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Graduates' Perception of History Education in Jamaican High Schools

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Abstract

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Abstract

Researchers have shown that history education is valuable, but it is not a popular subject of choice among secondary and postsecondary students in several parts of the world. In Jamaica, fewer students have taken the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examination in history education in the decade beginning in 2010 than in the decade before. The threefold purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate the perception of graduates of Jamaican high schools about what influenced their decision when they selected or deselected history education at the CSEC examination level, what career decision making factors they perceived influenced their decision, and what they think schools should do to improve the decision making regarding the selection of history education at the CSEC examination level. The study used a conceptual framework based on Super's life-span, life-space theory and Krumboltz and Mitchell's social learning theory of career decision making. Data were collected through telephone interviews from 10 participants who graduated from Jamaican high schools from 2014 to 2019. Data were coded by hand and resulted in four key findings, which indicated that career path, experience with teachers in history classes, and writing and reading skills were the main influential decision making factors, and that improvements should be made in pedagogical innovations as well as to explore careers to improve the uptake of history education. The findings of this study could contribute to positive social change by helping educators design history curriculum that students perceive as relevant to their career portfolio. It could also influence the wider society to begin creating jobs that make use of the content and skills learned in history education.

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Dedication

"I am the hope and the dream of a slave."

All that I do is part of my worship; hence, I dedicate this work to Jehovah God first. I could not have done it without you. Thank you for seeing me through. May you guide me in using the findings to effect some good in the world.

Second, I dedicate this work to the memory of my late mother, Adelaide Elizabeth Bignall, 1926-2003. Besides God, "Everything, I do, I do for you." As a poor Jamaican woman, you worked very hard in the cane fields so that your children could have a better life. You believed in the transforming power of education, and you were right in that belief. You were around when I started the first time, in 1997 at York University; sorry you are not here now "Sady" because this is for you. May your soul continue to rest in peace.

Third, I dedicate this work to the memory of my late father, Malton Lunova Edwards. "Every child needs a father," and while you have been deceased for more than 40 years now, I am glad I had the influence of a father. I am the embodiment of your intellect. When coupled with the insistence of the value of education by my mother, I have achieved what you probably dreamed of as a boy but was denied for lack of formal schooling. May your soul continue to rest in peace.

The old African proverb says, "It takes a village to raise a child." So, lastly, I dedicate this work to the memory of all others who helped to raise me, in particular three women from the village of Duckenfield. What Mrs. Flowers was to Maya Angelou in the Village of Stamp, Mrs. Joyce Malcolm was to me in the Village of Duckenfield. Eva

Gordon, another of the canepiece women, loved me with an everlasting love. And to Anta Williamson, I cherish the memory of my childhood days in Bamboo Corner, and the many times you and I sat together and looked through the window. May all your souls continue to rest in sweet peace.

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"You raised me up."

I took the long road, and because I did, I met many persons along the way whom I must thank for helping me get to my destination. But first, thanks be to the Almighty God for seeing me through. I could not have done it without you.

Like many at the time, I was skeptical about online learning, but growingly I found it as effective and perhaps more demanding that on-site learning. So, to the entire team that I interacted with at Walden University, thank you. Thanks to Dr. L. Weidner, my first chair, who upon retiring left me in the most capable doctoral hands you could imagine. Dr. C. Keen, you are a gem. The passion and competence you bring to your work is awe inspiring and worth emulating. This was complimented by the keen eyes of Dr. S. Lowrance and Dr. W. Fish. Thanks for being the committee who took me to the destination. Special thanks too, to all the mentors I had, in particular Lynda Kintz and Joshua Bass. May God's blessings be upon you.

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To well-wishers and supporters from my family, friends, current colleagues, and former colleagues, you are too numerous to mention. I don't want to run the risk of privileging any help or good sentiment over the other because whatever you did at the

time helped in moving me along. You know who you are-- from those who offered just a kind word or a prayer, to those who gave me time and space, those who helped with technology, searching for sources, discussing a concept, transcribing, rubbing my back, cooking some run-dung, picking me up at the airport, and the tasks go on – thank you. To the performers of Igle Jube, Jerusalema, and all the other music performers to whose songs I danced to relieve stress to keep my blood flowing and to keep body mass at a healthy level, you helped without knowing. Thank you.

Lastly but certainly not the least, to the participants, I could not have done it without you. This includes those who participated in the practice interviews and those who participated in the actual study. You are young, gifted, and graduates of Jamaican high schools, with your future ahead of you. In as much as I have been successful in this task, I wish the same for you and more. I pray that the career path you have chosen will make all the difference.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

History education is of use to 21st century learners. Organizations associated with educational testing and educational advocacy have acknowledged that history education is one of the core requirements needed to equip 21st century students with the skills necessary for success (Caribbean Examination Council, 2016; Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015). Burridge et al. (2014) have shown the value of history education in examining the issue of human rights. Harris and Haydn (2012), Wilkinson (2014), and Yazici and Yildirim (2018) indicated that history education has the power to foster social cohesion and that development of national identity is in jeopardy without a good civic education. Furthermore, the Caribbean Examination Council (2016) and Owino and Odundo (2016) proposed that history education can help in developing career readiness for 21st century learners.

Despite the recognition of its value, history education is not a popular subject of choice among secondary and postsecondary students in several parts of the world (Brookins, 2016a, 2016b; Jaffary, 2016; Schul, 2015). In some high schools, history education is marginalized by being integrated into social studies. In some, it is taught by teachers who are not qualified in the field (Drake-Brown & Patrick, 2013; Levesque & Zanazanian, 2015; Taylor & Guyver, 2012). Meanwhile, in some secondary schools, when given the option to choose history, it is not a popular subject of choice for students (David & Cheruiyot, 2016; Harris et al., 2012; Harris & Haydn, 2012; Kan, 2011). The decline in student selection of history education is also seen in higher education (Brookins, 2016a; Lehfeldt, 2016; Townsend, 2015). Furthermore, the problem of

deselection of history education is not confined to one country and includes countries such as Kenya, England, and Hong Kong (David & Cheruiyot, 2016; Harris et al., 2012; Harris & Haydn, 2012; Kan, 2011).

For the last 5 years, reports on two high-stakes examinations that are taken by secondary school students in Jamaica indicate that Jamaica is also one of the countries in which deselection of history education is occurring (Ministry of Education, Jamaica, 2018). Of the number of students who registered to take courses in the liberal arts in the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examination (a Caribbean regional examination), only 6% registered between 2013 and 2016. Meanwhile, data for the Jamaica School Certificate examination (a local Jamaican examination) indicated a similar trend. Of the number of students who registered for the three liberal arts courses that were offered from 2013 to 2016, an average of 14% registered for history education. Of that percentage, an average of 8% actually took the examination (Ministry of Education, Jamaica, 2015, 2016, 2018). A better understanding of the perception of Jamaican high school graduates about why they selected or deselected history education when they were choosing subjects for the CSEC examination may help curriculum designers and history teachers to design and deliver the kind of history education that students will perceive to be more beneficial to their civic development and also to their career development. Research in the area of history education for Jamaica is sparse; hence, the findings from this study may add to the literature on history education.

Chapter 1 includes information on the Jamaican education system, information about the examinations, and a brief review of the literature. In addition, Chapter 1

contains the problem statement, research problem, a brief discussion of the conceptual framework, the nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study for social change.

Background

Jamaica has a formal education structure, which is based on four levels: early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary (Education and Policy Data Centre, n.d.; Ministry of Education, Jamaica, 2019). Primary education is offered to students ages 6 to 11, and students generally spend 6 years at the primary level. History education as a stand-alone subject is not offered at this level. Instead, students are introduced to topics pertaining to history in Grade 4, as part of the social studies curriculum. This continues through Grade 5 and into Grade 6 (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1999). At the end of the 6 years, students take an exit exam, the Primary Exit Profile. In this examination, they are assessed in English, mathematics, science, and social studies. The results from this exam are used to place students in the secondary education level, which caters to students ages 12 to 16.

This level is divided into two sectors: secondary high school and technical high school. Secondary high schools follow a traditional academic curriculum while technical high schools follow a vocational curriculum. Students enter a sector based on their performance in the exams. In general, the secondary level is characterized by 5 years of school and is divided into two cycles: lower secondary from Grades 7 to 9 and upper secondary from Grades 10 to 11. In lower secondary school, history education is mandatory; however, when they move to upper secondary, it is optional. Regardless of

the sector of secondary education that a student is in, the transition from lower secondary to upper secondary school is a time of decision making for the students. At the end of Grade 9, students can take the Grade Nine Achievement Test, the Junior High School Certificate Exam, or the Jamaica School Certificate Exam (JSC). At the end of Grade 11, students are expected to take the CSEC examination (Ministry of Education, Jamaica, 2019).

At the end of Grade 11, students have a number of options. Those who qualify may go on to Grade 12, where the goal is to gain passes in the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination. Others can attend postsecondary institutions or seek employment. All of this is dependent on how many subjects they attain in the CSEC examination, as well as the grade with which they pass the subjects. Because the CSEC examination is such a pivotal one, I used students' decision making at this examination level to focus on history education.

The CSEC is a terminal examination, which is offered in the English Caribbean region. It is administered by the Caribbean Examination Council, which has its main headquarters in Barbados and a western office in Jamaica. The examination is taken mainly by students in Grade 11, following a 2-year preparation period; however, some out-of-school candidates do take the exam. The Caribbean Examination Council was established in 1972 with the aim of being the regional organization for setting assessment, evaluation, and educational standards. It replaced the prominence of the General Certificate Examination, which was administered from the United Kingdom by the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate.

The Caribbean Examination Council tests students in 33 subjects at the General Proficiency and Technical Proficiency levels. Both the General Proficiency and Technical Proficiency levels provide students with the foundation for employment or for advancing to further studies. The Caribbean Examination Council has a 6-point grading scheme, from 1, II, III, IV, V and VI, with I being the highest and VI being the lowest. In order for students to satisfy the matriculating requirements for postsecondary programs, they must acquire Grades I-III (Caribbean Examination Council, 2019). Since 2005, students need five or more subjects, including English language and mathematics, to matriculate to tertiary level education (higher education). Over the years, the examination has significantly increased its currency. It has become a benchmark of a student's overall academic achievement, and by extension, a variable that influences the perception of an effective or ineffective school. The Ministry of Education and the Caribbean Examination Council, therefore, invest heavily in CSEC examination preparation.

The objectives of the CSEC examination are in alignment with the expectations of parents and students, as both expect secondary education to have instrumental value (Cook & Jennings, 2016). In particular, they want secondary education to prepare their children for employment or postsecondary schooling. This is what the CSEC examination proposes to do (Caribbean Examination Council, 2016).

The nature of history education is defined in different ways; likewise, the purpose has many definitions (Brooks, 2013; Levesque & Zanazanian, 2015; Voet & De Wever, 2016). Both the varied nature and the multiple purposes of history education are compatible with the objectives of secondary education. This compatibility of an academic

subject with the secondary education's objective indicates that history education belongs on the secondary school curriculum. However, in spite of its value to the secondary school curriculum (Caribbean Examination Council, 2016; Harris & Haydn, 2012), it is not a popular subject of choice (Brooks, 2013; Harris & Haydn, 2012).

Studies conducted in different geographical areas have indicated that when students are given the choice to select subjects that they wish to take at the exit examination level, there are many factors that influence their decision making (Barrance & Elwood, 2018b; David & Cheruiyot, 2016; Duta et al., 2018; Harris & Haydn, 2012; Henderson et al., 2018; Iannelli et al., 2016). Among these are inequalities in the school curriculum, interest in the subject, perceived ability, requirement for future study, parental role, and students' socioeconomic background (David & Cheruiyot, 2016; Duta et al., 2018; Haydn & Harris, 2012; Henderson et al., 2018; Iannelli et al., 2016). What students believe about the character and the purpose of a high-stakes examination also influences their thinking (Barrance & Elwood, 2018b). Because there is the tendency to deselect history education (David & Cheruiyot, 2016; Harris & Haydn, 2012) some of these factors become influential in the Jamaican high school situation.

Studies have been conducted in different places showing that history education is marginalized by students deselecting it when it is no longer mandatory (Brookins, 2016a; David & Cheruiyot, 2016; Harris & Haydn, 2012; Schmidt, 2018). However, there is a gap in the research on the selection and deselection of history education for the Caribbean in general. While there are data to support the decline in the selection of history education for Jamaica (Ministry of Education, Jamaica, 2015, 2016, 2018), I did not find a study

that addressed the matter. Therefore, this study may fill that gap. It may do so by advancing the understanding of what graduates of Jamaican high school perceive to have influenced their decision to select or deselect history education at the CSEC examination level. It may also help curriculum designers and history teachers deliver the kind of history education that students in secondary may perceive to have instrumental value, in particular to their career development.

Problem Statement

Students' deselection of history education in some other countries (Brookins, 2016a; David & Cheruiyot, 2016; Harris & Haydn, 2012; Schmidt, 2018) is also occurring in Jamaica. This is evident in reports for the CSEC examination between the years 2010 and 2018 (Jamaica Ministry of Education 2015, 2016, 2018). Besides the CSEC regional exit exam data, data for the national examination, which is administered by the Jamaican Ministry of Education, the JSC exam, showed a decline in students' selection of history. This examination had more years of reported data than for the CSEC, showing data from 2005 to 2015. The data for both types of examinations indicate that student selection of history courses is small and that a decline has occurred (See Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1

Number of Students in Public Secondary Schools Entering CSEC Examination in Arts, Social Studies, and History 2010-2018

Date	Arts	Social Studies	Caribbean History
2010	64,897	15,065	5,573
2011	65,414	15,808	5,348
2012	71,544	17,382	5,933
2013	69,130	16,952	5,548
2014	68,712	16,512	5,204
2015	66,246	15,650	4,732
2016	66,568	15,601	4,836
2017	65,814	15,407	4,575
2018	62,588	15,143	4,280

Table 2

Number of Candidates Registered for Jamaica School Certificate Examination in History 2005-2015

Date	Number registered
2005	6,071
2006	5,942
2007	3,730
2008	4,054
2009	4,845
2010	3,923
2011	3,745
2012	2,681
2013	3,428
2014	3,269
2015	2,828

While both types of examinations do not have the same social currency, students have used them to qualify for postsecondary education and for the job market. Because of the value of history education to the social and economic development of the Jamaican youth and the Jamaican populace at large, this decline warrants an investigation. To understand why students deselect history education, it is necessary to understand students' perception of history education in Jamaican high schools. While researchers have investigated the decline in student uptake of history education in other parts of the world (David & Cheruiyot, 2016; Jaffary, 2016; Harris & Haydn, 2012; Rahman, 2015), I found none that had addressed students' perception of history education in Jamaican high schools. Nor did I find any studies that addressed why students in Jamaican high school selected or deselected history education at the CSEC examination level.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was threefold. I aimed to investigate the perception of graduates of Jamaican high schools as to why they selected or deselected history education when given the choice to select courses at the CSEC examination level, what career decision making factors they perceived influenced their decision, and what they think schools should do to improve the decision making regarding the selection of history education at the CSEC examination level. The study may help to provide information for educators about the perceived influence on students' decision making process when selecting or deselecting history education when it is no longer a mandatory subject.

Research Questions

There were three research questions for this study:

RQ1: What do graduates of Jamaican high schools perceive influenced their decision to select or deselect history education at the CSEC level?

RQ2: What career decision making factors do graduates of Jamaican high schools perceive influenced their decisions to select or deselect history education at the CSEC examination level?

RQ3: What do graduates of Jamaican high schools think schools should do to improve decision making regarding the selection of history education at the CSEC examination level?

Conceptual Framework

In this study, I used a conceptual framework based on two theories, Super's (Super, 1990, Super et al., 1996) life-span, life-space approach theory and Krumboltz's (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990, 1996) social learning theory of career decision making (SLTCDM). Super's life-span, life-space approach was heavily influenced by the field of developmental and occupational psychology. Super (Super, 1990, Super et al., 1996) posited that career choice is a process that occurs over an individual's lifetime. The theory identifies life stages through which an individual passes and career tasks that are associated with each stage. Because of this major link between life-stage and career related activity, I used Super's theory for guiding the design, framing interview questions around career-decision making activity, and interpreting the interview questions. I assumed that the participants were in the exploration stage and were involved in

crystallization when they made the decision because exploration is a career decision making stage of adolescence, and crystallization of that stage is the task (see Super, 1990, Super et al., 1996).

.The second theory comprising the conceptual framework was Mitchell and Krumboltz's (1990, 1996) SLTCDM. Mitchell and Krumboltz (1990, 1996) recognized that there are many factors that influence students' career decision making, including innate factors over which individuals have agency and factors over which individuals do not have agency. Factors over which the individual has agency are their learning experience and task approach skills. Innate factors are genetic endowment and special abilities. Factors that are not innate but over which the individual does not have agency are the environmental conditions and events. Because Mitchell and Krumboltz offered a list of factors, did not privilege any of the factors, and took into account non-White populations, the SLTCDM was useful to help investigate what participants perceived to have influenced their decision to select or deselect history education. Therefore, the theories were useful in framing the interview questions and helped in interpreting the data collected from the participants. Both theories have been tested by researchers (Harris, 2014; Jaeger et al., 2017; Kim, 2014). In Chapter 2, I discuss both theories in more detail.

Nature of the Study

This was a basic qualitative study. Basic qualitative research is also known as generic qualitative or the interpretive approach (Caelli et al., 2003; Kahlke, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015). I interviewed 10 participants who were selected through purposeful sampling. I interviewed them via mobile phone,

using the application WhatsApp. To obtain rich and thick information from the interviewees, I followed suggestions made by Patton (2015), Rubin and Rubin (2012), and Seidman (2006) about qualitative interviewing. Qualitative interviewing helped me to see how the participants perceived the influences on their decision making process, the career decision making factors influencing their decision, and the recommendations they offered regarding what they perceived could improve the decision making process for history education at the CSEC level. In analyzing the data, I used a priori and post priori codes, starting with the a priori. This coding activity led to the development of four themes, which constitute the findings of the study.

Definitions

The purpose of this section is to define some terms and concepts that are found within the study. Some of these terms are not common, and some may have multiple meanings.

Caribbean Examinations Council: A regional examination body made up of 16 participating Caribbean countries and is empowered by these countries to administer the CSEC and other exams. The council designs syllabi including the history syllabus for Grade 10 and Grade 11. It also trains teachers in the use of the syllabi (CXC, 2019).

The Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate examination (CSEC): CSEC refers to Caribbean region's exit examinations. These exams are generally taken at the end of Grade 11 and are done in May- June for in-school candidates. Subjects for the exams are offered at three proficiencies: basic, general, and technical.

General Certificate Examination (GCE): The GCE is the international examination that is administered by the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate. This examination used to be the main national exit exam for Jamaica until its primacy was replaced by the examinations offered by the CXC. The examination is still offered.

General Proficiency: The General Proficiency examination is one of the two proficiencies at which the CXC administers its examination. The General Proficiency exam is equivalent to the ordinary level General Certificate Examination. It provides students with the foundation for study beyond the fifth year of secondary school and for entry into the workplace.

Secondary high and *technical high schools:* In Jamaica, the words secondary and *high schools* are now used interchangeably. The Ministry of Education, however, uses the categories secondary *high* and *technical high*. All secondary high school offers 5 years of schooling, and some technical high schools offer 5 years of schooling. The 5 years are divided into two cycles. The first cycle is Grades 7 to 9 for students aged 12 to 14. The second cycle is from Grades 10 to 11, for students aged 15 to 16. Some secondary schools offer an additional 2 years of schooling for Grades 12 to 13 (Ministry of Education Statistics, 2013).

Social studies: An integrated subject. It draws on other subjects including history, economics. law, geography, sociology, anthropology, psychology, religion, mathematics, and natural sciences. The main objective of social studies is to help students develop

knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values that will make them socially competent national and global citizens (National Council for the Social Studies, n.d.)

Technical Proficiency: Technical proficiency is one of the two proficiencies at which CXC administers its examinations. The Technical Proficiency exam is for students who are highly skilled in the technical subjects. It provides students with the foundation for further study in the technical studies or pretechnician training (CXC, 2019).

Assumptions

Two assumptions were associated with this study. The first assumption was based on my ontological views about realities. I accepted the research paradigm that reality is not singular; instead, there are multiple realities (see Rubin & Rubin, 2015). I assumed then, that each participant would have a different reality even though they are all Jamaicans and all pursued secondary education in Jamaica. The second assumption was based on the accuracy of the memory of the graduates. Participants in the study were past students who graduated between 2014 and 2019. The participants had selected or deselected history education between 1 to 5 years ago. I assumed that because that is not a long span of time, participants would remember somewhat accurately their perceptions of history education that influenced their decision making process. Besides the influence of their memory, I also assumed that participants would be willing to offer honest responses to the interview questions**.**

Scope and Delimitations

Scope and delimitations are factors that define the boundaries of a study. This study had two delimitations. One was the type of secondary schools from which the

participants graduated, and the other was the geographical location from which the participants were drawn. The study by Gleeson and O'Neill (2018) along with examination reports from the Jamaican Ministry of Education (2018) revealed that the secondary education in Jamaica is not administered by one body. Participants who self-selected for this study were from schools administered by the government, and all participants were living in Jamaica. These factors affect the generalizability of the study because participants from schools administered by religious bodies did not participate nor was there any participant who was living outside of Jamaica. The scope of the study was set by the three research questions.

