

**TEACHING IN JAMAICA: MY STORY AND INTERVIEWS
WITH THREE TEACHERS.**

Irise A. Archambault

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ABSTRACT

TEACHING IN JAMAICA: MY STORY AND INTERVIEWS

WITH THREE TEACHERS

IRISE A. ARCHAMBAULT

This inquiry looks into the human dimension of teaching of three high school educators who teach in Jamaica, and my own experience of teaching art to high school students in Jamaica. The human dimension refers to the emotional and inter-personal side of teaching: the personal identity of a teacher. Teaching style is the blend of both the human and professional dimensions, and influences the dynamics of the classroom. The main task of the thesis is to analyze how our personal identities influence our teaching styles. My discussion places the personal identity of a teacher at the source of class dynamics.

I collected my data by going to Jamaica in April and May, 2002 and interviewing the three teachers about their experiences in their classrooms. I also interviewed four of my former students on their experiences of being in my class. I have selected four to analyze. 1) personal identities in relation to our teaching styles; 2) the environment and its relationship to teachers' personal identities and teaching style; 3) discipline; 4) the relationship between teachers and students.

Analyzing other teachers' practices provided me with stronger convictions of the impact we have on the development of our young students. It also contributed to the improvement of my own teaching style.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the people who inspired me and encouraged me in the writing of this thesis. Unfortunately I cannot name them all, but they know who they are. I want them to know I appreciate their support, whether moral or technical. I dedicate my thesis to all of them: my family, friends and colleagues, the teacher and student participants and all my past students. I also thank the entire staff of Anchovy High School, my editor, and also the members of my thesis committee. Thank you all.

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TEACHING IN JAMAICA: MY STORY AND INTERVIEWS

WITH THREE TEACHERS

Introduction

“Whatever approach we seek to develop, it always needs to be understood as an answer to the question of how an educator stands in life, how an educator needs to think about children, how an educator observes, listens, and relates to children, how an educator practices a form of speaking and writing that is pedagogically contagious” (van Manen, 1997, p.151).

In this thesis, I will analyze - **How the personal identities of teachers influence their teaching styles and class effectiveness.** The inquiry uses elements of hermeneutic phenomenological research method, reflecting on the lived experiences of three women educators who teach in Jamaican high schools, as well as on my own experience of teaching art to high school students in Jamaica. Our lived experiences will then be related to relevant academic literature.

In the context of my research, the term “human dimension” refers to the emotional and inter-personal side of teaching: the personal identity of a teacher. Teaching style is the result of the blend of both the human and professional dimensions which influences the dynamics of the classroom.

Since it was not possible to study all the dimensions of teaching, I have selected four to analyze.

- 1) The first dimension concerns teachers' personal identities and teaching styles.
- 2) The second, class environment - the physical/sociological atmosphere.
- 3) The third dimension looks at discipline/class management.
- 4) The fourth is about the relationship between teachers and students.

I feel it is important to study what works in class and how we can make our classes better places for us and for our students. That is the reason I have chosen to recount positive experiences of classroom practices. Therefore, I am considering here the teachers' personal identities as the source of successful class dynamics.

I went to Jamaica in April and May of 2002, and conducted interviews with three educators. Maxine Chin and Sharon Robinson are both art teachers, and Jane Crichton teaches English, literature and drama. I also met and interviewed four of my past students, Carla Ottey, Loxley Atkinson, Andre Scarlett who I met together, while Colwyn Stewart was interviewed alone. All interviewees read and signed a standard consent form before their interviews. Although the particular focus of my research is on the teachers, the voices of the other interviewees produced additional information relevant to the research. I will begin with my own experience.

Chapter 1

My Story of Teaching and Interviews of Four Former Students

For the benefit of the reader, I present below a chronology of my experience in Jamaica.

1961- First time in Jamaica.

1978- Moved permanently to Roaring River, Westmoreland, Jamaica.

1990- Founded The Roaring River Citizens Association.

1990- Founded the Roaring River Basic School and Cultural Center.

1990-1991- Administrator and educator at the Roaring River Basic School.

1996-2000- Art teacher and Head of Art Department at Anchovy High School, Anchovy, St-James, Jamaica.

I was not a total stranger to Jamaica, when I got my first art teacher's position there in September 1996. The first time I stepped on Jamaican soil in 1961, was with my father, mother, sister and brother; I was eight years old then. I remember clearly the sensation of being in a fable, as if I were on another planet. Everything was so different from where I was born, in Quebec, Canada. I grew up in a French culture, and went to school at L' Académie St-Paul in Montreal. Later we moved in the suburb where I finished secondary school.

Jamaica felt magical: the people looked different, the colours were brighter, the warm air carried exotic fragrances, the flora looked incredibly luscious, and the beautiful turquoise Caribbean sea was the coolest and saltiest liquid I had ever swum in. I don't know if I left a part of me there, or if Jamaica took a part of me, but ever since that journey I was attracted to that place as if pulled by a magnet. It was not until my teenage days that I was able to return to Jamaica, where I eventually met some wonderful folks who are still, to this day, my dear friends. After years of long visits to that beautiful country, I learned the Jamaican Patois, and I came to understand the culture, the people and their history. During my visits I also produced paintings which I sold and exhibited at the Dominion Art Gallery back in Montreal.

Then, in 1978, I decided to move permanently to a small rural village in Westmoreland, Jamaica, called Roaring River. In that year started my true apprenticeship of living day to day as a visible minority, in a language and a culture different from my own.

The twelve years I've spent in Roaring River have taught me many things. I lived without electricity or running water for the first five years, using lanterns and candles which softly brightened the darkness of the Jamaican jungle. The water was drawn from the river or a blue lagoon, a river head whose tales talk of a mermaid "river mumma" living in the bottomless Blue Hole. The bamboo hut I lived in was built on pillars overlooking this blue water, its walls we made from

fine strips of bamboo woven together in a star of David pattern (fig. 1&2). There I learned tropical farming and respect for the seasons, sculpting terraces from the hillside and garnishing them with edible and decorative plants. I lived in darkness, I lived in silence and isolation. I cooked with wood fire, roasting breadfruits and yams. I lived through dreadful experiences and through wonderful ones, acquiring patience and survival skills.

Nevertheless, I was the white stranger there and it took ten years of “taming”, observing and being observed before I found the opportunity to get involved with community development by helping to organize a Citizens Association, and the Roaring River Basic School and Cultural Center (Fig.3 and 4). We began by locating a pre-fabricated building that had been given to the village by some citizens of Vermont, after Hurricane Gilbert had done major damage in September, 1988.

The building had stood there abandoned on a small lot for over a year, and was showing signs of vandalism. By creating the Citizens Association we were able to claim the building and organize a raffle which raised enough funds to buy materials to finish the floor, and to build a small office, shelves and furniture for the Basic School. In September 1991, even though we had neither running water nor electricity, I contacted the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and informed them that we had forty-two children from age three to five registered at

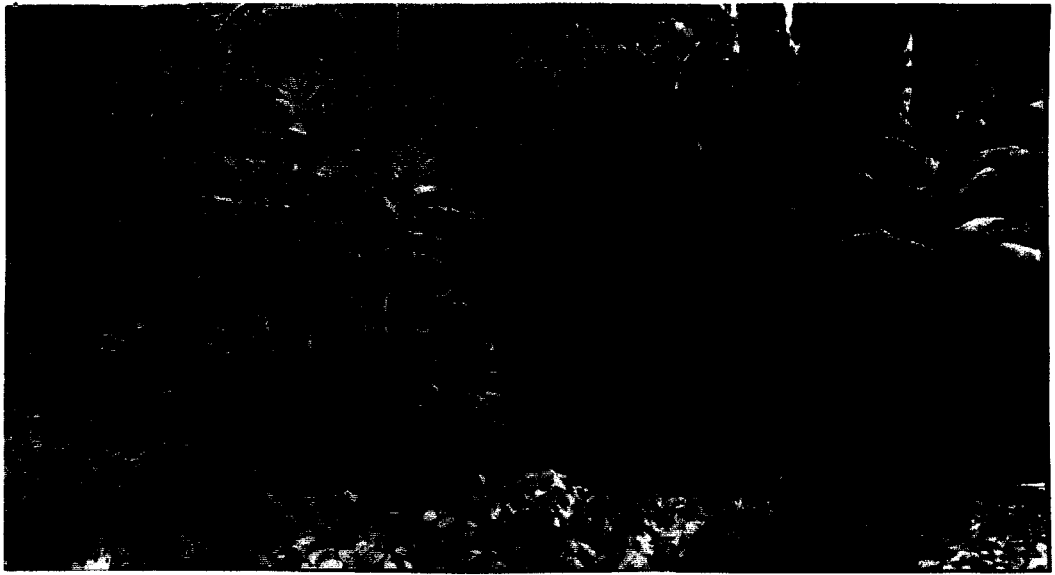


Fig. 1 Blue Hole, Westmoreland, Jamaica



Fig. 2 Blue Hole house

the Roaring River Basic School. It was my first teaching experience in Jamaica. I was both the administrator and one of two educators for a year, and when everything was in motion and going well, I left the running of the school to two wonderful women from the village. They are still there today.

I returned to Montreal in 1991 to study for a Bachelors degree in Fine Arts at "L'Université du Québec à Montréal." While studying I had the opportunity to teach different age groups. I worked in a kindergarten in Outremont as a part time educator. I gave weekend drawing lessons to a group of young teenagers at my studio, and as part of a course in adult education, I tutored a multicultural group of adults who came to my studio for art lessons every weekend for the duration of the term.

In my last year at University, I organized an intercultural art exhibition at the Belgo Building in Montreal. The exhibition showed the works of thirty-two artists from different cultural backgrounds who produced paintings and sculptures and installations inspired by the theme: "International Solidarity and Peace." Curating this exhibition from concept to realization was a very challenging and successful experience.

After I graduated in June 1996, I went back to live in the Wiltshire hills in Jamaica. In September I was hired as a senior students' art teacher at Anchovy High School, situated at fifteen kilometers from Montego Bay, and by chance,

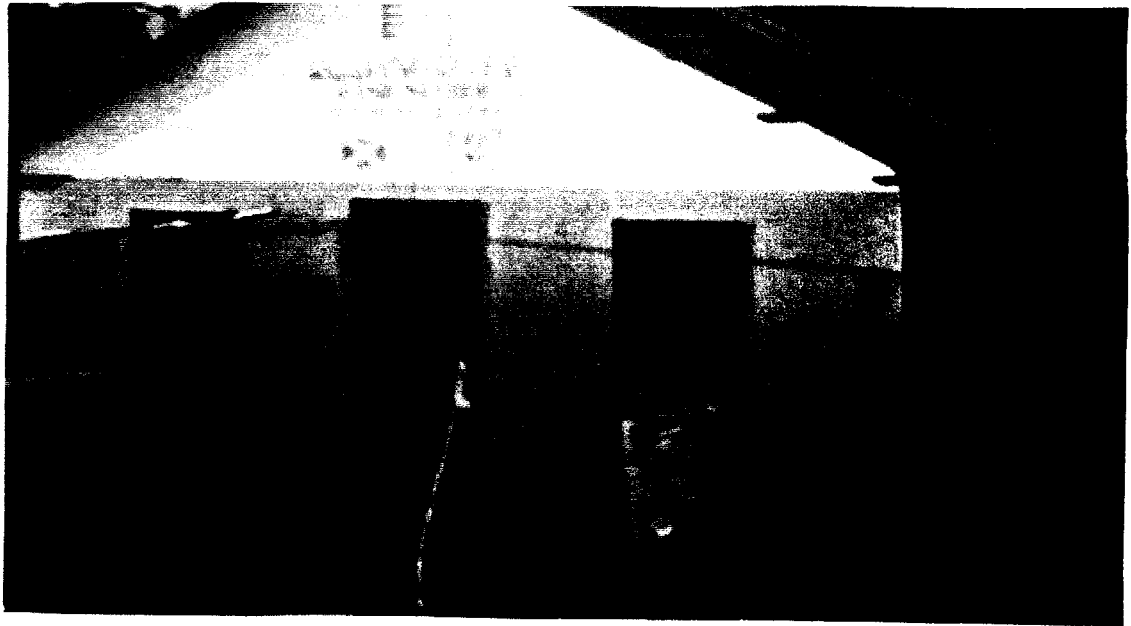


Fig. 3 Roaring River Basic School



Fig. 4 First day at Basic School

close to the community where I lived. There are approximately two thousand two hundred students placed on two shifts. The morning shift is from 7:15 am until 12:15 pm, and the afternoon shift is from 12:20 until 5:20 pm. The staff consists of one Principal, two Vice Principals (one for each shift), two Guidance Counselors, one work experience coordinator and Dean of discipline, a nurse and eighty four teachers for both shifts. All teachers and students alternatively change shifts every school year. The four years I taught at this school were the most challenging years of my life, and they are also amongst my most cherished and rewarding memories. (Fig.7)

The first year was the most difficult because I was new to the Jamaican school system. My responsibilities were to give art classes to grades nine to eleven, and to prepare grade eleven students for final exams. There are two exams for graduation. One is the National Assessment exam, the SSC, or Secondary School Certificate, which is given in two parts, one on theory and the other on practice. The other exam, the Caribbean Examination Council or CXC, is a regional (Caribbean) exam. This test is for students who want to continue studies in college or university. It is a very demanding exam and takes two years of preparation, from grade ten to eleven.

