

A DIALOGICAL MODEL FOR  
CURRICULUM DESIGN FOR IMMIGRANT  
EDUCATION: AN ILLUSTRATIVE CASE

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DEDICATION

To my Mother and Father; and my brothers and sisters  
especially Mark and Sophie.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The problem of striking the happy medium between differing factors that most interact has been an old one. Many efforts have been made by teachers to strike that medium between them and those they try to socialize - their students. The efforts the teacher makes seem to be least effective where there is a vast amount of unknown, as in the case of an immigrant student.

When the student enters school in his native environment, many contributing factors to this medium precede him. He or his parents might have previously met the teacher. Older relatives might have attended that school. He might have friends attending it. In short, he has an identity with which to make his entry; an identity that gives him initial confidence to face new experience and challenges.

An immigrant student has little or none of that. He stands alone with mounting perplexities. Thus the teacher's starting point will either make or mar him; for the link between the teacher's attitude to the student, and the student's academic achievement has received much attention and investigation by educators.

Teacher and immigrant need to overcome the problems that arise from social estrangement which come as a result of insufficient factors that contribute to a personal and cultural identity. In this study, it is argued that such problems can be overcome through dialogue; and that through dialogue will come the ultimate curriculum suitable for immigrant education.

But the sticky point is to find a spring-board for dialogue that will not require the student to become initiated at the cost of his personal values, or to the disadvantage of the non-immigrant student in the class.

In this study it is suggested that the immigrant's national literature be used as concrete situations to stimulate dialogue and to invite the immigrant to contribute the kind of information which, when varified and clarified through the reflective process, becomes the content of a dialogical model curriculum; for this is the model that will actively involve all students - immigrant and non-immigrant alike.

Literature is a usual subject in our education systems. It tells your story and mine. It asks "how are we similar; and how are we different?".

The literature of Jamaica is used as illustrations because Jamaican situations are those I am best capable of linking with themes in literature common to both immigrants and non-immigrants.

## THE STUDY

### Immigrant Education and Multiculturalism

The problems of coping with the unusual difficulties of immigration are many and complex. The nature of these problems are defined according to whose perspective is being taken. For example, from the view of the teacher, the difficulties of teaching immigrants are reflected when she is faced with the task of providing instruction to a class whose backgrounds, culture, language, and experience are diverse, not only from her own, but from each other member of the class. She must find a common core or starting point from which to establish grounds for providing instruction, while not providing an environment that is alien to the children involved. She must situate each child in his new culture as well as keep in mind the attitudes, values, beliefs and norms of his country of origin, while avoiding, at all costs, the pitfalls of stereotyping and labelling.

The problem of immigration from a student's point of view is reflected in terms of coping and adjusting. Describing West Indian students in a secondary school, teacher Liz Coelho explains their plight.

The students are likely to be trying to cope with all the usual difficulties of immigration, as well as with adjustment to new family circumstances, unfamiliar school subjects and discipline patterns, adolescence and an almost complete absence of any



positive portrayal of people like themselves in the school curriculum. Culture shock for these students can be very severe, and may seriously affect their performance in school for a number of years.<sup>1</sup>

The immensity of the problem was vividly illustrated in Toronto recently, where all the teachers (38) from a city school, asked to be transferred to another school because the Toronto Board of Education was not helping with the problems of their school.

Howard Fluxgold reported,

....Many of the pupils who enter the school are recent arrivals to Canada but, in the opinion of the teachers, the school does not offer adequate services for them.

Quoting from interviews he conducted with the teachers, he writes,

I'm feeling frustrated. There's no remedial reading program. There's no program for new Canadians to phase them in...They suffer from culture shock when they first get here...The majority of them sink.

He continues,

....pupils were tested in kindergarten to pinpoint their learning difficulties, but nothing is done. They're just put into Grade 1.<sup>2</sup>

He reported that the school board was forcing the school to use the same curriculum as other schools, but that it was not suitable for inner-city schools. Therefore, all the teachers, unable to cope, asked to leave.

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<sup>1</sup>Liz Coelho, "West Indian Students in the Secondary School," in T.E.S.L. Talk, September 1976, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Howard Fluxgold, "All Teachers At City School Seek Transfers," Toronto Globe and Mail, May 29, 1979, p. 1.

### Factors of Adjustment Among Immigrant Students

Studies have shown that the problems that immigrant children face, although centering traumatically on the communication factor, involve other problems of adjustment that are often discounted or overlooked. For example, Ramcharan points to the physical factors of adjustment:

Often the (immigrant child) is unfamiliar with the equipment in the classroom -- even simple artifacts like toys, crayons, and pencils. Researchers have found this inability to comprehend the physical environment a severe handicap in the learning process for immigrant and deprived children in general.<sup>1</sup>

Beck argues that

(educators) have focused on language learning, use of immigrant language as a pedagogical device, and courses in ethnic studies, and have neglected basic human issues of value, self-identity, national identity, culture criticism, cultural change and the meaning of life.<sup>2</sup>

And Stasiuk, a high school counselor points out the marked difference in West Indian children's attitude to the pace of classroom life.

The pace of life in the West Indies is much slower, and the children are not used to adhering to rigid time schedule and regular attendance...In this connection, a student's time orientation is very much the now and tomorrow rather than some future date. A work assignment for next Friday or two weeks away will not have the same impact as some-

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<sup>1</sup>Subhas Ramcharan, "Special Problems of Immigrant Children in the Toronto School System," in Education of Immigrants: Issues and Answers, Aaron Wolfgang, Ed. (Toronto: Institute for Studies in Education 1975) p. 100.

<sup>2</sup>Clive Beck, "Is Immigrant Education Only for Immigrants?" in Aaron Wolfgang, Ed., p. 5.

thing to be done for tomorrow.<sup>1</sup>

There is also much evidence to show the educational attainment of immigrant children is far lower than non-immigrant children. (Toronto Board of Education, 1965; Ashworth, 1975). Consequently, curriculum reform in the area of immigrant education has sought to address this main problem and the goal has been to improve educational achievement and attainment of immigrant children. Many of the explanations given for such deficiencies in achievement among immigrant children have been made in terms of culture shock and culture conflict. (Adler, 1968; Bhatnagar, 1970, Johannesson, 1973, Rogers, 1972) and the accompanying psychological impacts of such experiences. It is widely presumed that the bewildered, estranged and unhappy child cannot achieve until these psychological constraints have been assuaged. Central to the attempts to deal with the problems that surround immigrant education are fundamental concerns aimed at building the child's self-concept, his sense of security, acceptance and worth - his sense of Identity. Charles L. Caccia, MP in Ottawa best expressed these concerns by describing the responsibilities the teacher of immigrant children has. She must deal with

the cultural roots of the students and his background, giving reassurance and the recognition needed to strengthen those roots, eventually arriving at what is commonly described as helping the development of a good strong self-image so

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<sup>1</sup> P. Stasiuk, "West Indian Students in the High School," in Orbit, No. 7, June, 1976, p. 11.

that as a grown-up person the student will be at home both in his own community as well as in the broader cultural milieu of Canadian society.

....It seems to me that here there is a dual responsibility: that of educating, plus that of strengthening the bonds with the culture of origin to give the immigrant student a solid base not in knowledge of facts and figures but in a strong positive self-concept in relation to the culture of origin and to its values and its contributions to humanity.<sup>1</sup>

Another factor of adjustment talked about but often overlooked is the coping an immigrant child must engage in with respect to his social environment or the social factor. Feelings of alienation and anonymity accompany the child. In the case of the West Indian child such things as differing family arrangements, racial prejudice, differing patterns of educational expectations all contribute to a resultant confusion, bewilderment, powerlessness and estrangement in the social adjustment of the child. (Bhatnagar, 1970, Townsend, 1971)

Based on the findings of the problems of immigrant students, it is presumed that students with a feeling of estrangement, bewilderment, loneliness and powerlessness need to be assured by their teachers that there is a mutual constructive link between them. This is reflected in a statement by Professor of Education, James A. Banks. He states

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<sup>1</sup>Charles L. Caccia. "Immigrant Education and Multiculturalism," in Aaron Wolfgang, Ed., op. cit. p. 199.