Limitations

This study had limitations: researcher bias, sample technique, sample size, and communication channel. I have studied history and have taught history education for all of my professional teaching career. Because I think it is a useful subject, this could have influenced my data collection process. Second, the sampling technique used, purposeful sampling, inherently allowed for self-selection bias. Third, the sample size was small. When coupled with sample technique, it resulted in a nonrandom sample more representative of women and public traditional high schools. Last, the communication channel was a limitation. Interviews were conducted over the phone, and I was not able to see participants' nonverbal communication. Collectively, these limitations prevent the generalization of my findings across the entire population.

Significance

The study was unique because it addressed an area under researched in secondary education in Jamaica. Because history education has important uses, the findings from the study could assist in designing the kind of high school curriculum that may help to elevate the status of, and student preference for, history education in Jamaican high schools. Because of the importance of history education, this elevation could consequently produce students with a more unified sense of national identity (see Wilkinson, 2014; Yazıcı & Yıldırım 2018). Findings from the study may also help educators to identify skills students need for the 21st century that history education could provide, and this may be used develop their career readiness portfolio (CXC, 2016; Owino & Odundo, 2016).

Summary

History education is important to 21st century learners (CXC, 2016; Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015). However, when given the option, students in secondary schools display the tendency to deselect history education (Brookins, 2016a; Jaffray, 2016; Schul, 2015). In this basic qualitative study, I focused on the perception of graduates of Jamaican high schools of what influenced them to select or deselect history education at the CSEC examination level. I asked them about what specific career decision making factors they perceived influenced their decision and what recommendations they can give to improve the decision making for history education at the CSEC examination level. The findings from the study help fill a gap in the literature on history education. It may also help curriculum designers and teachers produce the kind

of history education that students will perceive as beneficial to their career development and civic growth. In Chapter 2, I provide a more detailed discussion of the theoretical framework and the current literature that contribute to an understanding of the status of history education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

History education can be used to examine human rights issues, to foster social cohesion, to develop national identity, and to foster career readiness skills (Burridge et al., Buchanan & Chodkiewicz, 2014; CXC, 2016; Owino & Odundo, 2016; Wilkinson, 2016). In spite of its usefulness to students, when secondary school students are given the option to select courses, history education is not a popular subject of choice in a number of countries, including Jamaica (David & Cheruiyot, 2016; Harris & Haydn, 2012, Jamaican Ministry of Education, 2014; Kan, 2011). The purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of graduates of Jamaican high schools as to why they selected or deselected history education when given the choice to select courses at the CSEC examination level, what career decision making factors they perceived influenced their decision, and what they think schools should do to improve the decision making regarding the selection of history education at the CSEC examination level.

In this chapter, I describe search strategies and the conceptual framework, and I discuss empirical studies relevant to the research questions on history education. I begin with the library search strategies and then discuss the two career-decision making theories that formed the conceptual framework. Thereafter, I present a discussion of studies pertinent to the status of history education. That discussion contains the following themes: students' perceptions of and interest in secondary education, the nature of and the purpose of history education, students' beliefs and teachers' beliefs about history education, curricular design, instructional strategies in history education, influences on

students' decision making, students' feeling about high-stakes examinations, and an analysis of the marginalization of history education.

Literature Search Strategy

For this review, I used a number of databases and search engines to find peer-reviewed articles and books regarding the conceptual framework and the empirical literature review section. These databases included Education Resource Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest, Science Direct, Journal Storage (JSTOR), ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost, and SAGE Journals (formerly SAGE Premier).

I applied a number of search terms to locate current empirical literature relevant to the research question. Some of the terms were used independently, and some were combined. Some of the terms that I used were *history, education, adolescents, high school, secondary school, secondary education, high school education, Jamaican school, Jamaican high schools, secondary education, history instruction, history education, history curriculum, history wars, Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), adolescents' beliefs about secondary school education, adolescents' attitudes toward high school, teaching methods, history teachers' beliefs, marginalization of history education, traditional subjects, secondary students' attitude, secondary school students' beliefs about social sciences, high school students' beliefs about high school education, high school students in Jamaica, adolescent decision making, Krumboltz, Krumboltz's social learning theory of career decision making,* and *social learning theory.* These search terms led to my finding of articles that I have categorized into a number of themes to

provide an analysis of existing research into secondary education and history education at the secondary level.

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study was comprised of two theories of career development and factors influencing students' educational choice. I used the adolescent stage of Super's life-span, life-space approach (Super, 1990) and Mitchell and Krumboltz's (1990, 1996) social learning career decision making theory to investigate why Grade 9 students in Jamaican high schools transitioning to Grade 10 made decisions to select their courses, selecting or deselecting history education. They can select the courses for which they will take at the CSEC examination when they reach Grade 11. This examination is used to help students gain employment and to secure a place in postsecondary institutions. Gaining employment and attending postsecondary institutions are career related activities. Therefore, students who participate in these examinations may be seen as choosing subjects with their career in mind.

Career development theories have been used to explain what influences people to choose certain careers, and for this study, it was appropriate to use segments of two career theories to construct the conceptual framework. Super's (Super, 1990, Super et al., 1996) life-span, life-space approach theory was appropriate because it proposes that career decision making is not a one-time event but something that takes place over an individual's lifespan. Based on research, Super (1990, 1996) found decision making divided into stages; Super (1990, 1996) also showed what career related task an individual engages in at a particular stage. The students whom I sought to involve in this

study were in the adolescent stage of human development when they made the decision regarding history classes. Super(1990,1996) suggested this is a period when adolescents make the initial decisions about career choices, and this stage aligns with Super's (1990, 1996) exploration stage. Therefore, Super's life-span, life-space approach was used to explore how students in this study may have perceived themselves as involved in a career development task. I also used Krumboltz's career decision making theory (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990) to help understand what Jamaican high school graduates perceive influenced their decision to select or deselect history education when they had to choose subjects at CSEC examination level.

Super's Life-Span, Life-Space Approach

Students in Jamaican high schools who are moving from Grade 9 to Grade 10 are not moving directly into a career. They are about 14 to 15 years old and are in the adolescence stage of life. Super's (Super, 1990, Super et al., 1996) developmental theory, also known as the life-span, life-space approach, is useful in illustrating how adolescents who are high school students are involved in a career decision making task. Super's lifespan theory focuses on the growth and change that an individual experiences regarding the development of their career over their lifetime, covering the career decision making process beginning with childhood, through adolescence, late adolescence, and ending with adulthood (Super, 1990; Super et al., 1996). For this study, I used the stage that covers the adolescent period, which Super (1990, 1996) characterized as the exploration stage, to guide the design of the study and particularly the interview questions.

Super's life-span, life-space theory originated from developmental psychology, occupational psychology, and personality theory (Super, 1990; Super et al., 1996). Super (1990) claimed that career choice is not an event but a process that unfolds over one's lifetime. This process has five stages that an individual experiences in the process of identifying a career. These are growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement. The growth stage is normally experienced from birth to age 14, and the exploration stage from age 15 to 24 (Super, 1990; Super et al., 1996). The Grade 9 to Grade 10 transition period in Jamaican high school falls between ages 14 and 15. According to the stages that Super identified in the life-span, life space theory, the participants in this study straddled two stages of adolescence when they made the decision. They were in the latter part of the growth stage and were beginning the exploration stage. Based on Super's theory, these two stages, in particular the exploration stage, are significant periods of career development for the adolescents, primarily because of the kinds of developmental tasks that occur within these periods. Furthermore, while age is used as a demarcation of the stages, it is the task (crystallization) that is carried out that is of major consequence. As such, the exploration stage was the focus.

Generally known as the adolescence period, lifespan theorists have marked the beginning of this period of human development at ages 12 to 13 and the end at 19 to 24 (Erikson, 1968; Super, 1990). Like other periods of human development, the adolescent period is accompanied by physical, cognitive, social, moral, sexual, and emotional development (Erikson, 1968; Kohlberg, 1994; Super, 1990). Major physical changes occur in height and weight, as well as other physical and emotional changes. Changes in

adolescents' cognitive abilities result in them engaging in more complex forms of thinking. This involves thinking about their identity and their future self.

In identifying different life stages in the theory, Super (Super, 1990; Super et al, 1996) also identified some tasks that are done in each of the different stages. Some of the tasks found in respective stages are crystallization, implementation, stabilization, advancement, holding, updating, decelerating, and retiring (Super et al., 1996). Super et al. (1996) suggested that crystallization normally occurs between 14 to 18 years of age, that is, during the exploration stage, though it is not confined to that stage. During crystallization, adolescents form career-related goals based on their values, interests, resources, and what appears possible. Through the selection of classes, adolescent students try to develop their vocational self-concept and try to figure out how they will fit into the world of work. The Grade 9 to 10 transition period in Jamaican high schools may occur when crystallization is the most significant task in the exploration stage. When students transition to Grade 10, the CSEC examination's syllabus becomes the syllabus that they follow for the next 2 years. This examination is designed to help qualify students for careers and employment because they are prerequisites for jobs and acceptance into postsecondary institutions (Granston, 2014). Therefore, Super's theory was helpful in this study because it situated the participants in a career development activity that is characteristic of the adolescent stage of development. Interview questions were used to ascertain if students were engaged in the process of thinking about their careers as they selected their subjects.

Super's (1990) theory is more than 50 years old, and researchers continue to apply the theory to empirical research. Some earlier research that used Super's theory stemmed from criticisms of the theory that it focused mainly on White males and tested the applicability of the theory in different cultural settings (Dillard & Perrin, 1980; Fouad & Keely, 1992; Westbrook & Sanford, 1991). Ferrari et al. (2015) more recently applied the theory to school–aged children by investigating the exploration stage of middle school students in Italy.

Based on the tenets of Super's (1990) theory, its applicability to this study was to understand better the stage of life that the participants were in and the developmental task that they were involved in at that life stage. Super's theory, however, does not provide an explanation of the surrounding influences on students as they make particular choices during the exploration stage. Krumboltz's (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990) theory offers more in-depth explanation of the factors that influence adolescent decision making when they are in the exploration stage.

Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making

Krumboltz's (SLTCDM) is based on Bandura's (as cited in Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990, 1996) social learning theory, which recognizes humans as intelligent agents who try to control their environments to their benefit. SLTCDM is a two-part theory that is generally presented as one. The first part of the theory focuses on the SLCTDM, while the second part focuses on a learning theory of career counseling, which is a guide for counseling. In general, the purpose of the career decision making theory is to suggest reasons people select certain educational programs or occupations or why they

may change educational programs or occupations at specific points in their lives (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990, 1996). I used Krumboltz's SLCTDM to investigate the perception of graduates of Jamaican high schools. In particular, the theory helped me to understand what the students felt to be their reasons for selecting or deselecting history education at the CSEC examination level. The whole theory did not bear relevance to the study; therefore, only the first part of the theory, SLTCDM, was used to guide interview questions that addressed the three research questions.

According to the first part of SLTCDM, four major factors influence the educational and career decision making process (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990; 1996). These are (a) genetic endowment and special abilities, (b) environmental conditions and events, (c) learning experience, and (d) task approach skills (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990;1996). All four factors play a role in the educational program selection process and the career decision making process of individuals. The weight of each varies, however, and this results in different educational program selection and career choices.

Two of the four characteristics of SLTCDM are outside of an individual's control. Genetic endowment and special abilities are qualities that are inherited and may include physical appearances, gender, sex, race, and physical disabilities. The theorists recognized the role of nature versus nurture and posited that special abilities such as intelligence, though innate, are cultivated through the interaction of the ability with selected environmental conditions (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990; 1996). Environmental conditions and events, which affect the educational and career decision making process, are also generally outside of the individual's control. They are political, social, cultural,

economic, and physical in nature. Examples of these forces are job opportunities, training opportunities, selection criteria for trainees and workers, the monetary and social rewards for various occupations, the nature of the education system, family culture, and natural disasters (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990; 1996).

The third factor - learning experiences - is not innate and the individuals are agents over these. Learning experiences that influence the individual's educational and career decision making are of two types: instrumental and associative (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990; 1996). With instrumental learning experience, an individual interacts with the environment and the resultant effect is positive or negative behavior. The behavior may be cognitive or emotional, overt or covert, instant or delayed. Examples of instrumental learning experience include taking an American history exam, studying for a Caribbean history exam, or a student discussing his or her career path with someone. Because people tend to repeat behaviors for which they have been rewarded, if a student scores a good grade on an American history exam, he or she will be more inclined to study American history.

While instrumental learning is motivated by reward and punishment, associative learning is not. With associative learning, an individual makes an association between two situations, one of which was previously not viewed as positive or negative. Another example might be that through observation, classical condition, or vicarious experience (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990; 1996) an individual associates history education with limited job opportunities, and thus may avoid taking history courses.

Like learning experiences, the fourth factor, task approach skills are also not innate and individuals have agency over them. These are a set of skills individuals develop because of the interaction among the other three factors identified in the theory – genetic endowment and special abilities, learning experiences, and environmental influences. These skills include goal setting, work habits, problem-solving skills, seeking occupational information, emotional responses and cognitive responses (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990; 1996). History courses generally require a large amount of writing. This makes the courses time consuming and requires goal setting skills, good self-management skills, and good writing skills of the students. If students do not have these skills, they are likely to have problems with the courses.

According to the SLTCDM, the interaction among the four factors leads to the development of thoughts and beliefs about the person and about the world in general (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990; 1996). The beliefs that people develop about themselves are known as self-observation generalizations. Individuals make generalizations about their abilities, their interests, and their values. These generalizations influence their goals and their actions. The beliefs about the world of work and beliefs about other events that individuals develop are known as world-view generalizations. These world-view generalizations also influence their goals and their actions (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990; 1996).

Krumboltz's theory has been applied to a number of research situations. Jaeger et al. (2017) used it to investigate how, when, and why women with STEM doctoral degrees make career decisions in the academic and private sector. Harris (2014) used it to

discover the social stress that racial minority and sexual minority students in historically Black colleges/university (HBCU) faced in the career-decision making process. Datti (2009) used it to explore the career decision making process of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning adolescents.

Both Super (1990,1996) and Krumboltz's (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990,1996) theories are useful for investigating what Grade 9 students transitioning to Grade 10, perceive had influenced their decision to select or deselect history education at the CSEC examination level. The participants were adolescents, and the section of Super's theory that focuses on adolescent career development task will be used to verify if participants were in that development stage and verify the task they found themselves doing. Similarly, Krumboltz's SLTCDM was be used to frame questions about the kind of factors they perceived influenced their decision to select or deselect history education. The next section will review empirical articles that focused on the research question.

Literature Review

Secondary education is an important event in human development. In general, secondary education caters to students who are 11-18 years of age, that is, students who are in the adolescent stage. While the structure of secondary education will vary from one country to the next (Harris & Reynolds, 2018; Perry & Southwell, 2014), at the end of secondary schooling, students are expected to gain competencies that will allow them to matriculate into postsecondary education or to gain employment. The studies that are reviewed in this section, focused on secondary education. The studies revealed the

perceptions of both students and parents and some of the individual and environmental factors that influence their perceptions.

Perceptions of and General Interest in Secondary Education

Studies have shown that secondary school students want secondary education that is relevant. Lemley et al.(2014) and Shin et al.(2016) examined students' interest in secondary education by focusing on relevance of the curriculum and relevance of school work. Lemley et al. studied a high school in a Texas school district and investigated some of the environmental factors that influenced student achievement among high school students. Shin et al. wanted to know if students in a Korean middle school and high school perceived schoolwork as a means of accomplishing their future goals. Both studies found that students wanted secondary education that was relevant to needs of the 21st century learners. For instance, the students in Lemley et al.'s study perceived the relevance of content and presentation in secondary education to be beneficial. The students in Korean study increasingly perceived that secondary education should have instrumental value. While the students in the studies were from different geographical areas and different cultures, both set of students then, believed that secondary education should serve the needs of adolescents.

While relevance, as was studied by Lemley et al. (2014) and Shin et al. (2016), may be regarded as a focus on students' perception of the purpose of secondary education, other studies that factors besides relevance and career readiness influence students' attitude towards school (Andu et al., 2017; Musheer et al., 2016; Anyio, 2015). Anyio (2015) investigated the effect of social problems such as alcohol consumption on

students' attitude towards school in Kaduna, Nigeria. The researcher found that peer group influence was not significantly related to students' attitude towards school, but alcohol consumption did significantly impact secondary school students' attitude towards school. Musheer et al. (2016) were concerned with the impact of gender and school type on students' attitude towards school in India. Musheer et al. found that students generally had a favorable attitude towards secondary school but gender and type of school had a significant effect on students' attitude towards school. In this study, girls had a less positive attitude towards school than boys. Andu et al.'s study in Nigeria found that gender had no significant effect on the attitude of senior secondary school students towards school. The variation in the findings on gender may be a result of differences in culture but also differences in developmental level, since the Nigerian students were upper level senior students and the Indian students were lower level high school students.

Parental involvement and parental attributes have been found to contribute to the perception of secondary education in general (Cook & Jennings, 2015; Cook & Jennings, 2016; Musheer et al., 2016; Shin et al., 2016). In investigating the perceptions of high school students in Korea about instrumentality of their schoolwork, Shin et al. (2016) examined the influence parents had on students. The researchers found that students valued the parents' perception about instrumentality of their schoolwork more than the perception of anyone else in the junior high and high school learning environment. Musheer et al. (2016) focused on the educational level of parents to see if that had any influence on students' attitude towards school climate in the schools in India, which they

studied. The researchers found that the educational level of parents did not present a significant difference in the attitude of students towards school climate.

The findings by Cook and Jennings (2015; 2016) bore similarities and differences to the findings by Musheer et al. (2016) and Shin et al. (2016). Cook and Jennings (2016) examined the value that both Jamaican parents and children placed on schooling. It compared the value system of students and parents to see if there was a significant difference in parents' and students' value of education. The findings bore some similarities to the findings of an earlier study that was conducted by both authors (Cook & Jennings, 2015). In the 2015 study, they investigated the causes of absenteeism in secondary schools and found that parents and children placed little value on education. The results of the 2016 study showed that both parents and students placed a moderate value on schooling and that both valued education for its instrumental purpose. This finding on the part of the Jamaican students is similar to the findings for the Korean students regarding perceived instrumentality of current schoolwork (Shin et al., 2016). The recurring theme of valuing instrumentality indicates that parents and students perceive secondary education as a place that will prepare students for beneficial postsecondary activities.

Cook et al.'s (2016) findings regarding parental valuing of education for instrumental purposes may be seen in light of their employment status. The researchers found that parents who were employed had a more positive perception about the value of education than those who were not employed. The findings also showed that parental value of education influenced children's value of education; therefore, it is

understandable that both parents and children in this study had similar perception of secondary education. Besides underscoring the value of instrumentality, the findings indicate the impact of socioeconomic status on people's perception of education and the influence of parents on their children's thinking about education.

Besides viewing education through the eyes of students and parents, researchers have also investigated secondary education based on the category or sector of the secondary schools. Cook and Jennings (2016) only gave a cursory look at school sector but Perry et al. (2016) made school sector (public and private) the central focus of their secondary data analysis of the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data. The data analysis was to answer (a) "to what degree students' perceptions of their teachers' instructions and engagement vary by sector and socioeconomic composition and (b) to what degree students' attitude towards schooling and their perceptions of their relationships with teachers and classroom disciplinary climate vary by school sector and socioeconomic composition?" (p.177). Socioeconomic composition and not school sector caused variations in educational experiences. Similarly, students' educational experience in public and private sectors that were within the same socioeconomic composition did not vary substantially. Therefore, socioeconomic composition was a more compelling factor in determining students' attitude and perception than the type of school that students attended.

Gleeson and O'Neill (2018) also used a school sector approach to examine the perceptions people had of secondary education. The authors postulated that the identity of faith-based schools were coming under pressure in a world that was becoming more

secularized. They used the Australian education system to make their case. In Australia, secondary school students can choose to attend Catholic, independent, or government schools. The researchers wanted to know why the participants chose a particular type of secondary school, their perceptions of the purposes of schools; and their perceptions of the features of Catholic schools. The findings showed that convenience of location and reputation for caring and academic excellence were the primary reasons for school choice. Religious reason was the third to the last reason for school choice. Similarly, except for those participants who attended Catholic schools, Catholic faith-based education as a purpose of schooling received a low rating. Convenience of location could be interpreted in socioeconomic terms (reduction in cost of travel) and reputation may be seen as the schools were beneficial to the students.

