ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the cognitive and affective components of environmental perception and their differentiation based upon the sample's: 1) demographic area, 2) gender and 3) involvement in environmentally oriented activities.

The sample was drawn from the total population of sixth grade public school students in Jamaica. One urban and one rural school were randomly selected from the eastern, central and western sections of the island, providing a total of six schools for the investigation. The sample consisted of 139 urban students and 89 rural students. From this total, 76 were boys and 152 were girls.

Three instruments were developed for the research study. The Environmental Knowledge Test (EKT) contained thirty-two, four part, multiple choice items, which measured low level environmental facts and concepts. The Environmental Attitude Survey (EAS) whose design was based upon the Likert - scaling technique, contained thirty-two, three part, monotone opinions measuring positive, neutral and negative feelings of environmental concern. The Environmental Activities Inventory (EAI)

consisted of twelve activities which measured the degree of involvement in environmentally oriented pursuits by use of a three category rating scale.

Four environmental parameters were selected for test inclusion: 1) pollution and health; 2) natural resources and energy; 3) population and 4) ecology. The specific instruments were validated and determined reliable by utilizing standard test development techniques.

An analysis of the test results included: 1) descriptive statistics; 2) Pearson's product-moment correlations and 3) stepwise multiple regression. The average student: 1) answered 57% of the items on the EKT correctly; 2) had a positive attitude in response to 61% of the EAS items and 3) was involved in 50% of the EAI items. There was a significant relationship between environmental knowledge and attitude test scores. Students with a broader base of environmental information also had more positive attitudes toward environmental issues. A strong relationship between demographic area, environmental knowledge and attitudes was also evident. Students in the urban areas were generally more knowledgeable and more positive in attitude than their rural

counterparts. Environmental activities and gender had a minimal bearing on knowledge and attitude test scores. A stepwise multiple regression using knowledge as the dependent variable showed that attitudes are the best predictor of knowledge, followed by demographic area and sex to a much lesser extent. Environmental activities were insignificant as a predictor of environmental knowledge.

Based upon the study results, recommendations were made for the advancement of environmental awareness. The role of formal and non-formal educational sectors in this endeavour was discussed, along with suggestions for a possible linkage between these two systems.