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Differential Perceptions of Teachers and Students About the Teaching and Learning of History in Secondary Schools of Trinidad and Tobago

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DIFFERENTIAL PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ABOUT THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF HISTORY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Stephen Joseph

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ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

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Title: DIFFERENTIAL PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ABOUT THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF HISTORY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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Problem

Students at the upper secondary-school level sometimes experience difficulties understanding basic historical concepts as well as appreciating the relevance of history as a subject in the school's curriculum. While these students are capable of formulating perspectives of their own, teachers often find it necessary to guide students' thinking toward an accepted paradigm (scholarly concept) of history. The problem is that there are mismatched paradigms that teachers need to bring together in order to establish a foundation for a scholarly approach to history.

This study seeks to identify different conceptual frameworks that exist in students' thinking about history. It also probes into teachers' perceptions of history and their opinions about students' understanding of historical concepts.

Method

This study employed a mixed-method research design aimed at triangulating quantitative and qualitative data obtained from questionnaires and focus group interviews. Participants were randomly drawn from selected secondary schools in Tobago and the east/west corridor of Trinidad. Four hundred and fifteen history students and 17 history teachers of the Fifth and Sixth Form classes participated in the study.

Findings

Analysis of the findings revealed the following:

1. Students generally rejected the notion that history is boring and irrelevant to everyday life. However, those in the Fifth Form were more likely than those in the Lower and Upper Sixth Forms to view history as boring.

2. Although students were able to identify appropriate responses on the surveys regarding the question of multiple causation, they were unable to adequately defend their position in a focus group setting.

3. There were no significant differences between teachers' and students' perceptions of the scope of the history syllabus, students' ability to understand texts used in history classes, and the role of the teacher in the teaching and learning process.

Conclusions

This study has highlighted the ability of students at the upper secondary-school level to engage in abstract and reflective thinking, and to formulate perceptions of their own. While these conceptual paradigms may require some adjustment, it is important for teachers to recognize the potency of students' perceptions as critical factors in influencing how and what they learn about history.

To my mother, who sacrificed all for my early education

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Problem

History can be described as the memory of human group experience. It assists individuals in understanding not only who they are and where they came from, but it also offers them a platform on which to make informed decisions about present issues and future developments. By carefully plotting the trends of the past, many historians believe that individuals can make intelligent estimates of the probable broad trends of the future (Laushey, 1988).

Without some rudimentary knowledge of history, says Robert Daniels, we become victims of collective amnesia, groping in the dark for our identity (Daniels, 1981). Arthur Marwick (1971) posits that it is only through knowledge of its history that a society can have knowledge of itself. He asserts that a society without memory and self-knowledge is a society adrift. History, therefore, fulfills our desire to know and understand ourselves as well as our ancestors.

History also teaches responsible citizenship, and develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills (The Bradley Commission on History in Schools, 1987-1988). Moreover, the subject provides an opportunity for students to understand and appreciate the inevitability of change and the need to develop historical empathy as opposed to

present-mindedness. When properly taught, history establishes a context of human life in a particular time and place, relating art, literature, philosophy, law, architecture, language, government, economics, and social life (Voss, 1998). Historians believe that a study of history sensitizes an individual to the universality of the human experience as well as to the peculiarities that distinguish cultures and societies from one another (Daniels, 1981; Voss, 1998). With such knowledge, students are more likely to show tolerance and appreciation of others. They are also better equipped to co-exist with those who think and live differently in a multi-racial and multi-cultural society.

While history teachers generally agree that there are many values and virtues to be gained from studying the subject, there seems to be no clear consensus about the specific goals of history instruction (Voss, 1998). This explains in part why some teachers experience difficulty in convincing students about the value of history education. Students themselves often have difficulty appreciating history. Some regard the subject as a laborious and futile exercise in memorizing dates and places. Others express little interest in history, failing to see its relevance to contemporary life. This is probably one of the reasons why only a small percentage of students choose to study history at the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) level. Data from the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education reveal that during the period 1996 – 2001, 3,400 students out of approximately 27,000 students selected history as one of their CXC options. This represents a mere 13% of the total student population registered for CXC final examinations.

There are several explanations why students often have difficulty appreciating history, as well as developing habits of mind that are critical to historical understanding.

One explanation is that students enter into the secondary school system with little or no background in the subject. This is due largely to the fact that history is not part of the prescribed primary school curriculum; and the only exposure a student is likely to get to the subject might be oblique references to history in a social studies class. Furthermore, many secondary schools of Trinidad and Tobago do not begin formal instruction in history until the third or fourth year of the 5-year secondary education program. Social studies is generally taught in the early secondary-school years as an alternative to history. This means, therefore, that students who select history as one of their CXC options often have only 2 to 3 years to understand key historical concepts in preparation for the final CXC examination.

This situation presents a tremendous challenge for history teachers. With already limited time to complete the CXC syllabus, teachers are also expected to inspire in students a love for the subject. Many history teachers neglect the latter in quest of the former. Of those students who pass the CXC examination, only a small percentage pursue the subject for an additional 2 years at the Advanced Level (A-Level). Given the lack of formal instruction in history during the early years, some students are likely to develop negative perceptions or misconceptions about the subject of history. As a result, such students may find it difficult to appreciate the purpose and relevance of history to contemporary life.

Another explanation for students' apparent difficulty in understanding and appreciating history has to do with the manner in which history is taught in schools. In some instances, history is presented to students as a compilation of facts and dates. In this approach, students are required to memorize a mass of information and recall a series of

facts about history. This view of history contrasts sharply with the way historians see their work. Unfortunately, students who perceive history as facts and dates often fail to appreciate history as a discipline guided by particular rules of evidence. Such students generally do not appreciate the relevance of history to their everyday lives.

Student perception of history may also be shaped by factors outside the classroom. Such factors include a general perception that history is dull and boring and has little or no relevance to present-day existence. There is also the view that studying history offers little prospect for future advancement except, perhaps, in the field of teaching. Whether this is actually true or not, the fact remains that such a perception helps to shape students' conception of history and impacts significantly on the subsequent learning of the subject.

Over the last 10 years, A-Level external examiners at Cambridge University have been commenting on students' inability to evaluate and integrate historical evidence in their writing. In 1997, for example, the Cambridge examiners commented: "There is need for students to develop the ability to make critical assessments of historical events and personalities, instead of merely reporting their favourable achievements" (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, 1997, p. 30). In 1999, Cambridge examiners again reported that there is need for "more informed historical judgement and of awareness of historical context" (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, 1997, p. 39). The following are the criteria set out by the Cambridge Examining Board for achieving a grade A in the Advanced Level examination:

1. The approach should be consistently analytical or explanatory rather than descriptive or narrative.
2. Essays should be fully relevant.

3. The argument should be structured coherently and supported by very appropriate factual material ideas.
4. The writing should be accurate. (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, 1997, p. 39)

Given these examination requirements, it is unlikely that students will perform creditably if they cannot differentiate between fact and conjecture, or assess the difference between evidence and assertion. Careful consideration must also be given to students' ideas and beliefs about the subject of history itself if teachers are to be successful in modifying these beliefs by instruction.

Statement of the Problem

Having taught history at the CXC and Advanced Level for over 10 years, I am acutely aware of some of the difficulties students experience not only in understanding basic historical concepts, but also in appreciating the relevance of history as a subject in the school's curriculum. While students at this developmental level are capable of formulating perspectives of their own, teachers often find it necessary to guide their thinking toward an accepted paradigm (scholarly concept) of history. The problem is that there are conflicting conceptual paradigms that teachers need to bring together in order to establish a foundation for a solid scholarly approach to history. This could only be done if an attempt is made to first identify the different conceptual frameworks that exist in students' thinking about history.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore students' and teachers' perceptions of history and to present results of the different conceptual paradigms that exist in students' thinking about history. The study also investigated possible expectation gaps that may

exist in the teaching and learning process as a result of a mismatch between teacher expectations and student conceptions of history. The study examined student perception of the history syllabus and the influence of teaching methodology on student attitude towards history. It also explored the differences in student perceptions of history in the Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms.

Another dimension of the study was to determine teachers' perceptions of history and their perceptions about students' understanding of concepts such as historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation.

Research Questions

The following research questions set the parameters for the study of differential perceptions of students and teachers about the teaching and learning of history in secondary schools of Trinidad and Tobago:

1. What are respondents' perceptions of history in the Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms?

2a. What are students' perceptions of historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation?

2b. What are teachers' perceptions of student understandings of the historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation?

3. Does a relationship exist between student perceptions of the history syllabus and their perceptions of the subject?

4. What differences exist in student and teacher perceptions of the history syllabus, history textbooks, and teacher competence?

5. What are respondents' perceptions of the teaching methodology used in Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms?
6. Does a relationship exist between students' perceptions of history and external opinions about the subject of history?

Research Hypotheses

Research Question 1 was tested with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of history based on Form level.

Research Question 3 was tested with the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between student perceptions of history and student perceptions of the history syllabus.

Research Question 4 was tested with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant difference between teacher and student perceptions of the history syllabus, history textbooks, teacher competence, and the level of enjoyment attained from studying history texts.

Research Question 5 was tested with the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the teaching methodology used in the history classroom based on Form level.

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant difference between student and teacher perceptions of teaching methodology, students' responsibility for their own knowledge, and the role of the teacher as facilitator of learning.

Research Question 6 was tested with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: There is a significant relationship between students' perceptions of history and external opinions about the subject of history.

Theoretical Framework

Good scholarship is often rooted in some form of conceptual framework that gives shape and provides a context within which a researcher investigates a particular problem. Hart (1998) suggests that a key element in good scholarship is integration. For him, integration is about making connections between ideas, theories, and experience, placing them into a larger theoretical framework. This study seeks to integrate Piagetian and neo-Piagetian theories of cognitive development with Hallden's theory of learning history, to provide insights into students' perceptions of history.

Buttressed by Piaget's theory of formal operational thinking, this study assumes that students at age 16 generally possess adequate intellectual ability to think historically (Hallam, 1970). Even critics of the classic Piagetian system recognize the importance of children's cognitive structures and the potential for abstract thinking in students over the age of 16 (Case, 1992).

Hallden's theory of learning history (Hallden, 1986) also provides a good platform for exploring a possible mismatch between teacher expectations and student conceptions of history. Applying Hallden's methodology to a Caribbean context, this study provides a new way of looking at the problem of students' perceptions of history from a Caribbean perspective.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in three ways:

1. It recognizes the important role of student perception in the teaching and learning process. The way students perceive the subject of history may very well impact their general understanding and appreciation of the subject.
2. It adds to the existing literature on student and teacher perceptions of history. Most studies on student perceptions of history have been confined to the North American and European education systems. This study is positioned to extend the discourse to a Caribbean context, thereby expanding the existing body of knowledge in the field of history education.
3. It will contribute to the further development of a Caribbean history curriculum that takes into account students' perceptions. Since both the Trinidad and Tobago Education Ministry and the Barbados Caribbean Examinations Council consider students as central to the education system, the findings of this research have implications for a more student-centered approach to curriculum development, design, and delivery of history in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean region.

Definition of Terms

A -Level (Advanced Level): A final examination taken by students in the Sixth Form after 2 years of additional study of the subject beyond the CXC level. This examination is administered by an external examining board at Cambridge or London University in the United Kingdom. It is equivalent to 1 year of college in the U.S. system of education.

Causation: A complex concept when used in terms of the technical work of an historian seeking to understand the development of history. The complexity is related to

the idea that for virtually any given action *A* or event *E,* there are a number of antecedent actions or events that can be labeled as a cause or causes of *A* or *E.* The issue of multiple causation is even more complex since a given action may produce one response under one set of circumstances, but a different response under another set of conditions. This demonstrates why historical events need to be considered in their appropriate contexts (Voss, 1998).

CXC: A final examination taken by students in the Fifth Form and administered by a regional examining body known as the Caribbean Examinations Council.

Fifth Form: The highest level in the Trinidad and Tobago five-year secondary school system, equivalent to Grade 12 in the U.S. education system.

History: The process of constructing, reconstructing, and interpreting past events, ideas, and institutions from surviving or inferential evidence in order to understand and make meaningful who and what we are today (Leinhardt, Stainton, & Virji, 1994).

Historical Evidence: Traditionally, the sources both documentary (primary) or written by historians (secondary), upon which authoritative historical explanations are founded. "Historical evidence cannot be considered as separate from the process of its interpretation through inference, its constitution as fact by an initial verification and comparison attesting to its authenticity, and being set within its context" (Munslow, 1997, pp. 6,7).

Historical Explanation: Sometimes regarded as a controversial concept in history. The first area of controversy deals with whether or not there are general laws in history. The other controversial issue deals with the type of explanation students provide for historical events, actions, or movements. Is history explained in terms of the Great

Man theory, human actions, and social and political institutions? These questions illustrate the difficulty in providing explanations for events in history.

Sixth Form: The highest level in the Trinidad and Tobago 7-year secondary school system, equivalent to first-year college in the U.S. education system.

Syllabus: An outline of a course of studies containing a schedule of topics or modules to be covered in a given subject area over a specified period of time. This syllabus also contains an accompanying list of objectives and suggested reading material for both students and teachers. In the Trinidad and Tobago education system, the syllabus is used as a teacher's guide to instruction in a particular subject area that forms part of the national curriculum.

General Methodology

Utilizing survey questionnaires and focus group discussions, this study employed a mixed-method research design aimed at triangulating quantitative and qualitative data generated by the research. Although survey and focus group techniques are derived from divergent theoretical approaches, modern researchers are increasingly using these complementary research methods to enhance comparability between qualitative and quantitative analyses (Wolff, Knodel, & Sittitrai, 1993). In this study, therefore, both survey and focus group instruments were implemented as complementary components of a unified research design.

Participants for this research were randomly drawn from selected secondary schools in Tobago and the east/west corridor of Trinidad, with 415 history students and 17 teachers from the Fifth and Sixth Form classes serving as respondents.

Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited to Fifth and Sixth Form history students and teachers in secondary schools of Trinidad and Tobago. Students of Forms One to Three were excluded because many of them were not exposed to history as a subject in the lower secondary level. And while it may have been useful to obtain the views of students who did not take history as a subject, I chose to delimit the study to those students who were actively engaged in studying the subject of history.

Summary

The entire research was built on the premise that students' perceptions of history are valid and should be explored, rather than ignored. The question of teacher perception is also critical in uncovering possible expectation gaps that may exist in the teaching and learning of history. In order for meaningful change to take place in students' attitudes toward history, some attempts must be made to examine what Covey (1989) refers to as "basic paradigms" from which those attitudes flow. This research was primarily designed to describe the differential perceptions of teachers and students about the teaching and learning of history. It also attempted to identify different conceptual paradigms in order to explain why these varying perceptions exist in the teaching and learning process.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 introduces the study and presents the background and a clear statement of the problem, along with the purpose and significance of the study. The chapter identifies the six research questions that set the parameters for the study and provide a theoretical framework within which the problem is investigated. The chapter also

discusses the delimitations of the study and provides an explanation of key terms used in the research.

Chapter 2 examines the status of knowledge on the subject of history education. It uses a thematic approach to examine core elements of Piagetian and neo-Piagetian theories of cognitive development, Hallden's theory of history, and other contemporary studies on students' and teachers' perceptions of history.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology and gives a clear description of the design, population, and sample, as well as a justification for the mixed-method approach used in the study. The chapter explains the instrument used in the study and discusses the issue of instrument reliability and validity. A discussion on data analysis as well as human subjects considerations also forms a part of this chapter.

Chapter 4 is a results chapter that focuses on the findings of the survey research. Tables, figures, and summaries are presented to describe the data collected for the study.

Chapter 5 continues the discussion of results by focusing on the findings of the focus groups that participated in the study. The data are presented in the form of summaries and descriptions of what the researcher considers pertinent to the study.

Chapter 6 summarizes the research and gives an analysis of the six research questions used in the study. The chapter also examines the implications of the study for current theory and concludes by recommending four research topics to be considered for further study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

As a burgeoning field of study, research in history instruction and learning has produced several significant studies over the last 10 years. Some of these include Evans's (1994) investigations into educational ideologies and the teaching of history, and Voss's (1998) reviews on learning and reasoning in history. Leinhardt, Beck, and Stainton (1994) also provide useful insights in their volume on teaching and learning in history. Using developmental psychology as a platform to launch investigations into history learning, early researchers in the 1980s relied heavily on Piagetian theory of intellectual development as a conceptual framework for their studies. However, before 1980 very little research was done in the area of history education. Piaget's theory, therefore, has played a critical role in our understanding of students' capacity to think historically (Voss, 1998).

The primary aim of this literature review is to examine the status of knowledge on the subject of history education in order to set reasonable parameters and to establish an appropriate theoretical framework for studying varying perceptions about the teaching and learning process. Using a thematic approach, this review examines core elements of Piagetian and neo-Piagetian theories on cognitive development, Hallden's (1986) theory

of history, and other contemporary studies on students' and teachers' perceptions of history.

Piagetian Classical System

Jean Piaget (1896–1980) is recognized in the academic community as one of the leading theorists in intellectual and cognitive development. In his *Theory of Cognitive and Affective Development,* Piaget identifies four primary cognitive structures in a child's development, namely, the sensorimotor stage (0–2 years), the preoperational stage (3–7 years), concrete operational stage (8–11 years), and the formal operations stage (12–15 years). Piaget believes that individuals construct their own meaning through adaptation and the interacting processes of assimilation and accommodation (Wadsworth, 1996).

In Piaget's sensorimotor stage, intelligence develops through sensory experiences and movement. Intelligence in the preoperational period is intuitive in nature and includes the use of symbols such as pictures and words to represent ideas and objects. The concrete operational stage is logical, but depends upon concrete referents. While these three stages of cognitive development have implications for education in general, this research is particularly concerned with the formal operational stage, where the child is able to solve abstract problems in a logical fashion without requiring references to concrete applications. Phillips and Soltis agree that it is at this stage that students are able to master conceptual reasoning (Phillips & Soltis, 1991). The ability to master conceptual reasoning is a requirement for succeeding both at the CXC and Advanced Levels in the Trinidad and Tobago secondary education system.

Analyzing adolescent thinking processes, Inhelder and Piaget (1958) suggest that individuals at the formal operational stage begin to build systems or theories of their own.

Although some of these theories may be influenced by peers, adolescents at this formal operational stage are generally capable of reflective thinking (Inhelder, Barbel, & Piaget, 1958). The authors argue that not only do adolescents build new theories they also feel compelled to work out a conception of life which gives them an opportunity to assert themselves and to create something new (Inhelder et al., 1958). This desire to develop new theories or conceptions leads to the formation of perceptions that are often not congruent with conventional structures.

Applying Piaget's criteria for logical thinking to historical thinking, Hallam (1970) assesses the responses of 100 pupils ages 11-16 on three carefully selected historical passages. His findings reveal that, generally, children were reasoning at a lower level than expected, reaching the formal operational level at a chronological age of 16 - 16½ years (Hallam, 1970). The author points out that students who engage in formal operational thinking recognize the importance of multiple causes in history and commit themselves to different possible explanations for events in history. Those who function at the preoperational thinking level engage in what he calls transductive reasoning, moving from one element to another without considering all factors involved in the problem (Hallam, 1970). The author also believes that at the concrete operational level of thinking students possess the ability to give organized answers, yet very often their responses are limited to what is immediately apparent in the text.

In reference to history education, Hallam (1970) observes that students between the ages of 13 and 16 also function at the preoperational and concrete operational stages. These findings conflict sharply with Piaget's stages of cognitive development. Still, Hallam is not surprised that thinking skills develop relatively late in history. He believes

that one reason for this is the fact that historical action is often far removed from the children's immediate world. Therefore, many students experience difficulty understanding some of these actions. In addition, Hallam argues that in history lessons students are often bombarded with inferences and moral dilemmas, which are even perplexing to intelligent adults. In light of this, Hallam recommends that all history teaching should be adapted to suit pupils' levels of intellectual development.

Piaget's theory has also been challenged at other levels. Empiricists like Brainerd (1978) and Flavell (1963) point out that Piaget's theory was formulated and presented in a way that made it difficult to test in any straight-forward empirical fashion. They also cite a lack of proper explanation of the various developmental changes in thinking that take place both within and between different cultures.

No doubt Brainerd and Flavell were influenced by the theories of Francis Bacon, John Locke, and David Hume who located the source of knowledge in the observable environment or the empirical world. This view, known as empiricism, holds that knowledge comes primarily from our inductive reasoning of evidence received from experiences and observations. Core tenets of empirical history include the "rigorous examination and knowledge of historical evidence verified by references; impartial research, devoid of *a priori* beliefs and prejudices; and the inductive method of reasoning, from the particular to the general" (Green & Troup, 1999, p. 3).

Emphasizing the need to engage in scientific methods of investigation, empiricists posit that we come to know from gathering information and from testing our understanding of experience with the external world (Fabricius, 1983). This explains why Brainerd and Flavell criticize the classic Piagetian system as difficult to operationalize

and to test in any empirical manner. Other critics also lament the absence of any account of individual differences in Piaget's developmental process (Case, 1992).

Like the empiricist critique, rationalists are also dissatisfied with Piaget's attempt to provide a global account of how children move from one form of structure to another, taking no account of individual differences or non-rational factors in the process.

Rooted in the writings of Descartes and Kant, rationalist philosophy asserts that the source of knowledge is found in human reason and that we discover new knowledge by logically adding to or changing old ideas (Fabricius, 1983). Because knowledge acquisition is an individual process, rationalists believe that Piaget should have made allowances for individual differences in his cognitive development model.

Concurring with both empiricists and rationalists, the sociohistorical critique also points out that Piaget's portrayal of children's development is "too universal, too focussed on the individual rather than on society, and too closed to the processes of cultural change" (Case, 1992, p. 188). Early proponents (Hume and Marx) of the socio-historical school believe that knowledge and thought evolve in a social and historical context. Therefore, any attempt to discuss cognitive development must take certain social factors into consideration. Even Vygotsky, a great admirer of Piaget, argues that social rather than biological factors carry the burden of explanation for cognitive development (Wertsch, 1985).

While these critics are able to identify certain shortcomings in Piaget's theory, no one has totally rejected the validity of Piaget's system. Despite various criticisms, Piaget's work remains important because it offers an insightful approach to understanding the developing learner (Phillips & Soltis, 1991). So important is his work

that neo-Piagetian theorists have attempted to preserve certain core postulates of Piaget's theory, while developing other aspects of the theory that they regard as incomplete. Neo-Piagetian theorists also undertake the responsibility of altering those aspects of Piaget's theory that seem difficult to operationalize. Although it is not the intention of this review to delve into a detailed explanation of the work of neo-Piagetian theorists, it is important to note their primary objective. Robbie Case puts it this way:

> The goal that neo-Piagetian theorists implicitly set themselves was to create a new body of theory that would preserve the strengths of the classical Piagetian position but introduce whatever extensions or modifications seemed necessary, in order to eliminate the weaknesses that the various criticisms of the classical position had highlighted. (Case, 1992, as cited in Sternberg, Robert, & Berg, p. 182)

Neo-Piagetians believe that a major strength of the classical Piagetian theory is that it offers a vision of children as active constructors of their own knowledge. In this regard, Piaget can be credited for inspiring the work of constructivists who view students as active participants in the whole pedagogical process (Hendry, 1996). If children are capable of constructing their own knowledge, then they are also capable of formulating theories or perceptions that may differ quite sharply from those of their teachers. Therefore, it is important that teachers pay close attention to student perceptions since such perceptions influence and impact subsequent learning of the subject.

Hallden's Theory of Historical Explanation

Recognizing the impact of student perception on the whole teaching and learning process, 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.

In support of this thesis, Hallden conducted studies with 17-year-old history students in the Swedish gymnasium (upper secondary level). His primary aim was to determine the extent to which students were able to form comprehensive and coherent wholes of teaching material presented to them in selected history lessons. As a case in point, Hallden cites a lesson on the Treaty of Versailles, where students were asked to explain the principle of distrust that characterized the peace agreement of 1919. Hallden found that student explanations focused on Germany's reaction to the terms of surrender rather than on the terms themselves. He concluded that pupils tend to seek explanations of historical events exclusively in the actions, reactions, and intentions of individuals or individual phenomena (Hallden, 1986). In the above example, the teacher expected students to focus on the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. But students' interpretations were different. The result was a clear mismatch between what pupils and teachers regarded as acceptable historical explanations (Hallden, 1986).

Probing deeper into students' beliefs about what constitutes historical explanation, Hallden (1993, 1994) studied a group of high-school students taking a course in Swedish history. Several major factors were presented as viable reasons for Sweden's democracy. These included industrialization, the emergence of different political parties, universal suffrage, and the development of the parliamentary system of government. After observing their various responses during the lessons, Hallden arranged an interview with students at the end of the course to assess their understanding of what was taught about Sweden's democracy. In his assessment, Hallden noted that students were unable to

identify the major factors highlighted by the teacher, choosing instead to give only small fragments of information to suggest that democratization occurred when people were suffering and wanted change (Hallden, 1993). He noted that once again, the conceptual frameworks of students and teachers differed sharply. The tendency for students to explain historical events in terms of people's actions and reactions reinforces Hallden's argument that students do not have the necessary conceptual framework to provide an acceptable historical explanation. Hallden believes, therefore, that since the conceptual framework of students and teachers often differ, some type of conceptual change is needed for students to understand history appropriately (Hallden, 1997).

Hallden's studies on historical explanation provide a good model for similar studies in different contexts. However, his discussion of students' conceptual frameworks needs further expansion to take into account factors outside the classroom which also influence and shape students' concepts of history. Investigations into student perceptions can assist in explaining why students do not readily appreciate certain historical concepts taught in the classroom. Teacher conceptions also need to be explored to determine their impact on student learning of history.

Teacher Conceptions of History

Teacher conceptions of history have a significant impact not only on what is taught in the classroom, but also on how students perceive the subject itself. Thornton suggests that within a societal and institutional context, teachers serve as institutional gatekeepers, since their beliefs largely determine both the subject matter and experiences of students (Thornton, 1989). If Thornton's hypothesis is correct, then greater attention must be given not only to teachers' conception of history, but also to how these

conceptions are transformed into classroom activities that ultimately impact student learning. In his "Educational Ideologies and Teaching of History," Evans (1994) describes teachers' conceptions of history with the intention of developing typologies that reflect various approaches to the subject. He identifies five categories: storyteller, scientific historian, relativist/reformer, cosmic philosopher, and eclectic.