Two months after I started, I was made Head of the Visual Arts department, which carried extra responsibilities. These included seeing to the functioning of the department for the morning and afternoon shifts of the school, writing a yearly

budget for materials and purchasing them, organizing department meetings, reading and approving the two other art teachers' diaries and exams, and reporting to the school's administrators and to the Education Officer from the Ministry of Education.

The art class space, which was basically a large room, was divided in two sections by two standing blackboards. "Goodbye privacy with your students !" The biggest section was for the large junior students art classes from grades seven to nine. There were two other art teachers for the juniors, one for each shift. Some of the largest classes had close to fifty young adolescents. Their area had four long tables and very few stools, a situation that caused seating problems and quite a few fights. The smaller section, which included a small office, a storage room with two sinks, and a space for three tables and a few stools, was where I gave my art classes to students from grades nine to eleven from both shifts. Students of grades 9, 10 and 11 who did not attend my shift and who wanted to take art as an option had to stay after or before their shifts to attend my art classes.

The entire art room needed repairs and the steel door for the storage room was off its hooks and its repair was a priority. Many of the windows were broken but outside you could see a hill, trees, cows slowly eating grass in a field, and right below, the garden for the agriculture department. Inside was not as pleasant: broken counters and shelves, graffiti all over the stained walls, and not enough

stools for the students. The counters had been used as seating alternatives, which explained to me how they had all been broken.

I did not know what materials were available since I was hired to start the very day after my interview. In the first notes of my teacher's diary, dated September 12, 1996, I wrote that the inventory of materials consisted of:

- * 5 half-jars of paint
- * A few yards of callico fabric
- * 1 jar of Ponal glue
- * 1 can of black spay paint.

No paper, no pencils. It was my first day at the school, and seventeen teenagers from my first grade ten class walked into my room to meet their new art teacher from "foreign" - me, the only white person on the school compound.

My first words welcomed them to art class and were followed by introductions and sharing of information on our cultural backgrounds. I displayed a very serious attitude and I was secretly impressed with my own calmness (considering how nervous I was), and I talked to them about what I expected from them. I informed my students that I love art and took my subject very seriously and expected them to work hard because I was going to be very challenging with their assignments. My teaching philosophy is based on respect and I expected them to behave respectfully with me and with each other and I would not tolerate any further destruction of the art room. I let them know that I wanted us to have fun doing art

and that they could rely on me for anything they wanted to discuss privately or as a group. I told them that art is a subject that develops their creativity and that the skills they would acquire would be useful in their lives whether they continued to study art or not. I also inquired about their interests in art making, getting to know their individual names and taking notes on them. Over the next few days I met with all my students and started to plan their assignments for the term.

Materials were desperately needed so I went to the Principal to inquire about their acquisition. I was asked to write a budget which caused me to go material hunting in Montego Bay. I looked for the best but most economical materials, found out which stores delivered, and asked about credit and discounts. After the budget's approval, I bought enough materials to start decent classes. Some of the materials such as pencils, erasers, sharpeners, rulers and paper, were sold back to students for an affordable price. As there were always materials available to buy, there could be no excuse for not working when students did not bring their supplies to class. The other advantage of this system was that we always had funds to buy extra materials when needed, and with the small profit I started an art library for the department.

The noise level coming from the junior classes made my life a nightmare. My own students and I could not communicate without nearly yelling at each other. I often had to walk around the blackboards into the junior classes and spend time talking to them and asking them to be more quiet, but without much effect since it would

all start again shortly after. The junior classes were frequently left unattended, the teachers were either absent or had taken refuge in the staff room. I had to stop fights for stools, which sometimes came crashing down on the blackboards. Once I walked into their section to witness the collapse of an entire table. That first year I became a tyrant, a warrior, I had to apply strict discipline with the junior students because the eventual destruction of the art room was evident.

It was the worst situation for creativity or communication, so I started to plan for improvement. My consolation was to find that my own students became my allies and also wanted to improve our class environment. So they too sometimes would go behind the blackboard and talk to the younger students about the noise.

I interviewed four of my past students in May 2002: Carla Ottey, Andre Scarlett, Loxley Atkinson (group interview), and Colwyn Stewart (single interview). The narratives of my students have been left as they were in the interviews so the reader will find their comments sometime in English and sometime in Jamaican. I asked them how they viewed my approach to discipline. This is what they said:

Carla: "Well actually it had to be there. We had our limits but there was always fun in it, always fun."

Loxley: "You were like, we were all on a level."

Andre: "We knew how far to go with it, we never go over board. We knew you were on a level with us... If it wasn't there, it would be upside down."

Loxley: "We knew you were the teacher."

Andre: "We never go above the limit."

Loxley: "You were more like a role model,...you just put down your rules and expect us to follow it. And is not like you were "uptight rule" with anything, it was just the basic, you know? You were not on our back, and like fixing us down so that we would hate you, because all the students liked you, because you were not uptight and all of that."

Andre: "And because of that, you will still get the respect." (Fig. 5 and 6)

I also asked the same thing to Colwyn Stewart during his own interview.

Colwyn: "Well you see when it comes to discipline, well, as with Miss Irise, she, she knows her level, she knows where to take things, how far she would take it and all. That is if a student should go over the limit while she is teaching and we like running jokes and things, she would just stop it right there." Imitating me he said: "Hey students, you can't do that !" (we both laughed).

One thing though I never had to punish anyone, because my students enjoyed their classes and just behaved well. I now realize that I was fortunate because I don't believe in punishment.

Teaching art at Anchovy High School was so rich in human relationships, both with the entire staff and with the students. I loved all of my students; I saw them as my precious young artists, exploring their own creativity. It was really all the fun in it that got me through the first year; even though our environment was

chaotic, the students and the beautiful works they produced gave me the courage to continue. Before the end of the year, the Principal promised me a wall between the junior and senior classes for the next school year. All my grade eleven students passed their CXC and SSC exams. I was pleased and enjoyed the summer.

The second year started off wonderfully because my grade ten and eleven classes had some very promising and talented students, and exam candidates. The intimacy of our class was tremendously improved because of the wall, and the students and I started to fix up our art room. We painted the walls in pale blues and greens, and made papier maché flower pots and put plants in them. We also started to display the students' works without the worry of finding them in a million pieces. It was so comforting to see all these young people having fun doing art and becoming amazed at their own work. I told my students that each of them was different and therefore their work expressed their individuality. (Fig. 8)

Nevertheless, as an art teacher, I had to evaluate which students would have a chance to succeed in the national and regional final exams. These exams are judged severely and there are great expectations for high standard works. I remember, for example, a girl in my class who was excessively shy and a slow learner. I used to keep the students' work after each class so that they could continue working on them on their next class, but this girl would crush her papers



Fig. 5 My students at their interview, May 2002



Fig. 6 Andre Scarlett in art class

and throw them in the bin. She had a speech problem and the students teased her a lot. I spoke to the students about their attitude and how we should encourage this girl, because, just like any of them, she must have her strength. The students in the class rallied around her, and guess what? Even though she could not draw a face, and would not pass exams, she could assemble and create the most exquisite sculptures, involving many problems to solve. She was amazing!

During my second year we started to participate in several competitions and my students won many prizes every year after that. It was fun for the kids because of their achievements and good for the reputation of our school. One piece for which my students won second place was a six by four foot portrait (in the Jamaican colours of yellow, black and green) of George William Gordon, a Jamaican National Hero. It was a group piece created by students from grades nine, ten and eleven, involved technical collaboration and painting skill since different students made sections of the face and then assembled them together to become a full portrait. This mural is now on a wall in the art room at Anchovy High. However, it was in my last year of teaching there that Colwyn Stewart, one of my students from grade ten, won the first prize in a National poster competition celebrating the Centennial of Edna Manley, the wife of the first Prime Minister of Jamaica and the Mother of Modern Jamaican Art. This event crowned me with delight and Colwyn won many prizes and a scholarship to study at The Edna Manley School of Arts in Kingston. When I interviewed Colwyn I asked him how

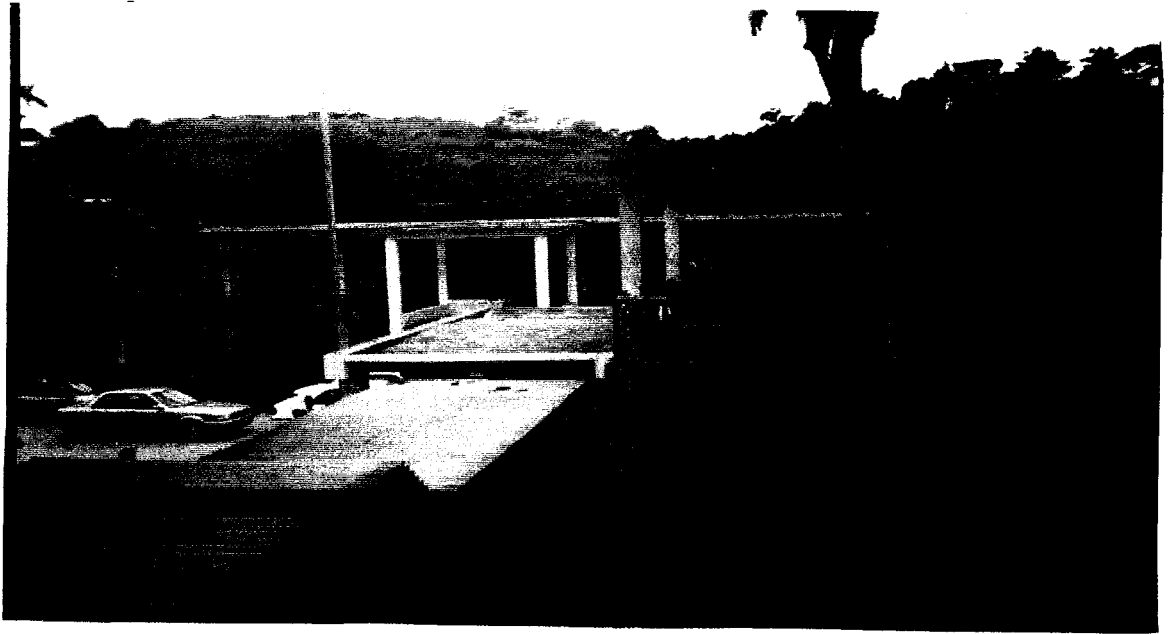


Fig. 7 Anchovy High School



Fig. 8 In my art class with Loxley Atkinson

he felt when he learned he had won the competition. He said: "At first I was thinking, hey, I can't do this because there are a lot of good artists in Jamaica; and if I entered I might loose so its not going to make any sense...When I did it, I was first place doing that." We laughed and then he continued: "Well you see what I realize from this, is I should not really doubt myself. I should go for anything that I want, yeah! So you see I learned from that experience." (Fig.9)

I was always concerned that all my students were in a good mood when they started working, I checked and greeted each one when they came in. The students were constantly busy with challenging assignments. I would first show them a sample or two of the finished product I had produced because this I believe stimulated them for their own pieces. Doing this also showed me the approximate time it took for an assignment and the difficulties involved. I explained the process and the technique but each student had to create their own version.