Teachers must help ethnic minority students to augment their self-concepts, to feel more positively toward their own cultures, to develop a sense of political efficacy and to master strategies which will enable them to liberate themselves from physical and psychological oppression.<sup>1</sup>

#### Purpose of Study

The problems of immigrant education are well-defined. Also, efforts made to address these problems have been well-conceived and well-intended. The purpose of this study then, is to offer another approach to present discussions in immigrant education, based upon a dialogical model of curriculum design.

#### Curriculum Reforms in Immigrant Education

##### Compensatory Programs: Language

Many attribute the poor academic achievement and social adjustment of immigrant students to difficulties with the language. T.E.S.L. (Teaching English as a Second Language) programs are designed to give children with language deficiencies assistance and special instruction (Stasiuk, 1976). Here the teacher is expert in the subject-matter and has specific objectives in mind that the student

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<sup>1</sup>James A. Banks, "Racism in Ethnic Education," in Curriculum: Quest for Relevance, William Van Til, Ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974), p. 286.

is to learn as a result of institution.

#### Counselling Programs: Community Links

Some school boards (Toronto) have instituted special counselling programs in which they attempt to connect the ethnic communities with the school in order to deal with the students' problems.

(Caccia, 1975). The aim is to form an axis from which to generate a spirit of cooperation in order that all involved mutually understand the problems each faces dealing with the immigrant child.

#### Curriculum Modification: Elective Ethnic Studies

There have been attempts to multiculturalize existing curricula. Two basic ways have been the 'separate' approach and the 'integrated' approach. 'Elective Ethnic' studies courses come under the separate approach and one argument is that it only momentarily meets the need of a few students. Another type of separate approach is the incorporation of multicultural units into existing units. This approach is criticized for its tendency to fragment the subject disciplines (Trevino, 1975).

These projects may also serve as examples of different models for curriculum development based on the idea that various theorizing in curriculum can be better understood in terms of the value concerns that comprise its "basic referents." James B. MacDonald, curriculum theorist, discusses how value priorities determine the basic referents of any curriculum:

... subject matter curricula are sets of value judgements that prize knowledge (cultural heritage) over social uses (or personal interests). Problems of living designs prize society first; and emerging needs proposals have individual welfare primarily in mind.

Drawing from the work of Jurgen Habermas, German social philosopher, MacDonald shows how an understanding of the value problems of curriculum can be improved by transcending what he refers to as the "problems of objectivism and scientism."

#### The Problems of Objectivism and Scientism

He understands objectivism to be the attempt to deal with matters of human concern as if there were objective, law-like structures that could be objectively observed and explained, capable of being viewed in a value-free context. Scientism is the "overriding concern for methodology that follows an objectivist stance".<sup>2</sup>

In other words there is the belief that if we employ the "scientific method" to social or human problems we will automatically discover the facts that will comprise the basis for future explanation, prediction and control of human events. MacDonald discusses

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<sup>1</sup>James B. MacDonald, "Curriculum and Human Interests," in Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists William Pinar, Ed., (Berkeley, California: McCutchan Publishing Corp., 1975), p. 284.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 288.

Habermas' critique of another methodology that falls prey to a shortcoming - that of the hermeneutic or interpretive methodologies that seek an understanding of human events in "the context of different cultural life expressions such as ordinary language, human actions and nonverbal expressions". He continues, "the interpretation of meaning in hermeneutic understanding depends on a reciprocal relation between 'parts' and a diffusely pre-understood 'whole' and the correction of the preliminary concept by means of the parts".<sup>1</sup>

Since the hermeneutic sciences "cannot be either logically deduced or empirically demonstrated,"<sup>2</sup> they too deny an adequate understanding of human events. As MacDonald notes, Habermas proposes a third science that "will begin to transcend the problems of objectivism and scientism."<sup>3</sup> Such a science would be self-reflective, and he cites psychoanalysis as an example of a process of knowing that transcends the problems of objectivism and scientism. He iterates;

...fundamental to the whole argument here is the assertion that all knowledge is grounded in human interest. This interest may be fundamental self-preservation, but even self-preservation cannot be defined independently of the cultural conditions of work, language and power. Thus, self-preservation becomes preservation of one's fantasy of the 'good life'. Thus the morality of human interest

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



enters as a meaning structure served by knowledge and nicely caught by Bertrand Russell's comment 'without civic morality communities perish without personal morality their survival has no value'. In either case knowledge is at the service of our interests.

From this analysis, MacDonald (paraphrasing Habermas) shows how three human interests emerge:

1. a technical cognitive interest in control underlying the empirical-analytic approach;
2. a practical cognitive interest in consensus underlying the hermeneutic-historical approach; and
3. a critical cognitive interest in emancipation or liberation underlying the self-reflective approach.

Following this, MacDonald reasons that since curriculum is based upon varying theories of knowledge, and since Habermas has provided us with a theory of knowledge, it is reasonable to apply these ideas to the "fundamental activity of curriculum thinking".<sup>2</sup> He then proceeds to propose three basic cognitive interests as basic sources of value differences in curriculum--

1. control
2. consensus
3. emancipation

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 289.

In terms of MacDonald's application of Habermas' outline of cognitive interests, it is possible then, to analyze current reforms in immigrant education in similar fashion.

MacDonald presents three curriculum models; the "Linear-Expert" model; the "Circular Consensus" model and the "Dialogical" model. He argues that the Linear-Expert model is one in which experts initiate and prepare materials to be tried out, fed back to them and then revised for distribution; and it is the expert who makes the initial and final decisions about the validity of the content and process. This is similar to the "compensatory programs" in language instruction.

He argues that the Circular Consensus model seeks to engage the local school staff in clarifying and specifying aspects of the curriculum; and that the approach requires considerable faith in the use of group process and the conviction that unless teachers are centrally involved in the process of curriculum development, documents, tests and materials will be misused or relatively meaningless. (MacDonald, 1974). This model is exemplified in the "Counselling programs" that establish community links.

What is evident in these two models is that, the experts are involved, the teachers are involved, but the student plays no part in planning the programmes. Student involvement in the planning of their programmes has been a regular theme of discussion since the thirties, but rarely found in programs aimed at immigrant education. The dialogical model, on the other hand, "actively

involves students in curriculum development".<sup>1</sup>

### A Dialogical Model for Immigrant Education

This model is based on the active involvement of the student in curriculum development through an investigation of his thinking. The process is based upon the constitutive dimension of dialogue--namely, the production of reflection and action through interaction. MacDonald describes the approach:

In general, this approach would follow from the idea that leaders (staff and other adults) would identify student leaders and with their help try to find major ways of providing a "match" between the cultural resources the adults know about and the needs and interests of students.

General curriculum themes or topics would be prepared by leaders who would engage students in dialogue, and the worth and direction of this material would be validated and verified by each student in his own self-reflection<sup>2</sup>

An illustration of this model in action can be found in the literacy programs developed in Brazil by Paulo Freire. Freire describes the rationale and methodology of dialogic education in his book Pedagogy of the Oppressed<sup>3</sup>. Here he argues that education should be liberating. Limitations to a critical understanding of

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<sup>1</sup>MacDonald, op. cit., p. 293.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, (New York; The Seabury Press, September, 1973), p. 75-84.

a person's reality is unnecessary, constraining and oppressive, thereby preventing a person from living a more full existence.