In the storytelling category (11.3% of the sample), teacher-centered pedagogy is dominant. Emphasis is also placed on transmitting knowledge, and storytelling is the common mode of instruction. In this model, the primary purpose for studying history is to develop a sense of cultural identity and to pay homage to our predecessors. The storyteller teacher sees each historical event as unique, without any clearly established patterns on which to establish generalizability. The storyteller typology is similar to the idealist school of history that takes a serious position on the role of the teacher in preserving the heritage and passing on the knowledge of the past (Morris & Pai, 1994).

Writing in defense of the storytelling approach to history, Skoda (1996) observes that in the second half of the 20th century, practitioners of history have increasingly replaced the storytelling method with a more scientific approach to teaching history. Skoda believes that many students find history boring not because of its content, but rather because of the teacher's failure to present the content effectively to students. He maintains that a biographical approach to history has the potential to reinvigorate the contemporary classroom (Skoda, 1996). The Bradley Commission on History in Schools (1987-1988) also recommends a return to story and biography in history classrooms.

The scientific historian (18.3% of the sample) represents the group of teachers who perceive history as science (Evans, 1994). These teachers see history as

generalizable but disagree about the existence of general laws. They stress objectivity and emphasize that historical truth can only be discovered by analysis of evidence. Evans discovers that the scientific historian sample does not indicate membership to any religious organization. He speculates that this reflects the scientist's attempts to remain detached from moral questions. Evans believes that the tendency to avoid moral judgment fits the general worldview of the scientific typology (Evans, 1994).

The relativist/reformer typology (45.1% of the sample) represents the largest group of teachers. These teachers view history as background for understanding current issues. They are essentially social activists who use information about the past to guide current decisions about making the world a better place. Relativists argue that since every aspect of historiography is infected with preconceptions, scientific objectivity is impossible to achieve. Echoing the sentiments of Beard (1933), these historians purport that history represents contemporary thought about our past and that it is not possible to describe past events exactly as they happened.

This approach is similar to the deconstructionist approach to history highlighted by Alun Munslow (1997). Concurring with the relativist historian, Munslow posits that in our postmodern world it is no longer tenable to conceive of history as an empirical research method. He suggests that the most basic function of historians is to develop some type of mechanism by which historians can grasp the relationship between knowledge and explanation, in order to find the foundation of truth, if one really exists (Munslow, 1997).

Deconstructionist history regards the past as a complex narrative discourse, rather than the product of some objective empiricist undertaking. Jenkins (1991) argues that "no

matter how verifiable, how widely acceptable or checkable, history remains inevitably a personal construct, a manifestation of the historian's perspective as a narrator" (p. 12). Rejecting the views of the scientific historians, deconstructionists also embrace the philosophy of the storyteller who believes that the role of the historian is to tell a good story.

The cosmic philosopher (2.8% of the sample) attempts to locate all human experience in a grand pattern, and describes or explains historical events in terms of God's design for mankind (Evans, 1994). But the eclectic (22.5% of the sample) has a less definite pattern, relying more on student interest rather than any historical ideology (Evans, 1994). This group is likely to use any of the above approaches to history instruction once it facilitates student interest in the subject.

Evans's research is useful insofar as it gives insights into teachers' conceptions of history. And while teacher conceptions cannot always fit neatly into the five categories outlined by Evans, his typologies give a broad understanding of the possible categories within which history teachers operate.

One weakness of the study, however, is that it lacks generalizability. The author uses a convenient sample of volunteers to gather information for his research. Evans admits that his total reliance on volunteers severely restricts the generalizability of the sample. Still, his findings are significant insofar as they highlight the relationship between teacher conceptions of history and teaching style, and the corresponding effects of teacher conceptions of history on students' beliefs.

Evans's model suggests that the storyteller and scientific-historian types transmit the curriculum to a greater extent than the relativist/reformer, cosmic philosopher, and

eclectic typologies. His findings suggest that teachers' personal background, knowledge and beliefs including religious and political beliefs are also found in the classroom even if not stated explicitly. Evans's verdict on his five typologies suggests that, for the most part, history is presented in a boring, routine fashion, emphasizing acceptance of the status quo.

Evans's verdict raises an important question. The question is that if the largest percentage of teachers belong to the relativist/reformer typology, why is history still presented in a boring and routine way in the classroom? According to Evans, teachers in this category tend to be social activists using the past to make the world a better place. Yet these teachers seem to be part of what Engle and Ochoa (1988) describe as the seamless web of schooling helping to create a denatured social life, void of controversy, void of causes, void of deep caring – socializing, but not countersocializing (Engle & Ochoa, 1988, as cited in Leinhardt, Beck, & Stainton, 1994, p. 206).

If this assertion is true of the very group of teachers that should make a difference in student perception of history, then it is important to consider the impact of the prescribed national history syllabus on the way a relativist/reformer must teach to meet the needs of an examination-driven education system. In this regard, it may be reasonable to assume that, in some cases, teachers are forced to make conceptual adjustments in order to accommodate certain realities of the education system.

Students' Perceptions of History

Current studies on students' perceptions of history are twofold. On the first level, researchers examine student perceptions of certain historical concepts, and on the other

level, attempts are made to identify factors outside the classroom that influence students' perceptions of the subject.

In studying students' understanding of historical time, Carretero, Asensio, and Pozo (1991) confirm that 15-year-olds are capable of developing a sense of linear order of events although their knowledge of historical dates may not always be accurate.

A study on student perception of historical evidence reveals that at the lowest level of understanding, students view evidence as equivalent to information, with little interest about how information is acquired and interpreted (Shemilt, 1987).

Further studies on historical causation reveal that although the concept of causation is somewhat complex, students are able to appreciate the idea of multiple causation of history, rather than simple cause-effect relationships (Voss, Wiley, & Kennet, 1998). All three studies confirm that adolescent students 15 years and over are capable of understanding and appreciating key historical concepts taught in the classroom.

In another study, Gregory (1988) investigates the impact of classroom interactions on student perception of history. To achieve this, he conducted a number of teacher and student interviews and classroom observations of U.S. high-school history students. Using pre- and post-test assessments, along with quantitative and qualitative analyses, Gregory observed that no significant improvement occurred in student perceptions of history at the end of one semester of classroom interaction. His findings implied that the lecture discussion method with teacher reliance on the textbook as the only authoritative source did not encourage improved concepts of, or perceptions about history.

In an attempt to address this problem, Burroughs (1997) conducted a study on the impact of popular music in the history classroom. Her findings indicate that using popular music can enhance not only the classroom atmosphere, but also students' attitudes towards learning about history. Burroughs admits, however, that other factors may have also contributed to the effectiveness of popular music as a teaching and learning tool. These factors include the teacher's personality and the manner in which the music was integrated into the history lesson.

Factors outside the classroom also play a critical role in shaping students' perceptions of history. In one study, Epstein (1997) shows how one's cultural background can exert a strong influence on one's historical understanding. His findings show that many Black 11th grade U.S. history students learn much from their family about Black history, while White children learn the more traditional Eurocentric narrative. In his analysis, Epstein identifies a conflict in interpretation between the "official history" taught in the classroom, and the "unofficial history" acquired outside of the classroom through interaction with friends and family members.

Wertsch and Rozin (1998) make a similar observation about the force of unofficial history in the Soviet Union. In comparing the traditional Marxist-Leninist approach to history during the communist period with students' interpretation of history after the Soviet collapse, Wertsch and Rozin discover that, notwithstanding the stress on the official history, many contemporary students embraced alternative narratives that attempted to tell the history as it really happened.

While various studies on student conceptions of history highlight the role of factors outside the classroom, not enough research has been done to assess the impact of the media in shaping historical thought. Although there are many good historical films that can be used to facilitate history learning, too many films incorporate fictitious episodes that encourage misrepresentation of the historical account. There is, therefore, need for more research to determine the extent to which sensational media representations eclipse the official history taught in the classroom. There is also need for further investigation into students' perceptions of history as a subject taught in the school's curriculum. This type of research is necessary to explain the increasing marginalization of the subject in some schools.

Expectation Gaps in the Teaching and Learning Process

Whether consciously or unconsciously, all teachers bring to the classroom their own philosophy of teaching and learning. Students also bring to the classroom certain expectations about the divergent roles of teachers and students in the teaching and learning process. Very often there appears to be a gap in what teachers and students expect of each other in the classroom. For example, many teachers expect students to view history as a discipline that requires particular analytical skills, while some students view history simply as a series of facts and dates. Robert Kegan (1994) explains that a critical factor in the learning process is not *what* students think, but rather *how* they think. He argues that students who believe that knowledge is certain and held by authorities, ask those in authority for the truth. But those who believe that knowledge is relative to a context and acquired through inquiry, look to teachers to guide them in that inquiry process. It means, therefore, that student learning is largely dependent upon how

they make sense of knowledge. Student learning is also influenced by different approaches to teaching. Fox (1983) identifies four basic theories underlying the approaches to teaching of a newly appointed polytechnic staff. The first theory deals with the transfer of knowledge. This transfer theory views knowledge as a commodity that can be transferred into students' minds. The theory suggests that if teachers do their best to impart knowledge, then the burden of receipt rests on the students. This theory is reminiscent of John Locke's *Tabula Rasa* theory that views the mind as a blank slate that needs to be shaped by experience. According to this educational philosophy, the teacher's primary function is to impart knowledge to students (Locke, 1693).

The second theory views teaching as training rather than educating. Therefore, teachers in this category believe that their role is primarily to shape students' minds into some predetermined form. Like the transfer theory, teacher control is central to the teaching and learning process. For the inexperienced, non-reflective teacher, the relationship between teaching and learning is simple. Such a teacher naively believes that once a topic has been taught, then learning must have taken place. Fox (1983) describes the third category as "a discovery or travelling" theory in which both teachers and students explore learning together (pp. 151-164). Unlike the other two theories, knowledge is not fixed and there is no right body of knowledge to be learned. The teacher's role is to guide students, encouraging them to question and appreciate the variety of alternative explanations to historical phenomena.

The final theory is referred to as the "growing theory" which teaches that students are required to contribute to their own learning. In this model, the teacher is a guide, facilitator, and co-explorer who encourages learners to question, challenge, and formulate

their own opinions and conclusions. This is precisely what the constructivist approach to learning is all about. One major assumption of constructivist epistemology is that individuals create or construct their own knowledge through the interaction of what they already know and believe, and the ideas, events, and activities with which they come into contact (Cannella & Reiff, 1994). Learning activities in constructivist classrooms, therefore, are characterized by active involvement in tasks, inquiry, problem-solving, and collaboration with others. Graham Hendry (1996) believes that constructivism represents "a fundamental challenge to many aspects of educational praxis, and may significantly change the ways in which young people are mass educated" (pp. 19-45). Constructivist epistemology recognizes the value of student perceptions, and makes allowances for expectation gaps that may occur between the different roles of teachers and students.

Constructivist learning theory forms the basis of postmodern education. Popularized by Foucault, Lyotard, and others, postmodernism asserts that all knowedge is invented or constructed in the minds of people (Grenz, 1996). According to this theory, knowledge or reality is a mere human construction created by people not because it is true, but rather because it is useful. Teachers who embrace this worldview, therefore, shift away from a teacher-centered classroom to a more student-centered environment where the student becomes the primary focus in the teaching and learning processs. Teachers who embrace certain teaching styles do so on the basis of their own philosophy of education. These philosophies vary not only from teacher to teacher, but they sometimes conflict with students' expectations of teachers' role in the teaching and learning process. Students also exhibit contrasting styles of learning. And like teaching

In a study on deep and surface approach to learning, Marton and Saljo (1976) asked students to read extended passages from academic articles. These students were later tested on the content of what they had read. Students who used a deep approach immersed themselves in the reading and were able to see connections and understand relationships of materials presented in the articles. Such students fit the typology of independent learners who take control of their own learning. This approach to learning complements the constructivist approach to teaching and may be encouraged by teachers who adopt what Fox (1983) refers to as a "discovery" approach to teaching. But expectation gaps may also occur in other situations where the teacher adopts different teaching approaches that do not complement students' learning styles.

Marton and Saljo (1976) found that some students adopt a surface approach to learning in which information is treated as unconnected facts. These students view learning as a means to achieve an end, and may exert the minimum effort necessary to pass a particular examination. Motivated by an extrinsic objective, such students will commit unrelated facts to their short-term memory, but are unlikely to establish meaning or relationships between or within given tasks (Marton & Saljo, 1976, pp. 4-11). A surface approach to learning is often incongruent with a teaching approach that requires students to construct knowledge and take responsibility for their own learning. As such, a mismatch in expectations may occur if these individuals find themselves in the same teaching and learning environment.

Johnson (1998) believes that the student can experience a series of frustrations when the student's approaches to learning and the teacher's theories about teaching are mismatched. Fox (1983) posits that mismatch often occurs where students view the

teaching and learning process as a transfer of knowledge. Accordingly, they will expect the teacher to provide information that can be regurgitated in examinations. Such students view creative exercises designed to help them learn for themselves as an abdication of responsibility by the teacher. These students believe that it is the teacher's job to teach them (Fox, 1983). Given this expectation-gap scenario, both teacher and student are likely to experience frustration in such a teaching and learning environment.

Summary

While many researchers in the pre-1980 period depended largely on a Piagetian framework for discussing history education, researchers from the 1990s are increasingly investigating other perspectives on what students know, how they acquire knowledge, and how optimum learning can take place in the classroom. And despite the various challenges to Piaget's theory, no one has totally rejected the validity of Piaget's system. Certain core postulates of Piaget's theory have been preserved by neo-Piagetians in an attempt to maintain the credibility of the Piagetian model. Like the neo-Piagetians, I believe that a major strength of the classical Piagetian theory is that it establishes that children at the formal operational stage are capable of abstract and reflective thinking. This is the premise upon which this study is built.

Hallden's study also provides useful insights into students' beliefs about what constitutes an historical explanation. His theory regarding students' inability to provide acceptable historical explanations will be further tested in this present study. Evans's research on teacher conceptions of history also provides a good platform for further investigation into different types of teachers and their various approaches to teaching history.

One notable weakness in the discourse on history instruction and learning is the tendency to focus only on the North American and European education systems. As far as I am aware, no study has yet explored the question of student/teacher perceptions of history from a Caribbean perspective. This research intends to extend the discourse to a Caribbean context, thereby expanding the existing body of knowledge in the field of history education.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Traditionally, researchers in education have used either quantitative or qualitative approaches as viable methods of inquiry. While both methods make important contributions to our knowledge of education, great care must be taken to ensure that the method selected is appropriate to the problem under investigation. Since no single method can be considered as the best method, the question of suitability becomes even more critical for the researcher. Rather than embrace one specific methodology, researchers in history education are increasingly using a mixed-method approach to inquire into the problem of history instruction and learning. Given the nature of this study, a mixed-method research design was used to triangulate quantitative and qualitative data generated by the research. In this chapter, a clear description is given not only of the population and sample, but also the instruments used to conduct the survey. This chapter also discusses the analysis and statistical techniques used in the research in order to facilitate easy replication of the study with other subjects if necessary.

The rationale for this type of research methodology came in part from Piagetian and neo-Piagetian theory that established the conceptual framework for the study. This mixed-method approach, therefore, was built on the assumption that students at Piaget's

formal operational stage generally possess the ability to engage in reflective thinking, build new theories, and formulate their own perceptions on a range of issues. The approach also took into consideration neo-Piagetians' view of students as active participants in the pedagogical process. The survey instrument used in this study was designed to stimulate students' reflective thinking processes, while the focus group discussions gave students the opportunity to respond to abstract problems involving multiple causation and historical evidence.

Description of Research Design

This study combined survey questionnaires and focus group discussions to produce a mixed-method research design to investigate varying perceptions about history teaching and learning. Although survey and focus group techniques represent divergent research traditions, modern researchers are increasingly using these complementary research methods to enhance comparability between qualitative and quantitative analysis (Wolff et al., 1993). A close examination of the strengths and weaknesses of each methodology provided the necessary rationale for using survey and focus group instruments as complementary components of a unified research design.

The Survey Method

The survey method can be an effective tool in understanding how students and teachers feel about the teaching and learning process. If properly selected, the sample will provide valuable data that can be used to make generalized statements about the population. Used in the context of this study, the survey questionnaires provided both

quantitative and qualitative information on student perceptions, while presenting an opportunity for students to reflect on their own learning in the subject of history. The questionnaires also served as a reflective teaching mechanism, encouraging respondents to reflect on their assumptions and views.

Anderson (1990) gives two reasons why surveys should be used for investigating research questions. First, they are much more efficient in cost-benefit terms than would be a study of the whole population. Second, surveys are sometimes more effective, since it would take too long and require too many researchers to contact the whole population (Anderson, 1990, p. 195). Anderson also believes that it is better to do a thorough job with a representative sample than to do a poor job with everyone (Anderson, 1990).

In summarizing the advantages of using the survey method, Olrich (1978) suggests the following:

1. Questionnaires are relatively inexpensive to administer.
2. Many individuals can be contacted at the same time.
3. Each selected respondent receives identical questions.
4. Generally speaking, responses are relatively easy to tabulate.
5. Respondents may answer at their own convenience.
6. Interviewer biases are avoided. (Olrich, 1978)

The success of the survey method is due largely to the quality of its design. In a step-by-step guide to designing surveys, Thomas (1999) outlines six phases in designing surveys. These six phases were used in designing the survey instrument for this study.

Planning

During this first phase, the topic of the survey project was narrowed and specific objectives were created to guide the development of the survey tool. The target audience was identified as well as individuals who assisted in administering the survey. A 2-month

time line for the project was also developed. This phase was critical since it established the foundation for the entire survey research.

Developing the survey

This phase involved the creation of the survey tool that took into consideration the length of the survey, type of items, the kinds of responses the participants provided, and how these responses were scored. During this phase, careful attention was placed on the wording of each question to minimize ambiguity and other problems such as leading questions and clichés.

Obtaining respondents

In keeping with the ethics of research, gatekeeper letters were issued to the Ministry of Education, principals, and teachers of selected secondary schools requesting permission for students to participate in the research project. These cover letters were written clearly and convincingly, explaining the purpose of the study and the important role respondents played as participants of the study.

Preparing for data collection

Pilot testing was critical to the success of the survey, since it facilitated review of questionnaires before formal implementation was carried out. During this phase, attempts were made to correct unclear items and make adjustments and improvements to the general format and layout of the survey instrument.

To achieve this objective, six Form Five students of Tobago were selected to pilot test the survey questions. They were instructed to answer all questions and to provide a general critique of the survey instrument, pointing out unclear questions and those that

should have been included. Students were also asked to comment on the length of the survey and the time it took to complete the exercise. These comments were taken into consideration as attempts were made to improve the instrument before the formal data collection process began.

One of these comments cited graphics that were placed at the center of each page of the questionnaire. While I felt that these graphics added to the general attractiveness of the survey, pilot test respondents found the pictures quite distracting. A further pilot testing was conducted with four other students of Trinidad who also found the graphics distracting. These graphics were subsequently removed from the questionnaires.

Collecting the survey data

During this phase, attempts were made to develop techniques for increasing the response rate of survey questions. While it is generally believed that a 100% return rate is rarely ever achieved in survey research, measures were put in place to facilitate optimum response from participants. One such measure was the personal delivery of survey questionnaires to all selected schools. Instructions were given for teachers to administer the questionnaires to students. Arrangements were also made for one student to collect the completed surveys, place them into an envelope, and deposit the sealed envelope into a secured box in the principal's office. I collected the completed surveys 1 week later at the school. This procedure eliminated the problem of possible low and slow return rate if responses were sent through the mail. This procedure resulted in a 100% return rate.

A critical aspect of the data collection exercise was the clear understanding of the rights of respondents as research subjects. In this regard, the question of anonymity and confidentiality was carefully highlighted to ensure that participants would not be unduly

concerned about reprisals as a result of their participation in the research. In addition to the data collection procedure described above, respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the exercise at any time, since their participation was strictly voluntary. Each participant was also given a time period of approximately 30 minutes to complete the 31-item survey questionnaire. Parents were also asked to give written consent for their children's participation in the exercise.

Summarizing the survey data

Data analysis is one of the most critical stages in survey research. During this stage, the variables were put in the correct form, and checks were made for missing values. In order to strengthen the data analysis process, proper grouping of data was carried out, and attempts were also made to correctly construct tables, graphs, and other statistical techniques used in presenting data (Thomas, 1999, pp. 1-97).

While the survey method can be a useful tool for research in history education, it is not without flaws. Olrich (1978) identifies some of the major disadvantages as follows:

1. Respondents may be limited from providing free expression of opinions due to instrument design.
2. The return of all questionnaires may be difficult to achieve.
3. A question may have different meanings to different people.
4. Respondents may not complete the entire instrument.
5. Too many open-ended questions may make data difficult to process. (Olrich, 1978)

Despite its disadvantages, the survey method has a good track record for strong external validity and good generalization of results to a larger population. To compensate for some of these disadvantages, I used focus group discussions as a means of further addressing some of the problems identified in the survey method.

Focus Group Procedure

Like the survey method, the focus group procedure can be another effective methodological approach to uncover various perceptions of teachers and students about the teaching and learning of history. It is a relatively cost-effective technique because it brings together a number of people at one point in time to provide data on a wide range of topics. Krueger (1989) outlines several other advantages of using focus group interviews as a qualitative method of inquiry:

1. Inhibitions are often relaxed in group sessions, and the more natural environment facilitates greater candor among respondents.
2. The flexible format of focus group discussions provides greater opportunities for the moderator to probe (Krueger, 1989). Morgan (1988) agrees that the strength of focus groups comes from the opportunity to collect data from group interaction. He also believes that "focus group interaction is useful when it comes to investigating *what* participants think, but it excels at uncovering *why* participants think as they do" (Morgan, 1988, p. 25).

Like all research methods in education, focus group interviews have limitations. These are as follows:

1. The researcher has less control in the group interview as compared to a situation where there is only one person to be interviewed.
2. Some group members are able to influence the course of the discussion.
3. Data are more difficult to analyze, since participants sometimes modify or even reverse their position after interacting with other participants of the group.

4. The technique requires trained moderators who understand the art of open-ended questioning, as well as the techniques of pauses and probes and knowing how and when to move into new topic areas.
5. Group discussions must be conducted in an environment that is conducive to conversation, or participants may feel inhibited to interact (Krueger, 1989).

In assessing the common mistakes in focus groups, Greenbaum (1998) identifies three major categories: methodological mistakes, procedural mistakes, and analytical mistakes. He argues that one of the most common methodological mistakes in focus group research is the tendency to use focus groups where quantitative research is needed. He further argues that procedural mistakes occur when the research objectives are not clearly defined; when participants are not sufficiently homogeneous; and when the moderator fails to control the group dynamics, leaving the way open for a few individual participants to affect the participation of others (Greenbaum, 1998, pp. 61-67).

Greenbaum (1998) also believes that since analytical mistakes inhibit proper interpretation of focus group results, great care should be taken to minimize the incidence of such mistakes. He posits that analytical mistakes include: observer bias, and placing too much emphasis on the inputs of a few participants at the expense of the group (Greenbaum, 1998, pp. 68-69). Despite these common mistakes, Greenbaum believes that all of them can be avoided "if the researcher is aware of them and is willing to make the extra effort to correct them" (Greenbaum, 1998, p. 61).

In an attempt to minimize the mistakes generally associated with focus groups, I established the following procedures:

1. A clear definition of the research objectives so that the information generated also related to the research questions and the objectives of the study.
2. The use of similar categories of questions found in the survey. For example, the focus group discussion utilized questions relating to student/teacher perceptions of history; historical concepts; the history syllabus; and teaching methodology. Although these questions were worded somewhat differently from those asked on the survey, the research objectives were the same. Survey items 13-17, for example, dealt with the history syllabus. The objective of this section was to determine whether a relationship existed between student perceptions of the history syllabus and their perceptions of the subject. These questions included the following:

    a. The history syllabus is relevant to students my age.

    b. I would enjoy history more if there were fewer details to be studied.

    c. My history textbooks are easy to understand.

    d. I enjoy reading the prescribed texts used in history classes.

    e. My teacher is very knowledgeable about history.

    The focus group discussion addressed the same objective by asking:

    a. How do you feel about the textbooks used in history classes?

    b. If you had the opportunity to revise the history syllabus, what would you delete or add?

Homogeneous groups were also used comprising six persons per group. In this model, students of Form Five comprised three groups; students of Form Six comprised two groups; and the teachers formed a separate group. This arrangement succeeded in

solving a common procedural mistake made by attempting to use mixed groups with varying levels of interests and abilities.

To avoid analytical errors, I gave an oral summary after each section of the discussion. I then asked whether or not the summary represented the collective views of the group. In one case where the summary statement was challenged, I obtained clarification on key issues before restating the summary for group consensus.

Population and Sample

In an attempt to address the sampling needs of this research in the most efficient and effective way possible, a two-stage sampling process was employed. In the first stage, a cluster random sample was drawn from a list of 53 secondary schools located in Tobago and the east/west corridor of Trinidad. These schools were divided into four distinct groups:

1. Government Secondary Schools: fully owned and managed by the government, with a student population comprising Forms 1- 6.
2. Government Assisted Secondary Schools: partially funded by the government but managed largely by a denominational board. Student population comprises Forms 1-6.
3. Senior Comprehensive Schools: fully owned by the government with a student population comprising students of Forms 4 and 5. Some of these schools offer Form 6 classes.
4. Private Secondary Schools: fully owned and managed by the private sector without any funding from the government.

The sample frame was obtained from the Planning Section of the Ministry of Education. A computer-generated series of random numbers was used to locate three to five schools within each group. All students and teachers of history in the two most senior classes were used as participants. These classes were Form 5 (equivalent to Grade 12 in the U.S. education system), and Form 6 (equivalent to first-year college). The sample size was 432, out of a target population of about 1,500 students and teachers.

In the second stage of the sampling process, a purposive sample was drawn to participate in focus group discussions. There were six homogeneous focus groups comprising six persons per student group, and five participants in the teacher focus group. The first three groups comprised Form 5 students; two more groups were made up of Form 6 students; and the sixth group comprised history teachers of both Form 5 and Form 6 classes. The sample size for the focus group discussions was 35 participants.

Justification for a Mixed-Method Approach

While the survey method and the focus group procedure can be considered as valid and acceptable entities of research, when combined as complementary research methods, the synergistic effects can be far greater than the benefits derived from any individual design. Wolff et al. (1993) believe that "incorporating a qualitative approach, represented by the focus group method, into an integrated research design with a major sample survey component, can enhance the quality of the resulting analysis" (Wolff et al., 1993, p. 119). They argue that although survey and focus group techniques emerge from different theoretical approaches, "there is nothing inherent in the methods themselves that forbids their combination" (Wolff et al., 1993, p. 119). As a matter fact, the strengths and

weaknesses inherent in each individual method may serve only to complement each other in a unified research design.