What I enjoyed the most was to walk around while they worked. I took time with each student looking at their progress, chatting a while and moving on to the next one. The students enjoyed discussing different topics during classes; and we often had good laughs and sometimes serious discussions. They were free to discuss anything which concerned them. Most of the time I would just listen, but other times they would get me involved by asking my opinion. One time I read them an article about the situation of women in Afghanistan during the reign of

the Taliban. The students stopped working, they were listening so intently to the content of the article. When I finished I was pleased to find out that the boys reacted in defense of the women and some of them said, "Miss, this could never happen in Jamaica because there would be a revolution!"

I felt my students were very comfortable with me, and this feeling was mutual. We developed a wonderful complicity and they knew I was there for them if they needed someone to talk to. Moreover, they always showed me respect. While they admired my art works and the samples, I could see they were a little competitive with me and with their peers, but it was a motivational competition rather than an envious one. I could see they wanted to do their best because they wanted their pieces to look good. I smiled at seeing their proud faces when I displayed their works on the walls. Each time, I felt them becoming more sure of themselves and I could see that they enjoyed learning to do things. (Fig.10,11, 12 and 13)

When I asked my students what art classes taught them, these were their answers:

Loxley: " It gave me self-control you see, I think a lot when I'm doing art and if you hear talking and "me dey right here so",...I am not hearing what is saying you know, I am just there doing what I'm doing."

Carla: "As Loxley said, it gave me self control for real...you see when you gave us the topic to do, and you played music and we were painting to the rhythm of



Fig. 9 Colwyn Stewart's winning poster

the music, that one helped me relax the most. Because it kind of sorts out everything, you concentrate on everything that you are doing. Not thinking about who is around you, but one thing you try to do, is make sure your work is better than everybody else.” (they looked at each other and laughed).

Loxley: “Right, that’s the thing about me, right, so that what art did is try to strife (meaning working hard) for the best, you understand?...always wanting to be better than everybody else” And Carla was always my rival you know.”

Irise: “Did that help you?”

Loxley: “Yeah, yeah, because I was always behind her...the motivation was there.”

Carla: “I know, I know, I know, I thank you for thinking of me.”

Loxley: “I did, I did put you above me.”

Carla: “No you didn’t.”

Loxley: “I did, I did, I just didn’t tell you.” (we all laughed).

Andre: “ When I do art, it really relax your mind, if you’re angry, you know people do other things to keep their mind off certain things, but when you sit down to do a piece you just forget about everything. Then you just focus, you just easy and relax. Other people might take drugs, but I just sit down and do a painting. Yeah, you know, just put down something positive.”

The art room became a place to visit. The other students stopped by daily during break time, and made comments about their peers’ work and how nice the art

room was. My students used to come and ask for their work before class started and they “appropriated” themselves of my attention so that I had hardly any time for a break myself. However, I could not resist their request; it made me feel good to realize how much they enjoyed being with me, their teacher. I asked my students several questions concerning my teaching style, how they viewed my interaction with them.

Carla: That was perfect, everything was perfect.”(I laughed).

Loxley: “You gave us too much.”

Andre: “The headline , she was the best. Out of all the classes I had, I couldn’t wait to go to Miss Irise.”

Carla: “Everyday if you were looking for me you could find me at the art class.”

Andre: “ She really made art fun.” (they all agreed).

Carla: “You learned new stuff everyday.”

Loxley: “Most of my friends on the morning shift, they envy me for art you know.”

Carla: “Yes and I was one of the most popular student in school.” (Loxley and Andre laughed).

Carla: “ Listen, for real you know why to? Everything they come to me to draw.”
(Loxley and Andre agreed)

Irise: “How did you feel when people came to you?”

Carla: “I really liked it.” (the others agreed).

Loxley: “People look out to you, then some people even come and even beg you, you just put a little resistance and they said please.” (we laughed).



Fig. 10 Students at work

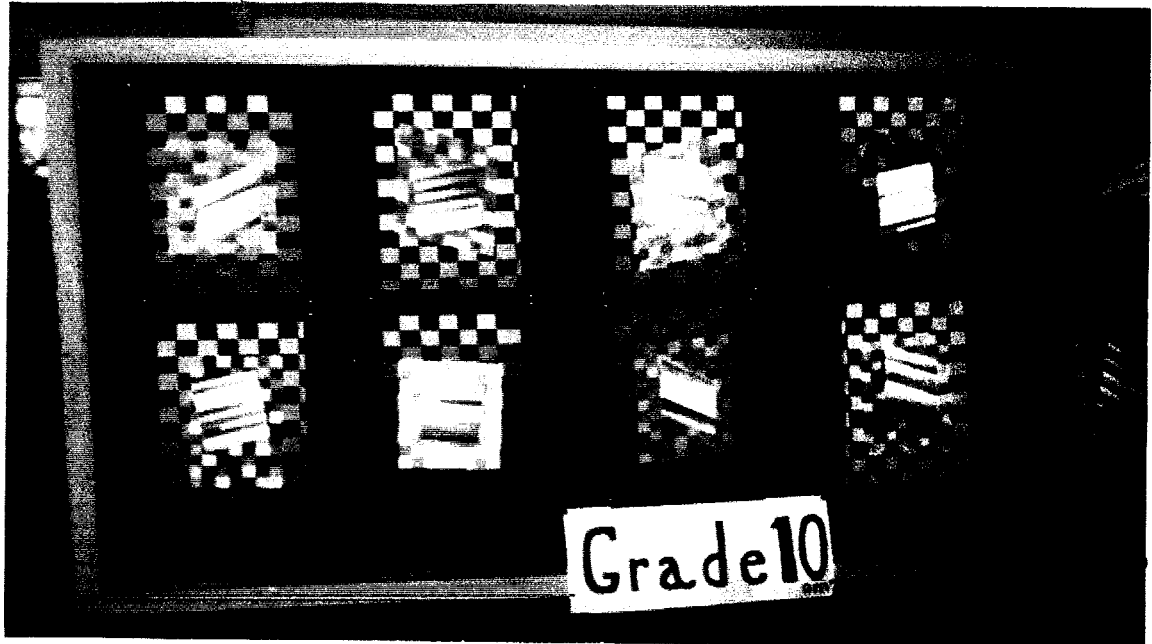


Fig. 11 Students' art works

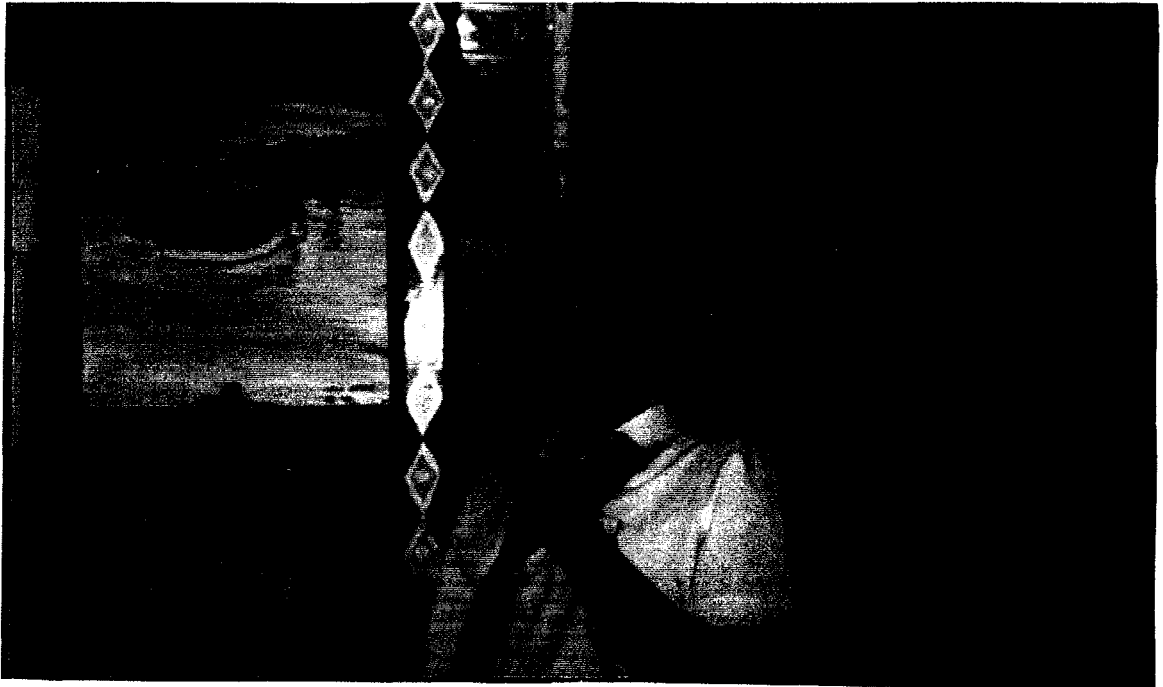


Fig. 12 Carla Ottey showing her work



Fig.13 Colwyn Stewart showing his architecture project

Irise: "It helped your self esteem?"

They all said "very much."

Then I asked:

Irise: "What was your first impression when you found out I was going to be your teacher?"

Loxley: "Firstly, I never take it serious at the first time, The whole class you know, the teaching because I didn't really know you. So I didn't say she is all good or she is all bad, is just normal like normal day. But after that first day, it became more than the normal."

Andre: "For me... I see her because she was the only..."

Carla and Andre: (look at each other and say together) "...White person, teacher on the compound."

Andre: "I was saying, who is that white teacher on the compound, she was just dressed different from everybody else even though she always dress nice. When we reach the class, we just say, this white teacher is going to be our teacher, let me see how different she will be."

Irise: "Did you see any difference?"

Carla: "Of course, big difference" (they all agreed).

Irise: "You feel that because I came from another country it made my teaching different?"

Loxley: "No."

Carla: "No Miss, it was your personality."

Andre: "No Miss, it was just you."

Carla: "Because you actually showed that you cared for the students."

Andre: "As I said before, it was how you deal with us differently from the other teachers. That's what made that class room so much fun, apart from the drawing and just apart from the art itself, it's just how you deal with us Miss, The environment of that class."

Carla: "Yes, because you also help us keep our surrounding cleaner. We couldn't drop anything on the floor, you understand, we couldn't leave our surrounding untidy so..."

Andre: "Yeah, yeah, we have to pick it up."

Carla: "It kind of help us."

Andre: (imitating me): "Come pick up the gum in the plants! Who put the gum in the plants? Don't trouble the plants!" (we all laughed).

Carla: "It helped us keep our environment clean."

Loxley: "As I said, you were the role model, after you are a role model the students will want to be like you. The class revolves around you."

I evaluated my teaching by writing in my teacher's diary and by keeping notes on what went on in the class, how the students were progressing, and whether they were learning anything from my classes. I made note of their enthusiasm for an assignment and noticed how hard they worked. By re-reading my notes and by the verbal feedback from my students, I was able to tell whether or not they had enjoyed what they were doing, or had learned anything. A negative conclusion

meant a change in the assignment or another approach to the activity. When my students and I looked at a finished piece and we all smiled, I knew they had learned many things from it, and that made me a satisfied art teacher.

Summary of my own practice

I feel that my personal identity influenced my teaching style because fundamentally I consider myself a caring person and that has been reflected in all the dimensions of my professional teaching practices. The students I interviewed told me that because they felt I cared for them, this made a big difference in our relationship and in the general mood of the entire classroom. In assessing my teaching I find that the welfare of my students and what they learned in my classes were very important to me. I also noticed that the behavior of my students improved when we kept the classroom clean and decorated it with their art works and plants. I insisted on mutual respect and that contributed to the good behavior of my students. I was a permissive teacher but at the same time my students knew their limits and did not want to jeopardize the relationship we had developed. I let them know that I was there for them if they needed to talk about any problem and I always kept that promise. I made sure they were always busy and I showed appreciation for the enthusiasm they showed in their assignments. I therefore consider that my behavior affected everything that happened in class.