### The Pedagogy

Freire's approach can be explained in terms of five main phases: (1) the existential situation; (2) thematic investigation; (3) decoding and evaluation; (4) thematic classification and demarcation; (5) problem-posing/problem-solving.

#### (1) The Existential Situation

The 'starting point' according to Freire is the present and concrete situation of the student and teachers. The program content should reflect the 'doubts, hopes and fears' as well as the aspirations of those involved. It should evoke also a desire to act upon the situation described. Freire asserts, "...we must pose this existential, concrete, present situation to the people as a problem which challenges them and requires a response--not just at the intellectual level, but at the level of action."

#### (2) Thematic Investigation

"Themes" represent the tangible as well as conceptual bases for human relations. Freire describes their character:

An epoch is characterized by a complex of ideas, concepts, hopes, doubts, values, and challenges

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

in dialectical interaction with their opposites, striving towards plenitude. The concrete representation of many of these ideas, values, concepts and hopes, as well as the obstacles which impede man's full humanization constitute the themes of that epic. These themes imply others which are opposing or even antithetical; they also indicate tasks to be carried out and fulfilled. Thus, historical themes are never isolated, independent, disconnected, or static; they are ways of interacting dialectically with their opposites. Nor can these themes be found anywhere except in the men-world relationship.<sup>1</sup>

The themes on one's existence, that prevent a more full existence, are usually embedded, concealed from one's conscious awareness or not fully recognized or perceived. It is the task of the educator to help disclose and unravel those themes in order that the people constrained by the lack of knowledge of its limiting nature may be freed or liberated. As Freire notes:

Thematic investigation thus becomes a common striving towards awareness of reality and towards self-awareness, which makes this investigation a starting point for the educational process or for cultural action of a liberating character.<sup>2</sup>

Themes are generated by reflecting upon the nature of the experience one is having in his present situation. The goal is to deepen awareness and emerge from "enveloping reality or a tormenting blind alley" with the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled. Freire refers to the results of such an emergence as "conscientizacao".

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 91-92.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

Once themes can be identified they are linked in concentric circles moving from the general to the particular. Freire illustrates this notion by discussing what he considers to be the "Fundamental theme of our epoch".

...that of domination.... which implies its opposite, the theme of liberation, as the objective to be achieved....In order to achieve humanization, which presupposes the elimination of dehumanizing oppression, it is absolutely necessary to surmount the limit-situations in which men are reduced to things. Within the smaller circles, we find themes and limit situations characteristic of societies (on the same continent or on different continents) which through these themes and limit-situations share historical similarities.

For example, underdevelopment, which cannot be understood apart from the relationship of dependency represents a limit situation characteristic of societies of the Third World. The task implied by this limit-situation is to overcome the contradictory relations of these 'object' societies to the metropolitan societies; this task constitutes the untested feasibility for the Third World.

---within yet smaller circles, thematic diversifications can be found within the same society, divided into areas and sub-areas all of which are related to the societal whole. These constitute epochal sub-units. For example, within the same national unit one can find the contradiction of the 'co-existence of the non-contemporaneous'.

Within these sub-units, national themes may or may not be perceived in their true significance. They may simply be felt--sometimes not even that. But the non-existence of themes within the sub-units is absolutely impossible.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 93-94.

### (3) Decoding and Evaluation

A "coded" situation Freire explains as that experience of the person that is "only diffusely apprehended". Decoding involves taking apart or analyzing critically the coded situation. It is at this phase that the process moves in two directions simultaneously--moving from the conceptual or abstract to the tangible and concrete, linking concentric themes and also moving dialectically from the theme to its contradiction. Freire explains:

....'decoding' requires moving from the abstract to the concrete; this requires moving from the part to the whole and then returning to the parts; this in turn requires that the Subject recognize himself in the object (the coded concrete existential situation in which he finds himself, together with other Subjects.) If the decoding is well done this movement of flux and reflux from the abstract to the concrete which occurs in the analysis of a coded situation leads to the supercedence of the abstraction by the critical perception of the concrete, which has already ceased to be a dense, impenetrable reality.

These two phases are preparation for the next, and incomplete, perhaps inconsequential without it.

### (4) Thematic Classification and Demarcation

Themes, during this phase, are organized in terms of related 'fans' of relationships and interpenetration. These 'fans' begin to stimulate the participants' previous and present perception of their situations and are clarified. These become the basis for

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

the content of the educational program.

(5) Problem-posing/Problem-solving

"The thematics which have come from the people return to them--not as contents to be deposited, but as problems to be solved".<sup>1</sup> The participants at this phase recognize and search for ways to resolve the problems they have posed. Freire points out:

The important thing from the view of liberation education, is for men to come to feel like masters of their thinking by discussing the thinking and views of the world explicitly or implicitly manifest in their own suggestions and those of their comrades. Because this view of education starts with the conviction that it cannot present its own program but must search for this program dialogically with the people, it serves to introduce the pedagogy of the oppressed, in the elaboration of which the oppressed must participate.<sup>2</sup>

Earlier, studies were cited that demonstrated the fact that immigrant children in schools feel bewildered,<sup>3</sup> estranged, friendless, and powerless. Also, it was shown how most programs on multi-cultural education are designed for and not by and with immigrants. The dialogical model is designed to address both issues as the basis for curriculum planning.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 118.



## CHAPTER II

### "IDENTITY" AS A GENERATIVE THEME: AN ILLUSTRATION

A generative theme in immigrant education is that of identity. When an individual is faced with the disruptive force of a new situation, he is also faced with such questions as "Who am I?", "What is my culture?", "Where do I fit?". The purpose of this chapter is to explore the concept of "identity" in preparation for its presentation as a starting point for thematic investigation. It is not to be viewed as a working hypothesis to be proved, but rather as a concept to be discussed in terms of the existential situation in which many individuals find themselves. The methodology for eliciting the views of those queried ought not be criticized for its lack of objectivity or scientific generalizability, for that was not the purpose of the exercise. It should be viewed rather as a sample of the kind of results that are possible during interaction, when an idea discussed evokes responses, not definitive, but rather suggestive of the bases upon which a coded situation could emerge and of the ways in which a leader/teacher would need to prepare for a dialogic encounter.

This section then, is an illustration of a dialogic approach to immigrant education. The work of Paulo Freire is used as the organizer with modifications adapted to the school setting. The five main phases of his approach will serve as the basis for discussion. Any ethnic group could have been chosen as a basis for study. The experience, context and situations of Jamaican immigrants have been selected however, to demonstrate the applica-

bility of the model.

#### Phase I The Existential Situation

In order to get a 'starting point' for an educational program for immigrants it is necessary to begin in the present, concrete situation of the student and teachers. The following is an example of what a teacher might do when confronted with people with whom she must build a curriculum. In the case of Jamaican students, the theme that recurs, not only, in empirical studies (Miller, 1973) but in conversations, is the theme of identity. How does one find out the hopes, fears, doubts and aspirations of those involved? Ask them.

In my attempt to locate and identify the constant features of the Jamaican identity, I interviewed fourteen Jamaicans, and seven non-Jamaicans who have associated with Jamaicans in Canada and/or in Jamaica.

The Jamaicans include five teachers presently employed in three high schools; two university undergraduates; four domestic workers; a business executive; a pharmacist; a stenotypist and an artist who lives in New York, but was on holiday in Montreal when interviewed. The non-Jamaicans include a housewife, two teachers, a photographer, an active professor in one of our universities. He says that although he taught many Jamaican students, his knowledge of the people stems mostly from his holidays on the island. The next is a Baharian undergraduate who says he has been listening to

Jamaican artist-singer Bob Marley for over ten years and has learned much of the culture through Marley's lyricism.

In addition to the interviews two works were relevant to securing more background. These are: Mirror, Mirror: Identity: Race and Protest in Jamaica and Jamaica the Search for an Identity.