In this research, focus groups were used to complement survey questionnaires. Used after the survey had taken place, focus groups served the purpose of evaluating the survey process. Not only were focus groups used to confirm survey findings, they were also used to clarify or elaborate survey results that might have remained unclear if the survey method was used as a singular research tool (Wolff et al., 1993). The advantage in using this complementary approach was that it facilitated triangulation between quantitative and qualitative data obtained from both surveys and focus groups respectively.

The best justification for combining focus groups and surveys into one unified research design was the fact that focus groups and surveys provided what Wolff et al. (1993) refer to as "asymmetrical but independent observations" of the population under review (p. 133). In the final analysis, this mixed-method approach contributed significantly in strengthening the validity and reliability of the research.

Instrumentation

This study combined survey questionnaires and focus group discussions to produce a mixed-method research design to investigate varying perceptions about history teaching and learning. (See the section titled "The Survey Method" in this chapter for a discussion of the development of the survey instrument and pilot testing.) The survey instrument comprised 31 items covering six objectives arising from the following research questions:

1. What are respondents' perceptions of history in the Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms?

2a. What are students' perceptions of historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation?

2b. What are teachers' perceptions of student understandings of the historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation?

3. Does a relationship exist between student perceptions of the history syllabus and their perceptions of the subject?

4. What differences exist in student and teacher perceptions of the history syllabus, history textbooks, and teacher competence?

5. What are respondents' perceptions of the teaching methodology used in Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms?

6. Does a relationship exist between students' perceptions of history and external opinions about the subject of history?

For most of these items, respondents were required to express their opinions on a 5-point Likert scale designed to elicit responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The advantage of using the Likert scale was that it was easy to administer and straightforward to analyze. In fact, it provided a substantial amount of data in a short period of time, and the number of persons choosing each response was a simple and effective form of analysis (Anderson, 1990). Statistical techniques such as One-way ANOVA, *t* tests, Student-Newman Keuls post hoc procedure, and Pearson correlation coefficient were used to identify underlying patterns of responses. Some responses required the use of open-ended items such as *fill-in-the-blanks* and *comment on* formats

to elicit extensive comments from respondents on their perceptions of the teaching and learning of history. However, open-ended questions were kept to a minimum since they generally tend to bias results by giving a greater weight to participants who are verbally expressive (Anderson, 1990).

The survey questionnaire was relatively short consisting of four pages, well-constructed sentences, and an attractive design to encourage maximum participation. As mentioned earlier, the instrument was pilot-tested to determine the extent to which items and directions were clearly stated. To achieve this, six students and three teachers were selected to complete the student and teacher survey questionnaires respectively and write comments and observations for improving both survey instruments. This feedback was used to improve the instruments before formally distributing the questionnaires to the sample population.

Focus group interviews were used as a complement to the survey instrument to collect qualitative data for the study. These interviews were conducted in six mini-groups consisting of approximately six persons per session. Mini-groups were preferred over full groups of 8 to 10 people because I believed that more in-depth information could be obtained from smaller groups.

The focus group instrument consisted of five categories of questions: opening, introductory, transition, key, and ending. The opening question was designed primarily to encourage all participants to talk early in the group. It was not intended, however, to gather useful data for the study. Therefore, the opening question was not analyzed. However, the analysis began with the introductory question that established the focus on

the topic of discussion. This was an open-ended question that allowed participants to give their perspectives on the topic under investigation.

The third category comprised the transition questions that helped respondents to see the topic in a broader perspective. These questions were designed primarily to move the discussion toward the critical questions that undergird the study.

Unlike the first three categories which allowed only a few minutes for each question, the category comprising key questions required more than half of the total discussion time. In this study, the two categories relating to historical concepts and teaching methodology occupied the majority of the discussion time. There was a total of six questions in these categories; and these questions were the ones that required the greatest attention in the analysis.

The final category of questions was designed to bring closure to the discussion. At this point, I summarized key points that emerged from the discussion, and the participants were given an opportunity to assess the adequacy of the summary. This assessment was critical to the final analysis of the data.

All questions were open-ended, so that participants could have the freedom to express their varying points of view on the subject of history instruction and learning. Questions were sequenced in such a way as to allow for general questions before specific questions, and positive questions before negative questions. Follow-up questions were also used to elicit additional information from respondents. The focus group interview instrument also allowed for serendipitous questions that also might have been important to the study. However, such unplanned questions were reserved for the end of the focus

group session. All questions asked were the same across differing groups of participants to facilitate consistency and ease in analysis. Pilot testing of questions was also done to determine the extent to which questions were clear enough to elicit appropriate responses from participants.

The following 16 questions were used for the 1-hour student focus group discussions:

Student Focus Group Questions

1. Think about your experience as a history student over the years. Now tell me how do you feel about studying history?
2. What were you thinking at the time that led you to choose history as one of your examination subjects?
3. Tell me how you feel about studying history at a higher level.
4. What in your view is a history concept? Think about it for a while and jot down your thoughts on a piece of paper. We'll take a few minutes for you to write these down.
5. Let's talk about some of the concepts you have learned in history so far.
6. How do you know that "historical facts" are really true?
7. What causes an event to happen in history? (simple cause-effect relations or multiple complex causes?)
8. Who or what determines the course of history? (human beings, events, technology, or supernatural forces?)
9. How does a historian use historical evidence?
10. How do you feel about the textbooks used in history classes?

11. If you had the opportunity to revise the history syllabus, what would you delete or add?
12. Tell me a little about history classes. Describe what you do.
13. What do you like most about your history classes? What do you dislike most?
14. What are some of the things you feel history teachers can do to make the subject more appealing?
15. What factors outside the classroom influence the way you feel about history?
16. Think back about all the things you have learned in history. Now tell me, what important lessons do you think people can learn from history?

Teacher Focus Group Questions

The following 16 questions were used for the 2-hour teacher focus group discussions:

1. Tell me a little about your teaching. What shaped your ideas about history?
2. How do you view your role as a history teacher?
3. Tell me a few of your thoughts about the purposes for studying history.
4. What is your understanding of a history concept?
5. What historical concepts do you find appropriate to teach at the Fifth/Sixth Form level?
6. Which concepts do you find most difficult to teach? Explain.
7. What is your approach to teaching concepts such as causation, historical evidence, and historical explanation?
8. How do you know that your students understand historical concepts taught in the classroom?

9. What is your assessment of the present CXC/A-Level syllabus? (Probe: its breadth, scope, and relevance).
10. What is your assessment of the main texts used in history classes?
11. If you had the opportunity to revise the history syllabus, what would you delete or add?
12. Let's go back a bit to the classroom. What do you do to stimulate interest in the subject?
13. Think back to some of your classroom experiences. Now tell me, what challenges do you face as a teacher of history? How do you deal with these challenges?
14. What in your view constitutes effective history teaching?
15. What in your view is responsible for student lack of interest in history?
16. Tell me some of your thoughts about the expectation gaps that may exist between history teachers and students in the teaching and learning process.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis for this study was done with the aid of Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Using the SPSS software, variables from the survey were put in the correct form and checks were made for missing values. The student data were grouped according to forms (Fifth Form, Lower Sixth Form, Upper Sixth Form) to assist in easy analysis of student perception of teaching and learning of history. This procedure was useful in assisting me to find out the extent to which student perceptions of history changed over a three-year period from Fifth Form to Upper Sixth Form. One-way ANOVA tests were used to analyze student responses to Research

Question 1 that asked about respondents' perceptions of history. These responses were obtained from student survey items 4-7 in the questionnaire (see appendix A).

One-way ANOVA tests were used also to explore the differences in opinions of students at the Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms on the question of teaching methodology highlighted in Research Question 5. These responses were generated from student survey items 19, 20, and 22 in the survey questionnaire (see appendix A).

In addition to the One-way ANOVA tests, the Student-Newman keuls post hoc procedures were used to show differences in students' perceptions of history based on the three Form levels. These post hoc procedures were illustrated in Tables 6-8 and 12-14 respectively.

The Pearson correlation procedure was used to identify significant relationships between variables measuring student perceptions of history and those measuring student perceptions of the history syllabus discussed in Research Question 3. These responses were obtained from student survey items 13-17 in the survey questionnaire.

The Pearson correlation coefficient was also helpful in identifying significant relationships between the variables measuring student perceptions of history and those measuring external opinions about the subject of history as indicated in Research Question 6. These responses were obtained from student survey items 23-26 in the student survey questionnaire.

t tests were used to determine whether there was a difference between student and teacher perceptions in teacher survey items 17, 18, 19, and 21 and the corresponding student survey items 14, 15, 17, and 16 discussed in Research Question 3. A similar

procedure was employed to determine differences in teacher and student perceptions in survey items 25, 26, 27, and 19, 21, 20 respectively. This was discussed under Research Question 5. These tests (One-way ANOVA and Pearson correlation coefficient) were done on the basis of a probability of error threshold of 1 in 20, or $p < .05$.

Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was also useful in generating frequency distributions of data collected in the survey. Computer printouts of frequency tables gave information on the number of respondents, and the various levels of responses to the different questions on the survey questionnaires.

Qualitative data analysis was done without the aid of a software program. Instead, I grouped the data collected through focus group interviews into five categories outlined in the focus group procedure for students and teachers (see appendix B). Information from an audiocassette was reviewed several times to obtain verbatim accounts of focus group interviews. All redundant or overlapping statements were removed, leaving only those points that were pertinent to the study. These points were later summarized and presented as data for the research. Some verbatim accounts were also presented as findings.

Qualitative data were used to answer Research Question 2, that inquired into student understanding of history concepts such as historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation. Qualitative data also served to confirm or highlight contradictions in the survey findings and to clarify any ambiguous elements of the survey.

The following techniques were used to ensure the credibility or validity of the focus group process:

1. Verbatim accounts of focus group interviews

2. Use of audiocassettes for recording data

3. Participant review of researcher's synthesis of interviews.

I employed all of the above measures in an attempt to strengthen validity. Care was taken to capture verbatim accounts of respondents in order to avoid misrepresentation of the data. At the end of each focus group session, I gave a brief summary of the major issues discussed to allow respondents a final opportunity to add or clarify certain aspects of the account. The extent to which interpretations and concepts have mutual meanings between participants and researcher is the extent to which validity is achieved in qualitative research.

In order to ensure consistency, I engaged in a series of self-monitoring and self-questioning exercises. Some of these involved multiple listening as well as multiple transcription of audiotapes used in focus groups. Use of alternative data collection procedures such as survey and focus groups also went a long way in corroborating initial findings.

Generalizability or external validity was also enhanced by adequate descriptions of the mixed-method approach to data collection, the population used in the research, discussions of criteria used for cluster and purposive sampling techniques, and data analysis strategies used in the study.

Human Subjects Considerations

Since this study focused primarily on human beings, I was ethically responsible for safeguarding the rights and welfare of the participants. Therefore, in an attempt to protect respondents from unnecessary mental pressure, I obtained informed consent from the subjects, their parents, and the schools' administration. Participants were informed of

their rights to confidentiality and anonymity, as well as their rights to withdraw their participation at any time. Respondents were also given the opportunity to receive results of the study if necessary.

In order to facilitate greater transparency, participants were informed about prior approval given by the Ministry of Education in Trinidad, as well as the Human Subjects Review Board at Andrews University. Contact numbers of these institutions were also given for further verification. I believed that these measures encouraged participants to respond freely in a non-threatening environment.

Summary

Researchers generally agree that there is no ideal method of scientific inquiry. Therefore, the major challenge in research seems to be the ability of the researcher to find methods and techniques that are well suited to the problem under investigation. I believe that the study of differential perceptions about the teaching and learning of history lent itself to a mixed-method research design. More than any single approach, survey questionnaire and focus group discussion appeared to be the most suitable combination for measuring independent quantitative and qualitative research perspectives on the topic of history instruction and learning. By combining these two methods, I was able to achieve a richer analysis, and ultimately, a more reliable and valid research that could be easily replicated by subsequent investigators

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

The primary focus of this chapter is to present the findings of the survey research without engaging in extensive discussion and analysis of the results. In this regard, an attempt is made to present data using tables, figures, and summaries in conjunction with my description of what is considered to be important. Extended discussion is reserved for the final chapter of this study.

Questionnaire Demographics

Questionnaires were distributed to 415 history students and 17 history teachers of secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. These participants were drawn from the two most senior history classes in the secondary school system, namely, Fifth Form (equivalent to Grade 12 in the U.S. secondary school system), and Sixth Form (equivalent to first-year college). The return rate was 100%. Students were selected from four distinct groups of schools:

1. Government Secondary Schools–owned and funded by the government; prepare students for CXC and Advanced Level examinations.
2. Assisted Government Secondary Schools–partially funded by the government and controlled by a Denominational Education Board. These schools also prepare students for CXC and Advanced Level examinations.

3. Senior Comprehensive Schools–government-owned senior high schools that prepare students for CXC and Advanced Level examinations as well as technical/vocational skills training. Technology education will soon be offered as another examination option.
4. Private Secondary Schools–owned by private individuals, corporations, denominations, and officially registered with the Ministry of Education. These schools prepare students mainly for the CXC examination.

In both student and teacher participant groups, females made up the greater portion of respondents with an age distribution between 15-19 years for students. Teaching experience ranged from 0-4 years to over 30 years (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1

Number of Students in the 15 to 19 Age Groups

Age Group	No. of Students
15	54
16	163
17	127
18	51
19	22

Table 2

Years of Teaching Experience

Years of Teaching	No. of Teachers
0 - 4	8
5-10	2
11-15	0
16-20	2
21-25	0
26-30	4
30+	1

Academic qualifications for teachers ranged from Bachelor's degrees to Master's degrees in History. Some teachers also acquired professional training in teaching. (See Table 3.) Other qualifications included Advanced Level Certificate (as the highest qualification obtained) and a Bachelor of Education degree. One private secondary school teacher was pursuing a degree in Law. Ten teachers out of a total of 17 held Bachelor's degrees in History.

Based on the distribution of years of teaching experience in Table 2, it is noteworthy that 47% of the participants are relatively new teachers with less than 5 years' teaching experience. It is also noteworthy that 65% of these participants do not possess any professional teaching training qualifications, as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3

Teachers' Academic Qualifications

BA History with professional teacher training	BA History	Other	MA History with professional teacher training	MA History
6	4	6	0	1

Findings of Research Questions

The following research questions set the parameters for the study of differential perceptions of students and teachers about the teaching and learning of history in secondary schools of Trinidad and Tobago:

1. What are respondents' perceptions of history in the Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms?

2a. What are students' perceptions of historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation?

2b. What are teachers' perceptions of student understandings of the historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation?

3. Does a relationship exist between students' perceptions of the history syllabus and their perceptions of the subject?

4. What differences exist in student and teacher perceptions of the history syllabus, history textbooks, and teacher competence?

5. What are respondents' perceptions of the teaching methodology used in Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms?

6. Does a relationship exist between students' perceptions of history and external opinions about the subject of history?

Responses from 415 students and 17 teachers were examined in relation to the six Research Questions listed above. The 31 survey questions were divided into five different categories with approximately five survey items comprising each category. For the purpose of this analysis, the term *survey items* will be used to refer to questions on the questionnaire so as to make a clear distinction between these questions and the six Research Questions that guide the study (see Table 4).

Table 4

Research Questions and Survey Items Distribution

Research Questions	Student Survey Items	Teacher Survey Items
1.	4-7, 27-31	5 -12
2.	8-12	13, 16, 29
3.	13-17	17-22
4.	13-17	17-22
5.	18-22	23-27
6.	23-26	31

Note. See Appendix A for survey questionnaire relating to students' and teachers' perceptions about history instruction and learning.

Findings of Student Responses to Research Question 1

Research Question 1: *What are respondents' perceptions of history in the Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms*? Survey items 4 - 7 and 27-31 addressed this research question. Survey item 4 asked participants to indicate on a 5-point Likert-type scale whether they agreed with the statement that all students in secondary schools should study history. From the 415 respondents, 72 indicated strong agreement and 124 students indicated agreement. This gave a general total agreement of 48%. Of this group, 136 students (33%) disagreed and 26 students (6%) strongly disagreed. Fifty-six of the total number of participants (14%) were uncertain as to whether all students in secondary school should study history.

Survey item 5 asked whether history was regarded as a boring subject. Only 14% of the respondents agreed that the subject was boring, while 73% disagreed with the statement. A small percentage (13%) held no opinion on the matter.

Survey item 6 questioned whether history is relevant to everyday life. Seventy-five percent of the respondents felt that history was relevant; 14% disagreed and 11% expressed uncertainty.

Survey item 7 examined the notion that history is mostly about dates and places. Of the 415 respondents, 73% disagreed with this view while 23% indicated agreement. Only 4% could not decide one way or another.

Hypothesis Testing

Research Question 1 was tested through the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 stated. "There is no difference in students' perceptions of history based on Form level. This hypothesis was tested using One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with data from student survey items 4-7. Table 5 illustrates findings for this hypothesis.

Table 5

One-Way ANOVA of Students' Perceptions About History

Survey item	Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
4	Between Groups	8.455	2	4.228	2.840	.060
	Within Groups	613.193	412	1.488		
5	Between Groups	30.216	2	15.108	9.012	.000*
	Within Groups	690.709	412	1.676		
6	Between Groups	12.526	2	6.263	4.234	.015*
	Within Groups	609.435	412	1.479		
	Between Groups	5. 884	2	2.942	3.629	.027*
7	Within Groups	334.029	412	.811		

Note. Survey item 4 = All students in secondary school should study history; Survey item 5 = History is a boring subject; Survey item 6 = History is relevant to every day life; Survey item 7 = History is mostly about dates and places.
* Significant at $p < .05$ level.

Student-Newman Keuls post-hoc procedures in Tables 6 - 8 were used to show differences in students' perceptions based on three different Form levels, namely, Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms.

With regard to survey item 4, the implied null hypothesis is retained. There is no significant difference in students' perceptions in the three year-levels about whether or not all students should study history.

With regard to survey item 5, the implied null hypothesis is rejected. The Student-Newman Keuls post hoc procedure indicates that students in the Fifth Form are more likely to view history as boring than students of the Lower and Upper Sixth Forms.

With regard to survey item 6, the implied null hypothesis is rejected. The Student-Newman Keuls post hoc procedure indicates that students in the Fifth Form are more likely to see history as relevant to everyday life that those students in the Lower and Upper Sixth Forms (see Table 7).

With regard to survey item 7, the implied null hypothesis is rejected. The Student-Newman Keuls post hoc procedure indicates that students in the Lower Sixth Form are more likely to see history as mostly about dates and places that those students in the Fifth and Upper Sixth Forms (see Table 8).

Survey items 27-31 were open-ended questions that elicited students' reactions based on their perception of history. Item 27 asked participants to identify two things they liked most about history classes. The majority of respondents listed "interactive class activities" as their first choice. The second most popular response was that "my teacher makes the subject interesting and lively." These responses placed great stress on the teacher's role in providing a stimulating environment for learning.

Table 6

Student-Newman Keuls of Students' Perceptions About Whether History Is Boring

Forms	Mean	1	2	3
1. Fifth	3.5890	----	*	*
2. Upper Sixth	4.0889	*	---	---
3. Lower Sixth	4.2787	*	---	---

Table 7

Student-Newman Keuls of Students' Perceptions About the Relevance of History to Everyday Life.

Forms	Mean	1	2	3
1. Fifth	3.7087	---	*	*
2. Lower Sixth	4.0656	*	---	---
3. Upper Sixth	4.1556	*	---	---

Table 8

Student-Newman Keuls of Students' Perceptions About Whether History Is Mostly About Dates and Places

Forms	Mean	1	2	3
1. Lower Sixth	2.8033	----	*	*
2. Fifth	3.0841	*	---	---
3. Upper Sixth	4.8222	*	---	---

Survey item 28 focused on negative classroom experiences. Students were asked to identify two things they disliked most about their history classes. Respondents cited the following as their major dislikes:

1. too much information to write
2. too many dates to remember
3. too much reading to be done
4. the subject is too long and boring
5. limited access to supplementary texts.

Respondents from one of the private secondary schools identified "poor teaching methods" as one of the things they disliked most about history classes. A few students felt that the time of the day (immediately after lunch) in which the subject was offered heightened their dislike for the subject.

Survey item 29 asked participants to identify the most important lesson that a student can learn from history. Only a few students felt that avoiding the mistakes of others was the most important lesson to be learned. Some students felt that the single most important lesson was the idea that the present is shaped by the past. The majority gave responses that did not seem to relate to the question precisely. One such response was "knowledge about my ancestors" is the most important lesson one can learn from history. Others identified "patience, persistence, and tolerance" as important lessons to be learned from history.

Survey item 30 asked students to give two reasons why they studied history. While some participants cited love for the subject as one of the reasons, many felt that they had no choice since the subject fell into a particular subject grouping that required students to select history as one of the options for the CXC examination. Some participants indicated that history expanded their knowledge; others studied the subject to gain greater insights into the past and to bolster a sense of self. Only a small percentage indicated, however, that they studied history mainly to receive a passing CXC grade in the subject.

Survey item 31 required participants to give two reasons why they felt that some students were unwilling to study history. The vast majority indicated that the primary reason was that some students viewed the subject as "too boring." Others felt that history had too many dates and events to study; and some students simply did not like to read. Respondents also indicated that some students did not study history because of the view that history is not required for their future career and that the subject is not relevant to everyday life.

In analyzing student responses to Research Question 1, two observations are noteworthy:

1. Students generally disagreed with the notion that history was a boring subject, and that it was irrelevant to everyday life.
2. Many students cited interactive class activities as the single factor they liked most about history classes, while too much reading was a major deterrent to the subject.

Findings of Teacher Responses to Research Question 1

Research Question 1: *What are respondents' perceptions of history in the Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms*? Survey items 5-12 addressed this research question. The One-way ANOVA was not utilized when discussing teachers' perceptions as the sample of 17 participants was too small to provide meaningful statistical analysis. Therefore, a descriptive summary is given. Survey item 5 asked participants to state whether they viewed history as a story to be told. Teachers were required to give their reaction by circling *A* on the Likert-type scale if they strongly agreed; and *E* if they strongly disagreed. Fifty-three percent (53%) of the respondents ranked the question *A* and *B* while 24% gave a ranking of *D* and *E*. Twenty-three percent (23%) had no opinion on the matter.

Survey item 6 asked whether events in history should be interpreted and evaluated. Fifteen of the 17 respondents agreed, 1 disagreed, and 1 had no opinion.

Survey item 7 addressed the issue of teaching history as a means of making the world a better place. Ninety-four percent (94%) of the respondents believed that teaching

gave them the opportunity to make the world a better place, while 6% of the participants had no opinion on the matter. No one disagreed with the statement.

Survey item 8 asked whether participants regarded history as the unfolding of God's plan for mankind. Eleven of the 17 respondents (65%) agreed with the statement, while 2 disagreed. Four participants (24%) held no opinion on this matter.

Survey item 9 probed into whether teachers saw their major responsibility as that of assisting students in passing the history examination. Thirteen teachers (76%) in this study reported that helping students pass the history examination was their primary responsibility. However, 2 teachers disagreed that this was their major role, and 2 did not have an opinion on this issue.

Survey item 10 asked teachers about their role as agents of social change. The majority (94%) saw themselves as social change agents, while 6% of the respondents chose to withhold their opinion on the matter.

A similar question on role identification was highlighted in survey item 11. This question asked whether history teachers saw themselves as gatekeepers of the past. Eight of the 17 (49%) respondents agreed, while 4 (23%) disagreed. Five teachers (30%) could not decide one way or another on the issue.

Survey item 12 questioned whether teaching history was the preferred career choice of history teachers. The majority (76%) agreed; two respondents (12%) disagreed and the remaining two withheld their opinion.

Based on the findings of Research Question 1, it could be assumed that teachers generally saw their role as complex and varied. The majority of participants reported that teaching history was their preferred career choice. Teacher response to survey item 8 also

merits some consideration. In contrast to Evans's 2.8%, this study reveals that 65% of respondents regard history as the unfolding of God's plan for mankind. This disclosure has implications for the manner in which history is interpreted and presented to students in the classroom.

Findings of Student Responses to Research Question 2

Research Question 2a: *What are students' perceptions of historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation?* Survey items 8-12 addressed this research question. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement by circling the appropriate letter on a 5-point Likert-type scale with the letter *A* representing strong agreement, and *E* representing strong disagreement.

Survey item 8 asked students to respond to the assertion that historical evidence should be questioned. The majority of students (309 or 74%) indicated that they agreed with the statement, and a small number (52 or 13%) disagreed. Fifty-two students (13%) had no opinion on the matter.

Survey item 9 probed deeper into the question of historical understanding and asked participants to respond to whether they believed that human beings determined the course of history. Again the majority of participants (316 or 76%) responded in the affirmative while 43 or 11% of the respondents disagreed.

Survey item 10 asked whether historical events were caused by a complex mix of different factors. Three hundred and thirty-two (80%) of the respondents agreed with the notion of multiple causation in history as opposed to 25 (6%) who disagreed.

Survey item 11 inquired into the question of historical inevitability. The question asked whether all historical events were inevitable. Respondents seemed divided on this

issue as evidenced by the 27% who agreed, 43% who disagreed, and 30% who could neither agree nor disagree with the statement.

Survey item 12 probed into the students' understanding of continuity and change. The question asked whether history involved the study of change over time. The majority of respondents (357) agreed with the statement, while 24 expressed disagreement. Figure 1 gives a graphic representation of student responses to Research Question 2a.

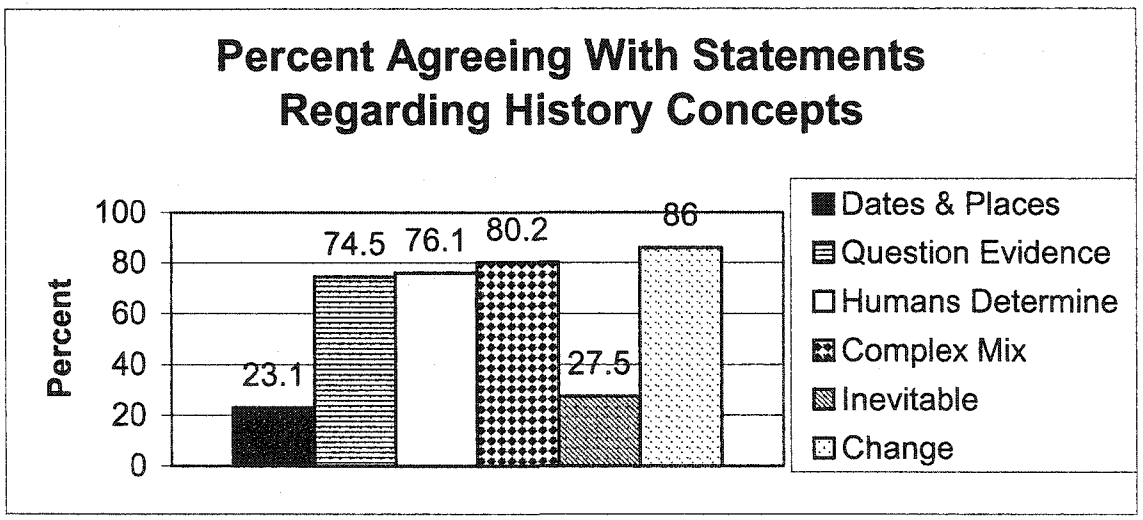

Figure 1. Student understandings of historical concepts.