When I look back in my experiences of being a student and now at being a teacher at Anchovy High, I realize that some teachers were more successful with

their relationships with their students while others were not. The same students who were problematic for some teachers were not for others. Students who learned in one class failed in another. I also noticed how students talked with each other about the teachers, and also assessed us by the way we dealt with them. This got me interested in the human dimensions of teaching, and how this might influence the dynamics of our classes and the success of our students. I wanted to find out more about the class dynamics of other successful teachers, and to hear their stories. That is why I decided to leave Jamaica in June, 2000, and to come back to Montreal to study at Concordia University in the Art Education Masters Program.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“Teachers will be most effective if they maintain their own personal identity and integrity while being guided by the tenets of pedagogy.” (Willen, Ishler, Hutchison, & Kindsvater, 2000, p.4)

During my studies in the Master’s Program I searched for literature related to my thesis question. The presentation of the relevant academic literature and its relationship to my observations will be written in four parts:

Part 1: Academic literature on the relationship between the teacher’s personal identity, teaching style and class effectiveness.

Part 2: Academic literature on class environment.

Part 3: Academic literature on discipline.

Part 4: Academic literature on teacher/student relationships.

When I started to search for academic literature, I discovered many recent inquiries relevant to my interest in the human dimension of teaching, for example: Fried, 1995; van Manen, 1997; Noddings, 1999; Henderson, 2001, Kottler & Zehn, 2000; Willen, Ishler, Hutchison, & Kindsvater, 2000; Kottler, 2002.

The human dimension of teaching has been a philosophical subject reflected upon since Antiquity. During the 1960's, "...writers and researchers began to pay more attention to the human aspects of teaching and learning" (Kottler & Zehn, 2000, p.3), while in the 1970's and 80's research gradually began to focus on the technology of education (ibid., p.4). Research in the 1990's emphasized multicultural phenomena and constructivist pedagogy, reviving academic investigation into humanistic philosophies of education (ibid., 5). Since the beginning of the new millennium, the human dimension of teaching has become an important progressive approach to the investigation of teachers' practices.

Part 1: Academic literature on the relationship between teacher personality, teaching style and class effectiveness.

Edmund Feldman in his book *Becoming human through art* (1970) believes that "...love has to be a dimension of everything education means and does because of the crucial role it plays in bringing about the wholeness of human character." (p.128). Feldman's views are that pedagogy and the personal identity of a teacher are inseparable. He wrote: "...there is considerable educational validity in the view that instruction and learning are shaped and organized to a large extent by a teacher's character and knowledge" (ibid., p.29). The teacher is the one that sets the pace for everything that will happen in class -the mood, the interactions and the learning aspect. All the teachers interviewed confirmed that the way they dealt with their students was very important. For example, all the teachers

interviewed accepted all their students unconditionally no matter what their learning abilities were. They respected and loved them as individuals.

It was equally important for our students to know we were competent in our subject. "...You ought to know," wrote Feldman, "how your ideas and definitions of art are related to the kind of person you are; and you ought to know or have expectations about what children learn about art as a result of your experience with art and the sort of person they see in you" (ibid., p.28).

The observations of other writers also confirm Feldman's arguments about the importance of caring in education. Nel Noddings (in Katz et al, 1999,p.13) suggests a curriculum which would include a caring attitude: "The notion of caring is especially useful in education because it emphasizes the relational nature of human interaction and of all moral life" (ibid., p.6). Caring persons are not enough, Nodding says; caring is about the relationship between teachers and students, how and what teachers do and say. She asserts, "Children need more than a "caring" decision; they need the continuing attention of adults who will listen, invite, guide, and support them." (ibid., p.13). Sharon Robinson talked about this in her interview, she said that by listening to your students showed that you care for them and this allowed you to understand them better.

Kottler and Zehn argue that teacher training, which is based on an elaborated study of a subject, and on methodology, pedagogy and psychology, is not the only factor that makes a competent teacher: "Not included in this simplistic

process are a number of other variables that make up the essence of all great educators and infuse them with power - their distinctly human dimensions, including personality traits, attitudes, and relationship skills" (Kottler, and Zehn, 2000, p. 2).

Teaching style, says van Manen, "is more than a habitual and idiosyncratic way of behavior or talking. Style is the outward embodiment of the person" (1997, p.121). Style is the reflection of our true self; the teachers interviewed acknowledged this fact. van Manen continues, "Teachers who do not feel for kids, or do not have a feel for the subject they teach, may be incapable of forming a style...Yet the essence of good teaching may have something to do with this phenomenon of personal style" (ibid. p.121). The teachers and myself enjoy teaching our subject matter so that we get our students to love it also. We also recognized that after reflection, we found that our personal identity influenced our teaching style.

Robert Fried (1995) describes what he calls a "passionate teacher":

There are a number of ways in which passionate teachers convey, through their personalities, the devotion they give to their work. Passionate teachers love to work with young people. They can be hard taskmasters precisely because they care for kids so deeply. Passionate teachers are alive to events both in the classroom and in the world outside school. They join with the kids in appreciating the abundant absurdity of human nature but are also sensitive

to issues that deserve to be taken seriously, particularly fairness and decency in how people treat one another (1995, pp. 26-27).

This is so beautifully said and the three teachers and I have experienced the benefits of living these words with our students. We feel that the caring we display towards our students comes back to us in the relationship of mutual respect which develop between teacher and student.

Part 2: Academic literature on class environment and effectiveness.

Many authors assert that teachers need to be aware of the dynamics of environment. The environment of our classes includes space utilization, time, moral/social atmosphere, group monitoring, and all interactions within the class including non verbal dimensions. The skill to organize a creative environment comes with experience and experimentation. Susi (1995) notes, "Through the strength of their personality and the way they treat their students in and out the classroom, art teachers influence how their students behave" (p.19). According to Susi, "To prepare the most advantageous behavior setting for any lesson, art teachers must develop a repertoire of strategies and techniques that merge their own personality and value system with the characteristics of the lesson and the preferences of students" (1997, p.19). Furthermore, he asserts that the physical and social factors must be considered when planning a lesson(1997, p.12).

James Henderson believes that “social-emotional growth is fostered in caring and supportive learning environments that invite active student participation in classroom and school management activities “ (Henderson, 2001, p. 12). To encourage a creative environment which includes our students’ participation, “...requires an awakening of our authentic selves, a deepening of our capacity to think deeply and soulfully” (Henderson, 2001, p.135). Teachers, as Henderson suggests, should practice self-inquiry because it allows them to be “...more attentive to the multiple dimensions of their work and to the thoughts and feelings of others” (ibid., p.72). The teachers in my inquiry and I believe that the practice of self-inquiry can improve our effectiveness, thus affecting the learning environment of our students.

Teachers have a responsibility to create a respectful environment. “The quality of life in the classroom is also contingent on social factors. Therefore, the classroom environment as it is affected by group process is the backdrop of productive learning” (Willen, Ishler, Hutchison, & Kindsvater, 2000, p.4). The authors argue that classroom dynamics are a result of teachers’ decisions. “Decision making” they say, “is personal behavior.” (ibid., p.2). Decision making is essential for classroom environment: lessons plans, interactions in and out of the class, and for assessment (ibid., p.3). My research suggests that decision making is the result of the personal identity of a teacher and therefore the root of decision making.

According to their research, "Classroom practices need to be considered in light of the effect they have on creating a favorable learning climate ." Willen, et al's recommendations for productive learning climate are:

"Establish an atmosphere in which academic goals are established. Promote high standards; then monitor and reward achievement. Maintain an orderly environment. Build expectations for success by convincing students of their ability to succeed and providing them with success experiences. Use feedback, reinforcement and praise to promote student achievement.

Encourage student self-monitoring and independent learning initiatives" (2000, p.55).

The environment, according to Kottler & Zehn (2000) implies three dimensions to be considered: "In dealing with adolescent students, three dimensions of management are important: managing the space, managing the energy, and managing the teacher's self" (p.149). Teachers, the authors observe, need to establish a secure and playful environment while keeping orderly settings.(ibid., p.149). Kottler and Zehn (1995) also wrote about the importance of teachers' ethical responsibilities. Being a teacher, they said, "...involves more than imparting wisdom and information; it means being available and accessible to students when personal issues are interfering with their ability to concentrate and excel in school" (p.81).

The learning environment will equally depend on the passion teachers display in sharing their knowledge. Robert Fried describes a passionate teacher as "...someone in love with a field of knowledge, deeply stirred by issues and ideas that challenge our world, drawn to the dilemmas and potentials of the young people who come into class each day or captivated by all these" (1995, p.1). Fried also insists on the ethical responsibilities of creating a respectful environment: "It is within a climate where people feel they can be themselves without prejudice, or alienation, that people take risks, make mistakes and keep growing as persons" (1995, p.42). This is the reason why the teachers and I insisted on self-expression and tolerance with one another.

Part 3: Academic literature on discipline.

"Mention the word discipline and most teachers think of a negative situation and the circumstances associated with misbehavior by students" (Susi, 1995, p.2). In his research on discipline, Susi acknowledges that "success as a teacher requires an awareness of the many factors that influence how students behave." (ibid., p.1). Some of these factors are the influence of popular culture and media, home environment, nutrition, psychological problems and the way teachers treat their students. It is important for teachers to be sensitive to their students' moods and to encourage respectful behavior by demonstrating it themselves. The teachers in this study all acknowledge the importance of demonstrating respectful behavior. We also acknowledge the limits to our involvement in helping our

students solve their personal problems and that is why we would propose that our students see a counselor if we thought they needed it.

According to Susi, "A teacher's efforts to establish and maintain order hinge on two interacting factors: - individual's personal style (personality, common sense, experience and instincts), - personal values" (ibid., p.27). Students should be encouraged to develop self management and if an intervention is needed "...every effort is made to preserve the dignity and self-respect of both teacher and student" (ibid., p.30). Teachers should quickly identify the cause of the problem and should always "...avoid the negative attention created by directly confronting misbehaving students in front of the entire class" (ibid., p.31). Susi recommends talking to disruptive students privately after class so that she or he can get a better understanding of the cause of the misbehavior.

According to their study of what teachers most liked and disliked about their profession, Kottler & Zehn (2000) discovered that lack of discipline in classes was at the top of the dislike list (p. 106). Discipline, the two authors declare, is necessary and must be fair, and students should participate in setting the rules. At the same time, "Good teachers are not pushovers. Yes, they are compassionate, sometimes even permissive, but they recognize that children need and even crave having the teacher set the limits" (ibid., p.12).

In his book *Students Who Drive You Crazy: Succeeding with Resistant, Unmotivated, and Otherwise Difficult Young People*, Jeffrey Kottler (2002) wrote, "In many cases, it is not just the students behavior that makes them difficult in the first place, it is how we react to what they do" (Kottler, 2002, p.5). Teachers should be aware that some students come from homes where they are treated badly and this affects the way they behave. It is also important to know our limits, the author says: "No matter how many resources are available to help you with difficult students, there are limits to what you can do" (ibid., p.52). "We also have to accept the fact that we just cannot help everyone we would like to, not just because of their limitations but because of our own" (ibid., p.53). The most important thing, says Kottler, is to try to never loose control: "If you wait until the point that you are already encountering trouble, you are far more likely to respond to the situation impulsively rather than reflectively" (ibid., p.101).

Students are most likely to behave if they are absorbed and busy, and if the teacher shows concern for their interests. Says van Manen, "Only when a teacher's presence embodies the subject matter in a personal way, and when he or she is able to show that there is a living relationship between the subject and his or her life, only then can the atmosphere of the classroom change from the authoritarian discipline of formal coercion to living vibrancy and spiritual animation." (1997, p.200)

Part 4: Academic research on teacher/student relationships.