In the first the author - R.M. Nettleford, shows that Jamaica's search for identity cannot be separated from her history and colonial years. In the second, K. Norris relates the resulting search to attitudes rooted in ancestral origin. These works are correlated with the interviews to exemplify some of the constant features that mark the Jamaican identity as a generative theme.

Nettleford states that "it is difficult to determine what exactly is meant by the term 'the Jamaican identity' (but) it is variously expressed as 'things Jamaican' or the 'Jamaican image'".<sup>1</sup> That difficulty was also voiced in the interviews.

On being asked "what does it mean to be Jamaican?" two teachers prefaced their replies with the remarks: "It is very difficult to define..." and "O dear! difficult!". One of the domestic workers said, "dat's hard; but anyway...".

Although there is that difficulty, Jamaicans showed an awareness of certain things that are special about themselves. The business executive said that:-

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<sup>1</sup> Rex M. Nettleford, Mirror, Mirror: Identity: Race and Protest in Jamaica. (William Collin and Sangster, Jamaica Ltd.).

"outside of Jamaica, you (Jamaicans) should carry with you some qualities of Jamaica..., be aware of the life-style... and do not depart from the Jamaican society."

And in response to the above question, he recalled the times of his early arrival in Canada, when as a new undergraduate student he recognized Jamaicans in his class, because they displayed some of those qualities.

Warmth and friendship, love and understanding are some of those qualities to which he referred. He said that:-

"Jamaicans are a pleasant set of people; they always greet you warmly, say 'hi, how are you?' and easily make an acquaintance."

To the same question one of the domestic workers replied:-

"to be Jamaican is to be intelligent, lovin' and kine."

The artist responded:

"a Jamaican is open with love and understanding... Jamaicans are very loving people; you can talk to them and they will understand you."

And the teacher who doubted her ability to define what is really means to be a Jamaican said:

"...certainly Jamaicans are warm, friendly people."

One of the university undergraduates described the warmth and friendliness of Jamaicans in the following way:

"Mrs. Quebec will meet Mrs. Ottawa on the street, and there is just that unaffectionate 'hello,' and they're gone. But when the real Jamaican meet Jamaican it is, 'wha happen child, dis lang time gal me no see you, meck we hug an kiss; an wen you come ova me yawd? You can come now?...' I mean that is the sort of warmth expressed by Jamaicans. They are warm in every sense of the word warm."

The professor said that when he visited Jamaica,

"(he) had the opportunity of meeting many people...  
One thing that I would say is common, is the  
warmth of the people."

One of the West Indian (not Jamaican) teachers hoped that those  
qualities will continue among Jamaicans. He said that:

"the warmth of the people and the way they  
extend their hands in friendship to new-  
comers particularly, without reservations,  
making new immigrants feel at home and like a  
human being, are aspects that Jamaicans should  
maintain (because) such aspects make them special  
and separate from all other West Indians as well  
as Canadians."

Nettleford argues that to be a Jamaican is to be in a rather "peculiar  
position" because,

We are neither Africans though most of us are  
black, nor are we Anglo-Saxons though some of us  
would have others to believe this. We are  
Jamaicans!... (which is) based on tolerance,  
(and which is) the thing which is supposed to  
make Jamaicans distinct from (other nations).

Comparisons were constantly made between Jamaicans and non-  
Jamaicans as those interviewed expressed their perceptions of some  
of the concepts that identify Jamaicans, but which are common to both  
Jamaicans and non-Jamaicans. On the common concept of friendship,  
the business executive said that what he experiences from some non-  
Jamaicans here is not friendship, but something more of a "patronizing  
nature". He added that:-

in Jamaica you visit your friend anytime...and he  
(your friend) would never thought that you came  
just because you want something... Here, if you  
didn't see someone... (for some time) and call

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Nettleford, op. cit., p. 23.

to say a warm greeting, the attitude is, 'I wonder what he wants now?'."

One of the teachers said that his friendship with his pupils is different from his friendship with adults. Therefore, he based the comparison on friendship from an adult vis-à-vis adult perspective. He said that:

"from the Jamaican standpoint, friendship is togetherness; wanting to know that somebody is close to you; expecting the person to ask you a favor... For example, if my friend should call and say, 'my car cop out,' I'd feel a moral obligation to go and help him. Here you call your neighbour who says he's your friend and he says, 'did you call the tow-truck?'"

I gathered that that was a common feeling among Jamaicans. Hence it was not surprising that the teacher who exclaimed, "O dear! difficult!" when asked the first question, unhesitatingly responded to the question "Do you have non-Jamaican friends?" with:-

"O yes. I do have some non-Jamaican friends. But when you live away from home it is necessary to find other Jamaicans to carry on the warmth and friendship."

She added

"I feel very relaxed when I'm with Jamaican friends. I feel relaxed too among non-Jamaicans..., but I look differently... I tell myself that 'I just have to fix my headspace'."

"Sharing" was expressed as another of those qualities that characterise Jamaicans. The professor noted about "five" situations in which he noticed the "degree to which Jamaicans share". He gave an account of one of the situations in which he observed the Jamaican

attitude to sharing. He said that:-

"(He) and his parents have three very close Jamaican friends... For Christmas we took them chickens, some hard-dough bread, (and) bags of candies for the kids. And all the stuff was shared with their immediate friends... Sharing is a constant thing there."

The non-Jamaican West Indian teacher said,

"During my first year here, Jamaicans took me under their wings; and while I was still at school, they saw to it that I didn't go hungry for long."

And the Canadian teacher, who also employs a Jamaican domestic helper, said that:-

"they are always willing to share their ideas; especially Miss (she named a Jamaican teacher with whom she works)...., and ....(her maid) always sends a part of her salary home to aid her family."

Among the professor's experiences in Jamaica, was one that vibrated not only with the practice of sharing but with a simple but significant Jamaican ethical value. He said that one of his friends in Jamaica whom he did not think earned more than twenty dollars per week, would not allow him to pay for anything if he (the friend) invited him out.

"He's very proud, and I'm proud that he is proud, but I felt concerned because my earning potential is so much higher than his...but he insisted so I didn't argue (he said)."

If the professor told that incident to the business executive, his comment would have been:-

"if in Jamaica I say to my friend, 'What you drinking man?' and he say 'rum', we go to the bar and whatever the bill is, it's my responsibility. We would take it as an insult if the other person tries to pay."

Norris explained that the act of sharing is a definite part of the Jamaican morality. She said that:-

(although) long periods of unemployment, eviction and other disasters can afflict a family, no one will go hungry as long as a neighbour or a cousin has a meal to spare... The Jamaican constantly belittles his own people, yet displays a neighbourliness and a generosity to them which puts the morality of a more sophisticated society to shame.

Many will agree that warmth and love, friendship, understanding and sharing are significant necessities of a happy family. Hence, it seems quite natural that an attachment to the family was expressed as another characteristic feature of the Jamaican identity. The photographer, who married a Jamaican, said he finds it difficult to stop her from "pining at every little bit of bad news from Jamaica". "But", he said,

"she is not the only one... they all go home often; they have very strong ties at home. I think the family is very important to them."

A male Jamaican teacher said that he thinks the "major difference" between Canadians and Jamaicans is their attitude towards the family. He said,

"I might be wrong... but when Canadian parents or grand-parents become old, there doesn't



seem to be that closeness... We (Jamaicans) feel responsible for our parents and grandparents."

That is closely related to the argument given by the executive.

He said,

"there is no place in this country for old people... As soon as parents get old here, the children pay any amount of money to keep them in a nursing home... In Jamaica you nurse your parents... and it is an honour to know that you can retain the friendship of your parents even if they live to a hundred; and you have to do everything for them."