Based on the findings of students' responses to Research Question 2a, one could assume that students generally demonstrated understanding of historical concepts such as historical evidence and causation. This is noteworthy because, upon further probing in focus group settings, students displayed a general lack of clear understanding of these concepts. This matter will be examined more closely in chapter 6.

Findings of Teacher Responses to Research Question 2

Research Question 2b: *What are teachers' perceptions of student understanding of historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation*? Survey items 16, 29, and 13 addressed this research question. Respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert-type scale whether their students understood the concept of continuity and change. The majority (10) or 59% of teachers reported that students understood the concept of continuity and change. However, 30% of the teachers (5) disagreed with this view, while 12% could not be certain whether, in fact, students understood this concept.

Survey item 16 asked whether students understood the concept of historical evidence. Again, the majority (11) or 65% of respondents indicated that their students understood the concept, while 4 out of 17 teachers disagreed. Two respondents could not be sure whether their students really understood the concept.

Survey item 29 asked why students often have difficulty grasping history concepts such as causation and historical evidence. Common responses included:

1. refusal to read and question information
2. over-reliance on teachers' interpretation
3. low level of understanding.

One Fifth Form teacher with 4 years' experience reported: "I believe that most of our students lack the depth and experience, which would encourage them to develop that frame of mind to truly understand our history. They see history as simply a story, thereby neglecting the real reasons for its study and making the excuse that it is boring because they experience difficulty in finding the true meaning."

One Sixth Form teacher with similar teaching experience said: "With regard to causation, it is not so much that the students do not understand the concept, but they do not seem to know what are the immediate and long-term causes that led to certain events."

A few teachers reported that students were not sufficiently exposed to primary sources and that the resource materials available to teachers and students were sadly lacking. One Form Five teacher with 16-20 years experience pointed out that since students did little history in the lower forms, their foundation was too weak to fully comprehend historical concepts like causation and historical evidence.

Teacher survey items 14 and 15 were intentionally set to correspond with student survey items 9 and 10 to determine the extent to which both teachers and students shared similar views.

Survey item 14 asked whether participants believed that human beings determined the course of history. The majority (13) or 77% of teachers agreed with this statement, while 2 or 12% of the respondents disagreed.

Survey item 15 asked whether historical events were caused by a complex mix of different factors. All 17 teachers agreed with the concept of multiple causation, as compared to 80% of students who also shared similar views.

Based on the findings of teachers' responses to Research Question 2b, it could be assumed that teachers generally believe that students understand such concepts as continuity and change, and historical evidence. Both teachers and students also held similar views on the concept of multiple causation. This finding is also noteworthy because the focus group discussions revealed that teachers themselves generally

experience difficulty teaching history concepts. Some teachers reported that they do not consciously set out to teach history concepts at all. This matter will be explored further in the discussion chapter.

Findings of Student Responses to Research Question 3

Research Question 3: *Does a relationship exist between student perceptions of the history syllabus and their perceptions of the subject?* Survey items 13-17 addressed this particular research question. Survey item 13 asked whether the history syllabus was relevant to students of secondary school age. Of the 415 students who responded to this question, 248 (60%) agreed with the statement. Eighty-nine students (21%) disagreed, and the remaining 78 students (19%) did not know for certain whether or not the history syllabus was relevant to the needs of secondary school students.

Survey item 14 asked whether students would enjoy history more if there were fewer details to be studied. Of the 415 students who responded to this question, a little more than half agreed with this statement, while 161 students disagreed.

Student reaction to survey item 15 revealed similar sentiments. The question asked whether students' history texts were easy to understand. Two hundred and twenty-eight (55%) students claimed that their texts were easy to understand while 149 (36%) students disagreed.

Although survey item 16 appeared similar to question 15, there was an essential difference. Question 15 explored the level of difficulty in history texts, while question 16 focused on the level of enjoyment derived from reading history texts. Survey item 16 asked if students enjoyed reading the prescribed texts in history classes. Less than half of the respondents (47%) admitted that they enjoyed reading the recommended history texts,

while 34% disagreed that they derived any pleasure from reading history texts. Twenty percent (20%) of the respondents found difficulty deciding one way or another on the matter.

Survey item 17 asked whether students felt that their teachers were very knowledgeable about history. This item was included under this research question because I believed that there might be a link between the way students felt about the scope of the syllabus and their perception of the teacher's ability to interpret and deliver the curriculum. The majority (343) or 83% of respondents felt that teachers were very knowledgeable about history. Only 25 or 6% of the students disagreed. Forty-seven (11%) of the respondents could not determine their teachers' knowledge of the subject.

Hypothesis Testing

Research Question 3 was tested through Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between student perceptions of history and student perceptions of the history syllabus.

The null hypothesis was tested using the Pearson correlation coefficient to identify significant relationships between the variables measuring student perceptions of history and those measuring student perceptions of the history syllabus. This analysis yielded 14 significant relationships among the variables that are represented in Table 9.

The first item relating to student perception of history asked whether all students in secondary schools should study history. In regard to this variable, 3 significant relationships were identified. The first of these indicates that those who feel that all students should study history also perceive the history syllabus as relevant to students their age ($r = .305, p < .05, N = 415$).

Table 9

Relationship Between Student Perceptions of the History Syllabus and Their Perceptions of the Subject

Variables Measuring Student Perceptions of History and Those Measuring Student Perceptions of the History Syllabus		All students in Secondary schools should study history	History is a boring subject	History is relevant to every day life	History is mostly about dates and places	Historical evidence should be questioned
The history syllabus is relevant to students my age.	Pearson Correlation	.305*	-.183*	.269*	-.052	.036
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.294	.465
	N	415	415	415	415	415
I would enjoy history more if there were fewer details to be studied.	Pearson Correlation	-.164*	.367*	-.095	.246*	.025
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.054	.000	.615
	N	415	415	415	415	415
My history textbooks are easy to understand.	Pearson Correlation	.096	-.105*	.081	-.034	-.080
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.052	.033	.100	.489	.103
	N	415	415	415	415	415
I enjoy using the prescribed texts used in history classes.	Pearson Correlation	.185*	-.299*	.133*	-.139*	-.064
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.022	.005	.195
	N	415	415	415	415	415
My teacher is very knowledgeable about history.	Pearson Correlation	.058	-.094	.070	-.054	-.064
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.242	.056	.156	.276	.366
	N	415	415	415	415	415

Table 9-*Continued.*

Variables Measuring Student Perceptions of History and Those Measuring Student Perceptions of the History Syllabus		I believe that human beings determine the course of history	Historical events are caused by a complex mix of different factors	All historical events are inevitable	History involves the study of change over time
The history syllabus is relevant to students my age.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	-.016 .739 415	.064 .191 415	-.008 .877 415	-.093 .058 415
I would enjoy history more if there were fewer details to be studied.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	.004 .938 415	-.052 .292 415	.147* .003 415	.080 .014 415
My history textbooks are easy to understand.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	.105* .033 415	.062 .205 415	.044 .368 415	.067 .171 415
I enjoy using the prescribed texts used in history classes.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	.153* .002 415	.011 .821 415	-.002 .960 415	.052 .291 415
My teacher is very knowledgeable about history.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) *N*	.-065 .184 415	-.024 .623 415	.019 .695 415	-.093 .058 415

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The second significant relationship suggests that those who believe that all secondary students should study history do not believe that they would enjoy history more if there were fewer details to be studied ($r = -.164, p < .05, N = 415$).

The final significant relationship indicates that those who feel that all secondary students should study history also enjoy reading the prescribed texts used in history classes ($r = .185, p < .05, N = 415$).

The second item relating to student perception of history dealt with the question of whether or not history is a boring subject. Four significant relationships were identified. The first indicates that students who think history is boring do not regard the history syllabus as relevant to students their age ($r = -.183, p < .05, N = 415$).

The second significant relationship indicates that students who think history is boring would enjoy history if there were fewer details to study ($r = .367, p < .05, N = 415$).

The third significant relationship indicates that those who regard history as boring do not think that history textbooks are easy to understand ($r = -.105, p < .05, N = 415$).

The fourth significant relationship indicates that students who view history as boring do not enjoy reading the prescribed texts used in history classes ($r = -.299, p < .05, N = 415$).

The third item relating to student perception of history dealt with the question of the relevance of history to everyday life. Two significant relationships were identified. The first significant relationship indicates that students who think that history is relevant to everyday life also believe that the history syllabus is relevant to students their age ($r = .269, p < .05, N = 415$).

The second significant relationship suggests that those students who think that history is relevant to everyday life also enjoy reading the prescribed texts used in history classes ($r = .113, p < .05, N = 415$).

The other item relating to student perception of history asked whether history is mostly about dates and places. Two significant relationships were identified. The first of these relationships indicated that students who think that history is about dates and places would also enjoy history more if there were fewer details to be studied ($r = -.246, p < .05, N = 415$).

The second significant relationship indicates that students who believe that history is about dates and places do not enjoy reading prescribed texts used in history classes ($r = -.139, p < .05, N = 415$).

The item relating to historical concepts asked whether or not historical evidence should be questioned. No significant relationships were identified for this item.

The item relating to the course of history asked whether human beings determine the course of history. Two significant relationships were identified. The first of these indicates that students who believe that human beings determine the course of history think that their history books are easy to understand ($r = .105, p < .05, N = 415$).

The second significant relationship indicates that those who believe that human beings determine the course of history also enjoy reading the prescribed textbooks used in history classes ($r = .153, p < .05, N = 415$).

The item relating to multiple causation asked whether historical events are caused by a complex mix of different factors. No significant relationships were identified.

The item relating to historical inevitability asked whether all historical events are inevitable. One significant relationship was identified. This significant relationship indicates that students who believe that all historical events are inevitable would also enjoy history more if there were fewer details to be studied ($r = .147, p < .05, N = 415$).

The final item relating to historical concepts asked whether history involves the study of change over time. No significant relationships were identified.

Findings of Teacher Responses to Research Question 4

Research Question 4: *What differences exist in student and teacher perceptions of the history syllabus, history textbooks, and teachers' competence?* Survey items 17-22 addressed this research question. Survey item 17 asked whether the history syllabus was too broad for students at the secondary level. Seven of the 17 (41%) teachers agreed that the history syllabus was too broad, while an equal number of teachers disagreed. Three (18%) teachers had difficulty deciding one way or another on the matter.

Survey item 18 addressed the question of students' ability to understand the textbooks used in history classes. The majority (12) of teachers reported that students understood the history texts. However, 5 respondents believed that students experienced difficulty comprehending the prescribed texts.

Survey item 19 focussed on the issue of teacher competence to teach history at Fifth and Sixth Form levels. All 17 teachers regarded themselves as competent to teach history at the secondary school level.

Survey item 20 explored the extent to which the history syllabus was relevant to the needs of students. The majority (10) of teachers felt that the syllabus met the needs of

students. Three respondents could not say for certain, and 4 teachers reported that the history syllabus failed to meet the needs of students.

Teacher survey item 21 was similar to student survey item 16 that asked whether students enjoyed reading from the prescribed texts. Less than half of the respondents (41%) indicated that students enjoyed reading from the prescribed texts. A similar amount (41%) disagreed with this view, while 18% of the teachers could not determine for certain whether or not students enjoyed reading from the prescribed history texts.

Survey item 22 asked whether teachers viewed the history syllabus as a guide to be adapted, questioned, and improved. The majority (15) or 88% of the respondents agreed that the syllabus is generally a guide to instruction. Only 1 teacher disagreed with this perspective.

Based on the analysis of both student and teacher responses to Research Question 4, the following observations could be made:

1. Both students and teachers held similar views about the relevance of the syllabus to the needs of students.
2. Students and teachers shared similar views on the extent to which students enjoyed reading from the prescribed history textbooks.
3. Both groups shared similar views on teachers' knowledge base in history as well as their competence to teach the subject.

Hypothesis Testing

Research Question 4 was tested through Hypothesis 3: There is a no difference between teacher and student perceptions of the history syllabus, history textbooks, teacher competence, and the level of enjoyment attained from studying history texts.

t tests were used to determine whether there was a difference between student and teacher perceptions in the following four areas highlighted in Research Question 4:

1. scope of the history syllabus
2. student understanding of textbooks used in history classes
3. teacher competence to deliver the syllabus
4. level of enjoyment attained from studying history texts.

Scores for teacher survey items 17, 18, 19, and 21 were compared with scores on corresponding student survey items 14, 15, 17, and 16 to determine whether any differences existed between the two sets of responses. These findings are illustrated in Table 10.

Findings presented in the *t* tests suggest that there are no significant differences between teacher and student perceptions in the 4 areas examined. Thus the null hypothesis is retained.

Findings of Student Responses to Research Question 5

Research Question 5: W*hat are respondents' perceptions of teaching methodology used in the Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms?* Survey items 18-22 addressed this research question. Survey item 18 asked whether students enjoyed attending history classes. The majority (275) or 66% of students gave positive feedback to the question, while a small minority (63) or 15% reported that they did not enjoy attending history classes. Seventy-seven (19%) students were ambivalent about the way they felt about history classes.

Survey item 19 asked whether teachers used different methods to teach history. The majority of respondents (65%) agreed that teachers varied their methodology,

while 20% felt that teachers failed to explore a variety of teaching modalities. Sixteen percent (16%) of the respondents had no opinion on the matter.

Table 10

t *tests of Students' and Teachers' Perceptions by Status*

	Status	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	Sig.
Scope of the history syllabus	1.00	17	2.9412	1.02899	.548	430	.584
	2.00	415	2.7566	1.37298			
Students' understanding of history texts	1.00	17	2.4706	1.06757	-.902	430	.368
	2.00	415	2.7566	1.28951			
Teacher competence to deliver the syllabus	1.00	17	1.4706	.51450	-.952	430	.342
	2.00	415	1.7108	1.03478			
Level of enjoyment attained from studying history texts	1.00	17	3.0000	.93541	.511	430	.610
	2.00	415	2.8506	1.18250			

Note. (1.00 = teachers; 2.00 = students)

*Significant at $p < .05$ level.

Survey item 20 asked whether teachers provided all the information students needed to know about history. Fifty-five percent (55%) of the respondents admitted that teachers provided all the information on the subject, while 31% disagreed.

Survey item 21 addressed the question of students' responsibility for their own knowledge of history. The majority (74%) of students felt a sense of responsibility for their knowledge of the subject. Only 16% of the respondents felt no sense of responsibility for their knowledge of the subject, while 10% of the students remained uncertain.

Survey item 22 asked whether teachers provided students with opportunities for group interaction. While 70% of the respondents reported that teachers provided opportunities for group work, 18% disagreed.

While findings of student responses to Research Question 5 revealed that generally history teachers provided a stimulating environment that bolstered student appreciation of the subject, I was interested in establishing whether there is any significant difference in the opinions of students at the Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms on the question of teaching methods used in history classes.

Hypothesis Testing

Research Question 5 was tested with hypotheses 4 and 5: Hypothesis 4 stated: There is no difference in students' perceptions of teaching methodology used in the classroom based on Form level.

Hypothesis 5 stated: There is no difference between student and teacher perceptions of teaching methodology, students' responsibility for their own knowledge, and the role of the teacher as facilitator of learning.

These hypotheses were tested using a One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with data from student survey items 19, 20 and 22. Findings are illustrated in Table 11. The Student-Newman Keuls post hoc procedures in Tables 12-14 were used to show differences in students' perceptions based on the three Form levels.

With regard to survey item 19 (Table 11), the implied null hypothesis is rejected. The Student-Newman Keuls post hoc procedure at Table 12 indicates that students in the Upper Sixth Form are more likely than their colleagues at the other two Form levels to view their teachers as employing different teaching methods in the classroom.

Table 11

One-way ANOVA of Students' Perceptions About Teaching Methodology

Survey item	Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P*
19	Between Groups	39.264	2	9.632	10.986	.000*
	Within Groups	736.244	412	1.787		
20	Between Groups	56.410	2	28.205	18.022	.000*
	Within Groups	644.795	412	1.565		
22	Between Groups	53.716	2	26.858	17.465	.000*
	Within Groups	633.585	412	1.538		

Note: Survey item 19 = My teacher uses different methods to teach history; Survey item 20 = My teacher provides all the information I need to know about history; Survey item 22 = My teacher provides opportunities for group interaction.

* Significant at $p < .05$ level.

Table 12

Student-Newman Keuls of Students' Perceptions About Teaching Methods Used in the Classroom

Forms	Mean	1	2	3
1. Upper Sixth	2.7111	---	*	*
2. Lower Sixth	3.5246	*	---	---
3. Fifth	3.7087	*	---	---

Table 13

Student-Newman Keuls of Students' Perceptions of Whether the Teacher Provides All the Information They Need to Know About History

Forms	Mean	1	2	3
1. Upper Sixth	2.3778	---	*	*
2. Lower Sixth	3.4098	*	---	---
3. Fifth	3.5761	*	---	---

Table 14

Student-Newman Keuls of Students' Perceptions About Whether the Teacher Provides Opportunities for Group Interaction

Forms	Mean	1	2	3
1. Upper Sixth	3.0667	---	*	*
2. Fifth	3.6570	*	---	---
3. Lower Sixth	4.4590	*	---	---

With regard to survey item 20 (Table 11), the implied null hypothesis is rejected. The Student-Newman Keuls post hoc procedure at Table 13 indicates that students in the Upper Sixth Form are more likely than Fifth and Lower Sixth students to perceive their teacher as providing all the information they need to know about history.

With regard to survey item 22 (Table 11), the implied null hypothesis is rejected. The Student-Newman Keuls post hoc procedure at Table 14 indicates that students in the Upper Sixth Form are more likely than those of the Fifth and Lower Sixth Forms to view the teacher as providing opportunities for group interaction.

Findings of Teacher Responses to Research Question 5

Research Question 5: W*hat are respondents' perceptions of the teaching methodology used in the Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms?* Survey items 23-27 addressed this particular research question. Survey item 23 asked whether teachers used

the lecture method more that any other method of teaching. Twelve of the 17 teachers (71%) admitted to using the lecture method as their primary teaching tool, while 4 (24%) of the respondents disagreed.

Survey item 24 asked whether teachers enjoyed using cooperative learning strategies in their teaching. While the vast majority (94%) reported using cooperative learning strategies in their teaching, 1 of the respondents remained ambivalent on the matter.

Survey item 25 further pursued the question of multiple methods of teaching. The question asked whether teachers often experimented with different methods of teaching history. The majority of teachers (14) reported that they used a range of teaching modalities. Only 2 teachers admitted that they had not often varied their teaching methods.

Teacher survey item 26 was similar to that of student survey item 21. The question asked whether teachers made students feel responsible for their own knowledge of the subject. Of the 17 teachers who responded to this question, 14 reported that their students were made to feel responsible for their own learning, while only 2 teachers disagreed. One teacher could not be certain about the matter.

Survey item 27 asked whether teachers regarded themselves more as facilitators of learning rather than dispensers of information. The majority (11) or 65% of teachers considered themselves as facilitators of knowledge. Five respondents did not see themselves as facilitators, and 1 teacher was unsure about the matter.

Based on survey findings to the question of teaching methodology, one could assume that teachers generally varied their methods of teaching, relying the least on the

lecture mode of delivery. This matter was further explored in the teacher focus group discussions.

Hypothesis Testing

Research Question 5 was tested with Hypothesis 5: There is no difference between teacher and student perceptions of teaching methodology, students' responsibility for their own knowledge, and the role of the teacher as facilitator of learning.

The null hypothesis was tested using *t* tests with data from teacher survey items 25-27. Scores on teacher survey items 25, 26, and 27 were compared with scores on corresponding student survey items 19, 21, and 20 to determine whether any differences existed between the two sets of responses. These findings are illustrated in Table 15.

Findings presented in the *t* tests suggest that there is no significant difference between teacher and student perceptions in the three areas examined. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained.

Findings of Student Responses to Research Question 6

Research Question 6: *Does a relationship exist between students' perceptions of history and external opinions about the subject of history?* Survey items 23-26 addressed this research question. Survey item 23 probed into the question of the role of factors outside the classroom in shaping students' understanding of the subject. This particular question asked whether students learned a great deal about history from other sources outside of the classroom. The majority (257) or 62% of respondents admitted that they did learn a great deal of history from sources outside of the classroom.

Table 15

t *tests of Students' and Teachers' Perceptions by Status*

	Status	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	Sig.
The use of multiple teaching methods in history instruction	1.00	17	2.1765	.80896	-.464	430	.643
	2.00	415	2.3108	1.18250			
Students' responsibility for their own knowledge	1.00	17	2.0588	1.08804	-.337	430	.736
	2.00	415	2.1470	1.05642			
Teacher as facilitator rather than dispenser of information	1.00	17	2.4706	1.28051	-.434	430	.665
	2.00	415	2.6072	1.27308			

Note. Survey item 25 = the use of multiple teaching methods in history instruction; Survey item 26 = students' responsibility for their own knowledge; Survey item 27 = the teacher as facilitator rather than dispenser of information.
(1.00 = teachers; 2.00 = students)

* Significant at the < .05 level.

One hundred and thirty-one students (31%) felt that little history was acquired outside of the classroom.

Survey item 24 asked whether family and friends influenced the way students felt about history. Only 28% (116) of the students reported that their perception of history was influenced by relatives and friends, while 55% (230) of the students disagreed that friends and family members had any significant impact on the way they view the subject of history.

Survey item 25 asked whether studying history will enhance students' chances of employment. Fifty-four percent (223) agreed, while 20% disagreed. One hundred and nine (26%) students could not say for certain whether history instruction could make them more employable.

Survey item 26 inquired into students' intention to pursue the subject at a higher level. Forty-seven percent (195) reported that they intended to do so, while 33% (138) said no. Twenty percent of the participants were still undecided on the matter.

Hypothesis Testing

Research Question 6 was tested with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: There is no relationship between the variables measuring student perceptions of history and those measuring external opinions about the subject.

The null hypothesis was tested using the Pearson correlation procedure to identify significant relationships between the variables measuring student perceptions of history and those measuring external opinions about the subject. This analysis yielded 11 significant relationships among the variables that are represented in Table 16. Thus the null hypothesis was rejected for these 11 significant relationships.

The first item relating to student perception of history asked whether all students in secondary schools should study history. In regard to this variable, two significant relationships were identified. The first of these indicates that those who feel all students should study history also believe that a great deal of history can be learned from other sources outside the classroom ($r = .115, p < .05, N = 415$).

The second significant relationship suggests that those who believe that all secondary students should study history also believe that family and friends influence the way they feel about history ($r = .171, p < .05, N = 415$).

The second item relating to student perception of history dealt with the question of whether or not history is a boring subject. Two significant relationships were identified. The first significant relationship indicates that students who think history is boring do not believe that they learn a great deal about history from other sources outside the classroom ($r = -.172, p < .05, N = 415$).

The second significant relationship indicates that students who think history is boring do not think that family and friends influence the way they feel about history ($r = -.113, p < .05, N = 415$).

The third item relating to student perception of history dealt with the question of the relevance of history to everyday life. One significant relationship was identified. This significant relationship indicates that students who think that history is relevant to everyday life also believe that they learn a great deal about history from other sources outside of the classroom ($r = .200, p < .05, N = 415$).

The other item relating to student perception of history asked whether history is mostly about dates and places. One significant relationship was identified.

Table 16

Relationship Between Student Perceptions of History and External Opinions About the Subject

Variables Measuring Student Perceptions of History and Those Measuring External Opinions About the Subject		All students in secondary schools should study history	History is a boring subject	History is relevant to every day life	History is mostly about dates and places	Historical evidence should be questioned
I learn a great deal about history from sources outside of the classroom.	Pearson Correlation	.115*	-.172*	.200*	-.212*	.096
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	.000	.000	.000	.052
	N	415	415	415	415	415
My family and friends influence the way I feel about history.	Pearson Correlation	.171*	-.113*	-.096	-.078	.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.021	.050	.113	.227
	N	415	415	415	415	415

Variables Measuring Student Perceptions of History and Those Measuring External Opinions About the Subject		I believe that human beings determine the course of history	Historical events are caused by a complex mix of different factors	All historical events are inevitable	History involves the study of change over time
I learn a great deal about history from sources outside of the classroom	Pearson Correlation	.118*	.145*	.002	-.004
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	.003	.961	.939
	N	415	415	415	415
My family and friends influence the way I feel about history	Pearson Correlation	.022	-.023	-.053	-.038
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.656	.640	.282	.441
	N	415	415	415	415

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

This significant relationship indicates that students who think that history is about dates and places do not feel that they learn a great deal about history from other sources outside of the classroom ($r = -.212, p < .05, N = 415$).

The item relating to historical concepts asked whether or not historical evidence should be questioned. No significant relationships were identified for this item.

The item relating to the course of history asked whether human beings determine the course of history. One significant relationship was identified. This relationship indicates that students who believe that human beings determine the course of history also think that they learn a great deal about history from other sources outside of the classroom ($r = .118, p < .05, N = 415$).

The item relating to multiple causation asked whether historical events are caused by a complex mix of different factors. One significant relationship was identified. This relationship indicates that those who believe that historical events are caused by a complex mix of different factors also think that they learn a great deal about history from other sources outside of the classroom ($r = .145, p < .05, N = 415$).

No significant relationships were identified in the item relating to historical inevitability.

The final item relating to historical concepts asked whether history involves the study of change over time. Once again, no significant relationships were identified.

Findings of Teacher Responses to Research Question 6

Research Question 6: *Does a relationship exist between students' perceptions of history and external opinions about the subject of history?* Survey item 31 addressed this

question. The question asked: Why do you think so many students are unwilling to study history? While this question called for speculation on the part of teachers, I felt that given their years of teaching experience, teachers might have been able to reasonably identify factors that could shed light on students' perceptions about the subject of history.

One teacher with 16-20 years of teaching experience responded this way: "I believe that students have a phobia for remembering dates (maybe based on their first impression) and wrongly equate history with dates. It may also be because we are being bombarded with futuristic ideas on science and technology and the apparent limited scope in occupation/career choices may add to making history unattractive."

