

**ABSTRACT**

Self Concept and School Perception  
Measurement of Secondary School Students  
in Trinidad: Subjects' Biographical,  
Social and Environmental Grouping

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This study seeks to measure the perceptions of secondary school students as they evaluate themselves on the cognized self; the ideal self and students' perception of school scales.

The sample was drawn from secondary schools located in Port of Spain (the capital city) and its environs. Six hundred and forty two (642) students from the first, third, fifth and sixth forms of the sampled schools were selected. The sample comprised two hundred and seventy eight (278) males and three hundred and sixty four (364) females. Principals of the respective schools and two of the form teachers were interviewed. The data collected was used as background information for the body of discussion.

The students were categorized according to the groups to which they belong. The groupings reflected the range of scores obtained in the students' evaluation of their

cognized self, their ideal self and their perception of school. The range of scores being divided into high, medium or low levels of the three scales.

The independent variables of School Type; Name of School; Gender; Class Form; Age; Race; Household Income; Socio Economic Status and Religion were used as the groups to which the data was assigned. The variables of School, Race and Religion were further viewed according to their gender groupings.

The selected schools, the teachers and the students sampled were obtained by random purposive sampling technique. The data collected was subjected to statistical examination based on the following procedures.

1. The use of Frequency Distribution table which grouped the compiled dates.
2. The use of the Chi Square statistic which establishes the degree of significance between the independent and dependent variables.
3. The analysis of variance statistic which isolated the relationship between the variables within the particular data group.

From the very inception of the study it was evident that

a specialised instrument for data collection had to be created and developed. The instrument had to be specifically tailored so as to effectively collect biodata from secondary school students in Trinidad and Tobago as well as satisfying the vigorous statistical requirements of validity, reliability and reproducibility. This remains a challenge to the continued study of the self concept in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean since traditional stereotypes for the determination of social values do not necessarily apply.

The results yielded information that supported all but four of the nine hypotheses. The partial confirmation of the hypotheses served only to highlight the extent to which localised research has to be done in our indigenous social environment. Further the need to forge a national "self" emerges as a crucial necessity for the transformation of our societies that already hold the stigmatic label of "Third World" stamped on our collective consciousness. To neglect this would be consigning the future of the region to the eternal bondage of mental slavery and the non actualisation of the rich promise of our potential.

The study yielded the following results. The ideal self scores registered by the sample survey were influenced

positively by the ascribed level of the school the students attended. This is further reinforced by those students from the higher income bracket holding a higher ideal self score. In addition the ideal self score of the French Creole student was higher compared with that of the students of East Indian and African descent. A notable departure from the trend was the fact that female students of low level schools held an ideal self that matched that of the females in High - Level schools. This is a point worthy of further research. Again religion held no established statistical relationship on this variable.

The School perception held by the sample reflected the following. Lower - Level schools were rated higher by their students than high level schools despite the disparaging public perception. Students from lower income brackets however, had a lower rating of their schools than did their peers from a higher income bracket. Worthy of note is the fact that East Indian students held a lower view of their school compared with students of French Creole, African, Dougla and Chinese ancestry.

This study marks the first recorded attempt to measure the Self Concept of these age groupings in secondary schools in the Caribbean. In essence, the study

highlighted the fact that the Self Concept is not determined by any given social factor but is a product of a holistic socialization process.

In undertaking a work such as this one, the lessons that were learnt far exceed this body of study presented here. The researching of the self conception of our nation's youth presented this sociologist with the responsibility of influencing national thought on a topic which bears heavily on the future course of national and regional planning.

The assumption of this responsibility is also borne out of a concern for the youth themselves. It is the next generation who will inherit the stewardship of this region in an era where sweeping changes in the form of the information revolution and the realignment of the First and Second worlds have forever altered the manner in which man manages his affairs.

This restructuring promises to pose unprecedented challenges at the feet of our region which will have to be able to maintain her impetus towards development given the reality that the global arena will be one for which she is as yet unprepared.

It is hoped that this work stimulates the process through the legacy of intellectual thought which impacts on our region to distill into working relevance for