Other comparable expressions showed examples of relationships between adults and children. For example, one teacher said that:-

"the way I bring up my children would be as I was taught in Jamaica."

I found it most interesting to present the next comparison as it was expressed by some domestic workers.

Speakers

- A. "Here they don't discipline their kids. Back home we are disciplined. Here when they do anything, dey don't scol' dem; dey laugh."
- B. ----, tell her about what de little boy do to you."
- C. "Yes, de first job me get, de little bway hawk-an-spit in his plate, everybody round de table. So I said; ----, dat's naughty; you mussen do dat. Hear him; 'take your tongue and lick it up'. Tears full mi eyes."

Inter-viewer: "What did his parents say about that?"

C. "Nutten. Dem laugh!"

Interv: "Did you work with children in Jamaica?"

- C. "I work wid a lot of children in Jamaica, and nutten like dat never happen. Because dey are different."

The members of the group all agreed that:-

"Canadian children tell dem parents anyting dat come to dem mout', even after de parents give dem everyting on a platter; (whereas) in Jamaica you betta work fi dat. Furthermore, (another added) you can't say 'fuck' to dem."

The response to that was:-

"What! You crazy? nat even a dead stranga; as long as is you elda, you cannot tell dem a word dat is undecent."

Comparison was again used to describe the behavior of Jamaican school children. One teacher said they behave "worse" than Canadian children, and "worse" here than they would behave in Jamaica. For example, she explained:

"Here, they tend to use a lot of Jamaican bad words, because Canadian teachers don't know what they mean. Even when Jamaican teachers are around they still use those bad words... When we try to correct them they say... 'we are not in Jamaica'."

I asked if acquainting Canadian teachers with those words would improve the discipline. She replied that she thought so; and she had told the Principal that such words are terrible and would not be allowed in Jamaican schools.

Comparison also featured between Canadian education and Jamaican education. The photographer said that Jamaicans "don't have a language problem. They come here with an education (which is) very similar to the education you get here."

The executive who has two children in high schools here said:-

"the general idea among Jamaicans is that the education standard here is higher (than that of Jamaica). It is not... nor is it different... The only thing that makes the difference is the French, because of which the child sometimes have to remain behind for a year... Another thing..., the way English is taught here, it's really hard for the child to learn English... Kids in English high schools... don't know a noun, a verb - parts of speech in general... In Jamaica we do English... you are able to distinguish the parts of speech even if you're sleeping."

"A sincere concern about God and religion," which the professor said he observed in Jamaica, was also expressed as a constant feature that identified Jamaicans.

Christianity through missionaries is a historical aspect of most of the Caribbean islands. Jamaica has never been without its religious leaders. And although she now boasts many sons of the soil among her ministers, originally they were all foreigners, mostly from England. Norris records that,

the white Jamaicans, who in 1775 were outnumbered fifteen to one by their slaves, were constantly in fear... A 'taming' influence had been the Christian religion. Moravian missionaries arrived in 1754 and were followed by Wesleyans and Baptists... A deep religious tradition developed....<sup>1</sup>

Hence, it might even be that the humane qualities, attitudes towards "bad" words and even Jamaicans' knowledge of "de bes English" are firmly planted on religious grounds.

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<sup>1</sup>K. Norris, op. cit., pp. 3, 4, 15.

The professor first observed the religious nature of Jamaicans on a flight to the island. During the flight, he helped an elderly lady with her travel document and her luggage. In expressing her thanks, she told him that because she had to travel without her sister for the first time, God had provided him to help her. He said that while he was staying in Jamaica he found other evidence of the reliance on God.

The religious inclination of Jamaicans is also observed in Montreal. Expressions on this part of the identity may be summed up in the photographer's comment:-

"I find very strong religious feelings among them here. Sometimes on a Sunday, I see them all dolled up, going to church."

A part of Jamaica's "artistic talent" roles through a type of music that has become a positive vibration of the Jamaican-identity. Nettleford had the occasion to say that,

Romantic classical ballet (with all its colonial class and colour connotations) is likely to remain for some a permanent yardstick for all movement patterns...among a people who cannot keep a rigid back, and who may wish to have their movements explode...from the regions of the pelvis rather than through extended arms and legs. Music is judged by the capacity to play indifferently... such status instruments as violin, the piano and the cello; while the drum is regarded as base, bastard unsubtle and incapable of music.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>R. Nettleford, op cit., pp. 193-194.

Nettleford's comment is useful here because it shows the musical transition that has taken place since then. He would undoubtedly be happy to know that it is not the kind of Jamaican music he described which the Baharian students associates with the Jamaican culture, but the sounds of "Count Ossie", the Rastafarian Drummer and of Bob Marley. It is also popular among Jamaicans. The business executive said,

"Jamaicans have created their own kind of music...  
Go to any Jamaican home, or his car, and you'll  
find him listening to the reggae music..."

One of the teachers said,

"I think the reggae music is a very dynamic force among Jamaicans. That is one thing I feel Jamaicans will take with them everywhere they go. This seems to be strongly reflected. As a matter of fact, it has really touched non-Jamaicans to a very large extent."

That the reggae music seems to have touched non-Jamaicans, may be exemplified by Baharian Mosa's reaction to it. Mosa said,

"I have almost all Bob Marley's records. I have never been to Jamaica, but I know the names of many places there. I know "Babylon", and the politics of Jamaica. Bob Marley puts it all in the songs. And where he goes, he carries his culture with him, his clothes are simple; he has humility. I also associate the joint with Rastafarian brethren and the music. Marley's music not only covers Jamaica, it covers details of life. Take for example, 'Rat-race'; he said:

'O what a disgrace  
To see the human race.  
In a rat-race."

Marley the 'Mighty Dread' is a master of poetry. All his songs are spiritual. Take this one for example,

'Until the philosophy which holds  
One race superior and another

inferior is finally and permanently abandoned, there is a war.'  
He sings about love. Marley is heavy; the reggae music is dynamic."

Jamaican music, food and language were expressed by both Jamaicans and non-Jamaicans as common features of the identity. Even short responses to what is most common to Jamaica were:-

"we music; we food"; and, "knowin' de same language."

as the domestic workers expressed. In addition to "our own lingo" which the executive said is common among Jamaicans, he said,

"...another thing is the Jamaican food... On a Sunday morning they want to have the old ackee and salt-fish... Whenever you go to a party and see the old curry-goat and rice, you can say, 'this is a Jamaican party'."

The pharmacist said that,

"Jamaican kids would surely carry with them, the Jamaican patois that we usually talk. Some people would say 'dialect'; like, for 'come here' we would say 'com yah', and right away we would know they are Jamaican kids."

The responses to that question could be summed up in one teacher's expression that:

"the dialect we speak is common among us; and the food we eat and the way we cook it."

Or expanded in the undergraduate's expression:-

"Meck me tell you how ih go.... the down-to-earth Jamaican would say, 'you waan fi hear what me ha fe tell you? Awright. Pull chair, sidung an meck we talk... Firse, de food...' You can always walk into the average Jamaican home any Sunday and look for dat rice-am-peas. If de chicken can't make it to the table, de rice-am-peas is right there... Reggae music is recognized internationally..."

Jamaicans are very anglicized but they also know the Jamaican dialect... Irregardless of what section of Jamaica you are from, what class you belong to, everybody knows it... the politicians speak it... all speak it; but of course it depends on the circumstances."

That using patios/dialect depends on the circumstances was seen in the expression of one of the Jamaican teachers. Although she said that,

"English teachers have a hard time trying to figure out what the children who speak that broad patois are saying; (so) the teachers tend to think they are stupid and they go down to a technical class because they (the teachers) cannot understand what they are saying, because they don't talk proper, proper English",

when I asked her if she thought the patois should be exposed in Canadian schools she responded:-

"it wouldn't help them here... they can speak patois with their friends; but when dealing with Canadians, you shouldn't speak patois."