In summary, the articles I reviewed for this section focused on different geographical areas and cultures: India, Nigeria, Texas, Korea and Australia. In spite of that there were commonalities about how students and parents perceived secondary education. All the studies found students and parents believed that secondary education should have instrumental value. The findings also indicated that socioeconomic factors were significant in how stakeholders perceived secondary education. Additionally, the findings showed that parents influenced their children's thought process about the perception of secondary education. While these articles were not discussing career decision making, there is a link to career decision making through the perception that secondary schooling should be instrumental and parents with more education may want their children to have similar opportunities. Because there is this underlying link, the

findings regarding some of the factors that influence the perception of secondary education bear similarity to Krumboltz's (1990;1996) position about factors that influence students' decision making.

Nature and Purpose of History Education

History has been one of the most debated subjects on school curriculum (Hawkey, 2015; Voet & De Wever, 2016). Much of the debate focused on the nature and purpose of history and much of this has been directed by politics and society (Voet & De Wever, 2016). The debate has taken place in countries such as Canada, England, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Turkey (Burridge et al., 2014; Harris & Reynolds, 2014; Yazıcı & Yildırım, 2018).

Harris and Reynolds (2014), who have researched and written extensively about history education, made a distinction between the participants in the debate. The researchers categorized one set of participants as the "educationalists", that is, those who focused on the "disciplinary and postmodern" approaches to history education. The other category of participants are those who adhered to the public and political discourse and focused on history education as a "collective memory'' (p.466). There is evidence of the public and political discourse about the nature and purpose of history education (Ethier & Lefrancois, 2012; Harris & Haydn, 2012; Kan, 2012). The studies which are reported in this literature review, however, reflect the educationalists' view. These studies present the views of teachers and student-teachers about the nature and purposes of history education and represent the more current discourse. This is not to suggest that the public and political discourse is over.

Based on the findings of the studies that reflect the educationalists' view, the nature of history education is determined by characteristics of the teachers, characteristics of the students, and the inclusion of elements of Seixas' (Seixas & Peck, 2004) *historical understanding* – a concept that appears to be cited by many in history education (Hildebrandt et al., 2016; Tambyah, 2017; Ryter, 2015; Whitehouse, 2018) and one on which I will elaborate further. This section draws on studies from Sweden, England, the United States, South Africa, Canada, and Flanders.

The nature of history education was not something that existed out there; instead, it was constructed by stakeholders interacting with the curriculum (Brook, 2013; Voet & De Wever, 2016). For this reason, instead of outlining what appears to be the nature of history education, some researchers identified who determined the nature of history education. Brooks (2013) and Voet and De Wever (2016) indicated that classroom teachers were instrumental in defining the nature of history education. Brooks (2013) used a case study in the United States to examine the *ambitious teacher*. The ambitious teacher was one who believed the nature of history education was defined by Seixas' (Seixas & Peck, 2004) six elements of historical understanding or historical thinking. According to Seixas and Peck (Seixas & Peck, 2004, pp. 109-117), the past can be known by applying a specific methodology to the reading of historical documents, narratives, and artifacts. To be successful with the method, readers must use their ability to determine the historical significance of what is being studied, use primary evidence, identify continuity and change, analyze cause and effect, develop historical perspectives, and understand the ethical dimensions of historical interpretation. Like Brooks (2013),

Voet and De Wever (2016) concluded that teacher-belief influenced teacher instruction, which in turn determined the nature of history education. Therefore, teacher-belief about inquiry based learning (IBL) determined whether or not teachers used inquiry based learning, which is reflective of the interpretive nature of history education.

Other studies focused on the use of methodology, in particular the use of primary sources as a defining feature of the nature of history education (Levesque & Zanazanian, 2018; Voet & De Wever, 2016). In the study conducted by Voet and De Wever (2016), some teachers described history education as scientific in nature because it is based on empirical evidence and rigor. The teachers in the study by Levesque and Zanazanian (2018) stated that primary sources were their preferred mode of investigating history and that they trusted historians as a source rather than history teachers because the participants in the study believed that the diverse educational background of history teachers did not necessarily prepare them to teach history education with rigor. However, while teachers believed in the importance of primary sources in defining the nature of history education, they did not always use instructional methodology that demanded the use of primary sources (Voet & De Wever, 2016).

Teacher Beliefs About History Education

Other researchers besides Voet and De Wever (2016) studied how teachers' beliefs impacted the nature of history education. Harris and Reynolds (2018) investigated teachers' decision making process. In particular, they examined how teachers transformed official policy into classroom learning for Key Stage 3 (Grades 7-9) students in England. They found the following: (a) that teachers focused on some of Seixas'

concepts of historical understanding; (b) the majority of the teachers focused on English and political history; and (c) that most adopted a chronological approach to teaching history education (see Seixas & Peck, 2004). The aim of this study was similar to one conducted earlier by Harris and Burn (2016). Harris and Burn (2016) found that teachers were hostile to the nature of the new history education curriculum, drafted in 2013, which British policy makers intended them to teach. Teachers described the intended changes as "irrelevant", "uninspiring" and "lacking in ethnic diversity" (p. 530). The words used by the teachers to describe the new curriculum could possibly indicate that the underlying tension between the educationalist and the political and public discourse. It could also mean that teachers want more autonomy in designing the curriculum.

Besides the history curriculum, other factors influenced teacher-belief about the nature of history education. Voet and De Wever (2016) found that school contextual factors such as classroom life and central exams were influential factors. Levesque and Zanazanian (2014) and Kose (2017) found that personal factors such as teacher qualification were influential. All these factors ultimately influenced the nature of history education and indicated that there was no universal definition.

A contextual classroom factor that researchers found to have influenced the nature of history education was student characteristics. Kose (2017), Ledman (2014), and Wilkinson (2014) found that student characteristics contributed to effective teaching. Kose (2017) and Ledman (2014) found that it was difficult for history education to be taught as historical understanding where students lacked prior content knowledge, and where they lacked proficiencies in reading, writing, and thinking in abstract terms. While

Kose (2017) and Ledman (2014) identified a lack of task skills as student-characteristics, Wilkinson identified student-characteristics defined by cultural factors that were important in defining the nature of history education. In his study, Wilkinson (2014) debunked the stereotype held in the British society, which purported that when history education is taught for historical understanding, Muslim boys could not be successful. The researcher showed that the Muslim identity was an asset because the nature of the Muslim identity positioned them to achieve intellectual success through the teaching of historical understanding. Furthermore, the findings showed no significant difference between the Muslim male sample and the non-Muslim male sample in the study.

Student Beliefs About History Education

Like teacher belief about history education, student belief about history education is a student characteristic that may be used to understand the nature of history education. Studies have shown the impact of sociological factors on students' thinking about the nature of history education (Godsell, 2016; Levesque & Zanazanian, 2014; Levy, 2016; Reynolds & Harris, 2014; Wilkinson, 2014). Some researchers found that what students believed about history education differed by race and ethnicity. Reynolds and Harris (2014) studied students in two English schools about how they felt about the history curriculum. The students stated that the curriculum was too narrow because of its British focus. However, the White students liked the curriculum more than the minority students.

The study by Levy (2016) supported the findings of Reynolds and Harris (2014), which indicated that minority students were more desirous of a curriculum with a broader scope. Levy investigated how three heritage groups viewed the history curriculum. The

findings showed that Chinese, Jewish, and Hmong students believed that there were benefits to all students when their cultural history was included on the curriculum. Because students complained of the narrowness of the curriculum, it could be argued that students did not always define the benefit of secondary education in job provision alone but that there is also cultural currency to be gained from a wider history curriculum.

Other studies showed that issues in the wider society which were related to ethnic groups also influenced student belief about the nature of history education (Levesque & Zanazanian, 2014; Godsell, 2016). Levesque and Zanazanian's (2014) study showed that French Canadians student-teachers had a different view of Canadian history from English Canadians. Similarly, Levy's (2016) study showed that Black South-African student teachers' view of what history was influenced by their experience with Apartheid.

Some of the researchers examined both the nature of history education and the purpose of history education and were very clear on the concept of the purpose of history education (Harris & Reynolds, 2018; Ledman, 2015; Wilkinson, 2014). Harris and Reynolds (2018) found that students in two English high schools did not really understand the purpose of history education. Wilkinson's (2014) study was also done in England and the author found that Muslim male students did not perceive history education as having any instrumental value. While they found the subject interesting, they found it "relatively irrelevant to their chances of getting a job" (Wilkinson, 2014, p. 416). The observation about perceived instrumentality made by the Muslim male students support the thinking of participants who believed that secondary school education should be instrumental (Cook & Jennings, 2016; Shin et al, 2016).

Educational level appeared to have had influence on the perception of the purpose of history education. Student teachers appeared to view the purpose of history education in a different light from the high school students. Godsell's (2016) study of South African student teachers showed that they saw history education as playing a role in development of "good citizenship", "freedom", and "democracy" (p.6). This seeing of history as something for the present was similar to what Canadian student-teachers perceived. Most of the participants identified "understanding the present" (Levesque & Zanazanian, 2014, p.43) as the most important purpose for teaching history.

The Canadian study revealed a hint of the identity politics that is typical of political and societal perceptions of the purpose of history education (Levesque & Zanazanian, 2014). Francophone Canadian student teachers were more likely to view "education for citizenship" and "identity-building" as purposes for history education than Anglophone Canadians. This indicates that, like the perception of the nature of history education, ethnicity also is a lens through which students view the purpose of history education, resulting in a perception of multiple purposes.

The articles in this section presented the nature and purpose of education from the perspective of the educationalist; however, there were hints of the political and public discourse. The review showed that educationalists accept Seixas' (Seixas & Peck, 2004) definition of history education, even though they might not always practice it. The idea of classroom practice was important to the definition of the nature of history education because it was driven by beliefs. Therefore, the literature review shows that teacher belief also defined the nature of history education. Student belief about history education

was also another defining factor of history education. And while the public and political discourse regarding the purpose of history education was not eminent in the studies, that discourse was not totally absent. It was present because student-belief about the nature and purpose of history education was colored by ethnic and other cultural beliefs. It can be concluded that the nature and purpose of history education reported in these articles were not fixed but were constructed by the interaction of different stakeholders in history education.

Motivation on Curricular Design

Th**e** discussion on the nature of history education indicated some of the tensions that still exist between the competing discourses about the nature and purpose of history education. Some of the strong words that teachers in England used to describe the new history curriculum – "irrelevant", "uninspiring" (Harris & Burn, 2016, p.530) - are possibly indicating that tension. As well, it could be showing that teachers want more autonomy in designing the history curriculum. More precisely, the discussion indicated that teachers perceived they were significant in constructing the nature and purpose of history education in their classroom practice. But besides engaging in classroom practice, teachers are sometimes curriculum designers (Ormond, 2017); hence, this section shows some of the challenges teachers have faced as designers of history curriculum**.**

Studies have focused on curriculum designers by investigating the decision making process of teachers in their role as curriculum designers (Harris & Reynolds, 2018; Ormond, 2017). Ormond's (2017) was situated in the context of the *knowledge economy*, a concept which emphasizes the prevalence of knowledge that has instrumental

value in the 21st century. Ormond believed that because of its disciplinary origin, history as a subject has the capacity to deliver powerful knowledge in the knowledge economy. Powerful knowledge is the kind that equips students with the cognitive skills to perform in a knowledge economy (Harris & Ormond, 2018). To achieve this, curriculum designers must apply rigor when selecting content and pedagogical styles. Using the social realism conceptual framework, Ormond (2017) investigated the epistemological challenges that teachers in New Zealand faced when designing their individual curriculum. In investigating the curricular decision making process of teachers in state-run schools in England, Harris and Reynolds (2018) also acknowledged the disciplinary nature of history and used this as one of the foci of their investigation. But they also wanted to know what approaches teachers used to develop substantive knowledge and on what kind of content they focused. The focus of the investigation of both studies point to an investigation into the nature of history education from the curriculum design standpoint.

The findings of Ormond (2017) and Harris and Reynolds (2018) identified some elements of history curriculum designs and identified challenges teachers faced when designing their history curriculum. Three key challenges that Ormond (2017) found were that (a) choosing topics that were interesting to the students for a whole year; (b) creating programs with adequate depth and breadth about the past; and (c) choosing and framing historical content which would be in alignment with external exam standards. The findings of Harris and Reynolds may be seen as reflecting the challenges identified by Ormond. Teachers focused mainly on English and political history and mainly used a

chronological approach; however, there was strong evidence of a disciplinary approach. Harris and Reynold's and Ormond's findings about the influence of student characteristics and teacher belief on the nature of history education validate the findings of Brooks (2013), Kose, (2017), Ledman (2014), and Voet and De Wever (2016). However, it also illustrates that external influences such as high-stakes exams influence curriculum design.

Acknowledging that the definition of *knowledge economy* is debatable, Harris and Ormond (2018) continued their investigation of history as a subject's place in the knowledge economy because they believed that history as a subject has been overlooked in light of the current preference for STEM subjects. In their study, Harris and Ormond compared the curricular focus of teachers in England and New Zealand finding similarities and differences. For instance, most teachers in the English schools perceived history as a discipline but there were variations in the level with which they adopted a disciplinary approach to teaching. Meanwhile, the strong focus on disciplinary procedures and concepts in the New Zealand curriculum led them to conclude that the teachers in the New Zealand study were more likely to be embracing a disciplinary approach.

There were also similarities and differences in content selection and planning of history programs (Harris & Ormond, 2018). With regards to the findings on content selection, teachers in both countries justified their content selection on the grounds of staff and student interest in the topic. Likewise, data from both countries showed that when planning history programs, teachers did not consider the overall shape of what

students should learn in regard to useable knowledge of the past. The latter finding calls into question the level of instrumentality that these teachers built into their curriculum design when selecting content. As well, it may be showing some inadequacies on the part of the teachers in their role as curriculum designers.

It is not surprising that teachers, in their role as curriculum designers, may have shortcomings. The study by Levesque and Zanazanian (2014) showed that teachers were trusted less than historians as a source of knowledge by other teachers. The rationale given for this was that the history teachers did not necessarily have a background in history education. In fact, the argument that is made here about gaps in teacher qualification may be related to the arguments made later in this review about the gap in teacher qualification that is a contributing factor to the marginalization of history education.

While the use of social realist theory influenced Ormond (2017) to identify challenges curriculum designers in New Zealand faced, Wilkinson's (2014) use of critical realism led to identification of gaps in the National Council Curriculum for History (NCH) for four British schools. Wilkinson (2014) focused on Muslim male students because these students did not seem to be benefiting from the claim by NCH that history as a subject could promote intellectual and emotional success for students. Wilkinson (2014) stated that reports in the British society stated that Muslim males were not achieving this success and they were presented as problematic due to possible involvement in terrorists' activities. Wilkinson (2014) used the qualitative data from a mixed-methods study of 295 Muslim male students to show that the participants

perceived an absence of Muslim contribution to history in the curriculum. This finding is a possible validation of Harris and Reynold's (2014; 2018) findings that the English curriculum was too narrow and that English teachers focused mainly of British history. But it could also be pointing to the challenge that curriculum designers have in creating breadth (Ormond, 2017).

The findings have implications for cultural inclusivity in curriculum design. Wilkinson (2014) found that the gap in the curriculum demotivated the students and impacted on how they interacted with the English and British national history segment of the curriculum. The feeling of demotivation by the Muslim male students sends a similar message to what the Chinese, Jewish, and Hmong students felt, as reported in a study by Levy (2016). The participants believed that there are cultural benefits to all when each cultural group is represented in the substantive knowledge section of the curriculum.

The articles in this section extended the discussion on the nature of history education by looking at the curriculum. The review showed the challenges teachers faced in designing the history curriculum. The society in which the studies were done all had British influence and may be characterized as multicultural societies. However, while curriculum designers want to produce knowledge which has instrumental value in the knowledge economy, these studies might be indicating the difficulty of doing so in a multicultural situation process. The next section will take a closer look at studies that focused on instructions in history education.

Instructional Strategies in History Education

Several studies have made contribution to the research on instructional strategies in history education by examining NAEP U.S. history data to explore the concept of opportunity to learn in history education (see Fitchett et al., 2017; Heafner & Fitchett, 2015; Heafner & Fitchett, 2018). Opportunity to learn has been defined as the "degree to which a teacher dedicates instruction to content prescribed by standards using pedagogical approaches that address a range of cognitive processes, instructional practices, and grouping formats" (Heafner & Fitchett, 2018, p.228). Heafner and Fitchett (2015) admitted that NAEP data had limitations but asserted that the data provided an opportunity to view certain trends in history education. Collectively, the studies (Fitchett et al., 2017; Heafner & Fitchett, 2015; Heafner & Fitchett, 2018) brought to the fore a number of points about instruction in U.S. history education: (a) classroom practice had hardly changed, remaining mainly traditional and teacher-centered; (b) the use of different instructional strategies was positively correlated to increased acquisition of U.S. history content knowledge; and (c) exposure to text dependent instruction - which included texts such as the text book, primary sources, letters, diaries, an essays from historical people - indicated a positive relation to knowledge acquisition of U.S. history.

While a variety of instructional strategies are beneficial, findings also showed that increased use of multimodal pedagogies decreased learning outcomes (Heafner & Fitchett, 2015). Therefore, Heafner and Fitchett (2015) suggested that overuse of the multimodal pedagogies produced the negative effect. They used prior research to explain this by showing that for multimodal pedagogy to be effective, background knowledge

must exist. This finding supports the findings discussed earlier where students' characteristics contributed to effective teaching (Kose, 2017; Ledman, 2014; Wilkinson, 2014).

Heafner and Fitchett's (2015) findings about the reliance on the traditional method is a criticism of narration as a teaching method. Schul (2015) defined the traditional method as one that focuses on the acquisition of content, uses a chronological approach, and uses the textbook as the main instructional material. As such, this method is teacher-centered. Unisen's (2015) study of prospective secondary school teachers who attended a pedagogical formation program at a university in Turkey offers insight into what some teachers think about the traditional method. Through qualitative responses, the participants suggested that the traditional narration as a history teaching strategy was not replaceable. They suggested that instead of seeking to replace narration, it should be supplemented with other teaching strategies to enrich the learning environment.

Agreeing also that history education instruction was teacher-centered and lacked variety in other forms of instruction, Nair and Narayanasamy (2017) advocated for the use of concept maps as one alternative strategy. Driven by their beliefs in the benefits of concept maps, they conducted a quasi-experimental with 70 form two students (14-year-olds) in two suburban schools in Malaysia. The findings showed that there was significant difference between the experimental group that used the concept map and the control group. While the sample size for the study was small and limited to only one form, it gives an insight into a history education teaching strategy that might work.

The studies in this section give additional insight into the nature of history education by focusing on instructional strategies. These studies are significant to the study on history education in Jamaican high schools because they point to classroom instruction strategies that may have or may not have been used. The studies will help in developing questions about instructional strategies to which participants were exposed and how they reacted to those strategies. Furthermore, questions of that nature would align with Krumboltz's (1990; 1996) concept of learning experience.

Influences of School on Students' Decision Making

Brown and Cinamon's (2015) argument that choosing a high school major is an important developmental task that adolescents engage in is supported by the exploration stage of adolescent development identified in Super's (1990) theory. The studies that were reviewed focused on factors that influenced students 'decision making. They were conducted in different countries and confirmed that that adolescents did select courses with their future in mind.

Other researchers also indicated that what adolescents studied in high school did matter to their future (Duta et al., 2018; Iannelli et al., 2016; Moulton et al., 2018). Brown et al.'s (2015) study of Israeli high school indicated that when it came to choosing a high school major, personal abilities and interests were the main influences. Palmer et al. (2017) had similar findings in their investigation of the relative importance of the factors that 14-17-year-old students in metropolitan Sydney considered when choosing subjects for their final years of school. Palmer et al.'s study used a Best Worst Scaling (BWS) scale to quantify the 21 factors that students in a pilot study reported were

important when choosing subjects. Their study controlled for socio-economic factors. The top six factors that students chose were

- expectations about how interesting the subject would be
- the subject requirement in pursuing career
- expectation about marks
- whether it was a requirement for future study
- how enjoyable it would be
- students' perceived ability.

There were studies that did not control for socio-economic factors because previous research indicated socio-economic factors influenced students' decision making (Anders et al., 2018; Henderson et al., 2018) and the researchers wanted to investigate that phenomenon in English schools. The findings from an analysis of Next Steps longitudinal data by Henderson et al. (2018) replicated the results of previous studies. They found that students from higher socioeconomic status (SES) took more academically demanding subjects than students from less advantaged economic background. Similarly, Anders et al.'s (2018) analysis of data for English state funded schools replicated the findings about the impact of SES on subject choices. While these studies were limited to England, when taken with the general findings about the impact of SES on students and parents' perception of secondary education in Jamaica (Cook & Jennings, 2016), it is reasonable to conclude that socio-economic factors have a significant impact on student outcome.

Because Henderson et al. (2018) had found that students from wealthier background and students who attended grammar school were more likely to choose a more academically demanding curriculum, they concluded that parental influence might influence students' choice. The study by Taylor (2015) did suggest the impact of parental influence on student uptake of subjects. Taylor's study was different from Henderson et al. in that it targeted secondary school students who were moving from the GSCE to the advanced level of the GSCE (A-levels) in the United Kingdom. The students were higher achieving students and the study focused on physics and media studies for comparative purposes. By applying the theory of planned behavior, the analysis showed that not only attitude towards studying the subject but also parental (and teachers') influence impacted choice of subject.