Another respondent with less than 4 years' teaching experience placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of teachers: "History teachers have positioned the subject as one that demands a slavish recall of dates, events, people, and places, rather than a unique opportunity to understand life and to fashion change."

The majority of respondents (65%) believed that students' perceptions of the subject were shaped by external attitudes about the subject. Some of these attitudes included the notion that history was irrelevant and that the subject was boring. Only a few teachers admitted that students' negative perceptions of the subject were shaped by the manner in which history was presented to students in the classroom.

Summary of Survey Findings

The six research questions of this study established a general framework for the investigation of differential perceptions of teachers and students about the teaching and learning of history in secondary schools of Trinidad and Tobago. Findings from these research questions revealed that history students generally rejected the notion that history

was boring and irrelevant to everyday life. And although they favored interactive class sessions such as group discussions, debates, and role plays, students demonstrated relatively low tolerance for the reading of prescribed history texts. Still, students were able to report general understanding of somewhat complex concepts like multiple causation and historical evidence. However, teachers reported differently in focus group discussions. The majority of students reported that while they also learned a great deal of history from sources outside the classroom, the class teacher was the single most important factor in shaping their perceptions of history.

Analysis of the six research questions also revealed that while teachers generally perceived their role as varied and complex, teaching remained their preferred career choice. Like students, teachers also indicated a preference for a wide range of teaching modalities.

Teachers and students shared similar views on a range of issues including the relevance of the syllabus to the needs of students as well as teacher competence to deliver meaningful history instruction. However, certain expectation gaps still appeared to exist in what teachers and students expected of each other in the classroom. One such expectation was that teachers should be responsible for creating a stimulating learning environment to facilitate student learning. Students have already reported that the teacher was a critical factor in shaping student perception of history. While teachers generally accepted their role as facilitators of learning, they failed to take responsibility for students' negative perceptions of the subject, claiming instead that students' perceptions of the subject were shaped by factors outside the classroom.

The fact that students were able to reject popular notions of history gives credence to Piaget's theory that students at the formal operational stage are capable of formulating perceptions of their own.

The following is a summary of major findings based on the six hypotheses used in the study.

Hypothesis 1: There is no difference in students' perceptions of history based on Form level.

Summary of Findings:

1. There is no significant difference in students' perceptions in the three year-levels about whether or not all students should study history.
2. Students in the Fifth Form are more likely to view history as boring than students of the Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth Forms.
3. Students in the Fifth Form are more likely to see history as mostly about dates and places than those in the Lower and Upper Sixth Forms.

Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between student perceptions of history and student perceptions of the history syllabus.

Summary of Findings:

1. Those who reported that all students should study history also perceive the history syllabus as relevant.
2. Those who think that history is boring reported that they would enjoy history if there were fewer details to study.

Hypothesis 3: There is no difference between teacher and student perceptions of the history syllabus.

Summary of Findings: Findings of the *t* tests suggest that there are no significant differences between teacher and student perceptions of the scope of the history syllabus, student understanding of textbooks used in history classes, teacher competence to deliver the syllabus, and the level of enjoyment attained from studying history textbooks.

Hypothesis 4: There is no difference between students' perceptions of teaching methodology used in the classroom based on Form level.

Summary of Findings:

1. There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of teaching methodology used in the classroom. For example, students in the Upper Sixth Form are more likely than those in the Fifth and Lower Sixth Form to perceive their teacher as providing all the information they need to know about history.
2. Students in the Upper Sixth Form are more likely than those in the Fifth and Lower Sixth Forms to say that teachers use different methods of teaching.

Hypothesis 5: There is no difference between students' perceptions of teaching methodology, students' responsibility for their own knowledge, and the role of the teacher as facilitator of learning.

Summary of Findings: Findings in *t* tests suggest that there are no significant differences between teacher and student perceptions in the use of multiple teaching methods in the classroom, students' sense of responsibility for their own knowledge, and the teacher's role as facilitator of learning rather than dispenser of information. There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of teaching methodology used in the classroom. For example, students in the Upper Sixth Form are more likely than those in

the Fifth and Lower Sixth Form to perceive their teacher as providing all the information they need to know about history.

Hypothesis 6: There is no relationship between the variables measuring student perceptions of history and those measuring external opinions about the subject.

Summary of Findings:

1. Those who believe that all students should study history also feel that a great deal of history could be learned from other sources outside the classroom.
2. Those who think that history is boring do not believe that they could learn a great deal of history from sources outside the classroom.
3. Those who think that history is relevant also believe that they could learn a great deal of history from sources outside the classroom.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS OF FOCUS GROUPS

Like the previous survey results chapter, this one attempts to present the data generated from the focus group discussions with students and teachers. These data are presented in the form of summaries and descriptions of what I consider pertinent to the study. Extended discussion and analysis will take place in the summary of this chapter as well as the final discussion chapter of this study.

Six focus group sessions were conducted as part of a mixed-method research design. Five of these sessions were held with students, and one group session was done with teachers. Both students and teachers were drawn from the Fifth and Sixth Form classes of four different categories of secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. These schools were:

1. The Government Secondary
2. The Assisted Government Secondary
3. The Senior Comprehensive Secondary
4. The Private Secondary.

In an attempt to facilitate some degree of homogeneity, students were grouped according to Forms and school types. Three of these groups were made up of Form Five students, two groups comprised Sixth Form students, and the teacher focus group

comprised participants who taught both Fifth and Sixth Form classes. Each student group comprised 6 participants, while the teacher focus group comprised 5 participants. All student focus group sessions were conducted for a period of 1 hour, while the teacher focus group discussions spanned a 2-hour period. A total of 35 persons participated in the focus group discussions.

Focus group participants were selected to provide clarification and elaboration on survey results that seemed ambiguous to the researcher. Focus group participants also served the purpose of confirming certain aspects of the survey findings. Having participated in the survey questionnaires, all focus groups participants would already have contributed to the first phase of this mixed-method research design. Input at this second phase greatly assisted me in arriving at conclusions that might have been more difficult if the survey method was used as a singular research tool.

Like the survey questionnaires, focus group questions centered on six major research questions that established the framework for the study of differential perceptions of teachers and students about the teaching and learning of history in secondary schools of Trinidad and Tobago. These research questions were:

1. What are respondents' perceptions of history in the Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms?

2a. What are students' perceptions of historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation?

2b. What are teachers' perceptions of student understandings of the historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation?

3. Does a relationship exist between student perceptions of the history syllabus and their perceptions of the subject?
4. What differences exist in student and teacher perceptions of the history syllabus, history textbooks, and teacher competence?
5. What are respondents' perceptions of the teaching methodology used in Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms?
6. Does a relationship exist between students' perceptions of history and external opinions about the subject of history?

All focus group questions for both students and teachers were divided into five different categories similar to those found in the survey questionnaires (see appendix B).

Findings of Student Focus Group No. 1

This group comprised 6 Form Five students from the Senior Comprehensive School group. Participants were highly interactive, with 5 students dominating the discussion. One student seemed somewhat withdrawn and had to be encouraged to participate in the discussion. This student seemed more at ease during the second half of the discussion.

Category I: Student Perceptions of History

In this first category, participants were asked how they felt about studying history; what led them to choose history as one of their examination subjects; and whether they planned to study history at a higher level. Some students stated that they studied history because they wanted to get into law school. Such students saw history as a stepping-stone to something for which they had greater interest. Others admitted that they

had no choice in the matter, since history fell into a subject grouping to which they were assigned. Two students stated that they studied history out of natural curiosity. Generally speaking, the participants were not certain whether they would choose to pursue the subject at a higher level.

Category II: Historical Concepts

In this category, students were asked to express their views of a history concept, and to explain in greater detail their understanding of certain historical concepts such as historical evidence, causation, and historical facts. Participants were asked to jot down on a piece of paper what they understood by a history concept. These were the responses:

Student A: "A historical concept deals with life evolving around situations which have occurred in the past like a war might have been fought without guns but now it might have been fought with these arms."

Student B: "History concept to me is one which consists of changes following time and how these changes become worse in certain areas."

Student C: "A history concept in my opinion is where people can look at history and determine how it affected their past and how it will affect their future."

Student D: "The concept of history is the continuous act and change from the past to now – like what happened then should happen now."

Student E: "A history concept in my view is the way history is made up and how things change or take place from time to time."

Student F: "I truly believe that the concept of history is a continuous thing – something that is passed on and inherited."

When asked about the concepts they had learned so far, students demonstrated difficulty in identifying a single concept. Participants in this focus group remained largely clueless even after much probing. No definitive response was given to the question. This reaction was noteworthy since students generally appeared to understand historical concepts from responses given on the survey questionnaire. This matter will be examined more closely in the discussion chapter.

Category III: The History Syllabus

Two questions were asked in this category. The first centered on students' feelings about the textbooks used in history classes. The general consensus was that history texts were not very user-friendly and, as a result, students experienced difficulty spending much time in reading. Participants agreed that the writing style in some texts was sometimes confusing, forcing them to resort frequently to the dictionary for insights into the meanings of some words. One respondent suggested the inclusion of a history dictionary as one of the prescribed texts for history teaching and learning. Other members of the group quickly embraced this idea.

The second question in this category asked students to indicate what aspects of the history syllabus should be deleted, revised, or retained. Students disagreed with each other to the extent that it was difficult to arrive at a strong group consensus. After much probing, all participants agreed that the difficult texts should be eliminated from the history syllabus.

Category IV: Teaching Methodology

When asked to describe what they did in history classes, students in this group identified the field trip as the single most worthwhile activity done in the history class. Generally, participants identified interactive class activities as the most enjoyable experiences in the history classroom. However, they all agreed that too many class notes contributed to their dislike for the subject. Members of this focus group suggested that teachers could do the following to make the subject more appealing:

1. use more pictures, maps, and other visual aids
2. develop a more pleasant personality
3. demonstrate greater passion for the subject
4. give more personal attention to students.

Category V: Student Reaction

The final question in this category asked participants to identify factors outside the classroom that influenced the way they felt about history. The group reported that history students were often bombarded with negative perceptions of history. Participants also gave examples of some students who dropped the subject in order to identify with the more persuasive group of detractors.

Findings of Student Focus Group No. 2

This second focus group comprised students of the Advanced Level (Sixth Form) history class in a Government Secondary School. The ages of the respondents ranged between 17-18 years. All 6 students participated actively in the discussion, disagreeing at times with each other, but arriving at a common consensus in the end.

Category I: Student Perceptions of History

In this category students were again asked how they felt about history; what led them to choose history as an examination subject, and whether they planned to study the subject at a higher level. Participants had mixed feelings about studying history. While some students indicated a great love for the subject, others admitted to having an emerging interest after reconsidering the value of history.

When asked about their thinking at the time that led them to choose history as one of their examination subjects, students gave the following responses:

1. "Trinidadians do not have a good sense of the past, who they are and where they came from. Therefore, I chose history to become informed so that no one can fool me."
2. "History is an interesting subject to study. And since I had a good base in earlier years, I decided to select it for A-Levels."
3. "History keeps me up to date with what is happening around me."

When asked about studying history at a higher level, no one could say for certain except that they would consider the idea.

Category II: Historical Concepts

In this category, students were asked to express their view of a history concept by jotting it down on a piece of paper provided by the researcher. The following responses were given:

Student A: "A history concept in my view are certain events that take place leading up to some sort of situation. By this I believe that it just shows what causes certain events to take place with either positive or negative outcomes."

Student B: "Throughout history we see that each era goes through different phases e.g. 'the slavery phase' and Industrial Revolution. So for me a history concept deals with a particular phase during the course of history. Because the topics in history deal with one particular concept various discussions will stem from that."

Student C: "A history concept is basically to me all about the facts of the past and how they have affected the individual's point of view in terms of life."

Student D: "I believe that history entails everything that took place in the past. It gives us a clearer idea of who we are, where we came from, and even where we are going."

Student E: "A history concept is the mix of historical ideas of what influenced contemporary society."

Student F: "A history concept may be a better understanding of the learning process of what happened in the past and what is now taking place in the future. It enables one to fully comprehend why something took place and the effects of that event."

When asked about the lessons that can be learned from history, students generally agreed that avoiding mistakes of the past was perhaps the most important lesson an individual can learn.

Category III: The History Syllabus

For this category, participants were asked to express their feelings about the textbooks used in history classes. While some students felt comfortable with the history texts, others argued that the texts were a bit confusing, and that they often experienced problems with interpretation.

On the question of revising the history syllabus, students had mixed views about what should be added or deleted. While some suggested that European history should be deleted, others retorted that knowledge of European history was important to understanding their West Indian past. The general consensus, however, was that there was need for wider choices to be included in the A-Level history offerings.

Category IV: Teaching Methodology

The first question in this category asked students to describe what they did in history classes. Participants identified note taking and teacher-led discussions as the major teaching strategies used for history instruction. Respondents generally enjoyed teacher/student interaction as well as the opportunity to engage in analysis. They identified long class sessions as a major deterrent. When asked to identify some of the things teachers could do to make the subject more appealing, students suggested greater use of visual aids and role plays as two important considerations. Respondents also suggested that students should be more actively engaged in class discussions. Students also felt that notes prepared and dictated by the teacher did little to bring the subject alive.

Category V: Student Reaction

The single question in this category asked about factors outside the classroom that influenced the way students felt about history. Some participants identified certain television shows like "Roots." Others believed that religion played a role in influencing the way they felt about history. Those who shared this view pointed to certain perceived

inconsistencies and contradictions between secular history and the teachings of popular religion.

The group generally believed that students could also learn history from their family members. They stated that, in some cases, family accounts of history could help to complement what was learned in class. Participants also believed that politics could influence students' perception of history. After some probing, students agreed that very often politicians were responsible for giving the wrong perception of history by distorting the facts to suit their own political agenda.

Findings of Student Focus Group No. 3

The third focus group was made up of Sixth Form students of a Government Assisted Secondary School. Members of this particular group were outstanding for their keen sense of gender awareness and passion for history.

Category I: Student Perceptions of History

There were three questions in this category. Question 1 asked how students felt about studying history. Question 2 probed into students' thinking at the time that led them to choose history as one of their examination subjects. Question 3 asked respondents to express their feeling about studying history at a higher level.

In response to the first question, all participants shared the view that studying history was difficult at times and that students were often challenged by the quantity of notes and dates they were expected to study. When asked about their thinking at the time that led to the selection of history, students gave a variety of responses ranging from their love for the subject, to the popular response that they had very little choice in the matter

since the subject fell into a particular subject grouping assigned to them. Participants generally regarded studying history at a higher level as an option, albeit a challenging one.

Category II: Historical Concepts

In the first question of this category, students were asked to jot down their views on what they believed to be a history concept. These were the various responses:

Student A: "A history concept is a matter of ideas being formulated about a particular event – the time period, the area in which it took place, and the impact of this event on society, economy and politics."

Student B: "A history concept involves a noticeable event that occurred in the past and has resulted in a lot of investigation. It may have affected many people either positively or negatively to be worthy of interest."

Student C: "Simply put, history concepts are those important terms or remarkable events that took place in our history."

Student D: "A history concept is the basis of what, when, where, why an event is all about."

Student E: "A history concept is comprised of distinguishable events or persons." Student F gave no response to this question.

The second question in this category asked students to discuss what caused an event to happen. This question was asked to determine the extent to which students understood the concept of simple cause-and-effect relations vis-à-vis multiple complex causes. Students were a bit tentative, but they responded after some probing. Responses

from participants highlighted the general perception that one particular factor, rather than several different factors, caused an event.

Respondents were also asked to explain who or what determined the course of history. All of the explanations centered on the notion that human beings were the primary determinants of history.

Students had much more to say, however, on the concept of historical facts. The question asked: How do you know that "historical facts" were really true? The general consensus was that one could not always be certain whether those "so-called facts" were really true. Students suggested that one had to examine various sources; and if there was agreement on a particular account, then one could reasonably assume the account to be true.

The next question asked: How does a historian use historical evidence? One student summarized the group's response in the following way: The historian gathers information and picks sense from nonsense. If all the sources say the same thing, then there is a likelihood that the events may be true. It is essential that historians use different sources.

When asked to state what these sources were, students identified pictures, books, legal documents, and records of cases as key sources of evidence.

Probing deeper into students' understanding of historical concepts, I asked one final question in this category. The question required participants to state what they understood by historical explanation. The group reaction was that a historical explanation is one that is strongly supported by evidence. If not, it becomes mere speculation.

Category III: The History Syllabus

The two questions in this category were:

1. How do you feel about the textbooks used in history classes?
2. If you had the opportunity to revise the history syllabus, what would you delete or add?

In response to the first question, students indicated that the language used in A-Level history texts was generally unappealing and sometimes difficult to comprehend. Students complained about having to refer constantly to the dictionary for meaning. They also lamented that there were no pictures in textbooks.

Students' response to the second question was that a few themes could be deleted from the syllabus and a greater mix in the history offerings could be explored. Students reported that they felt saturated with the present emphasis on Caribbean history.

Participants also recommended the inclusion of women in history, since they too must have made some contribution to the development of society. The girls noted that men dominated too much of the history, and some attempt should be made to correct this imbalance. Students also believed that more field trips and greater use of audio-visual equipment could enhance the history learning process.

Category IV: Teaching Methodology

One of the questions in this category asked students to describe what they did in history classes. The most outstanding activities identified were reading, lectures, and map reading. When asked to discuss the things they liked and disliked most about history classes, students identified group interaction and field trips as the most enjoyable activities. The teacher's personality and mode of delivery also attracted students to

history classes. Participants agreed, however, that too much essay writing lessened enjoyment of the subject; while excessive note taking, long lectures, and reading difficult texts also served as major deterrents.

Category V: Student Reaction

In this category, an attempt was made to probe into various factors outside the classroom that might have also influenced the way students felt about history. The first question asked students to identify factors outside the classroom that influenced the way they felt about history. Participants identified visits to historical sites as one of the positive factors that could influence students' perception of history. They suggested that media coverage of historical events could also color one's view of history. Students also believed that government's policy regarding the award of scholarships suggested that history was not perceived as important as the other subjects such as science and business.

The final question in this category asked about important lessons that people could learn from history. The responses centered on the following views:

1. Past mistakes ought not to be repeated.
2. Equality is a basic human need; it is an ideal for which one should strive.
3. Despite the many historical accounts, humanity still does not seem to learn anything from history.

Students also observed that too many historical accounts document and highlight atrocities committed by mankind. They argued that not enough emphasis is placed on humanitarian deeds, and least of all on the achievements of women.

Findings of Student Focus Group No. 4

This focus group comprised 6 Form Five male students from the Government Secondary School group. All the questions were similar to those of the previous groups and spanned a period of 1 hour. Students in this group seemed at ease and responded freely to the questions posed by the moderator.

Category I: Student Perceptions of History

The first question in this category asked how students felt about studying history. The general response was that although the subject seemed interesting, there were too many details to remember. Students in this group expressed a preference for World history over that of Caribbean history. When asked about their thinking at the time that led them to choose history as one of their examination subjects, students gave the following responses:

1. History was a better alternative to geography and would make an interesting study.
2. Since history was one of their strongest subjects in the lower forms, students felt that it would probably be easy to pass the subject at the CXC level.
3. History would increase their knowledge of the past.

Students reported that they were likely to study the subject at a higher level if the content were broader and students were allowed to engage in greater analysis rather than story telling.

Category II: Historical Concepts

Participants were asked to write down their thoughts on what they considered a history concept to be. The following responses were given:

Student A: "A history concept is an ideology or standard used to determine how people lived."

Student B: "A history concept to me is what helps us to understand how things came about today and why certain things are the way they are."

Student C: "The reasons why certain things happen in the past and how they led to our present position."

Student D: "A history concept widens the views of students on the past."

Student E: "A history concept would be a sort of perception of why and how something occurred in history. This would entail all the factors that led to a certain event."

Student F: "A history concept involves a critical examination of an event or some events which took place in the past."

The second question in this category focused on verifying historical facts. Students were asked: How do you know that historical facts are really true? The group's response was that they did not know for sure whether certain historical facts were true or not, and that they would have to carefully examine each situation to determine truth. When asked to elaborate, students gave the following outline:

1. examine different sources
2. look for consistency in accounts
3. consider different perspectives

4. approach the subject as though it were a jig-saw puzzle with trick pieces
5. use eyewitness accounts to corroborate certain aspects of modern history.

Students were asked to explain why an event happens in history. One recurring response was that people caused events in history. Probing deeper into the question of historical concepts, participants were asked to offer an explanation on who or what determined the course of history. After a short period of uncertainty, students identified powerful groups in society as the major determinants of history. Respondents also argued that almost anything worth recognizing could determine the course of history. Asked to give examples, students identified events such as hurricanes and other natural disasters as events that could alter the cause of history. Even when challenged by the rest of the group, one student insisted that sports could also alter the course of history simply by bringing together people from different parts of the world.

The final question in this category asked students to explain how historians used historical evidence. The group consensus was that historians were usually the ones to determine what evidence was most relevant to a particular study. The group also felt that a major responsibility of the historian was to evaluate and analyze evidence to determine truth. Students also noted that since historians usually based historical accounts on their own worldviews, many of these accounts might very well be biased.

Category III: The History Syllabus

The first question in this category asked students to express their feeling about the textbooks used in history classes. Generally, students were concerned about what they considered to be conflicting views offered by different authors and would prefer to be

given one main perspective for examination purposes. These students believed that examiners looked for one correct response to a particular question.

Responding to the question of possible revision of the history syllabus, students felt that the CXC history content should be reduced to fewer themes and that there should be a better mix of Caribbean and World history. Participants expressed a feeling of saturation with the present emphasis on Caribbean history.

Category IV: Teaching Methodology

The first question in this category required students to describe what they did in history classes. Students identified note taking, group discussions, and field trips as the major class activities.

When asked to identify things they liked or disliked about history classes, students reported that they enjoyed class discussions most since these sessions gave them the opportunity to sharpen their argumentative skills.

Generally, students disliked having to adjust their thinking to suit that of their teacher's. They reported that not enough opportunity was given to engage in analysis and that students were often forced to express only the views of the class teacher.

Category V: Student Reaction

This final category asked students to identify factors outside of the classroom that influenced the way they felt about history. One factor identified was that conflicting religious views sometimes contrasted with the secular historical account. Participants also identified the History Channel on television as a good source of information outside the

history classroom. Students believed that historical accounts from parents also helped in stimulating interest in the subject. Respondents confessed that they preferred to hear such stories from home than to listen to history stories in the classroom.

Students also reported that much of the negative influence came from peers who generally regarded history as boring. They admitted that history was not a popular examination subject in their school, and some history students often buckled under the pressure to drop the subject.

The final question required students to discuss what they considered to be important lessons to be learned from history. After much deliberation, the boys arrived at what they considered to be two important lessons that could be learned from history. These lessons were:

1. What you do today could adversely affect others in the future. Students cited global warming as a case in point.
2. Nothing is what it seems.

Asked to elaborate on this statement, students continued to demonstrate a remarkable degree of skepticism about the lessons one was expected to learn from a study of history.

Findings of Student Focus Group No. 5

Comprising 6 Form Five students of a Private Secondary School, this group was moderately responsive with 4 students taking the lead in the discussion. The other 2 students responded later in the discussion, after some prompting from the moderator. Like the other focus groups, all questions were put into five categories with a discussion period of 1 hour.

Category I: Student Perceptions of History

In this category, participants were asked to give quick responses to three questions. The questions required participants to describe how they felt about studying history; what led them to choose history as an examination subject; and how they felt about studying history at a higher level. The general response to the first question was that history was relatively easy to understand and that it facilitated knowledge of self.

In response to the second question, students reasoned that their earlier success in the subject was a good indicator of similar success they hoped to achieve at the CXC level. However, no one expressed desire to pursue the subject at a higher level.

Category II: Historical Concepts

The first question in this category required participants to jot down on a piece of paper their understanding of a history concept. Only 3 of the 6 participants responded in writing to the question.

Student A: "A history concept means the concept of learning about our past. It involves all aspects of history including the written and oral aspects as well."

Student B: "I believe this to be an idea formulated by the past and set in future by those who research the events that led to the idea."

Student C: "A historical concept is a developed idea that captures a proven fact and involves the use of analytical skills to look at a past circumstance and understand why."

The second question asked: How do you know that "historical facts" are really true? The general reaction was that not every so-called fact added up to be true.

Participants felt that they were more inclined to accept an historical explanation as true if there were supporting documents to verify the event.

On the question of causation, participants were asked to explain what caused an event to happen. Students believed that people were the major factor that caused an event to happen. When asked for further elaboration, participants reported that clashing views were responsible for some events of the past. Students maintained that differences in beliefs were the single most important factor that caused events to happen in history.

Students gave similar responses to the question of who or what determined the course of history. One such response was that people and ideas generally determined the course of history. Students also pointed out that events were also responsible for the course of history.

Much discussion was generated on the question of historical evidence. The question asked students to explain how a historian used historical evidence. After much deliberation, one student volunteered to sum up the discussion in this way:

> History is a mystery story to be pieced together. The historian searches for clues and puts them together to determine the most logical explanation of a particular event. But there is also need to consider other alternatives that may also be plausible.

Category III: The History Syllabus

The first question in this category asked how students felt about the textbooks used in history classes. Students believed that there was a definite need to include summary sections in the texts to assist students in pulling together the main points of the discussion. Students stated that they would appreciate some help in deciphering the

information given in texts, and a summary section would go a long way in meeting this need.

The next question asked students to state what aspects of the history syllabus they would be willing to revise should they be given the opportunity to do so. All students agreed that nothing should be deleted from the syllabus. As a matter fact, they insisted that the subject should be made compulsory, given the benefits to be derived from studying history.

Category IV: Teaching Methodology

In this section, participants were asked to describe what they did in history classes. They were also asked to discuss their likes and dislikes of history and to suggest ways of making the subject more appealing.

In response to the first question, students reported a relaxed atmosphere in history classes where the teacher talked and students took information in the form of notes. But there were also opportunities for group interaction where students compared information with classmates. Sometimes students were allowed to challenge the views of the class teacher. The participants felt that in their history classes everyone's opinions mattered.

Students identified individualized instruction as the single most appealing factor of their history class. They all liked the small class size and admired the way the teacher was able to get the point across to students. One deterrent, however, was the time of the day history was offered. Respondents all agreed that the period immediately after lunch was not the most ideal time to engage in a study of history. Students also stated that more visual aids and class outings would contribute to making history more appealing.