Since the patois is such an outstanding feature of the identity, it seems justifiable to explain what the "language" is, how it possibly originated and how it has affected the Jamaican education system. From Norris' account, it originated from slavery. She describes it as "the modern peasant vernacular incomprehensible to the untrained ear."<sup>1</sup> She said, however, that,

it is a richly expressive language with song, folklore, grammar and imagery of its own. A few African words have survived... but most of the vocabulary and expressions are built round the Jamaican folkscene and its numerous colourful proverbs.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Norris, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

She describes English and patois (which she calls "Jamaican") as two languages, and said that for a long time that fact was ignored by Jamaican educators. She explained that Jamaican children who spoke patois, had difficulty in following lessons in English, with school books written for English children. Hence, they did not benefit fully from the efforts made to educate them.

In contrast, other Jamaican children spoke English in their homes. They benefit more than their patois-speaking contemporaries; and also have it easier when both they and their contemporaries sat and wrote the same examinations written in English.

Norris' argument implies that the patois caused a problem in the Jamaican education system and the teacher's argument showed that it has caused problems in the Canadian school where she works.

I asked the housewife if her Jamaican helper uses the patois. Quite humourously she replied,

"yes. And when I hear her speaking it on the phone, I know she is talking secrets. It doesn't bother me."

The reggae music that identifies Jamaica, is inextricably linked with members of a cult group in Jamaica - the Rastafarians. Hence, in spite of the role of the music, some Jamaicans feel that Rastafarians are central to the negative side of the Jamaican identity. One feature that identifies many Jamaicans is a deep-rooted concern for a positive identity of Jamaica abroad. This can be exemplified with a lament from one of the teachers. She said,



"one thing that bothers me... is the bad image which some of our number have created; and this image is being spread throughout the larger community... Consequently, Jamaicans have a very bad name... in the Canadian society... A group who refer to themselves, I think incorrectly, as Rastafarians... have a strange attitude towards society. They are resentful of anybody who is different from them...; they refer to anybody who is not one of them as pro-establishment... They have a language of their own; and a whole mental attitude that is different. They are slowly destroying the good name of Jamaica abroad."

But there were conflicting opinions about Rastafarians. Another teacher said:-

"I'm not saying there is anything wrong with Rastas... these fellows here are not Rastas...; they just are a bad group wanting a group to fall back on...; and they are parasites on the society."

One of the non-Jamaican teachers said:-

"People who call themselves Rastas here, don't know what Rastafarian cult stands for. There seems to be a band wagon effects and if a lot of those who, let's say, grow their hair in a certain way were asked about their belief as Rastafarian..., what they'd say would be very different from Rastafarians in Jamaica."

One of the domestic workers said:-

"de rasta dem proud! Maan... is pure college-train guys ena Rasta now."

And when the professor helped his parents on one of his visits, he had the opportunity to associate with a Rastafarian. He said:-

"He's a plumber... we never got into politics... they seem to have a different philosophy about everything... We both worked together in getting a job done."

Another Jamaican teacher said he "wouldn't regard the Rastafarian movement as any part of the general identity of Jamaica," because:

"... it's just a sub-culture within the Jamaican society, (and) it's a small percentage of the people who develop this sort of philosophy about life, and although the reggae music is dominant, only a few people like Bob Marley and Peter Tosh have made it to the top."

Although the Rastafarians might be a small percentage of the Jamaican populace, the foregoing conflicting opinions and the subsequent expressions from the business executive and Nettleford show that they cannot be exempted from the identity of contemporary Jamaica. The executive said that:-

"People have the wrong impression of Rastafarians... They think that they are just a miserable, no-good cult. But the foundation of Rastafarian is built on L-O-V-E. All he preaches is love... but there are imposters... The true Rastafarian thinks "black"...., he is thinking too of the Jamaican motto... I might be wring... but I don't think anybody has done more for the Jamaican identity than these Rastafarians;"

and Nettleford records that:-

Jamaica's multi-racial nationalism... (which sought to prescribe the island's identity) met its fiercest and most positive antagonism from the black activist Rastafarian movement.

A group from the University of the West Indies studied the Rastafarians in 1960. The researchers found that some Rastafarians were committed to political and military struggle, others were revivalists in orientation, others were quietists, but all were

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<sup>1</sup> Nettleford, op. cit., p. 41.

deeply involved in their "prime concern - deprivation and poverty". It was found that Rastafarians were "revolutionary" in their identification of "basic incongruities" in the out-dated colonial power structure. They gave expression to their revolutionary spirit by a psychological withdrawal from the wider society, and clamoured to be repatriated to "Africa" which they regard as their ancestral home.

The tenets of the Rastafarian doctrine "posed fundamental threats" to the "Jamaicanism" of the time; and the reactions and attitudes of the wider society made them outcasts.

Yet the role of the Rastafarian movement has been a dynamic one in the wider society of which it is really a part. Many of the ideas and much of the mood of this group have seemingly passed on to the younger generation at large... and by the late sixties there was much more widespread embrace of Rastafarian attitudes, ideals and even practices among bona fide members of the wider society."<sup>1</sup>

In a previous quotation from Nettleford, the multiracial nature of Jamaica was implied. It is also implied in the motto, which is the national symbol of identity.<sup>2</sup> The Jamaicans interviewed were asked if the motto means anything to them in Canada. Summarised, the responses were:-

"Jamaicans are Jamaicans though we may be of different origins." (Teacher)

"We are many races." (Pharmacist)

"You name them; they are there." (Steno-typist)

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> The Jamaican motto is "Out of Many One People".

"Black, pink, yellow, polka-dots; every colour you can think of." (Undergraduate)

"White, black, green we all are one people. Dat's what de motto form out of; we are all de same colour don't matter." (Domestic worker)

"Chinese, black man, European, all have one spirit." (Business Executive)

"(And) the motto is very significant in adjusting to the multi-cultural society that exists in Canada." (Teacher)

Norris and Nettleford imply that the Jamaican identity could not be founded on any one race, especially because, as Nettleford states,

Race presupposes a biological purity which is difficult to justify;... and claims to such a biological purity are not absent from the Jamaican society.

#### Summary: Identity As a Theme

The contradictions faced when first arriving and adapting to a Canadian experience centered around two major areas: interpersonal relationships and language. The Jamaican experienced a particular kind of fellowship and friendship in Jamaica. His experience in Canada was antithetical to that. The language, although structured around English, was misinterpreted to reflect an illiterate or one with an inferior background. It would be mere speculation to offer explanations as to why these occur. The concern

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

here is to note that they do occur. The point to be made is to accept these contradictions in experience as the basis for an educational program.

CHAPTER III  
THEMATIC INVESTIGATION THROUGH  
DIALOGUE ON LITERATURE

It is significant to note that Freire did his work with illiterate Brazilian peasants and derived his form of schooling as an alternative to the "formal" schooling to which the peasants had little or no access. What is being suggested in this study is a modification to Freire's model in terms of working inside the school system. We have schools and children inside them - children who seldom can avail themselves of "alternative" methods or forms of schooling similar to the kind that Freire developed. Therefore it is necessary to find ways to work within the system and offer alternatives that can fit the existing model without too much disruption. For these reasons the present illustrative case is offered; to show the applicability of a different approach within an existing system. As a model of curriculum development, it can be most appropriately fitted into an existing English program at the high school/CEGEP level.

Phase II Thematic Investigation  
of the Coded Situation

The goal of thematic investigation, it will be recalled, is to deepen awareness of an existing situation and help those involved to develop the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled. The concentric circles of the generative theme of identity are

linked below, moving from the general to the particular. These circles serve as an example of the way in which a teacher would organize a program of study based on the dialogue encountered with her student/Subjects.