Encouraging the development of their students' self-esteem should be a priority for teachers, assert Jeffrey Kottler and Stanley Zehn (2000, p.12). The authors remind teachers that "...one principle that is crucial to keep in mind, maybe the single most important concept of education, is that nothing that is taking place in the classroom, is as important to children as what they are constructing inside their own internal worlds" (ibid., p.15). Relationship with students depends on the way teachers treat their students: "Unless students sense that we really value them and respect them, there is no way that they will ever trust us and open themselves up to hear what we have to say" (ibid., p.11). Having a sense of humor and playfulness they wrote, "are among the most powerful tools available to teachers to help accomplish this mission. It also means cultivating the children's own appreciation for humor. Your sense of humor will communicate to your students that you are creative, witty, subtle, and fun loving" (ibid., pp15,16).

A good relationship with students means "...developing a generous and generative spirit, a love for growth for ourselves and others, and a caring and compassionate nature" (Henderson, 2001, p.135). Max van Manen also agrees with this: "To become a teacher includes something that cannot be taught formally: the most personal embodiment of a pedagogical thoughtfulness" (van Manen, 1997, p.9). Teachers must also have tact. Manen wrote, "Tact touches a person with a touch, with a word, with a gesture, with the eyes, with an action, with silence. The term caring connotes an attitude and feeling rather than an

ability or skill.” (ibid., p.146) To be tactful is to be conscious of the emotions of others.

Fried says, “Passionate teachers have the capacity for spontaneity and humor and for great seriousness, often at almost the same time” (1995, p.27). To be good teachers means to enjoy spending time with our students: “Passionate teachers love to work with young people” (Fried, 1995, p.26). Teachers have influence on the development of children’s self-esteem and this is important to acknowledge as educators. Fried maintains, “The example we set as passionate adults allows us to connect to young people’s minds and spirits in a way that can have a lasting positive impact on their lives” (ibid., p.19). Teachers must earn the respect of their students, it does not come on command. (ibid.,p.43). He adds: “When students can appreciate their teacher as someone who is passionately committed to a field of study and to upholding standards within it, it is much easier for them to take their work seriously. Getting them to learn then becomes a matter of inspiration by example, rather than by enforcement and obedience” (ibid., p.47). This important factor was emphasized by all the teachers interviewed and is directly connected to the way we dealt with our students.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

“Phenomenology tries to penetrate the layers of meaning of the concrete by tilling and turning the soil of daily existence” (van Manen, 1997, p.119).

To conduct this study, I was inspired by the method of hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry as described by Max van Manen (1990, 1997). Phenomenology is a method that explores the essence of lived experiences; it attempts to detail an experience, ephemeral at its roots, in order to get a better understanding of the phenomenon studied. Van Manen asserts, “A good phenomenological description is an adequate elucidation of some aspect of the lifeworld, it resonates with our sense of lived life” (1997, p. 27).

Phenomenology is a method of research that involves personal stories and experiences. In my context, it involves the teachers’ experiences of being in the classroom. This inquiry draws its inspiration from the essence of teachers’ personal identities, their human dimension. The essence, as van Manen (1997, p. xv) explains, “...derives from the verb to be - by definition a profoundly existential notion.” In this research essence refers to the personal identity of teachers defined as the existential self, informing her or his actions and decisions within the classroom.

Hermeneutic phenomenology thus describes lived experiences and attempts to give new meaning to those lived experiences. Hermeneutic phenomenology helps to find new insights through critical analysis of data in view of oneself and of others, giving them a fresh meaning. "The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful" (ibid., p.36).

Phenomenology studies lived experiences, and I was inspired by its methodology. van Manen explains, "It is always a project of someone: a real person, who in the context of particular individual, social, and historical, life circumstances, sets out to make sense of a certain aspect of human existence" (1997, p.31). van Manen seems to be describing exactly what I am doing in my thesis.

The interview Process

I first met with the teachers individually, giving them general information about the purpose of my inquiry, and set a date to meet for the interview. I was glad to find out that they were all very enthusiastic about my research project. Before the interviews, I prepared questions and topics that would yield as much information as possible for my inquiry; however, since interviewing was a new experience for me, I felt quite disorganized and a bit nervous.

Below is a list of questions I asked in the interviews.

LIST OF SOME OF THE QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEWS

- * Can you tell me about yourself, as a person, and as a teacher. What made you choose to teach ?
- * Did any past teachers have an influence on your personal identity development?
- * What was special about these teachers? What did they do?
- * How did they influence your teaching style?
- * How did you feel the first time you went into a class ?
- * How do you present yourself to a new class? How do you introduce your rules to them?
- * How do you introduce and implement discipline ? How important is discipline ?
- * Do you let the students participate in making class rules and how ?
- * What kind of approach do you use to keep monitoring the students' behavior ?
- * What are the factors influencing students' behavior and what how can you influence their behavior ?
- * How do you handle disruption in a class ?
- * What are your views on the influence of popular culture on the development and behavior of students ?
- * How does art contribute to the development of children ?
- * Do you show your artwork to the students? Is it important for students to know that their teacher is knowledgeable ? Tell me a bit about that.

*Do you show your artwork to the students? Is it important for students to know that their teacher is knowledgeable ? Tell me a bit about that.

* Do you think an art teacher should also be an artist ? Why ?

* What is your teaching philosophy ?

* What has teaching taught you ?

* How does your personal identity influence your teaching style ?

* What are the implications when you are a teacher students can trust ?

* How do you self-reflect on your teaching ?

* How does the environment influence students' behavior ?

* How do you create a creative environment ?

* Do you feel you have a double cultural identity ?

* (to Jane Crichton) Do you feel your double cultural identity has any influence on your personal identity ? How and when does your double cultural identity affect your personal identity and teaching style?

* (to Jane) How do you feel when you go back to England ?

* (to Jane) How did it feel when you realized you wanted to live in Jamaica ?

The discussions were conducted with the open-ended conversational technique, which allowed for unexpected information to redirect the interview while keeping the focus on the main question. While listening, I took notes on other useful topics I had not thought of, to discuss or elaborate on them with the teachers later in our conversation. Each interview went on for an hour or more and was recorded on cassette. After transcribing the interviews, they were sent to each

interview, and Maxine Chin wrote me that she was satisfied with her transcript. They both contacted me through the Internet. Jane Crichton wrote me a letter and added extra reflections on some topics.

Keeping the questions open, as van Manen (1997, p.98) prescribes, allowed the participants to elaborate on a topic, but I also discovered (because of lack of experience), that this could distract my attention from the main question. Therefore, I patiently let the participants express themselves, then I would redirect the interview with a new question.

When I came back to Montreal, I proceeded to transcribe the interviews. This part of the research was very demanding and time consuming because the Jamaican accent came flowing through the conversations as the interviewees were carried away in their thoughts. Consequently, while listening to the cassettes, I had to pay special attention to understand the words. One hour of conversation corresponded to five to six hours of listening and transcribing, and about twenty pages of each interview.

Chapter 4

Interviews with three teachers

“What would be your advice to a teacher who was coming right out of College ?

“Never grow up ! I think that’s the definition of passionate teaching. Maintain your level of enthusiasm. Stay young. Grow up with the kids.” (Interview extract, Fried, 1995, p. 114).

In my quest to research the “Human Dimension of Teaching”, I went to Jamaica in April and May of 2002 to interview three teachers. The three educators are Mrs. Maxine Chin, Mrs. Sharon Robinson, and Mrs. Jane Crichton. I chose these three women because I know them personally and also because I know them to be dedicated to education and to their students. Before I interviewed them, I had met with Mrs. Joan Simpson, the Education Officer for the Visual Arts at the Ministry of Education in Montego Bay. Mrs. Simpson , has always supported my efforts to improve the art department at Anchovy High. She was very interested in my inquiry, knows the three teachers well and approved my choice of participants. I met with each teacher individually and each gave me some very inspiring narratives. The original narratives of the three teachers have been kept as in their interviews so that the reader can have a feeling for their individuality.

Interview with Mrs. Maxine Chin.

Maxine Chin was born in Jamaica. Of the three teachers, she is the one I know the least. Maxine took over my classes at Anchovy High School and I had met her at the school in June 2000, before I came back to study in Montreal. When I met her again in April 2002, I was pleased at the way she had maintained the art room and the visual resources. I looked around her class and saw the most delightful hand printed fabrics. Maxine chose the teaching profession twelve years ago. There is a youthful quality about her; she is enthusiastic and very spontaneous. When I met her I had the impression of a warm and fun-loving person. Her love for teaching and for her students were evident all through her interview.

Maxine and I met at my apartment one morning before she went to work for the afternoon shift at Anchovy High. We sat at a table in my kitchen-verandah at the hotel where I was staying in Wiltshire, a community close to Anchovy. While we sipped our fruit juice, we started our conversation. I first asked Maxine to talk about herself as a person and a teacher, and about how she got interested in art.

Maxine grew up in Hopewell, Hanover, a small town on the north coast of Jamaica. Maxine said she started to draw from a "tender age." Her family was always supportive and encouraged her talent. While attending Primary, Maxine was very sick for a year which caused her to miss a lot of school.

Drawing became an outlet to express herself: "That was my way to communicate with other persons around me. I would walk around where the sea was, nearby and you know, love that, love land, love nature. And (by drawing) I tried to express myself in that way."

Maxine chose art as an option when she studied at Mt-Alvernia High School in Montego bay. Her two art teachers had a particular influence on her self-development and her future choice of career. Sharon Robinson who I also interviewed, was Maxine's art teacher from grade seven to nine. Maxine praised Sharon's attitude towards the students, saying "From seven to nine there was Mrs. Robinson who guided my efforts, really, really helped me a lot in terms of believing in yourself, being able to express what I had in my mind and what I could feel." Mr. McGill, who taught her during her senior years, also took her through final exams. He was a man she admired tremendously. He would show them motivational pieces, and was respectful towards the girls and did not treat them as inferiors. "He would take us on field trips, by a river side to paint with him, he just spent a lot of time pulling out what he felt was our strength, which was incredible." When she graduated from High School, Maxine went to Sam Sharpe Teachers College in Granville to study in Art Education. It was the first year the College offered this program and there were few people who chose art education as a major. I asked her why she thought there were so few, and still are even today. She replied, "My thinking is that sometimes, as a country, as a people, there are times when we are not thinking about that. Look at art as a

subject, how it can influence persons in terms of how to grow up and not just culturally but help the individual. I think that the focus in those days was that when you did art you were dunce. Because in their mind, art is not a substantial subject, it's that little thing you do in your past time."

Then Maxine and I talked about her classes. I asked her if she showed her own artwork to her students and if being knowledgeable in art is important to teach it. This is what she said:

"I do, I show them my drawings. Usually what I do is if I am going to introduce a new topic to them, I'll come and demonstrate it to them step by step from start to finish. Then they will be able to experiment as well. Sometimes they say that they will never be able to do it but after a while they get excited about what they are doing." About being competent in her subject art, Maxine continued and said: "Very very important, I know that my students test me. It is very important that by showing your work the child knows that you know exactly what you are doing. Because somehow or the other they will call up on you to prove whether or not what you are doing is actually what you understand about the work."

Then we talked about discipline, and how she introduces and implements it. Maxine commented, Oh boy! That can be so challenging, no matter how experienced one is. What I try to do is prepare myself for the worst, in terms of students' reactions to a new teacher. They are always testing to see how far they can go or what they can get away with. If I am new I start by setting

what my expectations are, we work together in harmony to keep the room clean, put back the stools where they are supposed to be... Look at the room how beautiful it is, lets try to keep it that way. This is what we are going to do together. I give them some little guide lines so they know exactly where they stand. The first day I am very hard-line, and I am not joking, this and this are the standards. Afterwards, I answer some questions but I make persons know exactly what is expected, I don't play around."

When Maxine told me she sometimes uses punishment with her students, I asked her to explain. She replied:

"Sometimes I ask the students what punishment they deserve and they sometimes come up with some strict punishment. Because the students are the ones you allow to give some thoughts then they find that it's more humiliating." I asked her if she thought this made them behave better. "Yes," she replied, "sometimes your techniques go dry and you have to resort to them (the students) for different things. I think if you allow the students to be creative with coming up with punishment then it helps."