Category V: Student Reaction

Students were asked to identify factors outside the history classroom that influenced the way they felt about the subject. This group chose to focus on negative influences, suggesting that friends often discouraged others from taking history as a subject. Respondents pointed out that many of their friends considered history as a boring subject. Participants admitted that family members exerted a negative influence, claiming that history was not an important requirement for employment. Bombarded by these negative views, many potentially good history students opted not to select history as one of their examination subjects.

Summary and Discussion of Student Focus Group Findings

The five student focus groups of this study were used not only to confirm survey findings, but also to clarify and elaborate survey results particularly in the area of historical concepts. The primary advantage of using this complementary approach was to facilitate triangulation between quantitative and qualitative data obtained from both surveys and focus groups respectively. Analysis of focus group discussions centered on the five categories previously explored in the surveys, namely, student perceptions of history; historical concepts; the history syllabus; teaching methodology; and student reaction. Through these focus groups, I was able to understand better some of the ideas expressed in the survey. But more importantly, the focus group sessions provided greater insights into participants' thinking on the question of historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation.

Findings of questions in the first category (student perceptions of history) revealed that the majority of participants in the five student focus groups expressed

mixed feelings about studying history. While on the one hand, students generally appreciated the value of studying history, on the other hand, they expressed reservations about the quantity of details students of history were expected to remember. As a result, the majority of respondents doubted whether they would pursue the subject at a higher level.

In assessing students' reaction to the history syllabus, two points became clear. The first point was that students generally found the prescribed textbooks difficult to understand, and that they would prefer texts to be more user- friendly, with appropriate graphics, pictures, and summary sections to assist in better understanding of the material. The second point was that many respondents recommended revision of the CXC and A-Level curricula to reflect greater balance in the themes suggested for study. Some students expressed a feeling of saturation with the present emphasis on Caribbean history, and recommended the inclusion of world history as another component of the history syllabus. At present, the CXC syllabus focuses primarily on Caribbean history. Some students believe that an introduction to world history at the CXC level would better equip them to grapple with the complexities of European history offered at the Advanced level.

Findings of the question on teaching methodology revealed that students generally expressed preference for interactive class sessions where students were given the opportunity to share information and engage in critical thinking activities. Participants felt that excessive note taking and long lectures served to lessen enjoyment of the subject. All participants suggested that field trips, visual aids, and other graphic representations would stimulate greater interest in the subject.

Further discussions revealed that students were able to obtain a great deal of valuable information from sources outside the classroom. Historical information obtained from family members, television programs, and historical sites provided a good source of history instruction. However, several factors outside the classroom also contributed to students' negative perceptions of history. Many of the respondents agreed that perhaps the greatest negative influence came from their own peers who perceived history as boring.

Focus group discussions also centered on the question of historical concepts. Findings of the first question in this category revealed that students had varying views on what a history concept was supposed to be. Not only were these views varied but, for the most part, they were also misleading. Only 3 students demonstrated some degree of understanding of what a historical concept was. Two of these three responses came from Advanced Level students; the other response came from a student of the Private Secondary School group. However, the vast majority of students could not readily identify one single concept that they had learned in history class. The majority of participants believed that human beings were the primary determinants of history. Some were willing to consider other factors such as events and natural forces as possible suggestions only after much probing by the moderator.

Findings also revealed that the majority of students gave single factor explanations for events in history. Based on responses from the different focus groups, it could be assumed that students generally believed that an event was caused by one particular factor rather than by a mix of different factors. After some probing, only a few

students were willing to consider multiple causation as a viable explanation for the occurrence of a historical event.

This contrasts sharply with responses from the survey questionnaires that suggested that students generally understood the concept of multiple causation in history. Focus group discussions revealed however that, while students were able to identify appropriate responses on the survey, they were unable to adequately defend their positions with any adequacy in the focus group setting.

Students were more confident, however, about their perception of historical facts. Many respondents hesitated to state categorically that historical facts were really true. Instead, they adopted the deconstructionist approach, questioning the validity of certain historical sources.

The final question in this category dealt with the historian's use of historical evidence. An analysis of students' responses revealed that students generally regarded the historian as a detective using a number of clues to solve a mystery. Respondents were also aware of some of the limitations historians faced in trying to reconstruct the past. Still, students believed that notwithstanding the possibility of bias, historians were expected to carefully assess historical evidence before presenting any account of the past.

Findings of Teacher Focus Group Discussion

This group comprised 5 history teachers from three different school groups, namely, Government Secondary, Senior Comprehensive Secondary, and Private Secondary Schools. All of the teachers had a Bachelor's degree in history, with 2 teachers possessing additional professional qualifications in teacher education. Of the 5 teachers, 3 had less than 3 years' teaching experience; 1 teacher had between 5-10 years' experience;

and 1 teacher had over 30 years' experience in teaching. Three teachers taught both Fifth and Sixth Form classes, while 2 taught only at the Fifth Form level. Four of the participants taught in secondary schools in Trinidad, and 1 teacher taught in a Senior Secondary School in Tobago.

All participants demonstrated enthusiasm and expressed their views quite freely over the 2-hour period of discussion. Participants also seemed comfortable reflecting on their practice, as well as forging links with other teachers for further collaboration. After the formal 2-hour session ended, teachers continued to chat informally for another half hour, comparing teaching strategies and sharing classroom experiences.

Category I: Teacher Perceptions of History

In this category, teachers were asked to discuss the factors that shaped their ideas about history, and to comment on their role as history teachers. Generally, respondents reported that their passion for history was fueled by their former teachers' love for the subject, reading different historical accounts, discussion with others, and lectures by master teachers.

Participants had different views about their various roles as history teachers. One teacher retorted: "I see my role not as a facilitator of learning, but someone to hammer in views that are right. I determine what views are right for my history students." Ironically, this teacher has been teaching for over 5 years, and has recently completed training in teacher education. Another respondent saw his role as "getting the syllabus done." He argued that given the wide scope of the history syllabus and the low level of student ability, he had no choice but to concentrate on completing the syllabus.

Protesting strenuously against the previous point of view, another teacher preferred to focus on the social aspects of education. She felt that students must appreciate the importance of living together as one people, given their Trinidad and Tobago history as a multicultural and multiracial society. One teacher philosophized that her role was to act as a "mediator between the past and future," while another felt comfortable in the role of getting students to "live the history."

When asked to arrive at a group consensus on the matter, teachers veered toward the view that preparing students to pass the CXC and Advanced Level examinations was a major role performed by most teachers. They explained that since the present education system seemed largely examination-oriented, teachers were left with little option but to teach to the examination. They reasoned that if students acquired a love for history in the process, then their jobs would become more satisfying.

Category II: Historical Concepts

Like the student focus groups, questions about historical concepts were also discussed in the teacher focus group sessions. The first question required respondents to jot down on a piece of paper their understanding of a history concept. The following responses were given:

Teacher A: "A history concept is a viewpoint that has been generalized so as to explain an occurrence, event, or happening."

Teacher B: "A history concept is an over-riding theme that is used as a guide or springboard to teach individual lessons."

Teacher C: "Indentureship is an example of a history concept that describes a situation in which one group of persons works under the control of another group for a period of time."

Teacher D: "A history concept is the formulation of a set idea or theme upon which a teacher bases a presentation. Such a concept must be made as clear as possible so that the student is able to properly grasp the idea being taught."

Teacher E: "A history concept is used to engage students in some aspect of theory as it relates to the past, and as it bears upon themes."

When asked to explain their various approaches to teaching concepts in history, the majority of participants admitted that they did not really set out to teach concepts, rather, they taught facts presented in the history texts. They confessed that if concepts were taught at all, they were taught incidentally. One teacher explained that a method of teaching concepts would be to link a modern day situation to the past. Another teacher maintained that knowledge acquisition was an important pre-requisite to understanding concepts. She stated that students could not engage in analysis because they did not know the facts.

Extending the point a bit further, one participant admitted that she did not leave it up to students to analyze historical information because she felt that they were incapable of doing so. Holding firmly to her teacher-centered approach, the teacher insisted that she determined how students should analyze history. It is important to note, however, that this was not the general view of the group.

Question 6 in this category asked teachers to explain which concepts they found most difficult to teach. Having already admitted that history concepts were taught

incidentally, this question did not seem pertinent at this stage. Still, I persisted. Pointing teachers to the compulsory question in the newly revised Advanced Level history curriculum, I asked about the question of historical evidence. Participants agreed that teaching students to use historical evidence was a rather difficult exercise. They believed that since students generally did not read widely from different sources, they experienced difficulty in making syntheses.

Asked what teachers could do to assist students in acquiring the skills of analyzing historical evidence, participants gave the following suggestions:

1. Conduct interviews with senior citizens who were involved in historical events such as World War II and the Black Power Movement.
2. Allow students to visit the museum and national archives to interact with authentic historical evidence.
3. Take students on a historical walk around the community.

Participants believed that these activities would go a long way in helping students to understand historical evidence.

Although respondents felt that concepts such as slavery, class consciousness, and freedom were important concepts to teach in Caribbean history, they could not say for certain whether students fully understood these concepts taught in the classroom. In reflection, all the participants agreed that teachers should make a more conscious effort to teach historical concepts before students could begin to understand the meaning of concepts in history.

Category III: The History Syllabus

The first question in this category required participants to assess the present CXC/A-Level syllabus. All 5 teachers agreed that the present history syllabus was too long and broad for the short period of time in which students were required to study the subject. Respondents stated that in most secondary schools, CXC history is offered only at the Form Four and Form Five levels. This means that teachers have the gargantuan task not only of introducing students to history, but also preparing them for an examination that is broad in scope. Teachers pointed out that teaching history at CXC level would have been easier had students been introduced to the subject from the Form One level. Some felt that an added advantage could be achieved if students were taught history from the elementary level.

The same argument was made against the Advanced Level syllabus. Teachers believed that given the short 2-year period for A-Level preparation, students found difficulty engaging in deep learning largely because of the tremendous amount of facts to uncover. Returning to an earlier argument, teachers used this example to justify why they focussed on teaching facts rather than concepts.

When asked to assess the main texts used in history classes, all of the participants agreed that many of the Advanced Level textbooks were too difficult to read. They pointed out that some of these texts were also used at the university level. Teachers confessed that they too sometimes experienced difficulty reading some of the prescribed A-Level texts. Those who taught CXC assessed the main texts as too story-like for the most part. Participants believed that such texts did little to prepare students for the more difficult content found in Advanced Level textbooks.

While there was general agreement that the difficult texts should be removed from the history syllabus, teachers were reluctant to make suggestions for any new history material to be added to the syllabus. In response to the question of adding to the syllabus, one teacher proffered this emotional response: "Add to the already heavy and cumbersome syllabus? No way!"

The general consensus was that since the history curriculum was too long and sometimes difficult, attempts should be made to simplify the material to facilitate better understanding of history.

Category IV: Teaching Methodology

There were two questions in this category. The first question asked teachers to comment on what they did to stimulate students' interest in history. Without hesitation, participants suggested the use of role plays, games, projects, art, cultural exhibitions, drama, and technology as viable options.

The second question asked participants to identify some of the challenges they faced as teachers of history, and to explain how they dealt with these challenges. Teachers of the Senior Comprehensive and Private Secondary School groups identified lack of proper reading skills as one of the major challenges faced in the classroom. The suggested solution to this problem was to group students so that the stronger could assist the weaker ones. One teacher gave extra time outside the scheduled class period to instruct weaker students in remedial reading. This teacher reported quantum leaps in students' ability to read at the end of the academic year. Most of the remedial-reading students succeeded in passing the CXC history examination the following year.

Another respondent cited class indiscipline as a major challenge to history teaching. The teacher reported that students who experienced difficulty reading and understanding history were more likely than others to misbehave in class. "How then do you deal with such a challenge?" I asked. The teacher quipped: "I put the challenge out of the classroom. I do not allow students the opportunity to disrupt my class." This response generated much discussion about classroom management and the use of alternative methods of handling classroom challenges. Although the rest of the group did not share this teacher's method of dealing with the challenge of misbehavior, the teacher remained resolute in her strategy for dealing with the problem.

One participant identified difficult questions posed by students as another challenge to classroom teaching. The teacher cited a personal example of not having a correct answer to give in response to students' questioning. The group was happy to offer solutions to this challenge. One such solution was to evade the question completely by talking around the issue. Another strategy was to throw the question back to the students, forcing them to arrive at their own solutions. Dissatisfied with these responses, one participant offered a final solution that required teachers to confess ignorance, promising to further investigate the matter. The majority of participants accepted this response as the preferred solution to the problem.

Category V: Teacher Reaction

This final category was designed to capture participants' concluding thoughts on three questions:

1. What constituted effective history teaching?
2. What factors contributed to student lack of interest in history?

3. What expectation gaps existed between history teachers and students in the teaching/learning process?

In response to the first question, participants agreed that effective history teaching could be achieved when the teacher was innovative and possessed a sound knowledge base. Such a teacher must also have a passion for history and the ability to motivate students. In addition, teachers believed that in order to teach history effectively one must inculcate values in students, highlighting positive values that could be learned from history.

When asked about the factors that contributed to student lack of interest in history, most of the participants were quick to identify students' laziness, inability to read, and general poor attitude toward the subject as key factors to be considered. Only one respondent identified teacher inadequacy to teach as a possible contributing factor.

In response to the question of expectation gaps that may exist between the history teacher and students, participants offered the following explanation:

1. Teachers expect students to read more extensively on a range of history topics; students believe that they should read only what is necessary to answer the specific question.
2. Teachers expect students to use prescribed textbooks outside the classroom in preparation for class discussions; students want teachers to use the texts in class, pointing them to information to be learned.
3. Students believe that the teacher's role is to teach by giving information to students; teachers generally believe that students should play a more active role in their own learning experiences.

Given the general tenor of the discussion, I ventured to ask one final serendipitous question that I also regarded as pertinent to the study. The question asked: What caused teachers to use the lecture method as the primary mode of instruction when many seemed to favor multiple methods of teaching?

The majority of participants stated that they used the lecture method as a control mechanism to maintain order in the classroom. They argued that while cooperative and other interactive learning structures were good strategies, students often became carried away, sometimes to the point of disturbing other classes in the school. The lecture method succeeded in keeping students quiet and focussed on the lesson at hand.

Another reason for using the lecture method was to provide students with tailor-made information needed to pass the history examination. Teachers complained that many students did not purchase prescribed history texts, and therefore, they lacked a strong knowledge base to perform creditably in examinations. The lecture method was therefore used as a short-term measure to assist students in acquiring the necessary information needed to complete the history syllabus. While teachers did not generally regard the lecture method as the preferred teaching strategy, they continued to use it mainly as a survival strategy.

Summary and Discussion of Teacher Focus Group Findings

Like the student focus group discussions, this analysis also centered on five categories, namely, teacher perceptions of history, historical concepts, the history syllabus, teaching methodology, and teacher reaction.

Findings of questions in the first category (teacher perceptions of history) revealed that respondents had different perceptions about their roles as teachers. While

some saw their role as agents of social change, others perceived their role as bastions of historical truth. After further reflection, teachers generally agreed that, given the examination-oriented context within which they operated, a more pragmatic role was that of teaching for success in the history examinations.

Findings of the first question in the historical concepts category revealed that teachers regarded a history concept primarily as a viewpoint, an overarching theme or idea used to introduce discussions and develop explanations about the past. However, teachers did not consciously set out to teach concepts in history. A large part of teaching was devoted to covering facts necessary for passing the history examination. Although theoretically teachers were able to identify useful activities to facilitate better understanding of concepts such as historical evidence, in reality, teachers were very reluctant to attempt these activities. This was largely due to their own insecurity about their ability to teach history concepts adequately. The majority of participants believed that teachers must first understand what history concepts really are before attempting to instruct students on the subject.

Findings of teachers' perception of the CXC/Advanced Level syllabus revealed a general belief that the current syllabus was too broad in scope, given the limited 2-year period in which the subject was expected to be taught. Teachers also felt that while the CXC textbooks were reasonably easy to understand, they did little to prepare students for the more difficult content found in Advanced Level texts. On the whole, participants preferred to remove difficult texts from the syllabus rather than use them as a means of preparing students for greater intellectual challenges.

In analyzing participants' responses to questions related to teaching methodology, one major assumption could be made. The assumption is that although in theory teachers were able to identify effective teaching strategies, very little attempt was made to apply these strategies to truly bring history alive to students in the classroom.

The final category dealt with participants' responses to questions relating to effective history teaching, student lack of interest in history, and expectation gaps in the teaching and learning process. Findings of these questions revealed that while the majority of teachers believed that they could do more to bring the subject alive, few teachers were willing to take responsibility for students' lack of interest in history. Admitting that expectation gaps did exist in the teaching and learning process, teachers believed that their expectations were reasonable and that students could assume a more active role in their own learning experiences.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Student/Teacher Perceptions of the Teaching and Learning of History

In this study, 432 students and teachers of the CXC and Advanced Level history classes were asked to give their perceptions of the teaching and learning of history in secondary schools of Trinidad and Tobago. A cluster random sample was drawn from a list of 53 secondary schools located in Tobago and the east/west corridor of Trinidad. A mixed-method research design was used to triangulate quantitative and qualitative data generated by the survey questionnaires and focus group discussions respectively. Seventeen (17) history teachers and 415 students participated in the four-page survey questionnaire comprising 31 questions divided into five different categories. Of the 35 focus group participants, 30 were students comprising five mini-groups of 6 persons, and 5 teachers comprising one group.

The results of the student survey revealed that, generally speaking, history students did not regard the subject as dull and boring. Rather, the majority of students viewed history as interesting and relevant to everyday life. While students preferred interactive class sessions to lectures, the majority demonstrated a relatively low tolerance for reading prescribed history textbooks. Still, students reported a general understanding of concepts such as multiple causation and historical evidence. Responses to the survey

also revealed that while students learned a great deal of history from sources outside the classroom, the class teacher continued to play a critical role in shaping students' perceptions of history.

While the results of the focus group discussions confirmed survey findings in some cases, they also clarified and elaborated certain aspects of the student survey results. For example, student focus group responses, like the survey responses, also revealed a strong level of appreciation for the value of history. However, in the focus group discussions, students expressed reservations about the quantity of details they were expected to remember. As a result, they indicated reluctance to pursue the subject at a higher level.

Focus group discussions also elaborated on survey findings regarding history texts. Students generally found the prescribed history texts difficult to understand and suggested that texts be more user-friendly, incorporating graphics and summary sections to facilitate greater understanding of the material.

While student responses to the survey questions indicated a general understanding of historical concepts, focus group discussions told a different story. Findings of student responses to historical concepts revealed that students had varying and somewhat misleading views on what a history concept was supposed to be. Many students in the focus groups could not readily identify one concept taught in history classes. And contrary to their earlier responses to the survey questionnaire, students demonstrated a lack of understanding of the concept of multiple causation. The majority of respondents gave single-factor explanations for events in history. Focus group discussions also illuminated survey responses to the question of historical evidence. Students

demonstrated general understanding of the limitations faced by historians in attempting to reconstruct the past. Through focus group discussions, students were able to identify the possibility of bias based on the historian's particular worldview. Notwithstanding those limitations, students showed appreciation for the historian's role in using historical evidence to explain events of the past.

Results of the teacher surveys revealed that while teachers generally preferred to use a wide range of teaching and learning strategies, the majority of teachers continued to use the lecture method as the primary mode of history instruction. This point was further elaborated and clarified in the focus group discussions. Teachers explained that while they appreciated the value of employing a variety of teaching and learning strategies, they felt restrained by the wide scope of the syllabus, and the examination-driven education system within which they operated. They further explained that the lecture method was used primarily as a short-term measure to assist students in acquiring a certain quantum of information required to cover the history syllabus adequately. The lecture method was also used as a means of controlling student behavior in the classroom.

The study revealed that teachers and students shared similar views on a range of issues including the relevance of the syllabus in meeting the needs of students as well as teacher competence to deliver history instruction at the secondary school level. Still, certain expectation gaps appeared to exist in what students and teachers require of each other in the teaching and learning process. One such student expectation was that teachers should be responsible for providing information to students on a range of topics that cover the history syllabus. Teachers, however, expected students to engage in extensive

reading outside the classroom to uncover the necessary information needed for class discussions.

While survey findings revealed that students perceived themselves as independent learners, when exposed to further discussion and reflection in the focus group setting, these students expressed a preference for greater teacher assistance in history instruction in the classroom. Admitting that certain expectation gaps existed in the teaching and learning process, teachers continue to expect students to assume a more active role in their own learning experiences, notwithstanding teacher reliance on the lecture method as the primary mode of instruction.

Analysis and Discussion of Research Questions

Six research questions set the parameters for this study. The following is an analysis of each of these research questions:

Research Question 1: *What are respondents' perceptions of history in the Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms?* It can be concluded that, generally, both CXC and Advanced Level history students have a positive perception of history as a subject in the school's curriculum. Contrary to the belief that history is dull and boring, students in this study regard history as interesting and relevant to contemporary life. For example, when responses of Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Form were analyzed using One-way ANOVA tests, findings reveal that there is a significant difference in students' opinions in the three year-levels about the relevance of history to everyday life. Students also disagree with the view that history is mostly about dates and places.

When the Student-Newman post hoc procedure was used to further analyze differences in students' perceptions, the findings reveal that students in the Fifth Form are

more likely to view history as boring than students of the Lower and Upper Sixth Forms. Fifth Form students are also more likely to regard history as mostly about dates and places than those in the Lower and Upper Sixth Forms. Based on these findings, one could assume that students' perceptions of history are likely to improve with greater exposure to the subject.

The assumption could also be made that Fifth Form students seem to operate at a lower cognitive level with regard to historical reasoning. If these students view history mostly as the compilation of dates and places, then they are operating at what Hallam describes as the concrete operational level of thinking. According to Hallam, such students possess the ability to give organized answers, yet very often their responses are limited to what is immediately apparent in the text. It is necessary, therefore, that teachers guide students beyond this threshold to the point where they could move past historical dates to engage in deeper probing about the meaning of the events associated with historical dates and places.

While students generally regard interactive class activities as the single most positive aspect of history instruction, they consider information overload and too much reading as major deterrents. Notwithstanding their apparent interest in history, less than half of the respondents on the survey agree that all students in secondary schools should study the subject.

When responses of Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Form students were examined by One-way ANOVA tests, the null hypothesis was retained. This suggests that there is no significant difference in students' opinions in the three year-levels about whether or not all students should study history. One can assume that, notwithstanding

their earlier position, neither maturation nor greater exposure to the subject of history affected students' opinion of history as a subject to be studied by all secondary school students.

Student focus group discussions also highlight students' mixed feelings about studying history. While students generally appreciate the value of studying history, they express reservations about the quantity of details students of history are expected to remember. As a result, the majority of respondents have serious doubts as to whether they would pursue the subject at a higher level.

Students' apparent reluctance to pursue history at a higher level seems to have some relationship with their perceptions of history as a details-laden subject that becomes more cumbersome as one advances in study. While students are required to engage in deeper learning as they move toward higher levels, the fear of becoming overwhelmed by an endless series of names, dates, and places needs to be adjusted if students are to appreciate the value of history in later years. The onus is, therefore, on teachers to clarify this conceptual misunderstanding by instruction. This could be more readily achieved if students are exposed to history at an earlier Form level where teachers have adequate time to properly introduce students to the subject of history.

Teachers' responses to Research Question 1 reveal that teachers also have different perceptions about their roles as instructional leaders. Some teachers see themselves as social change agents. Others regard themselves as gatekeepers of the past. While teachers generally perceive their role as complex and varied, the majority of the teachers admit that teaching history is their preferred career choice. Such mixed feelings are also captured in the teacher focus group discussions. However, upon further

reflection, teachers agree that given the examination-driven education system within which they operate, their primary role is to ensure student success in history examinations. This sentiment is also corroborated by survey findings that reveal teacher preference to helping students pass history examinations.

The tendency for some teachers to see their role primarily as that of assisting students to pass the history examination further exacerbates the problem of student long-term interest in the subject. There seems to be a need for teachers to develop strategies to ensure success in examinations without eclipsing student interest in the subject.

Research Question 2a: *What are students' perceptions of historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation?* Based on student survey responses to this question, one can reasonably assume that students possess a reasonably good understanding of concepts such as historical evidence, causation, historical explanation, as well as continuity and change. But the focus group discussions do not support this assumption. The majority of students in these discussions demonstrate a lack of clear understanding of what a history concept is supposed to be. While the majority of respondents naively regard history concepts as events of the past, only 3 out of 30 respondents were able to identify historical concepts as ideas formulated about past events. This finding reveals the need for greater emphasis to be placed on the teaching of history concepts in secondary schools.

Findings of the focus group discussions also contradict survey responses to the question of causation. While students report understanding of multiple causation on the survey questionnaire, during the focus group discussions they continue to offer single-factor explanations for events in history. Based on responses, it could be assumed that

students believe that an event is caused by one single factor, rather than by a mix of different factors. After much probing, only a few students were willing to consider multiple causation as a viable explanation for the occurrence of an historical event.

Given this lack of understanding, one could assume that the wording of the survey questions made it easy for students to guess an appropriate response. But when placed under closer scrutiny in a focus group setting, these students were unable to account for their apparent knowledge of multiple causation in an adequate manner. In this regard, the focus group interviews served as an effective mechanism for cross-referencing student knowledge of information recorded on the survey questionnaire.

Focus group discussions also confirm what students regard as a historical explanation for events of the past. Holding fast to their popular survey response that human beings determine the course of history, students generally fail to consider other factors such as social and political events, technology, or even supernatural forces, as other possible explanations for events of the past. This suggests a lack of clear understanding on the part of students of what constitutes an historical explanation. But this is not surprising as these students are generally not taught history concepts in the secondary school system.

Focus group discussions corroborate survey findings on students' perceptions of historical evidence. Generally speaking, students believe that historical evidence should be questioned, and that the historian, like a detective, uses a number of clues to unlock the mystery of the past. Students also demonstrate understanding of some of the limitations that historians face in attempting to reconstruct the past.

Research Question 2b: *What are teachers' perceptions of students' understandings of historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation?*

Based on teachers' survey responses to research question 2, it could also be assumed that teachers generally believe that students understand concepts such as continuity and change, and historical evidence. Both teachers and students also hold similar views on student understanding of the concept of multiple causation.

Findings of the teacher focus group discussions reveal that while teachers believe that students understand certain historical concepts, there is no definitive way of testing this assumption since teachers do not teach concepts as part of their regular history instruction. The majority of teachers in the focus group confess that history concepts are taught only incidentally, if they are taught at all. Given this situation, one could reasonably assume that students' apparent understanding of certain historical concepts could be attributed to commonsense deductions based on incidental teaching of history concepts.