The outside circle represents the general problem -- a cultural mismatch between Jamaicans in Canadian context. This implies its opposite, that of a cultural match between Jamaicans and a Canadian context. The theme of identity has as its objective, the achievement of a recognition of one's worth, value, place and common bond, as well as his distinctiveness and unique style, within his/her self and community. It presupposes the elimination of prejudice, intolerance, ignorance and apathy. The limit-situation which has to be surmounted is the mutual lack of understanding that characterizes centers of ethnocentricity. These centers, whether in the larger community or inside the classroom itself must be reproached and transcended and the larger human condition must be disclosed, examined and known.

In the beginning the 'situation' is only partially understood by the students and teacher alike. The next situation illustrates how a teacher could help decode and evaluate the situation through a discussion of similar themes in Jamaican literature. The literature of the people in question is chosen because it more closely reflects the tangible, concrete present. The larger human condition emerges through dialogue.

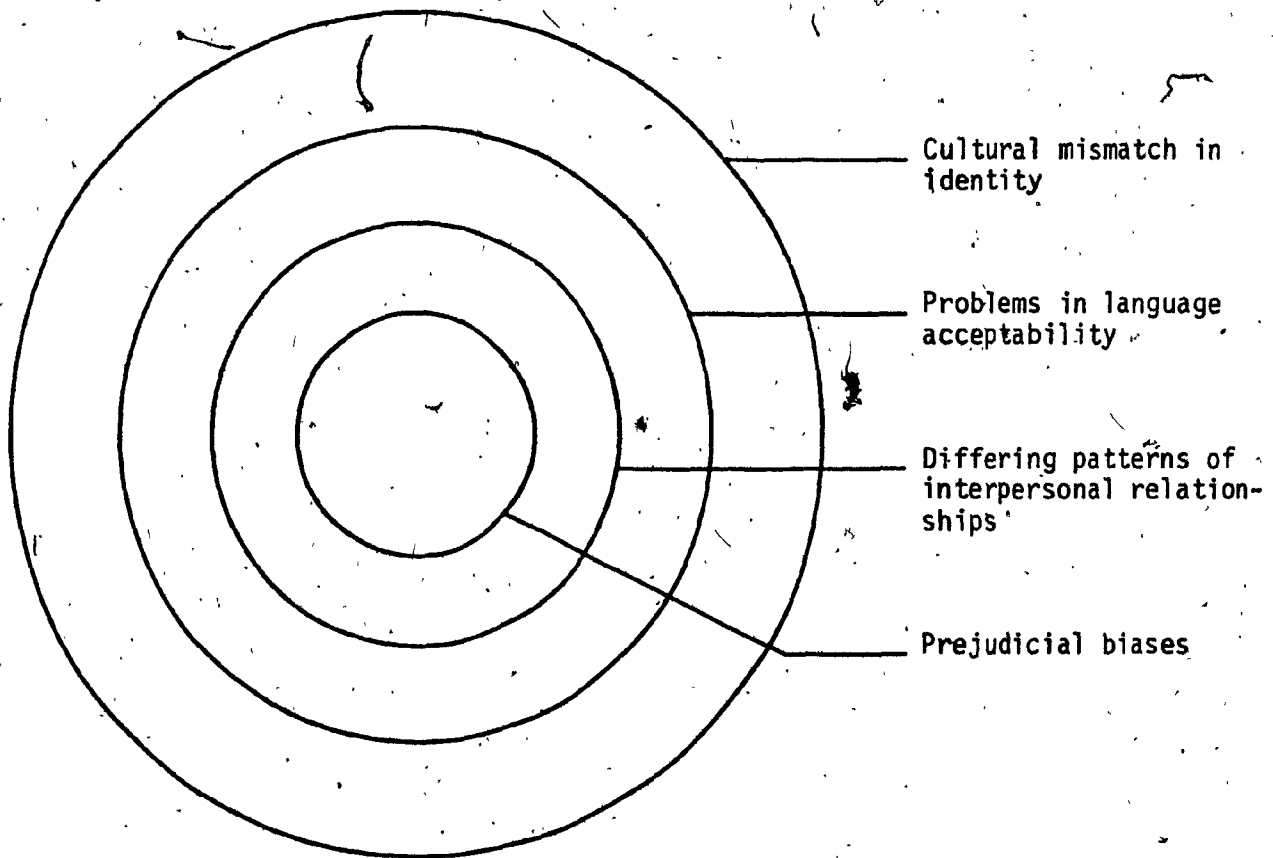


Figure 1. Concentric Circles of Related Themes



### Phase III Decoding and Evaluation

Decoding involves taking apart or analyzing critically the coded situations and making an attempt to link the concentric themes generated during the thematic investigation stage of enquiry.

In his programme for illiterate learners, Freire used drawings that represented "situations" as the springboard for his teaching. The central theme in one drawing is the picture of a well. By asking his subjects who made the well, why he made it, and how he made it, basic concepts emerged and the subjects distinguished between their cultural world and the world of nature, and to see the cultural necessity to which each situation corresponds.

He used a poem as another situation, and the student/participants discussed the cultural aspects of the poem. "Through the discussion they perceived in critical terms that poetic expressions respond to different necessities."<sup>1</sup>

In another picture situation the participants analyzed patterns of behavior as cultural manifestations and then discussed resistance to change.

On seeing the situation, the culture circle participants easily identify themselves. They discuss culture as a systematic acquisition of knowledge, and also the democratization of culture within the general context of fundamental democratization...In addition...the participants analyzed the functioning of a culture circle, its

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<sup>1</sup>Freire, Education for Critical Consciousness, p. 81.

dynamic significance, the creative power of dialogue and the clarification of consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

Significant to this study also, is Freire's use of "generative words". For example, from the concept "Slum" generated the concepts "housing", "food", "clothing", "health", and "education". The participants discussed the problems associated with such concepts.

Using Jamaican literature as an example, I shall now try to show how a nation's literature may be similarly used as "situations" for the dialogical curricular model. The discussion will follow that of Freire's situations and move from the conceptual to the concrete, demonstrating how the students can recognize himself with the hope of providing the kind of situation whereby the students can more critically perceive his situation.

#### Identity Through Literature

A nation's literature can be resourceful for national and cultural identity. Although Greene (1957) argues that it is the philosopher of education who needs to cultivate a sensitivity to people's thoughts and actions and should know what preoccupies them, so as to understand them, the same can be argued for a teacher, especially a teacher of immigrant students.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

Greene describes authors as "social beings... sensitized and articulate members of the culture" who write meanings as they observe and feel them, and interpreting their social world by means of symbols implicit in the cultural life. As they accomplish this, she continues, they provide pictures of human experiences which are shaped by the responses of living men. She notes that during the Thirties, the tone of cultural experience could best be heard in the imaginative writings of the times. The relationship between writers and their society is also discussed by Christopher Morley. He says that

the writer is in perpetual conflict with society  
(and) it is natural that he should be...(for)  
the writer is fulfilling his destiny only when he  
begins to create some attention.<sup>2</sup>

He argues also, that history records only those authors who fought against society, and points to Shakespeare and Bernard Shaw as writers who exposed people to themselves (and by implication to others). He echoes Greene's statement that spontaneous response comes from art when he states that writers cannot view problems as others view them. He observes that:-

from the standpoint of many successful writers,  
the principal characteristic of too many would-be  
writers is that they lack any real knowledge  
of society.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C. Morley, "The Writer and Society" in L.D. Farrar, Successful Writers and How They Work. (Harthorn Books, Inc., Publishers, New York, 1959), p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

He thus implies that successful writers should have real knowledge of their society.

Another assumption of this study then, is that when authors draw attention to socio-cultural features, they not only parade existential conditions but implicitly disclose conditions as they were in the past. Hence, Jamaican literature should be pertinent to the current as well as past ideals of Jamaica and its identity.