Taylor's (2015) findings that teachers influenced subject choice is an indicator of the role schools played in influencing students' subject choice. Anders et al. (2018) also found that schools influenced subject uptake by students. This is congruent with the findings of Griffith (2017) for the Caribbean where limited availability of subjects was also a factor for vocational subject uptake in CSEC. And was also similar to the findings of Perry and Southwell (2014) who found that marketization of the curriculum limited the access to academic curriculum.

Anders et al. (2018) explored to what extent subject choices were driven by the school's curriculum for students age 14-16. Their findings showed that school played a role in the subject choice decision that students made. The school factors that influenced students' decision were the SES of the demographics of the school and the qualification

and availability of the teachers in the school. The authors, however, offered cautionary note in that school factors must be seen in context because school factors as seen in their study were related to prior attainment, gender, and socioeconomic features of the students.

Besides SES, Henderson et al. (2018) and Anders et al. (2018) found that gender influenced students' decision making. Boys were more likely to take manufacturing and engineering while girls were more likely to take health and social care. Van Der Vleuten et al. (2016) added to the discussion on the impact of gender on subject uptake by exploring the influence of gender ideology on students' educational choice. They argued that previous research explored boys' and girls' educational choices by focusing on gender differences in ability. And that where researchers have focused on gender ideology, the influenced have been assumed and not tested. Therefore, by focusing on students in upper secondary school in the Netherlands, Der Vleuten et al. investigated the various ways in which gender ideology might affect girls' and boy' educational choices. They found that gender ideology did impact academic choices of boys and girls. Mainly, (a) gender ideology can affect educational choices by influencing how boys and girls evaluated their competencies in certain areas; (b) gender ideology can steer boys and girls towards different education tracks by influencing what they value in future occupation; and (c) gender ideology might affect educational choices by influencing academic subject preferences.

In addition to SES and gender, Anders et al. (2018) and Henderson et al. (2018) found that previous research had also indicated that prior attainment influenced student

uptake of subjects. Their research validated these findings (Anders et al., 2018; Henderson et al., 2018). Palmer et al.'s (2017) study regarding metropolitan Sydney also validated the findings about the impact of prior attainment when students were about to choose future courses. In fact, in their study, prior attainment was ranked by students in the top six of the 21 influential factors.

The studies showed that a number of extrinsic and intrinsic factors influenced students' decision to take a particular subject when it is made optional. These factors did not stand alone but often interacted with each other to influence students' decision. If the uptake of history education is to improve, educators will have to be aware of the complex interaction of these factors that influence students' decision making. The next section will focus on students' beliefs about high-stakes examination.

Students' Beliefs about High-Stakes Exams

High stakes tests are forms of assessments that are used to make important decisions about various stakeholders in the education system. These include students, teachers, schools, and school districts. They differ from low-stake assessment in function, not in form. In secondary education, some high stakes tests prepare students to qualify for the job market or to matriculate into postsecondary education. Some high-stakes assessments include the General School Certificate Examination (GCSE), which is taken by students in England, Northern Ireland, Wales; the CSEC, which is taken by students in the English speaking Caribbean; and the JSC, which is taken by students in Jamaica. The purpose of this section is to review literature pertaining to high-stakes examination. In

particular, it discusses test anxiety as a feature of high stakes exam and students' perceptions of high stakes exam.

While high-stakes examinations are important to a number of stakeholders, they are very important to a student's outcome, and because of this, a feature which is found to be associated with high-stakes test is test anxiety or evaluation anxiety (Erzen & Odaci, 2016; Qudysi & Putri, 2016). This is a condition characterized by cognitive and emotional distress in the context of test or other forms of evaluation (Boslaugh, 2017). Students from different levels of the education system experience test anxiety (Contreras-Soto et al., 2019; Brady et al., 2018; Putwain & Prescod, 2018). While test anxiety tends to impact negatively on the test taker, this not always the case (Santana, 2018), however, it is the negative impact that is of concern.

Erzen and Odaci (2016) and Qudysi et al. (2016) investigated test anxiety among adolescents. Both groups of researchers found a relationship between test anxiety and self-efficacy in adolescents. Erzen and Odaci conducted a quantitative study that examined the relationship between test anxiety and attachment styles and perceptions of self-efficacy in final-year high school students preparing for the university entrance tests in Turkey. The entrance test was important to the students because it was significant in determining their future professional and academic outcomes. The findings showed that test anxiety was significantly negatively correlated to self-efficacy and that self-efficacy was a significant predictor of test-anxiety. Qudysi and Putri had similar findings about the role of self-efficacy on anxiety when they investigated the role of self-efficacy on high school students towards the National Exam in Indonesia. The findings showed a

significant negative correlation between self-efficacy and anxiety felt before the National Exam. The findings on the impact of self-efficacy on test anxiety has significance for this study. Krumboltz's (1996) theory identified self-efficacy as one of the factors that influences a person's career decision making process. Therefore, this insight could help with framing questions or probes about students' self-efficacy towards history exams at the CSEC examination level.

There is differentiation in test anxiety based on gender. Erzen and Odaci (2016) found that girls had a greater anxiety than boys. This finding is compatible with findings in other studies (Erzen & Odaci, 2016; Santana & Eccius-Wellman, 2018). Aydin (2017) found that while test anxiety generally decreased as students moved from primary to secondary school, this was not the case of girls. Instead, test anxiety remained steady in girls, as they moved from primary to secondary education. However, Ahmad et al. (2018) found higher levels of test anxiety in university level male participants in their study. Cultural expectations, gender expectation, and developmental levels may be used to explain the variations in findings.

Besides test taking anxiety, there were other concerns about high-stakes testing that students had. Barrance and Elmwood (2018a) argued that too often nothing was heard from the students about how they viewed the structure of high-stakes examinations. Hence, their study aimed at giving the students a voice in an education system that was experiencing reforms of its high-stakes examination structure. Barrance and Elwood (2018a) used the reforms of the General Certificate Examination (GCSE) in Northern Ireland, Wales, and England to build their case. Formerly, the three countries

collaborated in regulating the examination and there was comparability of standards, assessment, and criteria. But as of 2010, each country began its own regulation of the exam and this resulted in curriculum differentiation across the region. In their study, Barrance and Elwood (2018a) focused on students in Northern Ireland and Wales.

They found that students were concerned about inequalities in the curriculum, which were related to the exam. Students felt that their subject choices were limited by the subject selection policy and also by teachers who steered them away from certain subjects; the latter, a practice that Harris and Haydn (2012) and David and Cheruiyot (2016) found to be happening. In a second study conducted by the same authors for the same locations, Barrance and Elwood (2018b) found that students in Ireland had concerns about the portability of their qualification, since students from Ireland tended to apply to universities in England. When taken together, a major indication of Barrance and Elwood's (2018a; 2018b) studies is that students do think about the instrumental value of high-stakes examination. As well, it is additional confirmation that schools influence student-uptake of subjects.

The studies suggest that high-stakes examinations are important to students and to the schools in general. For this reason, a number of issues arise which may not necessarily serve the interest of both students and the school concurrently. Some of these concerns that students and schools have about high stakes examinations could lead to marginalization of a subject in schools where students are allowed to select courses. The next section will review literature on the marginalization of history education.

The Marginalization of History Education

Marginalization of history education has continued and occurs in different ways and is happening in secondary and tertiary education where students are allowed to make subject choices. As previously shown, Perry and Southwell (2014) indicated that marketization can impact the curriculum. In their study, they showed how marketization led to inequalities in the school curriculum in New Zealand. Harris and Haydn (2012), however, focused specifically on the fate of history education in the UK, a place where education was becoming increasingly marketized. The history of the education system showed that prior to 1991, history was part of a broad curriculum students studied until age 16. But in 1991, the National Curriculum in the United Kingdom relegated history to a foundation subject. Consequently, history became compulsory between ages 11 and 14; an age range that is known as Key Stage 3 (KS3) in the secondary education system of the United Kingdom. But, in post-KS3 students had the option to select or deselect. Harris and Haydn conducted a study to find out if the claim that a 30% selection was taking place with history education. The finding revealed that the 30% was a national average but within the local area they studied, there were variations in the uptake.

Like Harris and Haydn (2012), David and Cheruiyot (2016) conducted research into the declining popularity of history education, but for secondary schools in Kenya. Both studies offered insights into what might be influencing students' lack of interest. These included the way subjects were prioritized by school management as well as teachers steering students away from the subject. Harris and Haydn (2012) found that students were steered in the direction of easier subjects. The indication that students may

be finding history to be a difficult subject is borne out by the data for NAEP-US History (Heafner & Fitchett, 2015). NAEP data showed a persistent gap in the history knowledge for grade 12 students. In addition, it showed that after controlling for socioeconomic factors, Black and Hispanic students scored less than White students.

Marginalization of history education also manifested itself in teacher qualification for secondary history education. David and Cheruiyot's (2016) recommendation for workshops to develop teachers' competencies in history education was an indication of that. Levesque and Zanazanian (2014) also examined teacher qualifications to find out if at the time of their study history teachers in Canada were better prepared than in 1960. Participants were history teacher education candidates from all over Canada. Their findings showed that on the average the candidates will graduate with less than 10 academic courses in history. Likewise, fewer of the candidates would have graduated with courses in Canadian history. The findings validated early findings of Hodgett (as cited in Levesque & Zanazanian, 2016) concerning the unpreparedness of history teachers. However, it also brings into question how many courses are needed in history for a history teacher to be deemed prepared.

Students declining interest in history education has also been found at the tertiary level and this is indicated by declining enrollment in the subject. The American Historical Association shown that enrollment for history major continued to decline (Brookins, 2016a; Townsend, 2013). Brookins' (2016a) analysis of National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) validated Townsend's (2013) earlier findings. Brookins stated that despite the minimal growth in bachelor's degrees awarded in 2014, NCES data showed

that the award of bachelor's degree in history continued to shrink and the third decline in 4 years and the largest decline since 1992. Self-reported data from history departments indicated that this declining trend would continue (2016b). Schmidt (2018) examined the change in degrees from 2011-2017 and confirmed that the trend had continued; and that history has fallen more than any other undergraduate major in the previous 6 years. Based on reports from history department chairs and faculty, Brookins (2016b) suggested that the recession which began in 2008 might have been responsible for the decline because parents and students often made decisions about degree choice based on perceived career instrumental value. The findings about parental influence at the tertiary level validated Harris and Haydn's (2012) claim that parental role was an influencer in student uptake of history education at the secondary level.

Research showed that marginalization of history education may also be seen from an examination of faculty history specialization**.** Townsend (2015) used a textual analysis of American Historical Association documents to analyze the trend in history specialization over the last 40 years. The analysis focused on the listing of faculties in history departments, history organizations, and historians. The field with the largest proportional expansion from 1975 to 2015 was environmental history, with an increase of 0.2 % to 2.7% faculty. Other areas of increase were histories of culture, religion, race and ethnicity, women and gender, and the history of sexuality, which had the fastest recent increase. Areas that experienced decline were diplomatic, economy, intellectual, legal, and social histories. Findings also showed changes in geographic fields. In 2015 the percentage of specialists in European history fell to its lowest. And while the percentage

of specialists in U.S. history increased from 41.0% to 41.1%, it still remained close to its historic low. On the other hand, faculties specializing in the history of all the other continents attained their highest increase in the last 40 years. These findings are useful in finding out the thematic and geographic fields of history education that students are interested in.

At least one study offered a response to those who marginalized history education because they see no market value in the subject. Sturtevant (2017) admitted that when all holders of a college degree are compared, history majors have a half a percent lower unemployment; but he asserted that the breakdown showed a less dismal picture. Sturtevant (2017) used American Community Survey data for 2010-2014 to debunk the myth that history degrees were useless and did not lead to gainful employment. The data showed that of the 29.7 % of American adults who completed a bachelor's degree, 2.21% majored in history or US history. Of those who completed a history major, 4.6% were unemployed compared to 7.7% of those who completed a bachelor's degree. The data also showed that only a small percentage became historians, professors, and museum professionals. But because of the skill set that history education offers, 20% went into education, 15% went into business management positions, 11% went into the legal profession. In responding to the argument that history majors are underpaid, Sturtevant (2017) argued that because of the diversity of careers, there was a wide range in income distribution. However, where instances of underpayment were pointed out – such as the teaching profession – the underpayment was not due to the subject but due to the field, that is, society undervalues several important public service careers like education.

The articles in this section indicate that marginalization of history education continues. A number of the influencers that researchers found bear similarities to what Krumboltz (1990;1996) identified as factors that influence students' career decision making process. The more prominent ones revealed in the study were environmental factors. These included school policy, teacher competence, parental influence, job availability and financial rewards. School policy, job availability and financial rewards are subtle and overt influencers that indicate marketization forces. These are the same forces that other studies pointed to when they indicated that students and parents believe that secondary education should be relevant and should have instrumental value. If history education is to be removed from the margin and placed to the center of the curriculum, history educators will have to show students what they can do with history education.

Studies have been done on history education in the Caribbean; however, they tend to be master's or doctoral thesis. The closest study which appeared similar to my line of research was Rahman's (2015) master's thesis conducted at North Star Secondary School in Trinidad. No study of this nature was found for Jamaica. Because this gap exists for Jamaica, it was important that I investigate why students in Jamaican high schools select or deselect history education at the post-compulsory level.

Summary

In this literature review I provided a summary of the status of history education largely for secondary level students, for the last 10 years. The literature reviewed showed the findings regarding students and parents' expectations of secondary education in

general. The findings showed that history education operates within a system where parents and students often expect secondary education to be instrumental. Instrumentality could be in the form of grooming students to be socially adjusted citizens of their nations. The participants of this study were graduates, but were adolescents at the time they made the decision; a stage where they explored career possibilities, instrumentality may also may have been expected to prepare them for direct postsecondary employment or postsecondary education. Because the findings showed that the nature and purpose of history education varied, stakeholders often believed that history education can fulfill both kinds of instrumentality; and rightly so. However, history education is hampered in achieving both kinds of instrumentality because it suffers from marginalization on the school curriculum in a number of countries around the world (Brookins, 2016a, 2016b; Jaffray, 2016; Schul, 2015) The literature showed that marginalization took many forms: poorly qualified teachers, students lacking in skills needed to perform adequately, school policy that relegated history education to the periphery, and students declining interest in the subject. If history education is to gain more traction on the school curriculum, all the stakeholders will have to make a concerted effort to improve the status of history education. I will be researching an area for which no research has been done on the status of history education in Jamaica. Guided by Super (1990) and Mitchell and Krumboltz's (1990) theories, the findings may yield data about the perceived influence on the decision making process of Jamaican high school students to select or deselect history education when they were given the opportunity to do so.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The threefold purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate the perception of graduates of Jamaican high schools about what influenced their decision when they selected or deselected history education at the CSEC examination level, to discover what career decision making factors they perceived influenced their decision, and to find out what they think schools should do to improve the decision making regarding the selection of history education at the CSEC examination level. In this chapter, I describe major topics and subtopics that justify the research design, outline how the study was conducted, and identify and discuss how ethical issues were dealt with. Major topics are the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, the methodological approach, the issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

The central phenomenon of this study was Jamaican students' experience of history education at one pivotal examination level. Therefore, the research questions for this study were: (a) What do graduates of Jamaican high schools perceive influenced their decision to select or deselect history education at the CSEC education level? (b) What career decision making factors do graduates of Jamaican high schools perceive influenced their decisions to select or deselect history education at the CSEC examination level? (c) What do graduates of Jamaican high schools think schools should do to improve decision making regarding the selection of history education at the CSEC

examination level? To explore this phenomenon, I used the basic qualitative inquiry, with a specific focus on telephone interviews to collect the data.

Basic qualitative inquiry bears similarities to the other qualitative methods. A basic qualitative approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015) contains the essence of what the qualitative method is, as it allows for exploration of a topic, facilitates a detailed presentation of the topic, allows the topic to be studied in the field in proximity to participants, allows the researcher to use a literary style in reporting, allows the researcher to report from the perspective of the participants, and is a rigorous method (Creswell & Poth, 1998; Patton, 2015). In spite of bearing similarities to all qualitative approaches, the basic qualitative approach is different from the others. In this section, I examine four of those traditions – phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and basic qualitative. In my examination, I justify the choice of the basic qualitative tradition.

Phenomenology has its roots in philosophy and humanistic psychology (Creswell & Poth, 1998; Patton, 2015). While phenomenologists purport not to be interested in simplification, categorization, and reduction of people's experience into basic laws (that is, phenomenologists are not positivists), they assume that there is an essence to the kinds of experiences people live on a daily basis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Therefore, experiences such as loneliness, motherhood, and love, each has a defining essence or a universality shared by those who undergo these experiences. It is the existence of this "single unifying meaning" (Creswell & Poth, 1998, p. 55) or shared essence that a phenomenological study seeks to find. It can be found because the experience has "an underlying structure" (Creswell & Poth, 1998, p.55). However, in order to find this

essence, the researcher has to be fluent in the philosophical underpinnings of the approach and should be able to put aside or bracket beliefs about the experience. Similarly, participants in the study have to be selected carefully to find persons who have really lived the experience (Creswell & Poth, 1998).

In this study, I did not assume that the experience of the students in the history education classes could be reduced to an essence. Instead, I assumed that each student was an individual who may have been impacted by different circumstances that may have influenced their experience. I listened to their perception of their experience, and I accepted the singularity of their perception, if it appeared so. As such, I did not try to give an essential structure of students' experience. Consequently, phenomenology was not appropriate for this study.

Ethnography has its roots in anthropology and literary arts. Therefore, the central question in ethnographic study focuses on the culture of the group, which is being studied, and how culture can explain the group's behavior. Ethnographers are constructivist in their thinking, as they do not assume that culture is out there waiting to be discovered (Creswell, 2012). Instead, they believe that culture is ascribed by the researcher based on the group's pattern of behavior, language, and artifacts. Because of the constructivist nature of the research, the researcher has to be immersed within the field to conduct fieldwork. This entails gathering data through interviews, observations, and artifacts. Like phenomenology that requires some expertise in philosophy, ethnography is best done by researchers who are grounded in cultural anthropology (Creswell, 2012). The researchers also have to spend extensive time in the field. The

framing of my research question indicated that I was not exploring the culture of any of the history classes from which the high school graduates come. Therefore, ethnography was not appropriate for this study.

Because of the everyday usage of the word “case”, there is some confusion when defining the case study method (Creswell, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015). However, when seen as a method and not as an object, it is defined as an exploration of a bounded system and like the other qualitative methods is tied to different traditions, including philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and psychology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015). The “system,” “phenomenon,” or “case” that is being studied is bounded by time and place and can be a program, an event, an activity, a theoretical construct, or an individual; it can also be one case or several cases. The central research question would then focus on what is happening to the phenomenon (case) within the setting. The setting can be physical, social, economic, or historical, and data would have to be collected from multiple sources such as interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials.

If I had chosen the case study method, a history education program or the types of examinations could have been the focus of analysis. Because the CSEC examination is a Caribbean regional one, I could have bounded a case by focusing on a specific country, such as Jamaica. Alternatively, I could have studied one school during the time of the year when students are making choices. This would have probably required me to sit with families in their home environment while the decision to select or deselect history

education at CSEC level was being discussed. This might not have been feasible to do, and my research question was different; hence, the case study method was not required.

Basic qualitative research is useful when researchers want to understand how people perceive and understand their experience. The basic tenet of my research question was to see how students understood their experience in history education classes that may have influenced their selection process. Decision making, however, is often influenced by more than one factor (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). The comprehensiveness of Krumboltz's (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996) theory finds alignment with the comprehensiveness inherent in the disciplinary roots of basic qualitative research. The roots of basic qualitative method lie in several fields, including philosophy, history, constructionism, phenomenology, and sociology (Patton, 2015). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), a defining feature of qualitative researchers is their interest in understanding how people interpret their experiences. More specifically, constructivism is a tenet of basic qualitative research because basic qualitative research does not suggest that meaning is something out there to be discovered. Instead, it suggests that meanings are constructed by individuals as they interact with objects, with concepts, and with their world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Because the question is an inquiry into participants' perception of what influenced them to select or deselect history education at the CSEC level, basic qualitative research was the best method to use into this inquiry.

Role of the Researcher

While I have professional training in the field or history education and while I still teach history education, I did not have a professional relationship with any of the

participants. The initial motivation for this study came from my professional affiliation. I have actively been in the teaching profession for almost 30 years, and while I have evolved into an interdisciplinary instructor, history education is one of my passions. I studied history education at the teachers' college level, where I majored in social studies. I continued studying history as a stand-alone subject when I completed my bachelors' degree in history and geography, a masters' degree in history, and I have six matriculated doctoral credits and six nonmatriculated doctoral credits in history education. During my university studies, on one occasion, I was recognized by the history department as one of the best students in history. Besides being educated in the subject, I have taught history education at the high school, college, and university levels. In addition, I have initiated my own research, which I called "The Village Album Project," into the local history of the area in Jamaica that I am from. My aim is to use this information to aid the economic development of the area. My education and paid and volunteer experience have indicated that I believe that the past is worth studying in a formal setting. In qualitative research, the researcher is the main instrument of data collection (Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Therefore, from a disciplinary perspective, my collective professional experience equipped me to conduct a study in the field of history education.