When and if she does have to deal with a behavior problem, a fight for example, Maxine said she takes the parties aside and talks it over with them. Sometimes, however, it is enough just to use eye contact or to make hand signs to the students. She also suggests, "There are times when you have to get hard line and say "come and step outside with me." When you feel they are ready to come

back they usually behave for the rest of the session". Maxine also asks her students to contribute to the rules she gives them: "I ask them, what are some of the other things now you can think for your art room, as a rule we can put down ? and they would say, 'Miss, what about so and so?' And I say yeah man, definitely we can't have the papers on the floor, what about the bubble gum? And so they come up with their little thing and of course, I usually get them to be responsible for a part of the room and say, next week we are going to re-do our art room. What would you want it to look like?" ... "and they get excited."

Maxine commented that the environment of the class was very important.

"I believe that if you go in an area that is not clean there is something about that that does not encourage learning. The same thing applies to the art room. I think that an art room should be vibrant, full of colours, full of life. Since we display the students' works, I also use that as reference and say look at that student's work and they can learn from that." By getting her students involved in the maintenance of the room Maxine found that it influenced their attitude : "I find that whenever the art room is like that (vibrant and clean), the students come and say 'Wow look at that', and there is a sense of "wow", you know! I think that whenever their environment is dull, that it takes away from their creative ability. I find that students come in and they might be totally blank in an assignment given. But they look around and they can see, not that they are going to steal people's works but they can see something and immediately create thought."

I asked Maxine what her teaching philosophy was. She answered, "Well I think, what I always tell my students is that every single person that comes through my art room is an artist in their own way, anyone whatever they put on their paper, it's a means of self-expression." Maxine also lets her students talk about their favorite topics, which are often about sex. She recounted a typical scenario:

"I mean there are times when my class becomes a sex education. Because all of a sudden they are going to work and say 'tell me what you think, you know, what about men and the girls having sex with older men ?' All of a sudden I'm thinking, how did we get to that ? We are suppose to be drawing... and they tell me that they are working, they are enjoying their conversation." Her students feel they can trust her; they respect her opinion while expressing their adolescent concerns about life.

Maxine explained how popular culture and life experiences influence the behavior of her students. She said, "It has a lot, there is a popular saying that children live what they learn and that whatever is happening in their environment usually comes out in how they express themselves. And I talk that when it relates to art, I find a lot of it in the works. ...they either have guns, you know, bloodshed, just a lot of "macho" stuff. The boys will draw a lot of guns, and "Macho" men, muscular, and the girls draw a lot of women with sexy clothes, little thing stuff. You realize that a lot of what they see around them and a lot of loud aggressive music that seem to talk about how they can this, this one, and do that one that and so a lot of it comes out. Even how they relate to each other at school,...they talk loud,

they use foul language and they think that it's just their way of communicating, so I say to them, couldn't you ask her another way ? Sometimes they genuinely don't understand, especially those coming from parents who talk to them that way. They relate to their children harshly, the students bring back these things thinking that this is the way."

Maxine understands that some of her students are living in harsh conditions at home, which also influences their attitudes at school. Maxine commented: "A lot of them bring what they see in society, a lot of them bring what they learn from outside into their environment. And it is a very challenging task that we (teachers), have to find a solution because sometimes we don't have the support of the parents or the outside environment."

I asked Maxine "What can an art teacher do to help students deal with their life experiences? Maxine replied, "I think that art teachers should become counselors and psychologist. It's amazing how we can pick up things, we are sensitive to people's feelings. And there are times when students come into our classroom, and you know there is a problem." I asked, "What is your reaction when there is a situation like that ?" Maxine said "Well, you talk to the student and see if you can refer him or her to a professional, help, like counseling, because there are times when we are not qualified to do a lot of the counseling, and personally I don't know necessarily where to go at times when a child is battered and bruised, suffering in such a way and so I refer them to someone who can." "How does it

make you feel when a child confides in you?" I asked. "Feels great," she answered, "but it carries a certain burden especially when you are not able to help. So on the one hand it gives you a sense of power you are not only there as an art educator facilitating learning, but I am also there helping the students totally developing themselves."

"How does your personal identity influence your teaching style?" I asked. Maxine responded, "A lot of it, hum, a lot of it, because my personal values at times, I find come out in the type of work that I demand from the students. I believe that whatever is being done, whatever activity, has to be done to their best of ability. Not in a sense, I don't mark so much for how good the art is as much as how much they take pride. I strongly believe if you are drawing a line, each of the lines must be the best line you ever do. That is me as a person, a lot of times I try to pull it out of them because I want them to feel good about what they do, and I want them to feel confident in themselves, no matter what you are doing."

When I asked about teaching materials and resources at Anchovy High, she made me very proud when she said, "I think that the art room I have now is the most equipped I have ever worked at." Maxine explained that from her experience, lack of materials are often causes of fights especially with the junior students.

When I asked Maxine how she evaluates herself, she answered, "I look at what the accomplishments are in terms of whether or not when I teach if students learn or not, that is how I know if I'm being effective."

Summary of interview.

Maxine said that her personal identity influences her teaching style since she expects her students to set high standards in the way they behave and perform, as she does for herself. She wants her students to achieve at the best level of their ability and considers it is important that they show pride in their work. She is open to dialogue and allows her students to express their life concerns while they are learning. By doing this her students feel they can confide in her. She understands that their behavior is affected by their life experiences which are sometimes very harsh. She expects discipline and allows her students to participate in setting class rules. When dealing with a serious disciplinary problem she will meet with the students outside of class time and avoid impulsive confrontation. She believes that the environment of the class should be dynamic, fun, respectful and clean.

I was very pleased with our interview; I got to know Maxine as a person and as a pedagogue. I felt her to be a friend and colleague, and someone who cares about her students and enjoys the teaching profession. It made me feel glad that such a teacher had continued the work I had started at Anchovy High School.

Interview with Mrs. Sharon Robinson.

I had met with Sharon Robinson several times during my teaching days in Jamaica. Sharon was born in Jamaica. I find her an authentic humanist. She is a warm person who inspires respect at the same time. She was genuinely interested in my research. Sharon teaches at Mount Alvernia High School, an all girls school in Montego Bay, where she herself also studied. She has been teaching art for the past fifteen years and is one of a few art teachers in Jamaica who have initiate students to computer technology, including graphic arts. Interviewing Sharon was easy because of her passion for teaching and her concern for her students. Her art room is very small, but she manages to create a pleasant atmosphere by displaying her students' works all around the trailer walls.

I met Sharon in small room at Mount-Alvernia High, where we could record the interview. I asked Sharon about herself and when she had decided to become an art teacher. She responded by saying, "I began to be interested in art from a young age, and it was carried through primary and finally high school. I decided I would teach. So there was a lot of art first and then teaching came afterwards. I decided I would go through Teacher's College, which I did and I graduated with a diploma in Secondary Art and Craft. My first job was at Mount Alvernia High and I've been here for fifteen years now. During which time I left and went to the Jamaica School of Art to study computer graphics, otherwise known as graphic design. I came back to Mount Alvernia and here I am!"

I asked Sharon what particular event made her decide to become an art teacher. She responded that it was the influence of past teachers, and certain qualities in them she admired. I asked her talk specifically about a particular teacher. Her answer was, "Well it was Mr. McDonald, my art teacher, although I had three art teachers through my O Levels and I think he had more impact on me. At the time he was very easy going, but at the same time there was respect and there was admiration because of the way he dealt with us girls. There was nothing that made us feel as if we were lesser in any way. He spoke to us on a level of equality which we admired and the growth of art with him I think, took us very, very far."

I asked Sharon about her own interaction with her students. How she introduces art to her first class ? "...I would start with the basic knowledge, I would call upon their experiences. I would try to find out what they know and link what I'm trying to do with life and in that way, I find the communication is better between us. "Sharon talked about discipline: " ...because obviously we need to have order, you know ? And even as artists and no matter how expressive we are there has to be some sort of control. So therefore everyone has rules and everyone is made aware of them."

At the same time Sharon considers her students by letting them partake in setting the rules. I then asked her how she dealt with misbehavior ?" She explained, "Every teacher has to deal with that at some point in her teaching, because we

are not perfect. There are instances when no matter what you say or do, some are not interested. I had to deal with it. I have found that the more I open to my students the more I am communicating and the more human I am. And I want to stress on the word human. Many times I have seen teachers not be human and as result, the students hold back and even have resentment. I have seen where because we try to be human, we try to communicate, students are willing to learn, relax, respect and I try to do that more, be open. Over the years I have seen its benefits and one of the benefits is why the rules stay after we made them.”

I asked Sharon about the importance of being knowledgeable in art in order to be able to teach it. Sharon’s view is that it is extremely important, and even more so today when students have access to the Internet. Because of this she explained, students have become more challenging for teachers. An art teacher, Sharon affirmed, “...has to be involved in everything; she is a person who probably will dress the students because she is fashion conscious. She is somebody who could go into interior design, because of her colour knowledge. She is a person who knows about the arts, the fine arts, the Mozart’s, the Michelangelo’s. I mean there is so much about being the art teacher it is almost frightening. She does graduation ball, decoration, she does the art certificates, for the sports’ day. And she is rounded in herself that she cannot help but be knowledgeable in what she is doing and she should be. Very important.”

Sharon shared her experience concerning her views on the relationship between environment and students' behavior. This was her response: "It is no secret that the smaller the space you have, in my opinion, having taught in five different schools (during her student/teacher days), I found that the tighter the space, the more restless and the more tardy the students. When the work environment is spacious, especially for art, being a practical subject, the students might want to stand instead of sit, so I think that the environment in terms of space is important." Sharon said that factors such as wall space, furniture and equipment are all stimulus. She added, "I started to play music in my senior classes and I can see a difference definitely."

I asked Sharon to define her teaching philosophy and this was her answer: "I believe that an art teacher should always listen to the students. Many of us are too busy with syllabus, time table, and I confess that I do too. But as teachers, we have to remember to listen to our students. Creativity is not taught, meditation is not taught, therefore as art teachers, regardless of time table and syllabus, listen to the students." I asked if that meant developing a relationship with students, and she said, "By listening, you can develop but you don't have too, because I can know my students well, but not have a relationship, it's quite possible. Because I listen to her...I am able to identify what is right, what is wrong, that is what I'm suppose to do as a teacher, and I fix it. With art teachers, our job is not to teach, I always said that to my students, you don't teach art. And because of

that so many of us get sort of side tracked and forget about creativity of our students. What they have brought to us, not what we bring to them.”

Then we discussed discipline and dealing with misbehavior. Sharon spoke, “Every teacher has to deal with that at some point in her teaching, because we are not perfect. The controlling of behavior is always, always the first impression with your students. The first time the students set their eyes on you is going to be your testing. If you pass or fail that day, you have your students. If you fail, it will be very hard to get back those students. Always be firm but at the same time a gentle hand, they will know the difference, students are not stupid. I don’t like physical punishment, but I prefer to reason with the students. Sometimes I am not in the option to reason because the behavior is so outrageous. I take the student aside, the class must not stop for me. So I step outside with the student and we speak. I always try to understand, because there is a reason for everything. ...you are not trying to be inquisitive, but as a teacher, you have to know. You don’t want to label this girl as worthless, dumb, nobody is that. You question her about the situation at home, “are you OK saying these things to me? “ Sharon listens to her student confidentially, she lets them know that they should feel free to talk to her. But at the same time, if she feels there could a more serious underlying problem, she proposes that her student see the counselor.

I inquired about possible reasons for misbehavior, and this was her reply :”The discipline or misbehavior problems in high school, are home problems. They are

not getting something. They come to school and they rebel, they just don't care. They know it's wrong but at that time it doesn't matter to them. It worries us at the high school level because no matter how much rules, we need the influence of parents". I asked her what art classes can do to help the situation and she responded by stating, "Yes they do, because they actually put it on paper. But the expression of oneself is so important that we have to be careful how we judge. There are times when the work is vulgar, but we do have to be careful what we say. Because for us it might be one thing, but it's a way of life for the student, as long as he or she knows it is safe to express themselves. But yes, I see it on their papers, I see it in their poems when we do calligraphy. I see the problems and sometimes I say to them, "Are you OK, is this enough for you to express it out, you need to move on."