If, in reality, students do not readily understand historical concepts, one can further assume that this situation is exacerbated by the lack of exposure to concept identification and concept teaching in the classroom. The assumption can also be made that unless teachers make a conscious effort to identify and teach concepts in history, students will continue to experience difficulty coming to terms with complex concepts such as causation and historical explanation.

This apparent difficulty of students to grapple with historical concepts seems consistent with Hallden's (1993) findings on students' historical understanding. After conducting two studies on students at the upper secondary level, Hallden concluded that

the tendency for students to explain historical events in terms of people's actions and reactions suggests that students at this level do not have the necessary conceptual framework to provide an acceptable historical explanation. This conclusion resonates well with this present study on students' ability to understand history concepts.

Research Question 3: *Does a relationship exist between students' perceptions of the history syllabus and their perceptions of the subject?* Survey findings highlight mixed feelings among teachers about the scope of the history syllabus. Seven of the 17 teachers agree that the history syllabus is too broad, while an equal number disagree. Teacher focus group discussions reveal a more consistent view, with all participants agreeing that the present history syllabus is too long and broad for the period of time in which students are expected to study the subject. Teachers generally believe that the heavy demands of the history syllabus often succeed in eclipsing student enjoyment of the subject.

Student survey findings reveal that more students are likely to enjoy history if there are fewer details to study. In fact, student focus group discussions confirm that students feel somewhat saturated with the present emphasis on Caribbean history, and recommend a revision of the syllabus to take into consideration some elements of World history.

Based on these findings, it is reasonable to assume that the scope and composition of the history syllabus impact on students' perception of the subject.

To make research question 3 amenable to analysis, the null hypothesis was tested using the Pearson correlation procedure. The null hypothesis states that there is no relationship between the variables measuring student perception of history and those measuring student perceptions of the history syllabus. This analysis reveals that a

significant relationship exists between those who feel that all students should study history, and the perception that the history syllabus is relevant to all students of the Fifth and Sixth Form levels ($r = .305, p < .05, N = 415$).

The analysis also reveals that those who believe that all secondary students should study history do not believe that they would enjoy history more if there were fewer details to be studied ($r = -.164, p < .05, N = 415$). In other words, students who value history are not necessarily perturbed by the quantity of details to be studied. Such students believe that all students of secondary school age should be exposed to the study of history. In like manner, students who enjoy reading the prescribed history texts feel that all students should be exposed to this experience.

Analysis of student thinking about history reveals that those who think that history is boring do not enjoy reading prescribed history texts, nor do they see the relevance of history syllabus to students their age. Such students generally assess the prescribed history texts as difficult to understand and indicate that they would enjoy history more if there were fewer details to study.

It is noteworthy that an analysis of historical concepts such as historical evidence, multiple causation, and historical change yielded no significant relationships. Using the Pearson correlation procedure, one has to accept the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between the variables measuring student perception of history concepts such as causation and historical evidence, and those measuring student perceptions of the syllabus. This confirms focus group findings that suggest that, generally, students do not understand history concepts. The reason for this is also revealed in teacher responses to

focus group discussions to Research Question 2, where teachers admit that they do not systematically teach history concepts.

One of the reasons why teachers do not teach history concepts is that they lack the necessary pedagogical skills to do so. Teacher competence in concept teaching requires training. Such training is absent in the current teacher education programs offered by the Ministry of Education. There is need, therefore, for a policy decision to cater for the professional development needs of teachers in the area of history instruction.

Research Question 4: *What differences exist in student and teacher perceptions of the history syllabus, history textbooks, and teacher competence?* Analyses of *t* test responses to this particular research question reveal that there are significant differences in students' and teachers' perceptions of the scope of the history syllabus, student understanding of textbooks used in history classes, and teacher competence to deliver the syllabus.

With regard to history texts, the survey reveals that 55% of students believe that the history texts are easy to understand, while 71% of the teachers report that their students understand the history texts used in history classes. While teachers' responses to this item are consistent on both survey questionnaires and focus group discussions, students' responses are somewhat different in the focus group discussions.

Generally, students report that the prescribed texts are difficult to read and understand; and they recommend that the design and layout of history texts be improved to meet the needs of students.

Research Question 5: *What are respondents' perceptions of the teaching methodology used in Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms?* Student survey findings

reveal that history teachers generally provide a stimulating environment for student learning through different approaches to teaching history. Teacher survey findings also reveal that teachers vary their methods of teaching, placing the least emphasis on the lecture mode of delivery.

Analysis of focus group discussions confirms a preference among students for interactive class sessions. Students recommend field trips, visual aids, and other creative activities as important components to effective history teaching. However, the general consensus is that excessive note taking and long lectures contribute to a loss of interest in the subject.

While students indicate a general dislike for lectures and note taking, teachers in the focus group discussions defend the lecture method as a control mechanism. They regard this method of teaching as a good strategy for presenting large amounts of information to students for examination purposes.

Based on survey and focus group findings, one could assume that although in theory teachers are able to identify effective, interactive teaching strategies, the majority of these teachers persist in using the lecture method as the primary mode of history instruction. And given the examination-driven education system in which they exist, some teachers adopt the lecture method as a pragmatic approach to teaching a relatively large syllabus in a minimum 2-year instructional time period. In the end, teachers choose to sacrifice student enjoyment of history for a passing grade in the final examination.

Analysis of Research Question 5 through One-way ANOVA tests reveals that there is a significant difference in the opinions of Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Form students about the teacher's use of multiple modalities in history instruction.

One-way ANOVA tests also reveal that there is a significant difference in students' opinions in the three year-levels about whether teachers provide students with all the information they need to know about history. In this case, it is reasonable to assume that teachers of Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Form levels engage in teacher-centered pedagogy. This contrasts sharply with the earlier findings that suggest teachers' use of multiple modalities in history instruction. In light of this, one can conclude that while teachers attempt to use different methods of teaching, there is also the need to provide students with content material using the traditional teaching method of transmission. The need to supply students with content knowledge was earlier explained in focus group discussions with teachers. In general, teachers view this as a means of ensuring student success in an examination-driven education system.

The persistent use of the lecture method despite teacher preference for multiple modalities in history instruction suggests a certain compromise. This compromise is based on expectation gaps that seem to exist among parents, students, and teachers regarding the teaching and learning of history. While some teachers would prefer to use what Fox (1993) describes as the "discovery" and "growing" approaches, students sometimes prefer to engage in the "transfer of knowledge" approach to teaching and learning. A mismatch occurs when teachers attempt to engage students in a process of constructing their own knowledge and when students expect teachers to provide information for passing examinations.

If teachers continually concede to students' expectations, then they run the risk of denying students the opportunity to engage in deep learning experiences. This has implications for lifelong learning. According to Marton and Saljo (1976), those students

who use a deep approach immerse themselves in the reading, see connections and understand relationships of materials presented in the textbooks. Such students are described as independent learners who take control of their own learning.

While students' expectations should not be ignored, it is the responsibility of teachers to provide students with the best possible learning experiences that go beyond merely preparing them to pass examinations. Such learning experiences should provide students with the necessary conceptual frameworks not only to understand history, but also to appreciate the value and relevance of history to everyday life.

Research Question 6: *Does a relationship exist between students' perceptions of history and external opinions about the subject of history?* Survey findings reveal a mixed response. While the majority of students admit to learning a great deal of history from sources outside the classroom, only a small number believe that external factors, including family members and friends, affect their perception of the subject. Teacher survey findings give a different perspective. The majority of respondents (65%) believe that students' perceptions of history are shaped largely by external attitudes about the subject. Only a few teachers admitted, however, that students' negative perceptions were shaped by the manner in which history is presented to students in the classroom.

Analysis of student focus group discussions gives some confirmation and elaboration on responses obtained through the survey method. But some degree of contradiction is also evident. Focus group findings confirm, for example, that students are able to obtain valuable information from sources outside the classroom. These sources include family members, selected television programs, and historical sites. However, unlike survey findings, focus group discussions reveal that the greatest negative influence

came from factors outside the classroom. These factors have been identified largely as non-history students who perceive history as dull and boring.

Based on these findings, it can be reasonably assumed that students' perceptions of history are shaped to a large extent by factors outside the classroom. These factors are both positive and negative. One is uncertain, however, about the extent to which the external negative factors supersede positive factors. Still, one can assume that these external factors, both negative and positive, contribute in some way to the formation of student perceptions about the subject of history.

Research Question 6 was further investigated by testing the null hypothesis of no significant relationship existing between the variables measuring student perceptions of history and those measuring external opinions about the subject of history. The null hypothesis was tested using the Pearson correlation coefficient. This analysis reveals that a significant relationship exists between the perception of those who feel all students should study history and the perception that a great deal of history can be learned from other sources outside the classroom.

The analysis also reveals that those who think that history is boring do not believe that they could learn a great deal of history from sources outside the classroom ($r = -.172$, $p < .05$, $N = 415$).

Conversely, those who regard history as relevant to everyday life also believe that they learn a great deal of history from sources outside the classroom ($r = .200$, $p < .05$, $N = 415$).

The assumption could be made that students who have a positive attitude towards history also make use of opportunities outside the classroom to heighten their appreciation of the subject. This concurs with the literature that seeks to establish a link between student interest in a subject and student ability to discover their own knowledge both inside and outside the classroom.

Epstein (1997), for example, posits that many students learn a great deal of history outside the classroom from their families and friends. Notwithstanding the possible conflict that may arise from different interpretations of the "official history" taught in the classroom, and the "unofficial history" acquired outside, the idea of students exploring the historical account beyond the classroom augurs well for a constructivist approach to learning. The possible conflict in interpretations should not necessarily be cause for concern since Fifth and Sixth Form students are at the developmental stage where they are capable of reflective thinking as well as formulating perspectives of their own.

Implications of the Study for Current Theory

This study was shaped by a theoretical framework based upon Piagetian and neo-Piagetian theories of cognitive development, Hallden's (1986) theory of history, and other contemporary studies on students' and teachers' perceptions of history. The theoretical framework provided the context within which I was able to investigate and document differential perceptions of teachers and students about the teaching and learning of history in secondary schools of Trinidad and Tobago. While the results of this study generally support current theory highlighted in the literature review, some of the findings suggest alternative perspectives.

The results of this study support, to a large extent, Piagetian and neo-Piagetian theories of cognitive development. Piagetian theory suggests that individuals at the formal operational stage are generally capable of reflective thinking. This type of reflective thinking was clearly evident in responses to Research Question 1 that required students to give their perceptions of history. Rejecting the notion that history is boring and irrelevant to contemporary life, students generally agreed that the subject was interesting and worthwhile for study.

Applying Piaget's criteria for logical thinking to historical thinking, Hallam (1970) posits that students who engage in formal operational thinking recognize the importance of multiple causes in history. Such students, in Hallam's view, also recognize the value of different possible explanations for events in history. Findings of the study suggest that while students generally appear to understand historical concepts such as historical evidence, causation, and historical explanation, upon further analysis, students demonstrate a remarkable lack of clear understanding of the concept of multiple causation.

Concurring with Hallam's findings, this study does not fully support Piaget's theory of cognitive development as it relates to student ability to master conceptual reasoning of certain historical concepts. Hallam (1970) believes that, by and large, history students reason at a lower level than expected, reaching the formal operational level at the chronological age of 16-16½ years. But he also believes that students between the ages of 13 and 16 function at Piaget's preoperational and concrete operational stages. This means that it is likely that history students of secondary-school age also function at

the level of 8-11-year-olds in Piaget's model. But this may not be entirely the fault of the student since many teachers fail to teach history concepts in the first place.

On the question of causation, focus group findings reveal that students generally believe that one single factor, rather than a mix of factors, caused an historical event. This clearly suggests that while students may be able to exhibit formal operational thinking in some areas of history, they appear to function at the lower concrete operational level when it comes to putting into perspective the concept of multiple causation.

In defense of Piaget, many neo-Piagetians argue that a major strength of the classical Piagetian theory is that it offers a vision of children as active constructors of their own knowledge. Findings of the study show that history students of secondary-school age are capable of formulating perceptions of their own that may not always be consistent with those of their teachers.' In this present study, the developing "formal operations" of the 15-18-year-old student is consistent with other research findings that suggest the development of an historian's paradigm. Analysis of student responses to Research Question 6 reveals that students learn a great deal of history from sources outside the classroom. However, only a small number of students believe that external factors such as friends and family members affect their perception of the subject. But teachers generally refuse to accept responsibility for students' negative attitudes about history, choosing instead to believe that factors outside the classroom are largely responsible for student negative attitude about the subject of history.

It seems convenient for some teachers to identify outside factors as major contributors to students' negative attitudes towards history. However, upon closer examination, teachers may discover that a mix of factors, including teacher performance,

contribute to student perception of the subject. In fact, students in the focus group discussions identified the teacher as the single most important factor in shaping students' attitudes toward history.

Findings of my study reveal that students are capable of constructing their own meanings for historical concepts, although these explanations may differ from accepted views. Analysis of focus group discussions reveals that the majority of respondents naively view historical concepts merely as *events* of the past. Analysis of teacher focus group discussions reveals that teachers do not set out to teach concepts as part of their regular history instruction. They admit that concepts are taught only incidentally, if they are taught at all. In light of this, therefore, it could be assumed that in the absence of formal instruction, the way is left open for students to form their own perceptions about what a history concept is supposed to be.

This observation is significant for my study because it highlights the need for teachers to guide students' thinking and bring into alignment those conflicting conceptual frameworks that rob students the opportunity of adopting a scholarly approach to history. The observation is also significant for the development of a history curriculum that emphasizes the teaching of concepts as an integral part of history instruction.

Findings of Hallden's (1986) research reveal that students tend to explain historical events exclusively in the actions, reactions, and intentions of individuals or individual phenomena. Results of this present study partly support Hallden's findings. Survey item 9, for example, probed into the question of historical understanding and asked whether students believed that human beings determined the course of history. The majority of the students (316) responded in the affirmative, while only 45 of the 415

respondents disagreed. Analysis of student focus group discussions also reflects a strong perception that human beings are the primary determinants of history. However, some students are willing to consider alternative factors such as social and political events and natural forces as other possible explanations.

On the basis of these findings, one is uncertain as to the extent to which students' naïve perceptions about what constitutes an historical explanation can severely threaten student learning of history. For example, while students may generally seek explanations in history in terms of human actions, they also demonstrate reasonably good understanding of historical evidence. Findings of this study reveal that students generally believe that historical evidence should be questioned, and that the historian often engages in this type of analysis in order to make sense of the past. Understanding how the historian uses evidence to reconstruct the past provides a good basis for the learning of history.

Studies in teacher conceptions of history focus not only on how teachers perceive history, but also on how these conceptions are transformed into classroom activities that ultimately impact student learning. Evans (1994) develops five typologies that reflect various approaches to the teaching of history. These five categories are storyteller, scientific historian, relativist/reformer, cosmic philosopher, and eclectic. Findings of this present study reveal the extent to which history teachers of Trinidad and Tobago fit into these categories.

Survey item 5 asked teachers to state whether they viewed history as a story to be told. Fifty-three percent (53%) of the teachers agreed with this position. This percentage was significantly higher than Evans's findings that reveal that 11.3% of the sample fitted

into the storytelling category, where teacher-centered pedagogy is dominant. Evans explains that, in this category, emphasis is placed on transmitting knowledge, and storytelling is the common mode of instruction. This view is supported by deconstructionists who regard the past as a complex narrative discourse, rather than the product of some objective empiricist undertaking. The Bradley Commission on History in U.S. Schools (1987-1988) also recommends a return to story and biography in history classrooms.

Findings of this present research reveal another type of teachers who regard their major responsibility as that of assisting students in passing the history examination. The majority of teachers (13) in this study believe that student success in examinations is their primary responsibility. Teacher focus group discussions also confirm that the majority of teachers concentrate largely on preparing students to succeed in examinations. On the basis of these findings, it is reasonable to conclude that these teachers also fit into Evans's storyteller category, where teacher-centeredness is the norm, and where great emphasis is placed on knowledge acquisition.

Analysis of responses to teacher survey item 7 reveals greater consistency with Evans's relativist/reformer typology. This survey item addresses the issue of history teaching as a means of making the world a better place. Ninety-four percent (94%) of the teachers believe that teaching gives them the opportunity to make the world a better place. This compares favorably with survey item 10 that reveals a similar 94% majority teacher response to the question regarding their role as agents of social change. Evans's relativist/reformer typology (45.1% of the sample) represents the largest group of teachers who view history as background for understanding current issues. Evans

classifies these teachers as essentially social activists who use information about the past to guide current decisions about making the world a better place.

Unlike Evans's minority sample (2.8%) that fits the cosmic philosopher typology, this present study reveals that 65% of the teachers regard history as the unfolding of God's plan for humanity. If this is so, then it is reasonable to assume that such teachers approach history instruction quite differently from those who do not subscribe to any particular religious ideology. More than likely, teachers who embrace a theistic worldview would attempt to address moral and ethical issues in history, pointing students to God not only as the central figure but also as an active participant in the affairs of mankind. This type of interpretation has implications for a particular teaching approach that emphasizes God's intervention in world affairs as an historical explanation. Such an interpretation also has implications for student success since CXC and the Advanced Level examinations council do not accept God-centered explanations as valid interpretations of historical phenomena.

Current theory on teacher conception suggests that whether consciously or unconsciously, all teachers bring into the classroom their own philosophy of teaching and learning. And while teachers may not always fit neatly into the five categories outlined by Evans, researchers generally believe that teacher conceptions of history have a significant impact on the whole teaching and learning process. Since students also bring into the classroom their own perceptions about teaching and learning, expectation gaps are likely to occur in the teaching and learning process.

The results of this study uncover some of the expectation gaps that exist in the teaching and learning process. The first expectation gap is in the area of reading historical

texts. While teachers generally expect students to read more extensively on a wide range of historical topics, students believe that their reading should be confined to material tailored to answering specific history problems. Another expectation gap exists in the varying perceptions of the role of the teacher. Generally, students view the teacher's role largely as a disseminator of information. But teachers have a different perception. They believe that students should play a more active role in their own learning experiences.

This view is consistent with Fox's (1983) "growing theory" which is built largely on constructivist epistemology. In this model, the teacher is a guide and facilitator who encourages students to question, challenge, and formulate their own opinions and conclusions. While on the one hand, teachers identify independent student learning as one of their expectations, on the other hand, teachers demonstrate a preference for teacher-centered pedagogy. This was clearly highlighted in teacher focus group discussions where teachers expressed the following sentiments: "I see my role not as a facilitator of learning, but someone to hammer in views that are right. I determine what views are right for my students." " My primary role is getting the syllabus done." While these views are largely individual perceptions, the general consensus of the group suggests that teachers are primarily concerned about student performance in examinations. In light of this, it is reasonable to assume that some teachers harbor unrealistic expectations of students as partners in the teaching and learning process, when they generally practice teacher-centered instruction in the classroom.

Concluding Comments

This study was undertaken primarily to explore students' and teachers' perceptions of history and to present results of the different conceptual frameworks that

exist in students' thinking about history. Findings of this research reveal that, quite apart from not fully understanding historical concepts, students of the Fifth, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth Forms hold a variety of beliefs about the subject of history. While many view history as relevant to everyday life, a few students regard history as boring, complex, and not worthy of study in subsequent years. It is therefore important for teachers to first identify these conceptual barriers before any meaningful attempt can be made to modify these beliefs by instruction.

In this regard, an attempt is made to establish a portrait of two types of students. The first type of student is likely to embrace history as an interesting subject worthy of study, while the second type is more likely to regard history as dull and boring.

Marton and Saljo (1976) have shown that some students adopt a surface or shallow approach to learning in which information is treated as unconnected facts to be memorized. Students who think that history is about dates and places miss exciting opportunities to comprehend the value of history in understanding events in their lives. These students are likely to be the ones with little or no appreciation for reading as well as those who experience difficulty understanding the prescribed textbooks used in history classes. My study identifies such students as those who expect the teacher to provide all the information necessary for passing the CXC and Advanced level examinations.

Conversely, those students who use a deep approach to learning immerse themselves in the reading and are able to see connections and understand relationships presented in history texts. Such students are likely to grasp historical concepts and recognize the importance of history as a subject to be studied by all.

Fifth and Sixth Form students who engage in deep learning are more likely than others to operate at Piaget's formal operational stage of development. These students engage in abstract and reflective thinking. But they are also capable of building mental structures that facilitate independent and creative thinking far superior and often different from that of their peers. Students who use a deep learning approach are less likely to be lost in conceptual barriers that hinder the history learning process.

Having established a portrait of two different types of history students, one obvious question might be: Can secondary school history teachers successfully bring into alignment those conflicting conceptual frameworks exhibited by the surface learner? And if they do, could such students learn to appreciate the value of history?

The answers to these questions hinge on teachers' conceptions of history and the extent to which they see their role as facilitators of learning rather than dispensers of knowledge. Findings of this research reveal that 94% of the teachers believe that teaching gives them the opportunity to make the world a better place. A corresponding 94% of the teachers also see themselves as social change agents. If this is true, then the impetus for seeking conceptual change in students already exists. While this may be so, one is also aware of the conflict that exists between the teachers' desire to inspire in students a love for history and the reality of operating in an examination-driven education system that seems to place a high premium on student success in examinations.

The history teacher is, therefore, faced with the gargantuan task of developing strategies to ensure student success in examinations as well as inspiring a love for the subject of history. No doubt, the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education has a critical policy role to play in making this ideal possible.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This study provides the basis to examine policy strategies that would support a more widespread appreciation of the value of history as a subject on the school's curriculum. Implications for policy and practice are suggested in the following areas:

1. *The introduction of history at the Form One level in all secondary schools of Trinidad and Tobago.* This would provide the opportunity for teachers to establish a solid foundation for the study of subject as well as to assist students in appreciating the importance of history to their everyday lives.
2. *Provide support teaching materials to enhance learning of the subject.* This should include a wide array of historical films and videos, appropriate reading materials, historical documents such as speeches, letters, and other primary sources of information.
3. *The establishment and preservation of historical sites and museums to stimulate interest in national history.*
4. *The design and development of a history curriculum that meets the needs secondary school students.* This curriculum should include aspects of local, national, regional, and international history. Curriculum designers should ensure that all recommended texts and other supporting reading material meet the needs of students at different developmental levels.
5. *The teaching of history as an additional option offered to teachers pursuing the in-service diploma in education program at the university.* To date, there is no specific training available to teachers of history who need instruction in the art of teaching history as a subject separate and apart from social studies.

6. *A system of collegial supervision to ensure proper mentoring of new teachers in the profession.* Heads of departments could provide in-service training to new history teachers in several areas including classroom management and effective ways of bringing the subject of history alive in the classroom.
7. *The introduction of history as a subject at the elementary or primary level.* This would further enhance students' appreciation of the subject at a very early stage. It would also increase the chances of students choosing history at the secondary school level.
8. *The appointment of a team of research officers from the Ministry's Division of Educational Research and Evaluation (DERE) with responsibility for investigating students' inability to understand history textbooks as well as their negative attitude toward the subject of history.* This team should examine a mix of factors including methodology, teaching resources, and the scope of the history syllabus, that may also contribute to students' dislike for the subject. The research team should work in close collaboration with the Curriculum Division of the Ministry of Education.

Recommendations for Further Research and Study

While a review of the current literature on history instruction over the last 10 years provided a justification for this study, both the findings as well as the conclusions of the research suggest the need for further investigation in the following four areas:

1. *A comparative study of student perception of history in selected regions of the Caribbean.* This study will not only extend the investigation to a wider arena, but it will also facilitate comparative analysis of factors that contribute to

students' perceptions of history. Another component of this study could be a comparative analysis of the views of students pursuing history for examination with those who do not pursue history as an examination option.

2. *Students' alternative frameworks in history.* In this study, emphasis should be placed on history concepts. The study should investigate not only what concepts are taught, but also how these concepts are taught in history classes. This study should also provide useful insights into why historical concepts taught in the classroom are not readily understood and appreciated by students, as well as the extent to which students consistently harbour misconceptions about history. The study should also explore the extent to which conceptual change can modify students' alternative frameworks about history.
3. *The impact of the media and other external factors on student perception of history.* A study of this nature has the potential of testing the role of historical films in providing factual or distorted accounts of history, and the influence of these films on students' thinking. The study could also provide information on the strength of negative factors and the extent to which they eclipse positive perceptions about the subject of history.

3. *A study of differential perceptions of two groups of post-secondary students about history over a 3-5 year period.* This could be a longitudinal study conducted with a given number of post A-Level history students, over a 3-5 year period, to determine the extent to which their perceptions of history changed over time. The first group of students could comprise those who

pursued history at university level, and the second group could comprise those who did not. A study of the different perceptions of these individuals over the given period could provide useful insights about the varying factors that continue to shape students' perceptions of history even after formal schooling has been completed.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

SURVEY

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT HISTORY INSTRUCTION AND LEARNING

How do you feel about history as a subject in the school's curriculum? Your answers to the following questions will help us better understand why some students choose history while others do not. All information will be treated as confidential. Completion of this survey is voluntary; you may quit at any time. By completing this survey you are giving consent to participate in this study. Please DO NOT write your name on this questionnaire.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Directions: Please put a tick in the appropriate box.

1. Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Age ☐ 15 years ☐ 16 years ☐ 17 years ☐ 18 years ☐ 19 years

3. Form ☐ Fifth ☐ Upper Sixth ☐ Lower Sixth

STUDENT PERCEPTION OF HISTORY

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements by circling the appropriate letter:

A Strongly agree
B Agree
C No opinion
D Disagree
E Strongly disagree

4. All students in secondary schools should study history. A B C D E

5. History is a boring subject. A B C D E

6. History is relevant to every day life. A B C D E

7.	History is mostly about dates and places	A B C D E

HISTORICAL CONCEPTS

8.	Historical evidence should be questioned.	A B C D E
9.	Human beings determine the course of history.	A B C D E
10.	Historical events are caused by a complex mix of different factors.	A B C D E
11.	All historical events are inevitable.	A B C D E
12.	History involves the study of change over time.	A B C D E

THE HISTORY SYLLABUS

13.	The history syllabus is relevant to students of my age group.	A B C D E
14.	I would enjoy history more if there were fewer details to be studied.	A B C D E
15.	My prescribed history textbooks are easy to understand.	A B C D E
16.	I enjoy reading the prescribed texts used in history classes.	A B C D E
17.	My teacher is very knowledgeable about the subject of history.	A B C D E

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

18.	I enjoy attending history classes.	A B C D E
19.	My teacher uses different methods to teach history.	A B C D E
20.	My teacher provides all the information I need to know about history.	A B C D E
21.	I feel responsible for my own knowledge of the subject.	A B C D E
22.	My teacher provides opportunities for group interaction.	A B C D E

STUDENT REACTION

Directions: Please write your reaction to the following statements by circling the letter corresponding to your choice.