My long and professional involvement in the field of history education, however, made me a participant in the discipline. Inherently, I have a bias towards history education. It was this bias that influenced me to conduct prior research, which resulted in finding a gap in the literature on history education for Jamaica. This bias could have reduced the validity of the research and was handled in ethical ways to mitigate that.

Patton (2015) suggested that researcher bias can be reduced by employing a method that is used in the phenomenology qualitative approach. This involves the use of reduction, which uses the concept of epoche and bracketing to achieve the outcome (Patton, 2015) In using epoche, the researcher suspends perception of the phenomenon that is being studied and tries to see it from what the data indicate. This is a challenge given that Braun and Clarke (2019) suggested that in coding qualitative data, themes are not there waiting to emerge. Instead, it is the researcher who makes the decision about what is a theme or a code. Patton indicated, however, that epoche could be achieved if the researcher waits until all or sufficient evidence has been collected before making a judgment. In achieving epoche, the researchers have to examine their perception, but with bracketing. This means examining the physical and human world that contextualize the data and separate the data from that world. When this separation occurs, the data are seen in their purest form. The researcher then synthesizes the outcome from both processes to arrive at unbiased data. While this was not a phenomenological study, I handled the data collection and data analysis process with these strategies in mind. I also kept a researcher's journal, a reflexive journal, and considered the feedback from my dissertation committee.

Methodology

The threefold purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate the perception of graduates of Jamaican high schools about what influenced their decision when they selected or deselected history education at the CSEC examination level, to discover what career decision making factors they perceived influenced their decision,

and to find out what they think schools should do to improve the decision making regarding the selection of history education at the CSEC examination level. This section includes explanation of participant sampling and recruitment, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Participant Sampling and Recruitment

I used purposeful sampling for this study. Purposeful sampling is a qualitative sampling technique used to identify and select information-rich cases (Creswell 2012, 2011; Patton, 2015). I purposely identified and selected participants who were knowledgeable about the phenomenon that was being studied. Purposeful sampling does not control for selection bias (Patton, 2015). I needed this bias to identify participants who were graduates who had experienced history education in Jamaican high school at the mandatory level and who experienced the optional level where students select and deselect history education. Moreover, this bias helped in determining if these were potential participants who could give rich information regarding their perception of what influenced them to select or deselect history education.

Qualitative research uses a smaller sample size than quantitative research (Patton, 2015) but there is no agreement as to how small the qualitative sample size can be (Guest et al, 2006). I used the concept of data saturation (Guest et al., 2006; Mason, 2010) to select participants. Saturation is the point where new data collection does not produce new information for the phenomenon being studied (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest et al. 2006; Mason, 2010). It is difficult to predict the number that will yield saturation. Therefore, I considered Patton's (2015) suggestion that sample size can be emergent as

the data collection process takes place. This was what happened. Fourteen potential participants responded. As I interviewed I reached data saturation with 10 participants. This number fell within the range (6-12) that Guest et al. (2006) found that data saturation could be reached.

Therefore, I had determined the criteria of inclusion and exclusion whereby participants would be drawn from Jamaica and the Jamaican diaspora, in particular the United States and Canada, who (a) had graduated from a public traditional or non-traditional high school in Jamaica; (b) had done mandatory history education in Grades 7-9; (c) selected or deselected history education during their high school years; (d) had graduated from high school from 2014 -2019. Gender and socio-economic status were not a part of the criteria of inclusion and exclusion. When prospective participants responded to the advertisement, I discussed the criteria with them, so as to make sure that they fit the criteria of inclusion.

As planned, I recruited participants by word of mouth and by using social media groups. I have kept in touch with former colleagues of the high school where I taught when I lived in Jamaica. I asked them for suggestions. Even though I had planned to ask the head of that history department for recommendation of graduates who I could invite to be participants in the study, I did not. When I submitted my application to the institutional review board (IRB), they had questions about partner organization. The situation did not constitute a partner organization but to avoid confusion, I did not pursue this option. Secondly, I know some graduates who fit the criteria of inclusion and exclusion who are living in Jamaica, the United States, and Canada. I also sent the

advertisement to them. It was my intent to advertise through the international student office at four colleges in my urban location, but I did not do so as COVID-19 placed restraints on face to face contact, and social media advertising proved effective.

Instrumentation

I developed a set of interview questions to allow me to look for rich and detailed information; in other words, I was looking for depth (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In addition, as a qualitative researcher, I recognized that each participant would have constructed her or his academic reality based on her or his experience and interpretations. Given the social constructivist beliefs inherent in qualitative research and the depth of information for which I was searching, the interview was the most effective data collection method. Furthermore, interviews were in alignment with purposeful sampling because "the power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for in depth study " (Patton, 2015, p. 264). Participants were also able to handle the interviewing process because of the level of academic maturity, that is, they are high school graduates (Seidman, 2006). Furthermore, interviewing was better than focus groups, as group members do interact with each other about the phenomenon but it does not affirm the importance of the individual perspective (Seidman, 2006) as much as the interview.

The interview questions (See Appendix) were developed based on the conceptual framework, themes generated in the literature review, and ideas about qualitative interviewing gleaned from Patton (2015), Rubin and Rubin (2012), and Seidman (2005). The questions were field tested and were also scrutinized by my committee. The first set of questions were general ones and were designed to obtain background information

about Jamaican high school attended, high school experience, examination passes, career focus, and current occupation. The questions became more specific by asking about decision to select or deselect history education, and factors that may have influenced students' decisions. The nature of these questions are in alignment with Krumboltz's (Krumboltz & Mitchell, 1996) four factors that are believed to influence students' educational decision making. As such, the questions focus on prior learning experience in history education classes, school-related factors, students' beliefs about their history learning skills' competency, postsecondary aspirations, economic status of the Jamaican society, Jamaican beliefs about history education, and other personal factors. Some of the questions had probes, some of which were in alignment with Super's theory regarding the career decision making task the students were involved in when they were in Grade 9. I assumed that there would be more probes in the actual interviews and this was the case. The additional probes emerged based on the answers that participants gave, in particular when I had to probe further for clarity. See the Appendix for the full set of interview questions.

Data Collection

In the plan which was approved by IRB (#03-25-20-0331381), I stated that I intended to use two communications channels to collect data - face to face and mobile phone. Due to COVID 19 restrictions, this did not materialize. I recognized that each face to face interview is an observation (Patton, 2015). Had I gone according to plan, I would have observed and listened to the interviewee. This would have allowed me to adapt the interview based on the non-verbal communication cues from the interviewee (Patton,

2015). However, I was not able to do that. Nonetheless, in the phone interviews I listened for the non-verbal cues present in the participants' voice. This include tone, volume, rate of speech, and long pauses, all of which worked together to convey the meaning of the participants' expression. (I made note of these non-verbal cues during the transcription process.)

I had planned on collecting data from a minimum of 8-10 participants gained through my advertisement via social media groups and through my personal network. After participants contacted me, I sent an email invitation along with the Informed Consent Form to arrange for the interview. The Informed Consent Form specified the nature of the study, participant requirement, interview procedures, voluntary nature of the interview, risk and benefits of being interviewed, privacy, and contact information for the examining body. If participants agreed to the terms, they were asked to respond by saying " I consent". When the potential participants responded in the affirmative, I arranged a date and a time convenient to them for the interview. I conducted all interviews from my home office via the mobile telephone, specifically through WhatsApp. This application was cost-efficient for all the participants. I recorded all the interviews with the recording capability on phone and the computer. In addition, I used a reflexive journal (Anney, 2014) to take notes and to reflect on my beliefs or assumptions. The interviews were slated to be a one-time event for 45-60 minutes. In reality all interviews went beyond 45 minutes and some went beyond 60 minutes. None of the participants seemed to have noticed the length and I did not discern any vocal expression that demonstrated that they

were in a hurry. As was planned, I asked the interviewees for permission to follow-up by phone or email, if I need more information.

In conducting the interviews, I started with questions that were intended to put the participants at ease. These questions were specific to the participants. I was able to be specific because in setting up the time and date with the participants, I learned a little about them. Therefore, the intent was for them to feel that I was connecting with them. They were simple questions and focused on things like the weather, and how their day was going. Some participants were attending a higher education institution and were also impacted by COVID-19. That event also provided an opportunity for conversation. After the icebreaker conversation, I informed the participants about the study and the ethical considerations. All participants were told that they could exit the interview at any time and that a pseudonym would be used.

In exiting the interview, I began with a closing question and a thank you. I asked each participant if he/she had anything else about their experience to add. This gave the participants an opportunity to ask questions. Most participants had nothing else to add but one used the opportunity to offer information about the dense style of writing that she observed in the history textbooks. Another felt that the grading of exam papers was too stringent. Following that, I asked the participants if I could send the transcript to them to check for accuracy. They all agreed to this.

In the final part of the exit, I told he participants “thank you” and discussed with them how they would like the gift certificate of $25.00 to be delivered. Some were unfamiliar with the gift certificates I named and suggested Western Union. One

participant had a U.S. bank account and asked if I could deposit the money there. Because these options deviated from what I had planned, I discussed them with my chair. She agreed the options were fine. As such, these were the options I used to deliver the compensation to the participants.

Data Analysis Plan

Several authors agree on key elements of the data analysis process when the interview method to collect data for the basic qualitative research design (Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012) is used. The elements are not necessarily fixed in a sequential order. Upon conducting each interview, I did a verbatim transcript of the interview recording. Following that, I analyzed the content of the transcript. This involved identifying, finding, and annotating the text for information that was relevant to the research question (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Patton, 2015). Known as coding, this allowed me to identify relevant concepts, themes, events, examples, names, or dates. I did open ended coding for all interviews. The practice interviews that I conducted in an advanced research methods class indicated that after doing open ended coding for the first interview, I tended to look for some of those codes in subsequent interviews. This also occurred when I was coding for the interview transcript. After coding I grouped the codes that were the same to form themes. Themes are more encompassing than codes and creating themes is an iterative process. Consequently, it involved my reading, sorting, and resorting the information more than once. After identifying the themes, I wrote a summary of each theme (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) and refined them. This refinement let to four themes, which I presented as the findings of the study.

Issues of Trustworthiness

According to Shenton (2004), the trustworthiness of qualitative research has been scrutinized but trustworthiness can be established for qualitative research. This can be done by looking at credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research. These were the elements that I used to demonstrate trustworthiness of the study.

Credibility establishes that the information reported is an accurate representation of the participants' point of view (Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Credibility was achieved in a number of ways: the nature of the participants, accurate representation of the phenomenon, and asking the participants to check for accuracy Firstly, the nature of the participants was used. Participants were high school graduates who had graduated no later than 5 years from high Jamaican school. As such, they were between the ages of 19-23. Secondly, the phenomenon under study was accurately represented because the data was obtained from participants who demonstrated that they selected or deselected history education in the CSEC level in Jamaica. Thirdly, participants were asked to check the transcript for accuracy (Patton, 2015).

Transferability is the ability to apply the findings of the study to other contexts, population, and settings (Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2015) This can be achieved if certain conditions are met. For instance, adequate description of the context was provided in the background section of the study to establish transferability. CSEC is a regional examination and I provided adequate description of the context, which will allow it to be transferred to other Caribbean CSEC populations. Additionally, I provided details about how the data were collected, description of the participants, and details of recruitment. .

The aim of dependability is to ensure that the findings are consistent with the data and the study can be repeated. In this study I provided adequate procedural details dealing with participant selection, instrumentation, procedures for data collection, and data analysis for replication of the process. This provision should facilitate replication of the process. I asked participants to check their interview transcript for accuracy and in reporting, I used the participants' words to convey the results.

The aim of confirmability is to demonstrate that the results are those of the participants and not the researcher. This was accomplished in many ways. At the beginning of the interview I exchanged pleasantries with the participants with the aim of making them comfortable. During this preamble, one participant wanted to know if she was being videotaped. I assured her that she was not. In addition, I kept a reflexive journal (Anney, 2014) which I used this to take notes, as well as to reflect on and bracketed my beliefs and bias about history education.

Ethical Procedures

The IRB at Walden University requires that all researchers follow ethical procedures for conducting research which are in accordance with the university, as well as with U.S. federal regulations (Walden University, n.d). In furtherance of this, I submitted the necessary forms to IRB and gained permission to conduct the research.

Because I planned on conducting telephone interviews with participants who might be living in Jamaica, I thought this might be seen as international research and that I needed permission from the Jamaican Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I emailed the Ministry with the intent of ascertaining the research protocol, but received no response.

Furthermore, I examined the regulations on the Jamaican Ministry of Education's site and found that it was only necessary to get permission if the participants were attending school. I saw no indication where either ministry had jurisdiction over what citizens did on social media.

Confidentiality is important in a research. Hence I used pseudonyms in place of participants' names. I conveyed this information to participants in the advertisement, in the email invitation, as well as the informed consent form which, I sent to participants. I honored the confidentiality obligation at all phases of the data collection and analysis process. The interviews were recorded using the recording capabilities of the mobile phone as well as the computer. These devices are used only by me and are password protected. After the study has been published, I will store the related data will for 5 years and will be deleted after that.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I outlined the plan for how the study was conducted. In doing this, I restated the purpose of the study and the research question. Since the research question determines the methodology, I identified and justified why basic qualitative design was used to explore the perception of Jamaican high school graduates, 19-23 years old, and what they believe influenced their decision to select or deselect history education at the CSEC examination level. Because the researcher is part of the instrumentation in a qualitative design, I declared my bias towards history education in the researcher's role section. In addition, in the chapter I discussed issues of trustworthiness in participant selection, methodology, data analysis, and data reporting, by showing what I did to

ensure that the overall study was reliable and valid. This also entailed showing the ethical procedures that I followed in aligning my research with Walden University and U.S. government regulations on research.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was threefold. I aimed to investigate the perception of graduates of Jamaican high schools about what influenced their decision when they selected or deselected history education at the CSEC level, to discover what career decision making factors they perceived influenced their decision, and to find out what they think schools should do to improve the decision making regarding the selection of history education at the CSEC examination level.

There were three research questions for this study:

RQ1: What do graduates of Jamaican high schools perceive influenced their decision to select or deselect history education at the CSEC level?

RQ2: What career decision making factors do graduates of Jamaican high schools perceive influenced their decisions to select or deselect history education at the CSEC examination level?

RQ3: What do graduates of Jamaican high schools think schools should do to improve decision making regarding the selection of history education at the CSEC examination level?

In this chapter, I describe the setting and how I carried out the recruitment process, which occurred during the early stages of COVID-19. I then describe the demographics of the participants from information which I collected at the beginning of the interview as well as when I was coding. Furthermore, I include sections on data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, the results, and a summary.

Setting

I recruited my participants through social media and by word of mouth. Given that I was operating under the COVID -19 quarantine, I had to be deliberate in what I did. I targeted members on my WhatsApp media whom I felt would likely know the kinds of participants I was looking for. Based on my selection criteria, my aim was to recruit participants who had graduated from Jamaica high schools within the last 5 years and who had selected or deselected history education when they were given the option to do so at the CSEC examination level. Then, I distributed the flyer to young people who were in the age group of the participants I was looking for. In addition, I sent the flyer to older persons who had children who may have had friends or acquaintances in the participants' age group. I also sent it to people who did not fit into any of those categories. In some cases, I spoke with these persons via the telephone to determine if I could send the flyer to them. All of this took place between March and April 2020.

At first, the responses were slow in coming in, but later on there was a change. During the first week of advertisement, I received no responses. As a result of that, I contacted some of those to whom had I sent the flyer to remind them to distribute it. Subsequent to that reminder, I received a number of responses. I responded to the potential participants and told them I would be doing the interviews in April. I asked if that time frame was convenient for them and that they respond via the consent form. I emailed the prospective participants when I noticed that the response rate was slow. In all, 14 responded, but I interviewed only 11. The other three responses came after I had stopped interviewing, and because I had reached data saturation, it was not necessary to

conduct any more interviews. I thanked the respondents and told them that I would keep their information in case I needed to interview them. After settling on the 11 interviews, I had to eliminate one and I ended up with a sample size of 10. I eliminated the ninth interview due to faulty recording. The noise level in the background interfered with audibility. In making the decision to eliminate the interview, I was still satisfied that I had achieved data saturation from the remaining 10 interviews.

During the interviews, I experienced two external situations that could have affected the trustworthiness of the data. All the participants who responded were living in Jamaica; hence, the interviews were conducted via WhatsApp and during the COVID-19 quarantine in both Jamaica and the United States. In using WhatsApp, I did not use the video recording feature and was not able to see the participants. Consequently, the interpretation of several elements of body language that could have assisted in the interpretation of meaning were missing. However, I took note of the silences, long pauses, and intonation. The second internal factor resulted from the COVID-19 quarantine. Many of the participants were indoors when I interviewed them. As such, I could hear background conversations, which on few occasions interfered with audibility. When this happened, I asked participants to repeat their responses.

Demographics

All 10 participants graduated from Jamaican high schools between the years 2015 and 2019. Participants were from six traditional high schools, five of which were located in an urban parish and one in a rural parish. Of the six schools from which the participants graduated, two were all boys schools, two were all girls schools, and two

were coeducational schools. There were eight female participants and two male participants in the study.

All participants completed the mandatory history education during their Grades 7 to 9 and in Grade 9 were given the option to select or deselect history education at the CSEC level. The participants were between 14 and 15 years old when they selected their courses. Cumulatively, the participants selected six to 10 subjects at the CSEC level. The range of subjects included mathematics, English, literature, accounts, principles of business, history, geography, social studies, Spanish, French, biology, chemistry, information technology, physics, additional mathematics, technical drawing, food and nutrition, agricultural science, electronic document processing, and management. Of the 10 participants, four selected history and six deselected history at the CSEC level. At the time of the interview, most of the participants were enrolled in higher education institutions.

Data Collection

I collected data from 11 consenting participants within a week; however, I used 10 in the study. The quality of the audio in one of the interviews was not very clear due to wind conditions in the area where the participant was located. Because I conducted two more interviews after that one, I was satisfied that I had reached data saturation. As such, I did not include that interview in data analysis.

The participants contacted me via email, and I sent them the Informed Consent form. After they returned the Inform Consent form, I told them that I would be conducting the interviews between April 19, 2020 and April 28, 2020. I asked that if this

time period was convenient for them, they should send me their WhatsApp number so that I could contact them to set up a date and time for the interview. Each of the potential participants did so.

I conducted the interviews within a week and then followed up with a number of short interviews with four of the participants for the purpose of clarification. I stated in the invitation to participants that the interviews would be 45 to 60 minutes long, and this was what I also told each participant at the beginning of the interview. In reality, however, the duration of interviews ranged from 53 to 96 minutes. While this duration exceeded the initially stated duration, none of the participants commented on the length of the interviews. During the interviews, I used two electronic devices to assist with the recording. I used WhatsApp to speak with the participants and used the webcam recording capability on my laptop to do the oral recording. The recording was done in my home office, and I was the only person there; hence, the webcam captured my image only. At no time did I see the participants; therefore, only their voices were recorded.

Three unusual circumstances occurred during the interview. One occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the participants were at home when they were being interviewed. As such, I could sometimes hear conversations in the background. When this interfered with the clarity of the voice of the participants, participants moved as best as the space in the home or school allowed to another location. The second occurrence pertained to the Internet connection. One participant had an Internet connection problem during the interview. We were disconnected, but only for a short time. Lastly, a call came

in on my phone and interrupted the transmission for a few seconds. I disregarded the call, apologized to the participant, and continued the interview.

I took notes during the interviews on note taking sheets, which I had prepared for each interview. I noted the participants' real name, information about type of school, and whether they selected or deselected history as a subject at the CSEC level. Eventually, I converted these names into pseudonyms and used them to identify the files of the recordings. I was not able to see participants' body language, but I made notes about what was communicated through their intonation or long pauses, my interruption of long pauses, and my own thoughts as I was doing the interviews. I continued using these note taking sheets for the transcription process as well. In addition, I kept notes about consulting my committee chair and asking her questions that would give me clarity on the process.

The participants came from six different schools, and I later understood that not all schools had the same curricular paths at the CSEC level. Some schools had required curricular paths, such that those choosing science could not include a history class, while other participants' schools allowed mixing courses from the sciences and liberal arts, in addition to the core mandated subjects. I did not parse the data according to these choices, as all the self-selected participants related to my questions about choosing or not choosing from their own perspective and not mandated curricular paths. Some did recommend that schools allow more flexibility in choice of individual classes while also focusing on curricular paths in liberal arts or sciences.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process was guided by the directions given by Patton (2015) and Rubin and Rubin (2012). By using ideas from these authors, I was able to construct a data analysis process that worked for me. The process included transcribing, summarizing, identifying codes, reducing codes into themes, and identifying which themes were more influential in the participants' decision making process. At the end of the process, I arrived at four major themes, which constitute the findings.