Summary of interview

Sharon then reflected on the influence of her personal identity on the dynamics of her class: "Oh definitely, there is no doubt, the teacher is actually the stimulus of the class, what he or she does sets the tone to the class. Being art teachers, we cannot afford to be dreary, we can't afford to be quiet, we can't afford to be nonchalant, our subject is so exciting, it has so many things to get us off, that to me, we should be exhausted after a day." "Personality" she concluded, "is definitely instrumental on the dynamics of art class, behavior, and everything."

Sharon said that the environment is affected by different factors and she said that the atmosphere of her class improved when she started to play music for her students. She feels it is her responsibility to encourage a creative atmosphere where her students are able to express themselves and respect each other. Discipline, she said, is essential and the rules of the class should be made clear to the students. She believes that the way she controls behavior is the first impression she gives to her students. Her philosophy is to listen, and by listening she can develop a relationship with her students.

We closed our conversation with her views on whether art education benefits the development of students. These were her words: "Oh, it does, there is a matter of fact, all innate qualities, skills, dance, music, drama, singing, all these qualities you have been born with, have their own way of bringing you far away into the adult world, and being able to function very well. We can't be judgmental as art teachers, because we could be the only outlet and we don't even know it."

Interview with Mrs. Jane Crichton.

Jane Crichton is the teacher I know the best of the three interviewees because we often met at the beach on weekends. Jane is a veteran teacher; she has been in the profession for the last thirty years, during which time she has taught both boys and girls in England and in Jamaica. I know Jane as a passionate person, because of the way she expresses herself, her words are never boring. She teaches English, literature, and drama.

Jane also has a great sense of humour and she considers teaching her life calling. She loves being with young people. Her implication in drama extends beyond her teaching hours since she is also passionately involved in theater, writing and reading poetry, producing plays and even acting. Jane's interview was very insightful. Before relating it, I will share her poem "The Dance of Life" because I feel it represents well the person she is.

"The Dance of Life"

Look at me dance!

I step into the sunlight and move my arms with the wind.

My eyes shine with the joy of life, of living.

I am so proud of the body I am blessed with

And all it does for me.

I never want to hear another dirge, another moan.

I dance with the wind, reach my arms to the clouds

And smile with the rain.

The crack of thunder and the howl of the storm

Are glorious music to me.

I have no fear of looking foolish,

I refuse to be laughed at.

You can laugh with me, dance with me, sing with me,

But never put me down.

Join my dance to celebrate our glorious world

And if you are strong enough, brave enough,

Dance with me.

Jane and I met in April 2002, one early Sunday morning at Doctor's Cave Beach in Montego Bay. We swam and relaxed for a few hours until we left for her apartment where we conducted her interview looking out into the bay. I started by asking her to talk about herself. She began by saying: "I was born in England but I came out with my parents when I was eight." Her father was an Anglican clergyman, who taught his children by showing his "tremendous love for people and no prejudice whatsoever" she confided. "I went to high school here so I always felt that Jamaica was my home."

Her first teaching job, in 1965, was at Sam Sharpe College, an all-boys high school in Montego Bay. I asked Jane how she felt being a white teacher in Jamaica. Jane explained to me that in those days there were more white teachers in Montego Bay so that her skin colour did not make any difference.

I asked Jane if she could recall a teacher who had had an impact on her self-development. This is what she said: "Two_ one English teacher here in Jamaica. I realize now that she was very young, and she had come here for a few years...she was very lively, young, always a caring person and she made me realize that I wanted to study English. She was very dramatic which had an influence on me. The other teacher who really had an impact on me was in Canada. An English teacher in my first year at the University. He was also a very strong and caring person, and he didn't think of me as that little thing from Jamaica as most people did. He taught me as a person with a real mind and he

treated me almost as an equal and that had a great impact on me.” I asked Jane to think deeper about this impact and to specify what she had learned from this teacher. She responded, “It made me realize that to be a good teacher you couldn’t be too serious and you couldn’t be heavy handed and that you had to see young people as individuals and allow them to think rather than always being sure that you are right.” She continued by saying, “I think these two teachers were the ones because they treated me that way. I saw that it was the way to proceed as a teacher...and it worked for me.”

I asked her about the dynamics within her drama classes. Jane explained that since drama is not considered an exam subject, she mainly teaches English and literature. But her drama classes are very exciting because of the creativity development through self-expression. Drama classes, she said bring you closer to children by getting them to express their concerns and to explore their ideas. Each class is different and sometimes improvised on a subject of discussion. Each session becomes a learning experience for herself and for her students.

I inquired about what the students are learning from drama classes, and she said, “One thing it does teach them and they do learn from it is discipline, which is an important thing. They think they are free, they think they can do anything they like, but they soon realize that to do well in drama you have got to be terribly controlled and terribly disciplined. The other thing, it teaches them to cope with problems they have in their lives. Some girls come from homes where the fathers

are either violent or not there. They have money difficulties, they have the temptation of drugs, always there, and conflict resolutions are a big problem. And by working these things out in drama, and by imagining what it must be like to be someone else, different feelings, under different circumstances, help them to work out their own problems and also let them see the other persons' point of view."

I asked Jane to talk about discipline_ how important is it, how she introduces it, how she deals with discipline problems, and what could be some of the causes of undisciplined students. Jane answered, "Yes, no question, no question, children need barriers and they understand rules and they like them. They like to know where the barriers are and many of them feel insecure if you are too easy going and it is the lack of security that messes them up...When I am teaching English language they have got to have the basics of the language before I can say now go ahead and write a poem. Make up words and forget punctuation, but they got to know those before they can be creative. And that's the way in their lives, they got to know the rules of ordinary living before they can be eccentric and different and unusual but you can't break the rules without knowing the rules."

During her career, Jane has found that girls are easier to discipline than boys. She explains, "...they like to know their limits, they like to have rules but they insist on being fairly dealt with. But once you are strict but fair, you don't have any problems and I now find it so easy to discipline. I realize now that you don't have

to punish. I never punish, you just have to be disciplined yourself and they respect that, and that seems to work.”

I asked Jane to tell me about her interactions with students concerning discipline, she answered, “...I just say to them “Look I don’t allow noise”, and the moment the noise starts I just turn away and turn my back and wait,...they realize that I won’t be talking to them and I won’t be teaching. I just make it quite clear by my actions that certain things are not acceptable.” “And what is their reaction ?” I asked. “They quickly start to behave the way I want them to,” Jane explained. And because they can trust me...They obey my rules because they can get what they want from me.” Discipline cannot be imposed, she told me, it just has to be a normal way of life in her classroom.

Jane applies what she has learned from teacher training, which is “...for the first few classes, I don’t smile and I am serious and after that there is no problem. You have to be very patient, not too patient because if you’re too patient then you loose control and once you’ve lost control you can’t get it back.”

When we reflected on relationships between students and teachers, she said, “...children have far more perception than most people realize and they know automatically the people they can trust.” Jane is always open to dialogues and many students confide in her. She feels it is quite a responsibility, but her students trust her ethics and her comforting ear.

Because she feels it is important for her students to discuss some of their concerns, Jane organizes sessions where her students debate a topic of their choice; followed by a written reflection of what was discussed. She is very interested in these sessions and her students get involved. These sessions she said help students in their self development while they are learning.

On the class environment, Jane said, "You can teach anywhere, any time. Once you are totally involved in what you are doing and refuse to be distracted by externals, the less than satisfactory environment, crowded classrooms, external noise, broken furniture, becomes less frustrating."

The conversation led Jane and I to discuss the influence of popular culture on the development of Jamaican children, and how this affect her classes and this is what she said: "It affects them very negatively, most of our culture is based on putting women down...I think this adds to the negative feeling that most girls have about themselves and inflates the egos of the boys too." One of her solution to this attitude is to make her students discover Jamaican women writers.

Jane reflected on some of the causes of misbehavior in our Jamaican children. "I think the biggest cause of misbehavior in the children is their desire to be bright academically and many of them are very mediocre. And if they don't have any wealth and most of them are from poor background, they think they have to be a somebody. So they will be a somebody that nobody can control just to be know

as something. Sexual abuse of our girls is also a reason for the misbehavior of some girls. They become disillusioned about the meaning of being a man or a woman....I don't know, the poverty, not so much financial poverty but the poverty of spirit, the poverty of real love, the poverty of trust that these children are fighting all the time."

I inquired about how she evaluates herself as a teacher. Jane replied, "The only way I can judge my teaching is the way the kids react to it,...by the way the kids learn, if they learn obviously I must be doing something right, if they don't learn, something that I've been trying to get across to them is not working and I have to re-think it and put it in a different way."

Summary of interview

We finished Jane's interview with her reflection on the relationship between personal identity and teaching. These are her words: "If you are sure of yourself, if your confidence in yourself and our own ability is strong, then the students believe in you and as a result, they learn from you. If you love yourself you can love them and love of people, shown by concern to them and valuing them as individuals, is the basis of teaching. Kids don't care what colour you are, where you come from, they just care about how you feel about them, how you treat them."

Jane feels that she can teach anywhere and that because she is passionate about her subject, problems such as space or noise become less frustrating. She believes that discipline is important because children expect it and a teacher that is too easy will eventually get problems and loose control. However, she maintains that discipline should be fair. She is a teacher who is open to dialogue and enjoys getting her students to discuss matters that are related to their immediate life.

Chapter 5

ANALYSIS/INTERPRETATION

“...we have to understand the “good” in order to give content to the meaning of competence when we speak of an adult as a “good” teacher...” (van Manen, 1997, p.157).

I read each interview several times trying to find links between the teachers' individual experiences and my own. The narrative of each teacher was classified into three themes: a) background, b) similarities, and c) differences. By 'background' I mean cultural background and life experiences that have shaped our personal identity. The 'similarities' included what we all seem to have in common in between our particularities while the 'differences' refer to what is singular to each.

These three themes became headings under which, for each teacher, I wrote sub-themes in columns under each corresponding theme. This process of writing took the form of coded words condensing some selected data possibly relevant to my inquiry.

After this process was finished, I highlighted each teachers' particularities with a different colour and cut them out in strips. This resulted in breaking down my data into two columns-similarities and differences-under which I glued each teacher's

particularities. By doing this, I discovered we had most things in common and very few differences. Some of the differences were place of birth, culture, language, education, race, approach to discipline, and teaching experience. Through this process, I was able to identify clearer patterns of personal identities and teaching styles, all of which became the basis for further analysis..

Interpretation of the interviews and my story

Since we have chosen the teaching profession we must become aware of our personal behavior and consider how we interact with students. If we are teachers concerned about class effectiveness, we must look deeper into the dynamics of teaching. We must be aware of the influence our behavior has on our students' self-development and behavior. It is by observing what works that we can find guidance and inspiration to improve ourselves as educators.

My discussion places the personal identity of a teacher at the source of class dynamics since I believe the teacher is the first one to establish the pace for future classroom interactions. I considered how my personal identity and that of each of the three teachers I interviewed work in parallel with our pedagogical approach and how this influences the dynamics of our classes. I noticed that even though we are quite different in our personal identities, we have many things in common, and very few things that are different in our approach to

teaching. The main differences are our place of birth, colour, language, education and teaching experience.

Sharon Robinson and Maxine Chin were born in Jamaica, while Jane Crichton was born in England and I was born in Quebec. Jane went to live in Jamaica when she was eight, so she went to high school in Montego Bay, Jamaica. The three other teachers grew up in the English language while I grew up in the French language. I went to secondary in a mixed school while the others went to an all girls high school. Our religions and our races are different but were not a factor in this research. I was the teacher with the least experience in a Jamaican high school.

When I interviewed Jane about her double cultural identity, Jane told me that she feels more Jamaican than British and that she never noticed that she had a double cultural identity. Later on in her interview I asked her again and she said that after reflecting on it she does feel her English roots within her personal identity but that she cannot point out clearly where and when it blends into her teaching style. I experience a similar feeling but I feel a stronger bond with Quebec and found a need to come back every now and then, while she does not feel that way about England.