A Strongly agree
B Agree
C No opinion
D Disagree
E Strongly disagree

23. I learn a great deal about history from other sources outside of the classroom. A B C D E

24. My family and friends influence the way I feel about history. A B C D E

25. Studying history will enhance my chances of employment. A B C D E

26. I intend to study history at a higher level. A B C D E

27. Identify two (2) things you like most about your history classes.

(a).....

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(b).....

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28. Identify two (2) things you dislike most about your history classes.

(a).....

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(b).....

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29. What is the most important lesson a student can learn from history?

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30. Give two (2) reasons why you study history.

(a).....

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(b).....

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31. Give two (2) reasons why you believe some students are unwilling to study history.

(a).....

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(b).....

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Thank you for participating in this study.

SURVEY

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT HISTORY INSTRUCTION AND LEARNING

How do you feel about teaching history at the secondary school level? Your answers to the following questions will help us better understand the challenges you face and the strategies you use to strengthen your practice. All information will be treated as confidential. Completion of this survey is voluntary; you may quit at any time. By completing this survey you are giving consent to participate in this study.

Directions: Please put a tick in the appropriate box.

1. Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. *Teaching Experience* ☐ 0-4 years ☐ 5-10 years ☐ 11-15 years ☐ 16-20 years ☐ 21-25 years ☐ 26-30 years ☐ over 30 years

3. *Qualifications*
   - ☐ B.A.(History)
   - ☐ B.A. History and professional training in teaching
   - ☐ M.A. (History)
   - ☐ M.A. History and professional training in teaching
   - ☐ Other (please specify)

4. *Level of Teaching* ☐ Fifth Form ☐ Sixth Form ☐ Both Fifth & Sixth Form

TEACHER PERCEPTION OF HISTORY

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements by circling the appropriate letter:

A Strongly agree
B Agree
C No opinion
D Disagree
E Strongly disagree

5. I view history as story to be told. A B C D E

6. Events in history should be interpreted and evaluated. A B C D E

7. Teaching history gives me an opportunity to make the world a better place. A B C D E

8. History is the unfolding of God's plan for mankind. A B C D E

9. My major responsibility is to assist students in passing the history examination. A B C D E

10. I see my role as an agent of social change. A B C D E

11. As a teacher of history, I see my role as a gatekeeper of the past. A B C D E

12. Teaching history is my preferred career choice. A B C D E

HISTORICAL CONCEPTS

13. My students understand the concept of continuity and change. A B C D E

14. I believe that human beings determine the course of history. A B C D E

15. Historical events are caused by a complex mix of different factors. A B C D E

16. The majority of my students understand the concept of historical evidence. A B C D E

THE HISTORY SYLLABUS

17. The history syllabus is too broad for the level I teach. A B C D E

18. My students understand the prescribed textbooks used in history classes. A B C D E

19. I feel competent teaching history at this level. A B C D E

20. The history curriculum is relevant to the needs of my students. A B C D E

21. My students enjoy studying from the prescribed texts. A B C D E

22. I view the history curriculum as a guide to be adapted, questioned, and improved. A B C D E

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

23. I use the lecture method more than any other method of teaching. A B C D E

24. I enjoy using cooperative learning strategies in my teaching. A B C D E

25. I often experiment with different methods of teaching history. A B C D E

26. I make students feel responsible for their own knowledge. A B C D E

27. I am more of a facilitator than a dispenser of information. A B C D E

TEACHER REACTION

Directions: Please write your reaction to the following questions.

28. What do you consider to be the major goals of history instruction?

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29. Why do students often have difficulty grasping history concepts such as causation and historical evidence? .....

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30. What in your view constitutes effective history teaching?

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31. Why do you think so many students are unwilling to study history?

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Thank you for participating in this study

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF HISTORY

1. Think about your experience as a history student over the years. Now tell me how do you feel about studying history?

2. What were you thinking at the time that led you to choose history as one of your examination subjects?

3. Tell me a how you feel about studying history at a higher level.

HISTORICAL CONCEPTS

4. What in your view is a history concept? Think about it for a while and jot down your thoughts on a piece of paper. We'll take a few minutes for you to write these down.

5. Let's talk about some of the concepts you have learned in history so far?

6. How do you know that "historical facts" are really true?

7. What causes an event to happen in history? (simple cause-effect relations or multiple complex causes?)

8. Who or what determines the course of history? (human beings, events, technology or supernatural forces?)

9. How does a historian use historical evidence?

THE HISTORY SYLLABUS

10. How do you feel about the textbooks used in history classes?

11. If you had the opportunity to revise the history syllabus, what will you delete or add?

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

12. Tell me a little about history classes. Describe what you do.

13. What do you like most about your history classes? What do you dislike most?

14. What are some of the things you feel history teachers can do to make the subject more appealing?

STUDENT REACTION

15. What factors outside the classroom influence the way you feel about history?

16. Think back about all the things you have learned in history. Now tell me, what important lessons do you think people can learn from history?

TEACHER FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF HISTORY

1. Tell me a little about your teaching. What shaped your ideas about history?
2. How do you view your role as a history teacher?
3. Tell me a few of your thoughts about the purposes for studying history

HISTORICAL CONCEPTS

4. What is your understanding of a history concept?
5. What is your approach to teaching concepts in history? e.g. causation, historical evidence, and historical explanation.
6. What historical concepts do you find appropriate to teach at the Fifth/Sixth Form level?
7. Which concepts do you find most difficult to teach? Explain.
8. How do you know that your students understand historical concepts taught in the classroom?

THE HISTORY SYLLABUS

9. What is your assessment of the present CXC/A-Level syllabus? (Probe: its breadth, scope, relevance).
10. What is your assessment of the main texts used in history classes?
11. If you had the opportunity to revise the history syllabus, what will you delete or add?

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

12. Let's go back a bit to the classroom. What do you do to stimulate interest in the subject?
13. Think back to some of your classroom experiences. Now tell me, what challenges do you face as a teacher of history? How do you deal with these challenges?

TEACHER REACTION

14. What in your view constitutes effective history teaching?

15. What in your view is responsible for student lack of interest in history?

16. Tell me some of your thoughts about the expectation gaps that may exist between history teachers and students in the teaching/learning process.

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP RESISTRATION FORM

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Your Name_____
   Last First

2. Age

   ( ) 15 years ( ) 16 years ( ) 17 years ( ) 18 years ( ) 19 years ( ) 20 years

3. Form ( ) Fifth ( ) Upper Sixth ( ) Lower Sixth

4. School _____

TEACHER FOCUS GROUP RESISTRATION FORM

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Your Name_____
   Last First

2. Teaching Experience

   ( ) 0-4 years ( ) 5-10 years ( ) 11-15 years ( ) 16-20 years

   ( ) 21-25 years ( ) 26-30 years ( ) over 30 years

3. Qualifications

   ( ) B.A. History ( ) B.A. History and professional training in teaching

   ( ) M.A. History ( ) M.A. History and professional training in teaching

   ( ) Ph.D. ( ) other (please specify)

4. Level of Teaching

   ( ) Fifth Form

   ( ) Sixth Form

   ( ) Both Fifth and Sixth Form

   ( ) Other (please specify)

5. Place of Work _____

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORMS

School of Education
Andrews University,
Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA

TEACHER/ STUDENT CONSENT FORM FOR QUESTIONNAIRE AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Research Title: Differential Perceptions of Teachers and Students about the Teaching and Learning of History in Secondary Schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

I have read and understood the description given to me about the research project, and I have been fully informed about the nature and purpose of the project, and my rights as a research subject. I understand that:

1. this project, which involves a questionnaire and focus group discussion, is part of the requirements for the completion of a Ph.D. degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Andrews University;
2. the purpose of this project includes providing history teachers and students the opportunity of reflecting on their own perceptions, beliefs, and practices relative to the teaching and learning of history at the secondary school level;
3. the information obtained will assist the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education as well as the Barbados Caribbean Examination Council in making curriculum decisions on the teaching and learning of history in the secondary schools of Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean region.
4. the questionnaire and focus group discussions will be done in the months of April to June, 2002;
5. the information collected from me is confidential, and at no time will my name be used in the written report;
6. there are no hazards nor risks associated with the questionnaire and focus group discussions, and my consent is voluntary. Even if I consent, I will have the option to withdraw from participating in the interview at any time, without prejudice.

I, _____, hereby consent to participate in this research. All my questions have been answered satisfactorily, and I have received a copy of this consent form. If I have any further questions, I can call Stephen Joseph at (868) 645-5415. His mailing address is No. 4 Francourt, King Street St. Joseph. I understand that if I have any further questions about my rights as a research subject, I can contact Andrews University Human Subjects Review Board at (616) 471- 6361.

(Name)	(Date)
(Witness)	(Date)
(Investigator)	(Date)

APPENDIX D

CORRESPONDENCE

School of Education
Andrews University,
Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA

January 15, 2002

The Research Committee
Division of School Supervision/Division of Curriculum Planning
Ministry of Education Alexandra Street St. Clair

Dear Committee Members:

I am currently conducting research on the differential perceptions of teachers and students about history instruction and learning in secondary schools of Trinidad. The participants for this study will comprise Fifth and Sixth Form students and teachers randomly selected from Secondary Schools located in Tobago and the east/west corridor of Trinidad. The 31-item questionnaire will ask for voluntary responses regarding students' and teachers' perceptions of history, on the level of concept formation as well as on a metacognitive level.

It is also my intention to conduct focus group sessions with students and teachers to enhance comparability between quantitative and qualitative analyses. In this study, both survey and focus group instruments will be implemented as complementary components of a unified mixed-method research design. The information generated by the research can be made available to stakeholders in general, and to the Ministry in particular, to assist in further revision and modernization of the schools' curriculum.

In this regard, I am kindly requesting permission from the Ministry of Education to conduct the study on the premises of the selected secondary schools. Copies of the survey instruments are attached for your perusal. I would also be happy to meet with you to provide clarification or additional information on any matter. I can be reached at the Secondary Education Modernization Programme Coordinating Unit (SEMPCU), Ministry of Education. My personal contact number is 683 9649 or 645 5415.

I appreciate your kind cooperation and assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Stephen Joseph
Doctoral Candidate

Research Committee's Approval

APPENDIX D

CORRESPONDENCE

School of Education
Andrews University,
Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA

March 4, 2002

Dear Principal:

I am currently conducting research on the differential perceptions of teachers and students about history instruction and learning in secondary schools of Trinidad. The participants for this study will comprise Fifth and Sixth Form students and teachers randomly selected from Secondary Schools located in Tobago and the east/west corridor of Trinidad. The 31-item questionnaire will ask for voluntary responses regarding students' and teachers' perceptions of history, on the level of concept formation as well as on a metacognitive level. Your school has been selected to participate in the study.

It is also my intention to conduct focus group sessions with students and teachers to enhance comparability between quantitative and qualitative analyses. In this study, both survey and focus group instruments will be implemented as complementary components of a unified mixed-method research design. The information generated by the research can be made available to your school upon request. It can also be used to assist the Ministry in its quest for further revision and modernization of the schools' curriculum.

In this regard, I am kindly requesting permission to conduct the study on your school's premises. The questionnaire will take less than half an hour to complete, and all information will be treated as confidential. I am also requesting that teachers assist in administering the questionnaire to students, and that all completed surveys be lodged in the principal's office for safe keeping.

In order to protect the anonymity of the students, I am kindly requesting that the following procedure be followed:

1. All questionnaires should be placed in a sealed envelope provided by the researcher.
2. The class teacher is asked to kindly allow one student to collect the sealed envelope, and take it immediately to the principal's office.
3. The envelope should be placed into a secured box and kept under the supervision of the principal.
4. The researcher will collect the envelope within a period of one week.

The Ministry of Education has also given approval to conduct the study. Still, I would be happy to meet with you to provide clarification or additional information on any matter. I can be reached at the Secondary Education Modernization Programme Coordinating Unit (SEMPCU), Ministry of Education. My personal contact number is 683 9649 or 645 5415.

I appreciate your kind cooperation and assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

_____

Stephen Joseph,
Doctoral Candidate

School of Education
Andrews University,
Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA

March 4, 2002

Dear Student:

As an important person in the education system, your ideas and opinions can assist in improving the quality of education in the nation's schools. This research project gives you an opportunity to share your views about history instruction and learning in secondary schools of Trinidad. The main purpose of the study is to obtain feedback about how you feel about the subject of history; historical concepts taught in the classroom; the history syllabus; and the manner in which history lessons are taught. Your suggestions will provide valuable information that can be used by the Ministry of Education to revise and modernize the history curriculum.

The 31-item questionnaire should take less than half an hour to complete. Your participation is strictly voluntary. Please **do not** write your name on the survey, since it is important for all participants to remain anonymous. All information you provide will be treated as confidential. Your class teacher will appoint one student who will collect all completed questionnaires, place them in a sealed envelope, and then turn them into the principal's office for safe keeping.

I appreciate your kind cooperation and assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

_____

Stephen Joseph
Doctoral Candidate

School of Education
Andrews University,
Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA

March 4, 2002

Dear History Teacher:

As a key stakeholder in the education system, your ideas and opinions can assist in improving the quality of education in the nation's schools. This research project gives you an opportunity to share your views about history instruction and learning in secondary schools of Trinidad. The purpose of the study is to examine students' alternative frameworks in order to determine why certain historical concepts taught in the classroom are not readily understood and appreciated by some students.

The study also explores the teacher's philosophy of teaching and learning vis a vis students' expectations about the divergent roles of teachers and students in the teaching and learning process. Your suggestions will provide valuable information that can be used by the Ministry of Education to bridge the expectation gaps that may exist in the education process.

The 31-item questionnaire should take less than half an hour to complete. Your participation is strictly voluntary. Please **do not** write your name on the survey, since it is important for all participants to remain anonymous. The information you provide will be treated as confidential. I would also be happy if you could kindly assign one student to collect all completed questionnaires, place them in a sealed envelope, and turn them into the principal's office for safe keeping. I will make arrangements to collect the surveys at a subsequent date.

Should you wish to contact me for additional information, you can do so at the Secondary Education Modernization Programme Coordinating Unit (SEMPCU), Ministry of Education. My personal contact number is 683 9649 or 645 5415. Please note that the information generated by this research can also be made available to your school.

I appreciate your kind cooperation and assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

_____

Stephen Joseph
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX E

RESULTS FROM CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

HEADQUARTERS

PRESS BRIEF

RESULTS FOR CARIBBEAN SECONDARY

EDUCATION CETIFICATE, 2001

This year CXC offered a total of 33 subjects comprising 14 at the Basic and General Proficiencies, one at the General and Technical Proficiencies, three at the Technical Proficiency only and 15 at the General Proficiency only. The subjects examined are in the areas of Languages, Mathematics and Science, Business Studies, the Humanities, Technical and Vocational Subjects, and the Expressive Arts.

The number of candidates who registered for the examinations increased to 118,110 from 117,331 in 2000. The entries for Information Technology have increased steadily over the years. This year, 11,225 candidates registered for the examination, an increase of over 12 per cent from 2000. Other subjects with large entries were Mathematics (85,448), English A (80,303), Principles of Business (35, 412), Principles of Accounts (29,377), English B (17, 773) and Integrated Science (14,282).

Overall, the performance of candidates improved in 2001 compared to 2000. Sixty per cent of the subject entries at the General and Technical Proficiencies was awarded Grades I – III, compared with 58 per cent in 2000. At the Basic Proficiency, 37 per cent of the subject entries was awarded Grades I – III, compared with 33 per cent in

2000. Since 1998, CXC introduced a six-point grading scheme. Grades I, II and III in the six-point grading scheme are equivalent to Grades I and II in the old scheme.

English A

This year, there was improved performance in English A compared with that of 2000. Forty-one thousand, two hundred and seventy-six candidates achieved Grades I – III, compared with 34, 663 in 2000, an increase of 16 per cent. Sixteen per cent achieved Grade I, 16 per cent also achieved Grade II and 26 per cent achieved Grade III. The examiners have noted that candidates need to be taught certain skills, in particular summary skills.

Mathematics

The number of entries for Mathematics also increased marginally when compared with 2000. Thirty-two per cent of the subject entries was awarded Grades I – III at the General Proficiency, compared with 39 per cent in 2000. The performance at the Basic Proficiency also improved. Twenty-nine per cent of the subject entries was awarded Grades I – III, compared with 19 per cent in 2000.

Improvement was noticeable in Consumer Arithmetic and Computation. However, at both Basic and General Proficiencies, candidates showed weakness in Measurement, Algebra, Statistics and Geometry. There is a concern that in many instances, Mathematics is being taught simply as rules and procedures. Many candidates are not able to apply concepts and principles to solve problems. This comment is applicable not only to Mathematics, but also to several other subject areas.

Sciences

There was improved performance in the Sciences. In Integrated Science, 78 per cent; in Biology, 59 per cent; in Physics, 51 per cent; and in Chemistry, 46 per cent of the subject entries was awarded Grades I – III.

In Biology, candidates displayed considerable knowledge of biological concepts. However, in all the Sciences, candidates need to improve experimental skills including planning and designing.

In Agricultural Science, 88 per cent for the Single Award and 79 per cent for the Double Award achieved Grades I – III. Candidates' performances in both the Animal Science and Crops and Soils options was satisfactory. Again, the examiners have noted the need for improvement in the practical component of the examination.

Information Technology

The growth in entries and performance of candidates in this area reflects the value being placed on Information Technology in the labour market and for further education. This subject is offered at the Technical and General Proficiencies. Ninety Per cent of the subject entries was awarded Grades I – III at the Technical Proficiency and at the General Proficiency 89 per cent was awarded Grades I – III. There was marked improvement in Word Processing and use of Spreadsheets. In this subject, candidates need to improve performance in Programming.

Business Studies

Eighty-one per cent of the candidates in Office Procedures, 72 % in Principles of Business, and 54 % in Principles of Accounts achieved Grades I –III. Performance in these areas is encouraging. However, in Principles of Business candidates need to pay more attention to the Finance and Introduction to Economics sections of the syllabus.

Caribbean History

Two hundred and sixty-three candidates, compared with 260 in 2000, registered for the examination at the Basic Proficiency, and 8, 200 compared with 8,569 in 2000 registered for the General Proficiency examination. Fifty-seven per cent at the Basic Proficiency and 67 % at the General Proficiency achieved Grades I – III, compared with 51 per cent and 69 per cent respectively, in 2000.

Social Studies

This is another popular subject for CSEC. Entries for the General Proficiency were relatively high (31,593) and 72 %, compared with 55 % in 2000, achieved Grades I –III.

French and Spanish

The entries for French were 3, 618 compared with 3,417 in 2000. Entries for Spanish were 11, 927, compared with 11, 817 in 2000. Seventy-three per cent achieved Grades I – III in both French and Spanish at the General Proficiency. This performance was comparable to that of 2000. It was heartening to note the increase in entries from

2000 and, as in the case of CAPE, CXC will work with Ministries and other sectors to encourage more persons to take these examinations.

Technical and Vocational Subjects

Candidates also performed well in the subjects – Building Technology, Food and Nutrition, Clothing and Textiles, Metals and Woods. Over 80 % of candidates who took these subjects achieved Grades I –III. However, in the technical subjects, such as, Electricity/Electronics and Electrical Technology, components that require knowledge of Physics were not well done. In the case of Building Technology and Woods, there is need for improvement in drawing and sketching, and, in particular, freehand sketching.

Expressive Arts

The entries for Visual Arts were approximately the same as in 2000. However, performance improved. Seventy-three per cent achieved Grades I – III, compared with 62 % in 2000. CXC also introduced Music in 1999. The entries are still relatively small. One hundred and seventy-two candidates sat the examinations this year. However, the performance is encouraging. Sixty-three per cent achieved Grades I – III, compared with 64 % in 2000. CXC has developed a Theatre Arts syllabus that will be introduced in schools in September 2001.

School-Based Assessment

Most of the subjects for CSEC have a school-based component. CXC is examining the demands of the SBA and has reduced the number of assignments to be

submitted for SBA. The SBA is an integral part of the syllabus and should not be seen as a separate component. For example, the SBA in the Sciences comprises practical exercises that are essential in the study of any of the Science subjects. CXC requires a minimum number of these assignments to be submitted for the SBA. This year, examiners reported marked improvement in the SBA and in the way in which the teachers marked the assignments. CXC provides teachers with detailed feedback that can help enhance teacher delivery and candidates' performance in the various subjects.

The examiners have also noted some specific areas that can be improved through workshops for teachers. CXC is, therefore, committed to continue to work with Ministries of Education, subject teacher associations and other bodies to conduct these workshops in a concerted effort to improve the quality of education across the region.

END

Source: Ministry of Education, Alexandra Street, St. Clair

Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Date: August 21, 2001

APPENDIX F

STATISTICS ON CAMBRIDGE ADVANCED LEVEL EXAMINATION

STATISTICS re: CAMBRIDGE G.C.E. ADVANCED LEVEL EXAMINATIONS

FOR THE CARIBBEAN (2000)

Total number of Candidates entered for Advanced Level Examination – 3, 759

SUBJECT	NUMBER ENTERED	NUMBER PASSED	FAILED & ABSENT
ACCOUNTING	941	820	121
ART & DESIGN	78	70	8
BIOLOGY	751	714	37
COMPUTING	65	65	-
CHEMISTRY	990	910	80
ECONOMICS	1,192	1,025	167
ENGLISH LITERATURE	652	636	16
FRENCH	156	156	-
FURTHER MATHEMATICS	210	200	10
GEOGRAPHY	575	540	35
GEO. & MECH. DRAWING	55	52	3
HISTORY	540	510	30
MANAGEMENT OF BUSINESS	1,264	1,185	79
MATHEMATICS	1,488	1,401	87
PHYSICS	810	783	27
POLITICS & GOVERNMENT	20	20	-

SUBJECT	NUMBER ENTERED	NUMBER PASSED	FAILED & ABSENT
SOCIOLOGY	503	443	60
SPANISH	310	301	9
GENERAL PAPER	3,759	3,591	168

Source: Ministry of Education, Alexandra Street, St. Clair

Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Date: August 29, 2000

APPENDIX G

CARIBBEAN HISTORY – 2000 BASIC PROFICIENCY

CARIBBEAN HISTORY – 2000
SCHOOL CANDIDATES

BASIC PROFICIENCY									
Territory	Candidates Entry	Candidates Writing Exam	GRADES						
				I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Anguilla	1	1	No	0	0	0	1	0	0
			%	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00
Barbados	30	27	No	0	8	12	6	1	0
			%	0.00	29.63	44.44	22.22	3.70	0.00
Belize	64	56	No	16	27	11	2	0	0
			%	28.57	48.21	19.64	3.57	0.00	0.00
B.V.I.	6	6	No	1	0	3	2	0	0
			%	16.67	0.00	50.00	33.33	0.00	0.00
Cayman Islands	13	13	No	2	3	4	3	1	0
			%	15.38	23.08	30.77	23.08	7.69	0.00
Dominica	18	16	No	3	10	2	1	0	0
			%	18.75	62.50	12.50	6.25	0.00	0.00
Grenada	9	9	No	3	5	1	0	0	0
			%	33.33	55.56	11.11	0.00	0.00	0.00
Guyana	2	0	No	0	0	0	0	0	0
			%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Jamaica	29	17	No	1	2	7	6	1	0
			%	5.88	11.76	41.18	35.29	5.88	0.00
St Kitts and Nevis	110	98	No	0	16	31	39	12	0
			%	0.00	16.33	31.63	39.80	12.24	0.00
St Lucia	34	20	No	0	2	8	8	2	0
			%	0.00	10.00	40.00	40.00	10.00	0.00

BASIC PROFICIENCY									
Territory	Candidates Entry	Candidates Writing Exam	GRADES						
				I	II	III	IV	V	VI
St Vincent and The Grenadines	9	9	No	1	4	3	1	0	0
			%	11.11	44.44	33.33	11.11	0.00	0.00
Trinidad and Tobago	384	237	No	0	15	59	85	68	10
			%	0.00	6.33	24.89	35.86	28.69	4.22
Netherland Antilles	1	0	No	0	0	0	0	0	0
			%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

APPENDIX H

CARIBBEAN HISTORY – 2000 GENERAL PROFICIENCY

CARIBBEAN HISTORY – 2000
SCHOOL CANDIDATES

GENERAL PROFICIENCY								
Territory	Candidates Entry	Candidates Writing Exam	GRADES					
			I		II	III	IV	V	VI
Anguilla	23	23	No %	8 34.78	8 34.78	5 21.74	2 8.70	0 0.00	0 0.00
Antigua and Barbuda	169	165	No. %	34 20.61	63 38.18	40 24.24	25 15.15	3 1.62	0 0.00
Barbados	533	506	No %	74 14.62	143 28.26	129 25.49	126 24.90	34 6.72	0 0.00
Belize	163	151	No %	33 21.65	67 44.37	39 25.83	11 7.28	1 0.66	0 0.00
B.V.I.	41	40	No %	0 0.00	11 27.50	22 55.00	6 15.00	1 2.50	0 0.00
Cayman Islands	11	11	No %	0 0.00	6 54.55	4 36.36	1 9.09	0 0.00	0 0.00
Dominica	200	191	No %	51 26.70	74 38.74	50 26.18	16 8.38	0 0.00	0 0.00
Grenada	466	456	No %	40 8.77	133 29.17	133 29.17	118 25.88	32 7.02	0 0.00
Guyana	1109	1066	No %	54 5.07	205 19.23	316 29.64	376 35.27	114 10.69	1 0.09
Jamaica	5291	5059	No %	600 11.86	1468 29.02	1474 29.14	1157 22.87	353 6.98	7 0.14

GENERAL PROFICIENCY								
Territory	Candidates Entry	Candidates Writing Exam	GRADES					
				I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Montserrat	13	13	No	4	5	3	1	0	0
			%	30.77	38.46	23.08	7.69	0.00	0.00
St Kitts and Nevis	395	388	No	38	107	116	108	19	0
			%	9.79	27.58	29.90	27.84	4.90	0.00
St Lucia	337	331	No	37	104	95	81	14	0
			%	11.18	31.42	28.70	24.47	4.23	0.00
St Vincent and The Grenadines	326	324	No	46	121	98	55	4	0
			%	4.20	37.35	30.25	16.98	1.23	0.00
Trinidad and Tobago	3567	3357	No	486	968	889	735	263	16
			%	4.48	28.84	26.48	21.89	7.83	0.48
Turks and Caicos	12	11	No	4	4	2	1	0	0
			%	6.36	36.36	18.18	9.09	0.00	0.00
Netherland Antilles	15	15	No	1	5	3	5	1	0.
			%	6.67	33.33	20.00	33.33	6.67	0.00

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REFERENCE LIST

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