The first major step in the process was transcription (see Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin 2012), but it was not linear, and it incorporated different methods. I first manually transcribed the first two interviews. Because I could not see the participants during the WhatsApp interviews, I tried to transcribe the vocal cues in the participants' voices as much as possible. This included the *ums* and *ahms,* long silences, and self-talk that the participants engaged in while answering. I submitted the first two transcripts to my chairperson for feedback. Second, I used a transcription application, otter.ai, to transcribe six more interviews and then manually edited these. Last, I gained permission to obtain and paid a transcriber who understood the Jamaican accent to transcribe the last two interviews. I was satisfied that the transcriber had also captured the verbal cues and other parochial linguistic patterns of speech.

The second major step in the analysis led to the identification of the codes. In doing this, I started with the interview questions related to RQ1. I began by coding the interview questions in a tabular form on a Microsoft Word document. The table had the participant's pseudonym, the relevant interview question, the data excerpt, and the codes.

Every element of the pseudonym was an identifier. This included type of school, name of school, and an indicator of whether participants selected or deselected history education (See Table 3 for an excerpt of the data analysis process sheet that I used).

Table 3

Excerpt of Data Analysis Process Sheet for RQ1

Participant	Interview questions/probes	Data excerpts	Summary of data/codes)
Demeeka	Tell me about your decision to select or deselect history education at CSEC examination level	Personally, don't like writing subjects, the path that I wanted to go on, I wanted to be a doctor, so I really didn't need to know history.	Dislike of writing, did not align with career path
Sedanel	Tell me about your decision to select or deselect history education at CSEC examination level	Two things really: I really love reading and history for me was just reading, and the teacher, the way she taught it made the subject interesting.	Love for reading, teacher made it interesting.
Dedaniz	Tell me about your decision to select or deselect history education at CSEC examination level	History at that time was very boring to me. At that time, I thought that I did not need to know about the past. I used to say, "whatever happened in the past, stay in the past."	I found it very boring and at the time I did not see the need for it.

In coding interview questions for RQ1, I used both inductive and deductive coding. I did the inductive coding first, that is, I searched the data for relevant information about concepts, themes, and examples (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), "without entering the analysis with preconceived categories" (Patton, 2015, p.551). To achieve this, I summarized the data and placed it under the column titled "Summary of Data/Code(s)" (See Table 3). It was this information that I later reduced to one word codes. I did it for each participant's response to each interview question. After this, I coded deductively, that is, I examined the data again for preconceived codes (Patton, 2015), based on the ones that had emerged during the first round of coding. Braun and Clarke (2019) mentioned that it is the researcher who makes the decision regarding codes and themes. Bearing this in mind, I examined the data again, and several times after that, to see if any other new codes emerged. Some of the codes that resulted from the entire process were *career path, content, purpose of history learning skills, exam policy, reading, writing, teacher, teacher strategies, grades, parents, school environment,* and *economics.*

I conducted a similar exercise for RQ2 and RQ3; however, the process was shorter because I used some of the codes that had emerged from the responses to interview questions in RQ1. In addition, the nature of interview questions related to RQ2 and RQ3 dictated that I use deductive coding. For example, RQ2 asked specifically about career path. All the probes were about career path; as such, I looked for answers about career path. Similarly, RQ3 focused on recommendations, so I looked for the recommendations in the responses to the interview questions. Nevertheless, I was open to

emerging data that did not fit the deductive coding schema. By combining the codes from the responses to all the interview questions, I arrived at 10 themes. These I combined and recombined until I ended with four themes. Based on consultation with my committee, I divided some themes into subthemes. I have used Table 4 to indicate how I arrived at a particular theme.

Table 4

Excerpt Showing the Development of Themes

Codes	Theme
Teachers	Experience with teachers in history class as decision making factor
Teacher strategies	
Teacher passion	
Teacher knowledge	

Evidence of Trustworthiness

For this basic qualitative study, I interviewed participants who graduated from Jamaican high schools about their perceptions of factors that influenced their decision to select or deselect history education. I also asked them specifically about career decision making factors that influenced them and asked them for recommendations that could be used to improve the decision making regarding the selection of history education. Trustworthiness is required to give value to this research. To achieve this, I will discuss how I addressed aspects of trustworthiness – credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability

Credibility

Credibility was achieved in a number of ways: the nature of the participants, accurate representation of the phenomenon, and participants checking for accuracy. Firstly, I used the nature of the participants to establish credibility. When participants responded to the advertisement, I asked them what high school they went to. At the start of the interview, I collected information regarding the school they went, when they started and when they graduated. All the participants had graduated no later than five years. In addition, the phenomenon that is being studied is accurately presented because participants selected or deselected history education at CSEC level. Thirdly, all participants were asked to check the transcript for accuracy (Patton, 2015). Eight of the participants responded to say the transcript was accurate or pointed out typographical errors that distorted the information. Two did not return the transcript. I contacted both on several occasions. One stated that she was occupied with doing exams and would attend to it when she had a chance. She never did. The other participant stated that he would return the transcript but never did. Lastly, when I was coding, I called four of the participants to seek and did gain clarity for some of their responses.

Transferability

Transferability is the ability to apply the findings of the study to other contexts, populations, and settings (Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2015). Given that the CSEC is a regional examination, the findings from this study can be applied to other Caribbean populations because I provided adequate description of the context in the background of

the study. In addition, I provided information about how the recruitment was done, how the data were collected, and a description of the participants.

Dependability

The aim of dependability is to ensure that the findings are consistent with the data and that the study can be repeated. I demonstrated this in a number of ways. I provided the procedural details, which are consistent with those required for qualitative research (Miles et al., 2014). This can be seen in the details regarding participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. This provision will entail that the research process can be replicated.

Confirmability

The aim of confirmability is to demonstrate that the results are those of the participants and not mine. I achieved this in a number of ways. At the start of the interview, I took time to talk with the participants, so that they could feel comfortable in relating their experience. During the interviews, I shared some of my experiences with participants, in particular about my thoughts about my family's economic status when I was in high school. The aim of this was to allow them to feel comfortable in sharing their experiences. Where participants expressed concern if whether or not their responses were correct, I assured them that as long as they perceived that the response reflected their experience, it was okay. At the end of asking interview questions for RQ1, I asked participants to give a summary as to why they think they selected or deselected history education.

Besides that, I kept reflective notes (Anney, 2014) about my own thoughts as I was interviewing, as well as during coding. As aforementioned, I sent the respective transcript to each participant to check for accuracy and I also made phone calls to some of them, to ask for clarity. Lastly, a culture's vernacular is important in communicating connotative meaning, which is an important aspect of deriving the overall meaning that the transmitter intended to communicate. Therefore, in reporting the result of the interviews, I included some of the local language that participants used.

Results

The findings provide answers to the three research questions. They indicate the factors that were salient in influencing participants to select or deselect history education at the CSEC level, the career decision making factors graduates perceived influence them to select or deselect history education at CSEC level and provide recommendations that graduates believe would improve the decision making for history education at CSEC level. There were four themes:

1. Career path influenced decision making.
2. Experiences with teachers in history classes influenced decision making.
3. Both strong and weak writing and reading skills were decision making factors.
4. Participants had recommendations to improve decision making factors.

Except for Theme 2, experience with teachers in history classes influenced decision making, all themes have subthemes that provide stronger evidence for the themes. I have presented in Table 5, the four themes along with their subthemes and refer the reader to which research question each theme or subtheme addresses (See Table 5).

Table 5

Themes and Subthemes and Research Questions They Addressed

Theme 1: Career Paths Influenced Decision Making

Subtheme: Career Interests were Influential

RQ1: What do graduates of Jamaican high schools perceive influenced their decisions to select and deselect history education at CSEC level?

Subtheme: Economic Concerns Were Influential

RQ2: What career decision making factors do graduates of Jamaican perceive influenced their decisions to select and deselect history education at CSEC level?

Theme 2: Experience with Teacher in History Class Influenced Decision Making

RQ1: What do graduates of Jamaican high schools perceive influenced their decisions to select and deselect history education at CSEC level?

Theme 3: Both Strong and Weak Writing and Reading Skills were Decision Making Factors

Subtheme: Writing Skills

Subtheme: Reading Skills

RQ1: What do graduates of Jamaican high schools perceive influenced their decisions to select and deselect history education at CSEC level?

Theme 4: **Participants had Recommendations to Improve Decision Making**

Subtheme: More Effort Needed to Make Students Aware of Career Paths in History Education

Subtheme: New Content Matter

Subtheme: More Engaging Instructional Strategies.

Subtheme: Provide Opportunities to Learn Skills Which Facilitate Learning of History

Subtheme: Provide More Favorable Course Selection Policy

RQ3: What do graduates of Jamaican high schools think schools should do to improve the decision making regarding the selectin of history education at the CSEC level?

Theme 1: Career Paths Influenced Decision Making

The theme which captures the most dominant responses of most of the participants was career paths as a decision making factor. This theme addresses RQ1 and its subtheme addresses RQ2 (See Table 5). When I asked participants to give a general response to what they perceived influence their decision to select or deselect history at CSEC level, career path emerged as the most compelling reason. Of the 10 participants, eight identified their career path as a major influence on their decision. Irrespective of whether participants selected or deselected history education, they frequently mentioned the different economic concerns associated with their career choice. As such, economic concerns emerged as a subtheme of career paths influencing decision making.

Subtheme: Career Interests Were Influential

Demeeka, Dedaniz, Dashahnl, Damina, and Dakayla all perceived that they deselected history because it did not align with the career path that they intended to pursue. Demeeka stated that she deselected because she "wanted to be a doctor, so I really didn't need to know history." In responding, Damina stated, "My career path led me to choose the science subjects. And seeing that I could not choose out of the range, was not able to select history." Damina clarified her use of the word "range", when she explained that the school offered students two options when they were to select subjects for CSEC. They were allowed to choose either science subjects or arts subject; therefore, she could not select subjects not classified under science. Like Damina, Dshahnl spoke generally about her career path, stating that history was not in alignment with what she

had in mind. According to Dshahnl, “I had it in my head that I was going to do something in geography, so I did not need history”.

Two of the eight participants who, in their general response, stated their career path as their reason for their decision, selected history at CSEC level. Both cited wanting to go into law as their reason. Selexia stated that she selected history “...because I intended to study law”. Sajanay stated that “I could use is for my law career.” Semarian, another participant who selected history, later on in the interview revealed that she selected history because she “needed the subject in order to pursue law.”

The interview questions designed for RQ2 asked participants about the career decision making factors that influenced their decision. The responses provide strong support for what emerged in their earlier response for the more open ended questions that were related to RQ1, which asked participants what they perceived influenced their decision. The responses supported the perception that career path was the most compelling reason participants perceived influenced their decision to select or deselect history education at CSEC level. Their career paths were wide ranging: lawyer, medical doctor, math teacher, mechanical engineering, geographic information system, physical therapy, chiropractor, business owner of soap making and cosmetic industry, chartered accountant, and law.

I posed probing questions to participants to find out if they were satisfied in choosing or not choosing history at CSEC level. Demeeka, who wanted to be a medical doctor was “100% satisfied” that she deselected history. Dakayla who wanted to become a chartered accountant and deselected history remarked, “Haa, haa, 100% satisfied”.

Similarly, some participants who selected history were also satisfied. Samarian who, later on in the interview told me she also wanted to pursue law, stated that "I am very satisfied I (had) chosen history". Selexia who also wanted to study law, stated that "I am very satisfied. I do not regret choosing history, and if I was to start school all over again, I'd do history again. I did history straight until I left 6th form." Sajanay was equally satisfied, as she stated,

> I have never regretted doing it. Even though at the time I chose it for a different degree program, it is very useful to me in my current degree program – the subject and the skills I learned from the subject, as well as the content.

Two of the 10 participants expressed regrets about the choice made to deselect history at CSEC level. Dedaniz, who at first wanted to become a mechanical engineer and later selected to do mathematics education, was not satisfied that he deselected history. He stated,

> I am not satisfied because with mathematics, history kind of play a part because right now we are doing courses in mathematics, history comes in and right now I am saying to myself, if I had done history in high school these would be a lot easier for me. So I am really not satisfied.

Damina was partially dissatisfied with her choice. She said,

> I am 65% satisfied (I didn't select history) because I would have wanted to do history as a subject, to be honest. I would have wanted to do history as a subject but circumstances caused me not to be able to choose it, so I'm 65% satisfied because I am going to be able to do what I like; that being, soap making.

Subtheme: Economic Concerns Were Influential

Economic concerns emerged as a subtheme which addressed RQ2, that is what career decision making factors influenced participants' decision, when some participants made a link between their career choice and economics, including parental economic status or the economy status of Jamaican society. Three of the 10 participants linked their parents' economic status to their decision to select or deselect history, while at the same time linking the decision with their career path. Selexia, the only participant who clearly identified her parents' economic status as "low" explained why she selected history:

> It was a low economic situation, but I was not entirely deprived of needs and wants. History, as I said, I had to choose subjects that aligned to my career goal, so I think yes, the economic situation contributed to it.

Sajanay, identified her parents as middle income but was also thinking of upward mobility. For that reason, she selected history, citing that

> people always say education propels you upward on the social ladder. And with me doing law, I thought "Oh yeah, that would put me further up on the social ladder and if I do history, that would drive my law career". So yes, I did think about it in that sense.

Damina, who deselected history and who had positive things to say about her history classes and history teachers, stated that

> I think we are middle income. Both my parents are teachers; however, sometimes they complain that the government is not paying teachers what they should earn,

> and sometimes it seems that maybe if they were in a different job, it would have been better. I think that kinda led me to choose science based subjects.

Some participants mentioned the Jamaican economy and the prospect it held for their career path. In responding to question regarding her perception of the purpose of history education, Selexia was not optimistic about the economic purpose that history education served. She stated that "I really don't think there is an economy for history, apart from becoming a teacher or a lawyer, or maybe a policy analyst". However, perhaps contradicting herself, she linked the purpose to economy and career path:

> Jamaica is a poverty stricken economy and it is quite bad. So, ultimately, I really don't think that as it relates to the economy and me choosing the particular subject. My career path would have afforded me eventually...social or upward mobility; so I, it was essential to choose a subject that align to it.

Participants were asked specifically about aspects of the economic condition of the Jamaican society that may have influenced their decision to select or deselect history education. The two participants who stated that their perception of the Jamaican economy influenced their decision, deselected history at the CSEC level. Dashahnl said that

> It actually did. At a point, like in grade 7 or 8, I wanted to actually do law, and I knew that I needed the history. But then my IT teacher said there's too much lawyers in the world; it will be hard for you to find a job. And yeh, with the job thing, yes, I didn't really know what to do with history.

Damina stated she did think about the economy at the time she had to make the decision about selecting history or not:

> I think the Jamaican economy is average, or kind of below average. As it relates to educational opportunities, there are not many in Jamaica; or it might be we aren't really aware of it. They haven't shared a lot of opportunities with us as young people. That may have led me not to select history because the opportunities that I have heard of on TV or via social media have to with the sciences.

Theme 2: Experiences With Teachers in History Class Influenced Decision Making

When participants were asked to describe their grade 7-9 history class experience and if and how it influenced their decision, seven of the 10 participants reported that their history class experiences did influence their decision and it was the second most important explanation that participants gave for their decision to select or deselect history education at CSEC level. This theme addresses RQ1 (See Table 1). Of their history class experiences, they most frequently talked about their teachers and their teaching strategies. Less frequently mentioned were grades, exam policy, and classroom atmosphere. In this section, I will focus on teachers and teachers' instructional strategies, as significant decision making factors in the Grade 7-9 experience in their history classes.

I asked participants to describe their grade 7- 9 experience in their history classes; and in doing so, six of the 10 participants made reference to their history teachers. Sajanay and Sedaniel who both selected history at the CSEC level had positive things to say about their history teachers. According to Sedaniel, the "teachers did a lot of hands on activities so that you remember; did feel like you (made you feel like you are) studying for an exam; felt like you were part of story; classroom atmosphere was

welcoming...so the experience did influence me to select." Sajanay stated that "it was fun. The teacher made it really fun and interesting. She was part of the reason I chose it." However, a participant who did not select also had favorable perceptions of her history teacher, some of which focused on the teacher's non-verbal communication. Damina mentioned that

> She was fun, spoke loud so we could hear; she would sit between us as students and help us with the work. She doesn't rush the class, so I can remember clearly we would grasp different concepts easily, she would give tests on a regular basis. I actually enjoyed history. [I] got good grades.

In describing their Grade 7-9 experience, three participants had negative things to say about some of the teachers they had during that time period. Semarian who selected history at CSEC level, for career path reason, mentioned that in Grade 7, she didn't really care for history "but the teacher was pretty scary, so I did it and passed". Demeeka who deselected history said that "Coming into Grade 7, I did not enjoy history – maybe it was because of the teacher; I got bad grades." Dshahnl, who did not choose history, stated that

> Grade 7, it was not the best experience; I actually like the subject because we were learning about the school, but I don't know if it is the teacher, did this test and this lady failed me. I was so confused, so confused.

For Dshahnl, her negative perception of her experience was repeated in grade 9. She exclaimed "Jezum...the teacher...not in class most times, did not teach, and when exams are coming up she pile on [sic] all the work."

When I asked participants specifically about their teachers, I first probed about their beliefs about their history teacher and if they perceived that those beliefs influenced their decision to select or deselect history at CSEC level. Of the 10 participants, six expressed favorable perceptions about their history teachers. Of the six who expressed favorable beliefs, four selected history at CSEC level.

The four participants who selected history at CSEC level, expressed positive perceptions about their history teachers and linked those beliefs to their decision to select. In stating how her beliefs about the history teacher influenced her, Sajanay said, “Oh yes, definitely. She knew her content, she was encouraging, the class was fun”. Selexia said “Ms. Nistory was a good teacher, wonderful teacher – gave feedback on time for class, taught in a manner that was understood...”. Sedaniel stated, “Yes, it certainly did. My history teacher that I remember the most, Ms. Bistory, did not do anything simple. She found a way to make the lesson interesting and to grab the students’ attention.” Semarian stated that “I think it did because my first form teacher, she taught me first form and third form and she is a natural passionate lady about history.”

Two participants - Damina and Dakayla - had positive perceptions of their history teachers but deselected history. Damina said that her history “teacher was caring, considerate even though she was strict with her work, so you have to get it in on time”. In spite of the teacher being strict, Damina stated that “..., I don’t think my beliefs about her led me to not select history”. Like Damina, Dakayla perceived a level of strictness about her history teacher in regards to handing in assignments on time; but similarly, she mentioned that “my history teacher was very passionate about history, [a] good teacher”.

Dakayla did not think her perceptions about her history teacher influenced her to deselect history. She said, “I think I was the one who was not interested enough, or good enough.”

Of the four remaining participants who did not express positive perceptions about their history teachers, none of them selected history. Only two were very specific about their perceptions. Dshahnl mentioned that she really liked the subject but “The way upper school students talked about the type of teachers, I was afraid to select and get the same teacher from 3rd form and I [did] not want to fail CSEC”. In responding, Dedaniz focused more on “disposition”, rather than on passing tests. He mentioned that “...when teaching the history content, they weren’t enthusiastic; they did not bring across the lesson [as] very interesting”.

In discussing their perceptions of their history teachers, participants sometimes referred to teacher instructional strategies; however, I also asked them specifically to comment on teacher instructional strategies and whether or not that influenced their decision to select or deselect history education at CSEC level. Four of the 10 participants mentioned that teacher instructional strategies influenced their decision; five said it was not, and one did not express directly if it had an impact. Of the four who stated that they were influenced by the teachers’ instructional strategies, two selected and two deselected. Dedaniz who deselected stated that “The strategies were dull. They would just come to class with no material or anything; they would just start talking about history; talking, talking, talking.” According to Dedaniz, “if they (had) brought it in a better way that was appealing to the younger mind, probably [I] would have chosen history.”

On the other hand, Sejanay who selected mentioned that "she came with quizzes and things to make the class fun." She mentioned the teacher's nonverbal strategies of "walking through the rows and peering at our work; giving us activity to finish in a specified time in class gave it a rush that made it fun." Speaking favorably of teacher instructional strategies, Damina mentioned reading in class, as a strategy and that

> Sometimes she would bring handouts and we would have to go through the handouts and answer questions. However, I do not think that led me to not select history. The way that she teaches the class the strategy that she(used), I think was very good in teaching the subjects.

Of the five participants who stated that the instructional strategies did not influence their decision, only one selected to do history at CSEC level. Semarian who selected, mentioned that

> Strategies were hard, because of her passion, she didn't give easy things to do. Had to reenact stuff, for example, the Columbus' coming to the Caribbean, and had to be precise, lots of project and had to be precise. In preparing for presentation, you basically be studying to pass the exam – that was helpful, in presentations she mostly graded on the response to the questions she asked after the presentation.

Despite her perception of the instructional strategies, Semarian selected history for the career path it represented.