The three teachers and myself have a similar approach when we meet with a new class. We deliver our expectations to our students in a serious manner and soften

up as time goes by. This way we make it clear that we are in charge but that we consider our students' feelings by making them accept and participate in the class rules. All of us love children and love teaching, which is very significant to the way we interact with our students. We all feel it is important, not only for ourselves but also for our students, that our class environment is creative, fun, and educational.

Jane found that girls are easier to discipline but I never felt that way; my boys never gave me any more problems than the girls. We all agree that minor discipline is easily dealt with by non-verbal behavior and that the major cases should be dealt with away from the rest of the class. We all acknowledge the need to inquire about the problems of our students because we are conscious that they might have home or personal concerns which distract them from learning. We believe in communicating individually with students and we make them feel safe in sharing their problems by showing that we care for them.

Maxine lets her students decide what punishment they deserve. I think this is quite democratic, and she said that it works for her. Nevertheless I do not agree that punishment should be humiliating because I think that humiliation could affect a student's self-esteem. Jane and I do not believe in punishment and we both realize that we have never had to punish anyone in our classes. In a letter she sent me, Jane wrote some additional comments on discipline with which all teachers agree. She said that discipline cannot be imposed but that respectful behavior should be understood as something natural, and a way to live with

others. We think that this attitude contributed to the good behavior of our students.

When I asked Sharon about punishment, she said that when she feels a behavior is outrageous, she takes the student out of the class to talk privately. My three colleagues and I do not believe in physical punishment. We know that some students come from homes where they most probably experience verbal and physical abuse, and because we care about their development as humans and as social beings we think that communication rather than punishment is better for their self-esteem and self-development. "Our job is to help them become aware of what is going on inside themselves, as well as what is going on around them. We use our helping skills to facilitate their exploration of the internal and external world" (Kottler and Zehn, 2000, p.61).

We all believe that every student is unique in her or his personal identity and we encourage them to express this without discrimination, judgment or ridicule from anyone in the class. We think that learning will occur if our students find that the assignments make sense in the context of their lives. We are open to dialogue within the class or in private, and we let our students choose themes or topics to discuss because we believe that they can also teach us something. We do not view ourselves as absolute holders of the truth.

While Jane expressed that the physical environment does not necessarily interfere with her class dynamics, Maxine, Sharon and I feel that it does. The reason for this might be that Jane teaches English and literature, which require less space and less materials. We do however, feel that the physical space is important for effective art classes. On the other hand, I do agree with Jane when she says that when you are totally involved in your subject you can by-pass certain obstacles and carry on anyway.

Sharon told a story which took place while she was a student teacher in Kingston and she had to improvise a drawing assignment because of lack of materials. Sharon said that when she found that there were no materials to work with, she sharpened some wooden fudge sticks to make pens and used bauxite dust mixed with water to draw with. She said that the students were very excited about it and that it was a discovery for them and for herself. I do agree with Sharon that in the short term art teachers have to be able to improvise, but in the long run materials are very important for an art teacher and for the effectiveness of the class. We all think that enjoying teaching our subject and being competent is very important for an effective class. We strongly believe that our enthusiasm contributes to getting students involved in whatever they learn.

When we reflected on whether our personal identity influenced our teaching style we all asserted that it does. We think that the way we deal with our students will have short and long term impacts on their self-development and we care about

this fact. We know that our own teachers had an impact on us and that the ones who cared about us are the ones who contributed the most in shaping our own personal identities. They are the teachers we like to remember, and we found that the qualities we enjoyed in them are precious assets to our own teaching styles, and so we adopted those qualities. I was influenced by an art teacher in secondary school; he was a gentle, patient person, and he made me believe that I had talent. This had a terrific affect on my self-esteem. All four of us believe in laughing with our students, but also we take things seriously when necessary. We think that to be ethical is crucial in establishing trust with our students. We also know our limits and offer further counseling with specialists when we feel that certain problems are beyond our helping capacities.

My three colleagues and I realize that teaching is a progressive activity and we constantly search for ways to improve our practice and our skills and try to keep up with changes. We reflect on our teaching methods and adjust to the learning abilities of each student. We take part in seminars and learn new skills so that our lessons are always fresh with new meaning and challenges. We watch to see if our students are learning and if they are interested and we listen to their comments and criticism. We all agree that even though we are the ones who set the pace for the class, our students also participate in making our classes pleasant places to work.

CONCLUSION

“Every teacher has to use their own personality, their own style” (Fried, 1995, p.146).

In light of the findings from the three teachers’ interviews and from empirical data, it appears that the personal identity of a teacher is inseparable from the pedagogue. Teacher behavior and lived experiences in the classroom have only lately been recognized in research on the humanistic philosophy of education. Van Manen comments, “Only recently has anyone recognized that education needs to turn back to the world of experience. Experience can open up understanding that restores a sense of embodied knowing” (1997, p.9).

While researching the literature on the human dimension of teaching, I noticed there was very little inquiry conducted at higher levels of education. It appears that College and University professors’ behavior with their adult students has not been investigated by educational research; it could therefore be a subject for further investigation. Human relationships in classrooms do not stop at the primary and secondary levels. Just because people have reached adulthood does not mean that they are not affected by the way professors treat them. Personal identity continues to be formed through life experiences; it does not have a limit, and people have feelings until the last breath of life.

My three colleagues from Jamaica and I shared the experiences of our classrooms. While reflecting on how our human dimension influenced our teaching styles, I perceived that even though we are all different in our personal identities, we shared common behavior and philosophies which are based on love and respect.

It is therefore clear that good teaching does not result from a prescribed recipe but rather from the way we respond to children and apply our pedagogy. When I analyzed my colleagues' teaching experiences and the educational research, I discovered common patterns of human qualities that seem essential to enjoying the teaching profession and to being effective. A good pedagogue should display certain qualities, as van Manen asserted: "...a sense of vocation, moral intuitiveness, self-critical openness, thoughtful maturity, tactful sensitivity toward a child's subjectivity, an interpretive intelligence, a pedagogical understanding of the child's needs, improvisational resoluteness in dealing with young people, a passion for knowing and learning the mysteries of the world, the moral fiber to stand up for something, a certain understanding of the world, active hope in the face of prevailing crises, and not the least, humor and vitality" (van Manen, 1997, p.8).

Looking into the experiences of other teachers enables us to discern the variety of personal identities and teaching styles, but we can also find a common bond uniting our celebration of teaching. Caring for our students through the dynamics

of our classes, means preparing a hospitable atmosphere within our classes which considers the welfare of our students, and establishing a creative, respectful, and orderly setting. This way, we enjoy our profession and teaching becomes a continuous learning experience for our students and for ourselves.

Sharon, Maxine, Jane and I, by reflecting on our own memories of being students, realized how much past teachers had influenced our development as human beings. We also recognized how much impact we have on our students' development. We believe that we are responsible for creating classes where students can be themselves while respecting the integrity of others. We understand that their moods and behavior are the result of their own life experiences which are tinted by their understanding of the adult world. We are conscious that our accessibility as counselors is significant in alleviating our students' pain and hurt and that we should take the time to understand and to listen to them. We believe in making our classes safe places for our students to express themselves without being judged and ridiculed. We find time to laugh and converse about themes and things which concern them. We have observed that by being caring and tactful, and by applying just and accepted rules of discipline, as well as being competent, interesting and challenging, we build an alliance with our students, and we constantly foster that relationship. Moreover, we recognize that nothing is stable in life, that everything is forever changing, including education, and that as teachers we should adjust with the advancements in society and in education if we are going to call ourselves teachers.

The implications of the human dimension of teaching are more and more relevant because of the chaos we face in our world today. Teachers need to find ways to reach young people and motivate them in their development. Ellen Skinner and Michael Belmont concluded their research on the effects of teacher behavior on student's engagement by stating, "Hence, changing teacher behaviors from those that undermine to those that promote the engagement of discouraged children should be a top priority of educational reform. If one educational goal is to encourage teachers to support children's motivation, then understanding the factors that influence teachers is critical" (Skinner, and Belmont, 1993, p.580). Their research concluded that teacher behavior influences students' engagement and vice-versa.

Violence and the loss of moral values are everywhere in our present world. The media tells us horror stories of displaced populations and war refugees. Immigration now brings people into closer contact; we therefore encounter a variety of cultures and ways of thinking in our classes. I feel it is important for teachers to give our share of love, tolerance and understanding to the children who come into our classes everyday. Our example will have a positive impact on the way they treat each other.

I have found that children are extremely receptive to human relationship. I have also found that adolescent students are vulnerable even while acting as if they were grown up. My students give me a taste of the future while I listen to their

ideas and their concerns. I envision them as future adults; and it is for this reason that I believe in helping to develop their human dimension. I find that this concern is scarce in our societies and very often in our families today.

My teaching philosophy is based on respect. My classes were like my families; the students were like my children. I treated them as if they were my own, but at the same time I was conscious of the limitations I was faced with. I was also glad to see them move on in their lives. But as long as my students were in my class, they were safe from their fears, or were even able to confront them. I kept them busy with positive creativity and I marveled everyday to see them produce wonderful art works.

I was not perfect, as my students said in their interviews. I made mistakes but I was humble enough to apologize to my students if I had to. Now I wonder if I could have proceeded differently in the face of the chaos I had to deal with in my first year at Anchovy High. However, I do not regret, or say, "I should have" since the past cannot be changed. Nevertheless, I learned from it. The more I have encountered young people, the more I have understood the influence I have on their attitudes, and the more human I have become for our mutual benefit - and it has worked wonderfully!

Interviewing my three Jamaican colleagues and reading about the academic literature on the dynamics of teaching and its human dimension has confirmed my

beliefs. It gave me the opportunity to look back at my practice in a critical way; I now realize that at times I have lacked the sensitivity to understand the behavior of some students. Writing this thesis has confirmed for me that even though we are all different in our personal identities, fundamentally every human being, no less so teachers, need the human dimension in their professional lives. It has also confirmed to me that teaching is more than imparting theory or practice, it is a human relationship between an adult - the teacher-and her or his pupils.

Researching on successful teachers' practices has convinced me even more of the importance of the human dimension for the development of young people as social beings. The experiences of other teachers have taught me additional tactics to put into practice in the future so that I can become a better teacher.

Education is a crucial part of everybody's life and it definitely contributes to the shaping of people's behavior and personal identities. Empirical data on effective and successful teachers has shown that teachers' attitudes have an impact on their practice, and on the success of their classes. My three colleagues and I have personally experienced that it is possible to create fun and educational classes regardless of the many problems we encounter in our schools every day.

I hope that my thesis will empower other practicing teachers, and inspire future teachers, and provide useful information for the benefit of their practice. Is it not what every teacher should want - to enjoy their profession and to succeed in their

classes, and to appreciate the knowledge we acquire through the relationships we have with our students every day we meet?

While writing this thesis and reflecting on my own and other teachers' experiences, I realize how much I miss being with the young people in class, and how much I still have to learn from my future students.

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APPENDIX A

Sample of Informed Consent Form

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Irise Archambault of the Art Education Department of Concordia University.

A. PURPOSE

The research conducted by Irise Archambault is to gather data for her thesis project.

B. PROCEDURES

The research will take place in Jamaica between the 24th of April to the 24th of May 2002. The participants are three teachers, four past students, and the Education Officer for the Visual Arts from the Ministry of Education in Montego Bay. Participants will be interviewed on topics related to art education and class dynamics. The interviews will be recorded on cassettes. The data collected will be edited later and participants will be sent a copy of the transcript for review before being published. Part of the research will also involve photographs of participants and their art works.

LIST OF TOPICS FOR INTERVIEWS: The Jamaican curriculum, place of art in education, art and cultural identity, art education and child development, class discipline, students/teachers relationship, personal identity and teaching style, class environment, pedagogy and teaching philosophy.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

* I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.

* I understand that my participation in this study is NON-CONFIDENTIAL.

* I understand that the data from this research may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print)-----

SIGNATURE-----

WITNESS SIGNATURE-----

DATE-----