talking and I really didn't care to talk about history in class so I would put my head on the desk and fake sick. *Laughs*

(H)Mabel: miss would come in on mornings and ask the questions and no one would put up their hand because you probably have the wrong answer. So she would get vex and then tell us to bring up the books.

(sci)Keisha: well during history classes miss would walk in and it would be like every other subject. Come in put the objective on the board and try to discuss it. To me History was loud seeing that everyone had their own views. History is the one class that students understand whats going on, the interaction.

R: Did history class encourage you to research more?

(POB)Jessica: I was enthused about the subject because of my sister and many schools don't teach history from form 1 and I was excited to start at form 1 but then the class was dead and sleepy and that vibes was over you even though you trying. The class was bored although I did my highlighting in the text and reading at home.

(sci)Andrea: I use to be happy to be in class but it was easy for me because the answers in the book and write it word for word in the exam. The memorizing was easy for me.

(H)Bernice: Not anymore now you have to analyse and put in evidence. Miss now I find it difficult for me and I use to actually do good in history but now Im not so good because I have analyse and link policies. Its just a lot and you have read an entire chapter before you get it and then make the link to other chapters to get a complete answer. I mean I love history eh but the teacher wants us to pass and appreciate history and understand where you come from.

(H) Josephine: I guess I would do extra at home if I felt like it but I mean I was excited for class but I never really did anything extra unless if it was an assignment and I bounce up something interesting to read I would read it. I never used that library upstairs it has nothing good in it to read but somehow I end up being library prefect in form 2. *Laugh*

(POB)Jessica: it helps us understand our country

(H)Bernice: you could look back then and think about it now about similar things going on. I have a broader idea of what people in my country long ago went through and I could link things and see how it has changed. The links Miss...like when Trinidad was getting independence in 1962, Cuba was going through something else.

(POB)Jessica: miss like indian arrival day and people could understand the significance of having a public holiday and the importance of this day to us.

(sci)Ronnica: I definitely appreciate my country because other countries have one type of race and here have have different races and we try to make things equal for all and I appreciate my country since other places don't have different races.

(POB)Sasha: I guess Miss well certain things like holidays in the country I would remember what we did in class about it but I just glad for the holiday.

R: what don't you like about history?

(sci)Ronnica: maybe the amount of reading and analyzing too because I have not very good with that but I can memorise something easy for you.

(H)Bernice: for its making the links because I get stuck at a certain question and the different policies like dollar diplomacy, munroe doctrine and some of them are similar and you keep guessing.

R: did you peers or family help with your challenges?

(H)Mabel: Miss Ronnica helped me a lot and she had the answers for everything and we had something similar but she would write it in her own words and she would put in the necessary information and I use to go to her to help me.

(H)Bernice: My friend helped me a lot to help me analyse because I use to just copy and paste the answer into the paragraphs and you suppose to put in your own words.

(H) Josephine: we would have discussion in class and outside of class about history topics so I guess in a sense my peers would have helped me because most of the times it turned into debates and man everybody pulling out their books just to argue down their point.

(POB)Jessica: My friend worked with me and she helped me and I helped her.

(POB)Jessy: I had real people to help me copy the answers in the morning *laughs* Miss I had totally given up on history I didn't care if the answers right or wrong I just wanted the answers so Miss could see I have an answer in my book.

R: why you gave up on History?

(POB)Jessy: Miss the teacher, the class. The style was more like sit and talk and hard to approach her. The class was noisy and I use to bury myself in half of them. The years was too many too and I had to take my notes in form 2 and I didn't know how to do that and she talking to fast. But she use to give good motivational speeches at the beginning of the term so I felt motivated to do it at the start but them at the end errrrmmm no.

(sci)Andrea: Miss I had no help in history I had to do it myself but I had actually liked it. In form 2 I read out the book because it was interesting. I don't mind doing it in the future because it's a nice subject and you could learn about the past. The past defines the present and to appreciate society now.

(sci)Keisha: I had my aunt who did history and my aunt helped me so I helped my class mates and I felt bite up that I knew these things.

(sci)Ronnica: I gave help to others and I was able to do it on my own and I just appreciated the past. I had a good memory and I was strong in that. The problem with my friends were is that the questions came differently in the exam and they didn't know how to interpret the questions because she would come and teach the objectives.

(POB) Sasha: I didn't really care to get help or give help if anyone asked me anything I didn't know. So don't come around me with history because I can't help no body

R: what about resources available.

(sci)Ronnica: I never researched anything because miss gave us hand outs and we never really had any research to do on our own. So it was easier to get the answers from the handouts.

(H)Bernice: I preferred the handouts too because it's easier.

Appendix F
Sample of line by line coding of interview responses

Table 4
Interview responses

<u>Line numbers</u>	<u>Codes</u>
39	Appreciation
40, 41, 42, 43	Teacher strategies
46, 47, 48	Peer influence
71, 71	Career path
91, 92,93,94	Subject content
128, 129	Family influence
106-111	Personal interest
321, 322, 323, 324	Resources
193, 194	Travel and conversation

Appendix G
Sample of field notes

- Ronnica: Likes History, finds it interesting
Career does not require History
May study History in the future
Competitive student
Would help other students (peers)
Bored of teaching strategies
Was very motivated in Lower forms to do History
- Sasha: Does not have interest in subject because of no family support
Did not like teacher strategy
Mind block for History
Career does not require History
Does not see the relevance of History
- Jessica: Loves History
Did not get into class because of low grades
History is overwhelming at times
Wants to study History in the future
Teacher strategies could have been varied.
- Mabel: Passion for History
Family encourages and helps her with assignments
Teacher strategy varied at times
Was intimidated by class size, likes History class size now