While most of the participants' perceptions about their history teachers and teacher instructional strategies were a response to interview questions related to RQ1,

interview questions related to RQ3 asked for recommendations that they perceived would improve 9th graders' decision making regarding the selection of history education at the CSEC level. Their first responses mostly addressed teaching strategies. Six of the participants commented on the low level of engagement in teachers' strategies and offered recommendations to ameliorate that. Samarian, who selected history, said "(the) majority of time the history teachers aren't fun; they aren't engaging." She recommended that teachers should "... try different angle[s] because all the student[s] learn differently". Dshahnl recommended that "for [grades] 7-9, the teachers should be more interactive with the students. Have the students actually take part in activities, not have them sit down all the time just talking, talking because people will fall asleep." She stated further that they should have "more trips (because) people want to experience what is being discussed." Dedaniz deselected history and recommended that teachers "should use different strategies instead of coming and talking, … or have them (students) read an entire book." He suggested that they should use SMART boards, make a history lab, have concrete objects." In addition, Dedaniz made recommendations regarding the disposition of the history teachers. He stated that they "should have an appreciation of the subject, appreciate the content. When they do, they will be enthusiastic and who knows, the students will be enthusiastic and motivated to learn".

Theme 3: Both Strong and Weak Writing and Reading Skills Were Decision Making Factors

Reading and writing skills emerged as the third strongest decision making factors. Five participants perceived that writing influenced their decision and five participants

perceived that reading influenced their decision. Their responses and their recommendations regarding writing and reading skills address RQ1, which asked participants what they perceive influenced their decision to select or deselect history education at CSEC level. The responses emerged as two subthemes -writing skills and reading skills- and are the focus of this section.

Subtheme: Writing Skills

I asked participants about their perception of their beliefs about their writing skills and whether or not those beliefs influenced their decision to select or deselect history at CSEC level. Six of the participants had positive feelings about their writing skills. Four selected to do history – Samarian, Sedanel, Selexia, and Sajanay. Samarian was confident that her writing skills would allow her success in history at the CSEC. She stated that "It was because I was a good writer. Because I knew and because of how well I had written, and was passing, I knew if [I] selected? it in CSEC it would be an easy pass." Selexia was equally confident, when she stated that "I have good writing skills, [I am] able to put properly, statements together. I like writing. I didn't have a problem with that. I think that influenced me also." With similar confidence, Sajanay stated that "The fact that I knew I could write and how writing intensive this subject is, I felt that it wouldn't be a problem." Sedaniel, however, differed from the other three in her response. She admitted that there were areas of writing where she had problems but she" did not mind writing about history because I do also love making up a good story." Sedanel's characterization of history has to be seen in light of her earlier response where she described her Grade 7-9 experience in history class as a "subject where you came and read stories".

Two participants, Demeeka and Dedaniz, did not select history at CSEC level and both linked their decision to the negative beliefs they had about their writing skills. Demeeka, cited her writing skills as "a main reason" for not selecting history at CSEC. She was concerned that "because I could not write very well – my grammar, and not attending to details – I'd maybe get a 3 or 4 in history". At the CSEC level, scoring 3s and 4s are not considered to be highly competitive grades. Students need to score a 1, II, or III to be accepted into higher education institutions (CXC, 2019). Dedaniz was also clear about his writing skills. He stated that "my writing skills were poor." Because of that, he was "not the one interested in something to do with any essay writing or story writing, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera." This did influence him not to take history at CSEC level.

Dshahnl and Damina were the participants who had positive feelings about their writing skills but chose not to select history at the CSEC level, specifying that history did not align with their career paths. Dshahnl stated "No, no. I think I am still a good writer. I don't think that affected my choice." Similarly, Damina said,

> I am a very good writer! [I] like writing very much. I love the English language, so for me writing lengthy detailed essays was not a problem. For subjects such as environmental science and stuff like that I had to write full paragraphs and essays. I had to answer essay questions in essay format, so writing for me was not a problem. That did not hinder me from [not] choosing history.

Like Dshahnl, in spite of her positive beliefs about her writing skills, she deselected history because it did not align with her career path. And even though she would have

wanted to select it, the school course selection policy limited her choice to" only one group of subjects".

Dedevaun and Dakayla had negative feelings about their writing skills but did not link their choice to their beliefs. Dedevaun admitted that "my essay writing skills weren't that good." However, he believed that had nothing to do with his choice to deselect because "English demanded the writing of essays as well and I'm pretty good at English. But I just couldn't get the essays for history because I did not know anything". This belief of not knowing anything, Dedevaun developed in further responses. Unlike Dedevaun who perceived that he did well in English and literature, Dekayla stated that "...I struggled with English and literature". Furthermore, she stated that "I personally don't like writing essays. That's just not my thing". Despite her negative beliefs about her writing skill, she did not think it influenced her decision to deselect history at CSEC level.

There were occasions when participants mentioned writing without being asked specifically. Demeeka was consistent in her mentions of writing. She mentioned her dislike for "writing subjects" when she was first asked to give her general perception of why she deselected history at CSEC level. Sajanay also remained consistent in her response regarding her affinity for writing. When she gave a response regarding her understanding of the nature of history education, amongst the responses she gave was that "it taught us how to write...". Later on in the interview when she was asked if there were any factors such as career plans that influenced her decision to select history, amongst the response she gave was that "...it would help with my essay writing skills..." Both

participants demonstrated in their unsolicited responses about writing that writing was an important factor in their selection or deselection decision.

Subtheme: Reading Skills

Like writing skills, reading skills also emerged spontaneously when some participants mentioned it in response to other interview questions; however, all mentioned it in response to a direct interview question. I asked them all: "… history is reading intensive. Did your beliefs about your reading skills influence your decision? If so, how?" The responses fell into two categories (a) those who stated they liked reading, (b) and those who did not like certain aspect of reading in history classes, such as the volume and the content.

Of the four participants who stated that they liked reading, three selected to do history at CSEC level. They stated that their love for reading influenced their decision. Sedaniel stated that "... my love for reading did push me into doing history...". In expressing her fondness for reading, Selexia contrasted it with the opposing feeling she had for mathematics. She stated that" I liked reading, so it influenced me. I don't like calculations, so I am not gween dweet [going to do it]." She showed how strong her feeling about reading was by adding a proverb to her response: "I like reading, enjoyed reading, had no problem with reading and there is the thing that says "Reading maketh a man". Like Selexia, Sejanay added the idea of having no "problem" to her response when she stated that she "... did not have a problem reading the textbook" and that she "like to read". Because Sejanay liked reading and had no problem reading the text, she reasoned that "I didn't have a problem sitting down and going through them. So that fact that I

knew I didn't have a problem with that, I didn't see it as anything that would affect me choosing the subject".

Two of the participants who did not select history education linked reading to that decision. Dedaniz admitted that reading skills played a part in his decision but linked it to the content, He stated that "Yes, reading skills had a part to play. I don't have a problem reading something in my field. However, history for me, I did not want to read it, especially the type of history they were giving." On the other hand, Demeeka linked her decision to the volume of reading that would be required. She stated,

> I don't really read a lot, and then I think I'm a lazy person. So you know, and history is a lot. With history, you can't really swat, you have to just know, read, and understand. So, yes, the volume of reading did actually influence me.

The volume of reading emerged as a response to the specific question on reading but it also emerged without participants being specifically asked about reading. This came about when participants were asked if they had any assumptions about how Jamaicans viewed history education. Samarian, who selected history said, "I think they think it's not important, it's a bore for them, cause yu nuh (you know), it is a lot of reading..." Dedaniz, who deselected history said, "I was surrounded by a lot of technical persons, who share the same view as me, saying history is boring, it is a lot of reading." Sejanay, who selected history stated that "They think it is irrelevant, boring. You hear the narrative all the time, "weh mi a guh (what will I) do with history, that's too much reading".

There were other instances during the interview when participants mentioned reading without being specifically asked about reading. Selexia, a participant who selected history, described herself as an "avid reader". She mentioned that for her, the grade 7-9 experience in her history classes indicated that in history "All you had to do was read and apply. I had no problem with that." Dedaniz, a participant who did not select history, when asked about the influence of exam policies on his decision mentioned that "I got to understand that for history in CSEC, [I] would have to do a lot of reading and writing. I wasn't the type to be writing essay [sic], that was not my interest." While he was not very specific here about not being interested in reading, he did so when he was asked specifically. That was when he responded that "I did not want to read it, especially the type of history they were giving." The participants' responses indicated their perception of the nature of history, in particular, the type of historical content that they perceived they should be required to read.

Theme 4: Students had Recommendations to Improve Decision Making Factors

In response to the interview questions related to RQ3, participants gave recommendations regarding how history classes could be improved to benefit the selection rate of history education at CSEC level, as well as how there is a need to emphasize the value of studying history and create access through more choice. Most of the recommendations focused on areas of weaknesses that they highlighted when they responded to interview questions pertaining to RQ1. As they responded, they implicitly and explicitly offered recommendations on teacher strategies, career path advertisement, the nature of the history curriculum, learning skills, and school selection policy. In

responding to interview questions pertaining to RQ3, they consistently addressed the same areas. In addition, they made new recommendations, the most salient of which was the recommendation that clubs be used in helping to develop interest in history classes. Participants also directed their recommendations to two sets of stakeholders - the local school and the Ministry of Education. In this section I have identified these specific recommendations as subthemes of recommendations participants perceived would improve the decision making factors regarding history education at CSEC level.

Subtheme: More Effort Needed to Make Students Aware of Career Path in History Education

Participants commented on and made recommendations around the lack of effort on the part of schools (and society) in making them aware of the career paths available in the field of history education. Damina, one of the participants who loved history but did not select it because of career-path reasons, addressed the matter at length when she responded to RQ1. She stated that "As it relates to educational opportunities, there are not many in Jamaica...or it might be that we aren't really aware of it. They haven't shared a lot of opportunities with us as young people." She addressed the wider society when she said, "...the opportunities I have heard about on television or via social media platform have to do with the sciences. They very seldom bring across jobs that have to do with history." She elaborated when responding to interview questions related to RQ3, when she mentioned that "on Career Day, the school usually invited police officers, doctors, firefighters, or nurses". She suggested that if there was a history club, the club could

"invite historians, philosophers, lecturers...archaeologists. Different occupations." Dakayla suggested that

> When teaching, teachers could touch on some of the career choices available, or the history department could put on different presentations especially from Grades 7-9 because those are the years when you choose to get a feel of what you like or don't like.

The lack of effort on the part of schools was mentioned by some as the low level of visibility placed on history as a subject worthy of pursuit in the formal curriculum and on the extra curriculum. Sedanel and Selexia commented on the lack of advertisement (on the school campus) given to the subject and its importance. Selexia said, "They (the local school) need to popularize more the importance of the subject." She stated further that "they need to let individuals know that just like science, history is important." Sedanel suggested that a "history club should be a prominent club in the school." This club would play a role in putting on events such as "Jamaica Day, Black History Month, Heroes Day, Reggae Month..."

Subtheme: New Content Matter Needed

In defining the nature of history, some participants defined it based on the kind of content the subject covered and made recommendations regarding the nature of the content. Dedaniz was critical about the content when he spoke earlier in the interview about his experience in grades 7-9 history classes: "...they touched on like the Maya history, Mesopotamia and Egypt. [The teachers said] nothing about Jamaica." Dshahnl felt similarly about the lack of information on Jamaica and stated that she would rather

see content that “focus on Jamaica”. According to her, “we are learning about Cuba when half of us don’t really know anything about our own country”. She then linked her concern about the non-Jamaican content to how teaching strategies could be varied, when she mentioned that “If we learn about our country in Grade 7-9, that’s when we can actually go on the trips that I was talking about”. Sajanay also suggested that new subject matter was needed. She said,

> Ah, history has basically become the narrative of enslavement, emancipation, and independence. And that narrative is kind of played out at this point, and African history is so much more that slavery. But I mean, would mean going into the class, you probably feel like you already know what it is meant to be about.

Subtheme: Development of Learning Skills Which Facilitate Learning of History

Participants identified a number of learning skills that, if were they better developed by schools, students would be more likely to choose history. Besides reading and writing skills, participants mentioned that they needed skills such analyzing, discussing, debating, critical thinking, researching, and working in groups. They gave a number of recommendations regarding how these skills could be developed. Sedaniel and Dedevaun expressed similar recommendations by stating that skills that students needed to facilitate learning (in a history class) should be taught. According to Sedanel “Some of these things have to be taught...because frankly, they don’t know.” Dedevaun, who deselected history, expressed great pleasure in offering his recommendations. He said,

> Thank you. I knew my voice would be heard. I have always spoken to my friends about the fact that we are expected to learn but we never actually go to school and

learn how to learn. I believe we should have a class where we learn how to learn. And that's how we will fix it.

In keeping with the idea of teaching students the learning skills, Demeeka focused particularly on writing skills. She believed that modeling would be helpful when she suggested that teachers could show current students "examples of" essays from "past student who [got] a good grade on the essay." Dedaniz focused on reading skills. Stating that the "volume of reading is high", he suggested that reading should be given in smaller chunks. He identified the long standing student magazine that is used at the primary school level – The Children's Own – as a model to follow, in giving smaller sized readings.

Three of the participants recommended that the skills could be developed by spreading the skills across the curricular and co-curricular areas. Selexia and Dshahnl suggested incorporating the skills into different subject areas. Dakayla stated that "History teachers should come together with English language and literature during the Grade 7-9 to develop the skills". And Damina stated that "Clubs could be used to develop these skills; reading clubs.". She emphasized that "It should be a rule that students take part in different clubs that can contribute to character development."

Subtheme: More Engaging Instructional Strategies

In responding to RQ1, some participants volunteered comments on what they perceived as the low level of engagement in teachers' instructional strategies, and when the participants were asked to, offered recommendations. In these recommendations they suggested that improving teacher instructional strategies may be helpful in facilitating

more students choosing history. Samarian, who selected history, said that most " of time the history teachers aren't fun, they aren't engaging." She recommended that teachers should "... try different angle[s] because all the student[s] learn differently". Dshahnl recommended that "for [grades] 7-9, the teachers should be more interactive with the students. Have the students actually take part in activities, not have them sit down all the time just talking, talking because people will fall asleep." She stated further that they should have "more trips (because) people want to experience what is being discussed." Dedaniz deselected history and recommended that teachers "should use different strategies instead of coming and talking, … or have them (students) read an entire book." He suggested that they should use SMART boards, make a history lab, have concrete objects." Dedaniz was the only participant who felt that gender may have influenced his decision to deselect history and offered recommendations for strategies, which may appeal to male students. In critiquing the videos shown in the class, he said they were "boring". To lessen the boredom, he felt that they should use

> games or quiz that is very competitive because it was a boys' school and you know that we love to compete against each other. So we could be competing or playing games while learning at the same time and that would be more interesting.

Subtheme: More Beneficial Course Selection Policy

In responding to interview questions pertaining to RQ1, participants volunteered information about the CSEC selection policy but in regard to RQ3 they were asked specifically to describe the school policy regarding course selection for CSEC and whether or not it was beneficial for the uptake of history education. Seven of the 10

participants believed the course selection policy was not beneficial. Demeeka mentioned that at her school, “Like other Jamaican schools, everyone has to do math, English, and literature. “Demeeka’s response concerning the mandatory nature of some courses was validated by the other participants who came from other schools. The selection policy regarding courses that were not mandatory, however, varied according to the school. Referring to her school, Demeeka said, “If they [the teacher] see where they [students] are able to manage eight or nine, they can select, but teachers decide”. At Dedevaun’s school, “if you don’t have the grade requirement – above 65 - you can’t do the subject”. At Dekayla’s school, “...some of us were allowed to choose some subjects, some were not; I was in the top stream, we couldn’t choose agriculture”. At Sedanel’s school, “Some courses were boxed in, so there were restrictions. At some schools you could choose what you want but at my school were requested to choose from predefined groups.”

While some participants felt that the selection policy was not beneficial, only some were able to offer recommendations for change. Sedanel believed that the selection policy should not be discarded, instead “ it just needs to be refined.” Demeeka recommended that “students should be able to choose any subject they want. The fact that teachers believe they can handle it or not, should not be a deciding factor.” Damina, a participant who wanted to choose history but could not, addressed her recommendations to the local level and at the Ministry of Education level. She said, “I think [my school] should have allowed us to choose the subjects that we wanted to do, not limit us to one group only.” She continued in a similar manner by stating that the “Ministry of Education should allow students the freedom to choose subjects across group and not to be limited

to social sciences or science subjects. Freedom of choice produce more rounded individuals." She compared her situation with a friend who migrated abroad and who told her of the many subject choices she had, stating that, "She is able to choose what she wants to do but we are limited to two choices and I don't know why. I wish for them to change that."

Summary

In Chapter 4, I reported the findings. In doing this, I began with a restatement of the purpose of the study and the research questions. I described the setting, the demographics of the 10 participants, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and reported the result. The analysis of those interviews produced four major themes and their accompanying subthemes. Collectively, the themes and subthemes addressed the three research questions. In Chapter 5, I will present an interpretation of the findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The threefold purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate the perception of graduates of Jamaican high schools about what influenced their decision when they selected or deselected history education at CSEC examination level, to discover what career decision making factors they perceived influenced their decision, and to find out what they think schools should do to improve the decision making regarding the selection of history education at the CSEC examination level. I interviewed 10 participants, and data analysis of those interviews indicated that three major findings influenced participants' decision making process. They were (a) career paths influenced decision making, (b) experience with teacher in history class influenced decision making, and (c) both strong and weak writing and reading skills were decision making factors. Furthermore, data analysis yielded findings regarding recommendations participants had about ways to improve decision making factors associated with the selection of history education at the CSEC examination level. These recommendations addressed the other three major findings and focus on the need for (a) more effort to make students aware of career paths in history education, (b) new content matter, (c) more engaging instructional strategies, (d) more opportunities to learn skills that facilitate learning of history, and (d) a more favorable course selection policy. In this chapter, I present the interpretation of the findings in light of the conceptual framework and in light of the literature review, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion.

Interpretations of the Findings

In this section, I use two lenses to interpret the findings: the study's conceptual framework, which was based on Super's life-span, life-space approach (Super, 1990, Super et al., 1996) and Krumboltz's career decision making theory (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990), and the study's literature review. Super's (1990) theory stated that career choice is a process that occurs in stages, over an individual's lifetime, and Krumboltz's theory describes four factors that influence an individual's career decision making process. I have organized the interpretation section by the four thematic findings. In each theme, I explain which research question is addressed and compare the findings with the conceptual framework and with empirical studies.

Theme 1: Career Paths Influenced Decision Making

Participants' intended career path was the most influential decision making factor and addressed RQ1 and RQ2. Eight of the 10 the participants cited this as their reason for selecting or deselecting history education at the CSEC level. Of those eight, for those who selected history courses, history education was a requirement for pursuing their career path, and for those who deselected, history education was not a requirement for pursuing their career path. Demeeka, who wanted to be a medical doctor, for example, deselected history education, while Sajanay, who wanted to be a lawyer, selected history education. At the time participants made the decision, they were between the ages of 14 and 15.

Theme 1: Interpretation in Light of the Framework

According to Super (Super, 1990; Super et al., 1996), adolescents are involved in the exploration stage, in particular, crystallization, where they narrow down their choices through the selection of classes. Participants demonstrated that they were narrowing down their choices by selecting or deselecting from the block of subjects from which the school allowed them to choose. While Super's theory can be used to interpret the findings from participants regarding adolescents' career decision making task, Krumboltz's (Krumboltz & Mitchell, 1996) theory can be used to interpret the importance the participants placed on career path as a deciding factor. The participants linked their career path and course choice to economic factors, their parents' economic status, and the status of the Jamaican economy. Their general perception was that the Jamaican economy did not offer enough career related opportunities in the fields related to the study of history. According to Krumboltz's theory, the economy is an environmental factor that influences career decision making. For those participants who felt that their parents' economic status was low or middle, they perceived that the career path they choose would afford them upward socioeconomic mobility.

One's learning experience is another element of Krumboltz's (Krumboltz & Mitchell, 1996) career decision making factors, which allows analysis of the findings in regard to career path as a factor that influences decision making. Krumboltz identified two types of learning experience, instrumental and associative. Instrumental learning is motivated by reward and punishment and occurs when an individual interacts with the environment and produces a resultant effect that can be positive, negative, overt, covert,

instant, or delayed. Associative learning occurs when an individual makes a connection between two situations, one of which was not previously viewed as positive or negative. Krumboltz considered a discussion with someone about one's career as instrumental, while a vicarious experience such as limited job opportunities is an example of associative learning. Both types of learning experience were present in the findings. First, most of the participants discussed their choices with their parents, and a few did so with the career counsellor or with a teacher. The discussion with their parents centered mainly around attending postsecondary institutions to pursue undergraduate studies towards their career goals. Second, their perception of the Jamaican economy was one that provided limited job opportunities associated with history education.

Theme 1: Interpretation in Light of the Literature Review

Studies have shown that students in high school want the type of secondary schooling that is relevant to their future goals (Lemley et al., 2014; Shin et al., 2016). Studies specific to course selection have confirmed that, like the participants in the study, adolescents select courses with their future in mind (Duta et al., 2018; Moulton et al., 2018; Iannelli et al., 2016). After controlling for socioeconomic factors, Palmer et al. (2017) indicated that subject requirement in pursuing a career and whether the subject was a requirement for future study were amongst the top six factors that influenced high school students when selecting courses**.** Like the participants who looked at history education in light of the prospect it held for their career path, Wilkinson's (2014) study conducted in England revealed that while students found history interesting, "they found it relatively irrelevant to their chances of getting a job." (p. 39). Furthermore, Barrance

and Elwood (2018b) found that students in Ireland had concerns about the portability of their qualifications because students from Ireland tended to apply to the universities in England.

Theme 2: Experience With Teachers in History Class Influenced Decision Making

Participants' experience in their previous history classes was the second most influential decision making factor and addressed RQ1. Seven of the 10 participants identified it as influencing their decision. The most frequently mentioned features of the experiences in past history classes were teachers and teacher instructional strategies. The positive or negative feelings that participants had about their teachers, as well their perceptions about teacher instructional strategies, were influential in their decision making. Generally, participants who had positive perceptions about their history teachers and their teachers' instructional strategies tended to select history education, while those who had negative perceptions about the teacher and their teaching strategies tended to deselect. However, there were two participants who had positive perceptions about the teachers and the teachers' instructional strategies who deselected history education for career path reasons.

Theme 2: Interpretation in Light of the Framework

Krumboltz's (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990, 1996) theory of career decision making factors can be used to interpret the findings regarding previous history class experience. According to Krumboltz, learning experiences is one factor that influences students' educational and career choices. In describing their prior learning experiences, participants who selected history education commented favorably on teacher knowledge

of content, teacher disposition, and teacher instructional strategies. Sedaniel, for example, mentioned that her most memorable history teacher always found a way to make the lesson interesting. On the contrary, those who deselected history had commented unfavorably about their experience mentioned in particular negative teacher disposition, lack of teacher passion, weak teacher attendance, and poor instructional strategies. Some of the participants who did not select linked their negative perception of the teachers and their teaching strategies with their low grades in history. There were instances where participants said they did not select because they did not wish to get a low grade or because of what students in the upper grades told them about a particular teacher. The latter constitute further examples of associative learning.

Theme 2: Interpretation in Light of the Literature Review

Empirical studies have confirmed the influence of past experience in history classes on students' perceptions of history education. With regards to this study, past experience includes participants' perceptions of the course content. Some participants were critical of course content that did not include Jamaica or provide enough coverage of it. This is similar to the findings of Wilkinson (2014), which was conducted in four British schools. The participants were Muslim males who were studied because the National Curriculum for History did not think this segment of the school population was benefiting from the curriculum. The participants felt that there was an absence of Muslim contribution to history in the content section of the curriculum. The participants' perception of the British curriculum was confirmed prior to and after their study by

Harris and Reynolds (2014, 2016, 2018) who studied the problem of declining interest in history education. Their findings indicated that the British curriculum was too narrow.

Researchers have also focused on past experiences in history classes, indicating that teacher belief about history education influenced classroom practice (Harris & Reynolds, 2018; Kose, 2017; Voet & De Wever, 2016). While I was not able to confirm this because teachers were not participants, participants reported that their Grade 7 to 9 history teachers and their teaching strategies were impactful. There were participants who enjoyed their teachers' instructional strategies, but there were participants who perceived the strategies to be unengaging, mainly about "chalk and talk," and reading. This description of teachers' instructional strategies refers to the traditional or teacher centered method. Studies conducted in the United States by Heafner and Lambert (2017) and Heafner and Fitchett (2015, 2018) confirmed that there has been a reliance on the traditional method of teaching in history classes, as did Unisen's (2015) study of prospective teachers in Turkey. The prospective teachers in Unisen's study defended the method, stating that given that students' characteristics influence instructional strategies, the traditional method should not be replaced but supplemented.

Theme 3: Both Strong and Weak Writing and Reading Skills Were Decision Making Factors

Reading and writing skills emerged as the third most influential decision making factors and addressed RQ1. Five participants perceived that writing influenced their decision and five participants perceived that reading influenced their decision. Generally, participants who had positive beliefs about their writing skills selected history education,

while those how had negative feelings deselected history education. Similarly, in general, participants who expressed positive beliefs about reading selected history while some who expressed negative feelings about reading deselected history.

Theme 3: Interpretation in Light of the Framework

Krumboltz's (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990; 1996) theory of career decision making factors, in particular, task approach skills, can be used to interpret the findings regarding reading and writing skills. According to Krumboltz, task approach skills are a set of skills individuals develop because of the interaction among the other three factors identified in the theory – genetic endowment and special abilities, learning experiences, and environmental influences. These skills include goal setting, work habits, problem-solving skills, seeking occupational information, emotional responses, and cognitive responses. When participants expressed their like or dislike for writing, they were giving an emotional response, but often this was accompanied by a cognitive justification. Semarian, one of the participants who selected history, demonstrated this when she responded confidently about her writing skills. She stated that she was a good writer and because she had written well in the past, and was passing the subject, she knew would do well at the CSEC level. Similarly, Dedaniz, one of the participants who deselected history, expressed negative beliefs about his writing skills. Dedaniz said that his writing skills were poor and he was, therefore, not interested in a subject that required him to write essays.

Task approach skills (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990; 1996), in particular the emotional and cognitive responses, can also be used to interpret participants' response

about reading skills. In giving solicited or unsolicited responses about reading, participants fell into two categories: (a) those who liked reading and (b) those who disliked certain features of reading that were associated with history classes. Sajanay's response illustrates the emotional and cognitive response. She stated that she liked reading and did not experience a problem in reading history textbooks; therefore, she did not anticipate having a problem in doing a similar task at the CSEC level. Dedaniz, who deselected, mentioned that he was surrounded by peers who shared his feelings that history was a boring subject. But he also stated that it was the nature of the history content that he was not interested in reading. For Demeeka, who also deselected, she stated that she was "lazy", so the volume of reading required in a history class did influence her decision

Theme 3: Interpretation in Light of the Literature Review

Participants' positive or negative perceptions of their reading and writing ability to accomplish the reading and writing skills demand of history education is a function of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in her/his ability to successful accomplish a task (Bandura, 1986). Studies confirmed that beliefs about reading and writing efficacy influenced students' success (Graham et al., 2018; Pace & Mellard, 2016). And Palmer et al.'s (2017) study found that students' perceived ability was amongst the six top of 21 factors that influenced students when it was time to select a high school major.

Theme 4: Participants Had Recommendations to Improve Decision Making Factors

Participants offered solicited and unsolicited recommendations regarding how history classes could be improved to benefit the uptake of history education at CSEC level, and their perceptions addressed RQ3. The recommendations were aimed at the classroom level, school level, and at the Ministry of Education level. Participants called for teaching strategies that were more interactive, dissemination of more information about career path in history, a history curriculum that was broader with more updated content, teaching of skills which would facilitate learning history, and school selection policy that allowed students more freedom to choose their courses.

Theme 4: Interpretation in Light of the Framework

Krumboltz's (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990; 1996) theory, in particular environmental factors, confirm the kinds of recommendations participants gave regarding factors that would influence the decision making process. Environmental factors are outside of students' control and are political, social, cultural, economic, and physical in nature. Specific examples include job opportunities, training opportunities, selection criteria, and the nature of the education system. In making her suggestion, Damina, who deselected history education, said that there were not a lot of job opportunities associated with history education "or it might be that we aren't aware of it". Her suggestion that historians, philosophers, lecturers, and archaeologists should be invited to the schools is confirming the possible influence embedded in the job opportunities aspect of the theory. Inviting those professionals would expose students to the job opportunities in the field.

Likewise, participants' call for more freedom of choice in the course selection policy confirms the idea that selection criteria are influential in the decision making process.

Theme 4: Interpretation in Light of the Literature Review

Participants commented on and gave recommendations on what they saw as low level of visibility of history as a subject on the curriculum and the lack of effort to position it as a subject worthy of pursuing. The motivation behind this recommendation can be compared with studies that examine the marginalization of history education (David & Cheruiyot, 2016; Levesque & Zanazanian, 2014; Townsend, 2015). Of those studies, David and Cheruiyot's (2016) research in secondary schools in Kenya was most comparable. David and Cheruiyot found that teachers steered students away from certain subjects such as history. This was similar to Dashanl's experience where the IT teacher discouraged her from doing history. However, the justification for "steering" was different. In David and Cheruiyot's study, steering was done towards what were deemed "easier subjects", while in Dashanl's case, it was for the perceived lack of market value of the subject.

Limitations

This study had a number of limitations, all of which often accompany qualitative research. Included here are limitations related to researcher bias, sampling technique, participant demographics, and data collection method. These factors affect the generalizability of this study. Nevertheless, the accompanying discussion shows what was done to mitigate the limitations that the study may be considered trustworthy.

Researcher bias is inherent in this study because the study aligns with my professional interest. I have studied and have taught history education at the high school and college/university level for many years. It is this professional interest that led me to pursue this dissertation topic. I was careful, however, to try to mitigate the bias. I followed as much as possible the protocol that was approved by the IRB. Furthermore, I followed the interview questions and probes that were approved by my committee. When I had to paraphrase a question because the participant asked for clarification, I used my languages skills to remain true to the original questions. In transcribing the interviews, I wrote only what the participants said. Where responses were not clear, I called the respective participant to ask for clarity. I also sent the transcript to each participant to verify that I had accurately recorded their responses.

A second limitation resulted from the sampling technique - purposeful sampling- that I used. Purposeful sampling does not control for self-selection bias. Participants selected themselves for the study after receiving the advertisement that I distributed to my contacts on WhatsApp. It is likely that some of the participants knew each other and could have had prior knowledge of the interview questions. While prior knowledge would allow them to reflect upon their answers before being interviewed, they could have been influenced by previous participants to respond in a particular manner. Therefore, when participants were concerned about whether or not their answers were correct, I assured them that the response was about their experience. Also, when participants responded in the third person, I was careful in asking them if the response was a description of their experience. In addition, at the end of interview questions that were

related to each research question, I asked participants to summarize their response from a first person perspective.

A third limitation was sample size and the participant characteristics that accompanied it. The sample size of 10 participants was within the range that qualitative researchers recommend (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2015). The minuteness of this sample can be grasped when compared to the number of students who entered the exam for two of the years covered by the study. In 2016, 35,312 registered while in 2018, 35,139 registered for the exams (Ministry of Education 2016; 2018). This size and self-selected nature of the study affect the generalizability of the study. Secondly, there were eight females and two males. The data from the Ministry of Education for 2016 and 2018 also showed that fewer males registered for the examinations. This gender bias may have impacted the response to the interview question which explored whether or not gender was a decision making factor. Only one participant, a male, perceived that it may have been. It is likely that with more participants, the findings on gender for example, could be different. Thirdly, while six schools were represented, all the participants were from traditional high schools, all of which were public schools. All these schools are generally considered to be well-performing high schools. The findings may not be generalized to schools that are not in this category.

Another limitation resulted from the communication channel that I used to collect the data. The interviews were conducted via WhatsApp. I did not use the video recording capability, so I could not see the participants and neither could they see me. Consequently, I was not able to see the non-verbal cues that work with verbal

communication to communicate meaning. To compensate for that, I ensured that in transcribing, I made note of intonation, pauses, sighs, laughter, and use of the local language. In writing the report section, I included some of the local language. Because I am from that culture, I was able to select phrases or sentences that conveyed meanings that would help in answering the interview questions**.**

Finally, the participants in the study graduated from Jamaican high schools between 2015 and 2019 and their memories may be inaccurate or faulty. The interview questions designed to answer RQ1 were aimed at their grade 7-9 experience. When responding to some questions, some participants did not readily recall the experience and took some time in responding and another participant gave an answer and then questioned herself in regard to the correctness of the answer.

Recommendations

This study fills a gap in the literature. The literature review, the findings, and the limitations, indicate that further studies need to be done. It is on this basis that I recommend studies to be done on career options and gainful employment opportunities in the field of history education, perceptions of history education using more male participants and students have recently transitioned from Grades 9-10, perceptions of history teachers on how to increase the uptake of history education at CSEC level, and perception of graduates of high schools in other CSEC participating Caribbean countries.

This study confirmed that the participants were in the crystallization stage of Super's (Super, 1990, Super et al., 1996) theory when they selected their courses for CSEC. It is probably for this reason, career path emerged as the most influential decision

making factor. However, they made the decision when history education was marginalized in a number of ways on the school curriculum. For instance, participants reported a lack of information about the career path that students could pursue if they studied history. This example is confirmed by Kirdoz and Harman's (2018) Turkish study of high school students, in which the researchers found that lack of information about occupation was one of the difficulties the participants encountered. Sturtevant's (2017) study was a response to those who claimed that history degrees did not lead to gainful employment. The findings showed the employment and salary potential for history majors but it also indicated the other areas of employment that the skill set which students develop in history education can qualify them for . Sturtevant's study was done for the United States. Research needs to be done for Jamaica to show the employment potentials for history education.

Studies have indicated that gender can influence students' decision making (Anders et al., 2018; Henderson et al., 2018), but this study did not confirm that**.** In general, participants reported that gender did not influence their decision. However, most of the participants were females. The one participant who stated that gender may have been a factor was a male participant. This participant also recommended that teaching strategies should be used that considered the interest of males. Moreover, many of the participants referred to history as a "reading subject". Because studies have shown that girls tend like reading more than boys (Loh et al., 2020; Ozturk et al., 2016), the findings could be confirming that girls like reading subjects more than boys but the sample was

skewed towards girls. As such, more studies need to be done with a larger sample of male participants in order to draw a more logical conclusion.

The literature review and the findings highlighted the role of teachers in influencing students' decision making. Palmer et al.'s (2017) included "how enjoyable it is" (p.47) on their list of factors that influence students' selection of courses. This alluded to the factor of teachers making the subject enjoyable. The participants in the study confirmed subject enjoyment as a factor in their description of their history teachers' demeanor and history teachers' instructional strategies. In this study, I did not hear from the teachers. Studies could be done to find out the perception of Jamaican history teachers regarding how to increase the uptake of history education at CSEC level.

Lastly, the participants in this study were graduates of Jamaican high school. However, CSEC is a regional exam, which is done in 16 Caribbean countries. There is a general lack of studies about this particular problem in Jamaica but also in the other participating countries. Over the years, studies have been done on the uptake of history education in several parts of the world (Brookins, 2016a; Harris & Reynolds, 2014; Schmidt, 2018), but there is a lack of research for the English Caribbean region. While the findings of this study is transferable, research needs to be done in other CSEC participating countries. The studies by Joseph (2011), Rahman (2015), and Stephens (1993) indicated that researchers in Trinidad and Tobago had noticed the problem of declining interest in history education. These studies are not recent and were not driven by career decision making theories. Further studies using career decision making theories

need to be done for other CSEC-participating Caribbean countries. This would facilitate a meaningful comparison with the current study.

Implications

The findings and recommendations of this study have implications for stakeholders at different levels in the field of education. This study addressed a gap in the literature and by doing so indicates that more research needs to be done in the field of history education. It points specifically to the need for research that will address the value of history education in relationship to students' career portfolio. At the administrative level, it implies that curriculum designers need to evaluate the curriculum with the aim of making the content more relevant to the knowledge needs of the twenty first century learner. Townsend's (2015) textual analysis of the trends in history specializations is indicative of the change in topical interest in the discipline. Townsend claims environmental history, cultural history, gender history, and women's history were historical specializations on the rise; while diplomatic history, economic history, and intellectual history were some of those historical specializations on the decline. There are also implications for classroom practice. History teachers need to examine their instructional strategies and improve the level of engagement built into the strategies. In addition, teachers should teach skills that will facilitate the opportunity to learn history. As well the school and the Ministry of Education need to examine the course selection policy and improve the packaging to allow students more freedom of choice. Lastly, there is an implication for the wider society and those who are focused on job creation.

Creative thinkers need to look into creating jobs that are based on history education or jobs that require the use of the content and skills which are learned in history education.

Conclusion

History education is valuable to the 21st century learner but the percentage of students choosing to study it in high school is on the decline. Researchers in several countries have studied this phenomenon; however, a gap existed in the research regarding the choice of history courses in Jamaica. This basic qualitative study, guided by a career decision making conceptual framework, was conducted to fill that gap. The purpose was to find out what graduates of Jamaican high schools perceived influence them to select or deselect history education at CSEC level, what career decision making factor influenced their decision, and what recommendations they had for improving the uptake of history education at CSEC level. The findings confirmed that the participants were involved in a career decision making task when they selected their subjects for CSEC; hence, they made their decision based on the requirements of their intended careers. Nevertheless, there were other factors that influenced their decision.

Based on the literature review, the findings, and the limitations, this study has a number of implications. Firstly, the lack of information around the research topic implies that more research needs to be done with this and with related topics. Secondly, career path is important to these students who transitioned from Grade 9 to the Grade 10 CSEC syllabus; perhaps in the Grade 7-9 years, all the stakeholders need to put more effort into showing students the job related value of history education. Thirdly, the learning skills that students need to succeed in history education can be more directly or effectively

taught. Fourthly, instructional strategies that present opportunity to learn history should be used. Fifthly, it seems that there needs to be a reexamination of the content of the curriculum. While chronological thinking is one of the historical thinking skills (Seixas & Peck, 2004), added emphasis may be placed on the themes that are on the CSEC history syllabus (CXC, 2011). Historical themes could be taught around career interests. Lastly, some schools need to take a look at how they package the courses at the CSEC level. Collectively, attention to these ideas could help to bring about more economic opportunities, and ultimately social change, for students graduating from Jamaican high schools. Positive change at the individual level may result in positive change at the school and societal level.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. **Opening Questions to confirm eligibility**:

    a. Where are you from?
    b. What type of high school did you attend in Jamaica?
    c. Which grades did you attend in high school?
    d. Which CSEC subjects did you do? When did you graduate?

RQ1: What do graduates of Jamaican high schools perceive influenced their decision to select or deselect history education at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate examination level.

2. **Tell me about your decision to select or deselect history education at the CSEC examination level**.

    Probes:

- Describe your general experience from Grades 7-9, including curricula and co-curricular activities.
- Describe your experience of your Grades 7-9 history classes. Are there any ways those experiences influenced your decision to select or deselect history education at CSEC level? If so, how?
- Are there school examinations policies that may have influenced your decision to select or deselect history? If yes, describe them.
- Did your beliefs about your history teacher/s influence your decision? If so, how?
- How would you describe the instructional strategies used in your history classes? Do you think any of these instructional strategies influenced your decision? How?
- History is a writing intensive subject, did your beliefs about your writing skills influence your decision to select or deselect history education at the CSEC level? If so, how?
- Similarly, history is reading intensive. Did your beliefs about your reading skills influence your decision? If so, how?
- Is there anything about the economic condition of the Jamaican society that may have influenced your decision to select or deselect history education? If so, did you discuss this with your parents and what was their response?
- Is there anything about your family's socio-economic status that may have influenced your decision to select or deselect history education? If so, please tell me about it.
- Is there anything about your gender that may have influenced your decision to select or deselect history education? If so, discuss.

3. **Let's discuss your beliefs about history education:**

    - What is your understanding of the nature of history education? How did, it at all, your understanding of what history education is influence your decision to select or deselect history education at the CSEC level?
    - What are your beliefs about the purpose of history education? How did, if at all, your beliefs about the purpose of history education influence your decision to select or deselect history education at the CSEC level?
    - Do you have any assumption about how Jamaicans view history education? Can you tell me about them?
    - Did your beliefs about how Jamaicans view history education influence your decision to select or deselect history education? If so, how?

RQ2: What career decision making factors do graduates of Jamaican high schools perceive influenced their decision to select or deselect history education at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate examination level

4. **Can you describe your career goals and current career focus?**

5. **Were there any factors, such as career plans or higher education plans, you think influenced your decision to select or deselect history education at the CSEC examination level? Can you tell me about them?**

    Possible probes:

    - Did you discuss your career plans with your family? If so, what was the nature of the discussion?
    - Was there any discussions of college or graduate school with your parents? If so, describe the nature of the discussion.
    - Was there any career counselling available at the school? If so, who gave the counselling? What was the nature of the counselling?
    - How satisfied are you with the choice you have made to select or deselect history?
    - Are there suggestions on what the school could have done to support the decision with the future in mind?

RQ3: What do graduates of Jamaican high schools think schools should do to improve the selection rate of history education?

6. **Are there learning skills that you perceive to be necessary for success in a history class? If so, what should schools do to develop these learning skills?**

7. **Please describe your school policy regarding course selection for the CSEC level.**

    - How beneficial do you think is this policy for the uptake of history education? Should the course selection policy be different? If so, how?

8. **Besides class subjects, describe the occupational options to which the school exposed you (subjects, volunteer work, part-time work)**

    - Was any specific to history education? If so, discuss your experience.

10. **Closing Question/s**

- In closing, is there anything else you would like to add?
- Thank you.