#### Situations in Jamaican Literature

Some of the authors selected for this study are represented in present Jamaican curricula at the secondary and university levels. Others are selected because they have gained some recognition in and out of Jamaica, and because they are relevant to this study. Among the most highly recognized and contemporary West Indian poets are Derek Walcott, Edward Brathwaite, A.L. Hendriks and Mervyn Morris. The latter two are Jamaicans (Walsh 1973). The late Roger Mias, The Honourable Louise Bennett, and Vic Reid are among the writers who have in different ways expressed Jamaica's predicament in attempting to find that "other dimension" or "third force" between her European and African pull (Nettleford). Other Jamaican authors represented in this study are C.E. Palmer, H. Patterson, Bongo Jerry - a Rastafarian poet, Evan Jones, and Claude McKay.

Although standard English is Jamaica's official language, the Jamaican dialect is a significant feature. The dialect is the mode of expression used by Louise Bennett and Evan Jones.

Bennett's poems were not originally included in Jamaican school curricula, although they were used in school concerts and speech festivals. There are at least two reasons why her poems were used in concerts and festivals but were not included in the school curriculum per se. The first is, "Louise Bennet has long been regarded as little more than a spinner of jingles and a first rate entertainer".<sup>1</sup> The second is, "the ordinary Jamaican grows up regarding standard English as the standard in all things that apparently mattered".<sup>2</sup> Nettleford argues that,

it is equally true that (the Jamaican) speaks and listens to a lot... Much of himself comes out in a language less 'standard', but which poets, novelists and playwrights would exploit more quickly to uncover the truth about ourselves. For this is the language which occasions the underlying rhythms which are a combination of an African suppressed and the native-born (creolized) Jamaican...<sup>3</sup>

The section that follows is organized around the concentric circle of related themes and is aimed at portraying how a teacher could match student's concerns with analogous themes from literature.

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<sup>1</sup>Nettleford, p. 193.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 189-90.

### Situation One: Prejudicial Biases

At the center of the coded situation, as schematized in the concentric circle diagram (See Figure 1, p. 43) is the recognition of racial and class prejudicial bias. Feelings of being unnecessarily discriminated against have created hostility in many people from Jamaica (Miller, 1973), particularly the adolescent. The story, "One for a Penny" expresses some of the prejudices associated with the European/African biases imbedded in the cultures of Jamaica which can be linked to existing biases in a Canadian context.

#### The Story - "One for a Penny"<sup>1</sup>

Daphne sat and stared vacantly in her "oppressive" room. She was aroused from her sad composure by her nephew, Tom, whose mother (Peggy, Daphne's sister) had sent him to ask her to move into a room she had found for her. As Tom awaited a reply and watched her, Daphne returned to her melancholic gaze. She recalled a school game:-

Orange in the market one for a penny,  
Queen Victoria reign for many;  
Anybody, anybody trouble me lover,  
I take out me knife and stab the bugger.

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<sup>1</sup>H. Orlando Patterson, "One for a Penny", in Caribbean Rhythms, James T. Livingston, Ed., (Washington Square Press, Pocket Books, New York), pp. 137-145.

Peggy had demanded that she say "England" instead of "market".  
Her refusal had kindled anger in their father. He was

A tall black man with a large prominent nose,  
which he proudly declared was Scottish... He  
hated her as much as he loved her elder, lighter  
sister (Peggy).

He had predicted one day, that, Peggy would marry an élite, but she  
would marry "de booga-man".

When she refused to say "England" her father had scolded her  
harshly and commanded her to obey her elder sister who "have more  
sense" than she had. "Now Peggy darling, tell her again", he had  
entreated. And,

in the ludicrously affected manner which  
teacher Reynolds had said was the king's  
English,

Peggy had repeated the words and reported her disobedience to their  
father. In spite of his command to "obey her sister", Daphne had  
screamed rebelliously, "Orange in the market".

He had meant only to frighten her; but at the crack of his  
"whip" the tip had stung her cheeks. She had seen that he was  
frightened and was glad. As she huddled to her mother, summoned  
by her screams, she had tauntingly yelled, "orange in the market!"  
She had said those words aloud and frightened Tom.

...Tell her thanks, but not to bother with the room,  
she told Tom.

Nettleford argues that the Jamaican identity could not be based on race because of a claim to "biological purity" in some races. The prejudices attached to such a claim is what Patterson draws attention to.

Peggy and her father admire and adhere to the European bias, while Daphne favours the African bias in the Jamaican society. It is not uncommon to find such biases subtly interwoven into many individual Jamaican families. Notice the terms of endearment the father uses when addressing Peggy, e.g., "Peggy darling" which he denies Daphne; and his expectation for each daughter. Peggy will marry an élite, but Daphne will marry the "booga-man".

The story presents a child who has experienced prejudicial biases in her very home, but one who is conscious of her worth and her identity in the Jamaican context. In a class with immigrants there is likely to be many Daphneys and many Peggys. The teacher can gain the confidence of each and establish mutual respect and understanding which are necessary to situate each immigrant in the new culture, if he/she becomes significantly aware of the problems that haunt them. They can be learned through dialogue. In the case of Jamaican immigrant students, the story becomes the point of contact and the spring board for dialogue.

An interesting starting point for the teacher is to ask, "do you know the game - 'Orange in the market?'". He may next involve the students in role-play with more questions. For example,

1. What would you do if you were Peggy?
2. What would you do if you were Daphne?



Through the dialogue the teacher will be able to detect the personal doubts, hopes and fears which are tied to the student's cultural identity and hence, what each student's needs and interests are.

#### Situation Two: Problems of Social Interaction

Claude McKay has been universally declared poet of the Black Renaissance, and his works have been considered relevant to the understanding of social interaction in the Jamaican society. It was Tom Redcam - "a white Jamaican", and the nation's first poet laureate who guided and encouraged McKay - the "Black Jamaican police-man poet". (Walsh, 1973) McKay's poem - "The Tropics in New York"<sup>1</sup>, is chosen for this study because it implies the theme of nostalgia which one non-Jamaican said characterises all Jamaicans,

#### "The Tropics in New York"

Bananas ripe and green, and ginger root,  
Cocoa in pods and alligator pears,  
And tangerines and mangoes and grapefruit,  
Fit for the highest prize at parish fairs.

Set in the window, bringing memories  
Of fruit-trees laden by slow-singing rills,  
And dewy dawns, and mystical blue skies  
In benediction over nun-like hills.

My eyes grew dim, and I could no more gaze;  
A wave of longing through my body swept,  
And, hungry for the old, familiar ways,  
I turned aside and bowed my head and wept.

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<sup>1</sup> Claude McKay, in Figueroa, p. 82.

Some problems that may arise when peoples of different cultures interact, are portrayed by Evan Jones in his poem, "The Song of the Banana Man".<sup>1</sup> In the first stanza Jones implies the theme of cultural misunderstanding in the meeting of a tourist and a banana farmer.

Touris, white man, wipin' his face,  
Met me in Golden Grove market place.  
He looked at me ol' clothes brown wid stain,  
An' soaked righ through wid de portlan' rain.  
He cas' his eye, turn' up his nose;  
He says, 'You're a beggar man, I suppose.'  
He says, 'Boy get some occupation;  
be of some value to your nation.'

But the banana man refuted the tourist's assumptions with:-

...By God an' dis big right han'  
you mus' recognize a banana man.

and gave a version of the daily occupation and a picturesque image of a Jamaican farm property.

Up in de hills, where de streams are cool,  
an' mullet an' janga swim in de pool,  
I have ten acres of mountain side,  
an' a dainty-foot donkey dat I ride,  
four Gross Michel, an' four Lacatan,  
some coconut trees, an' some hills of yam,  
an' I pasture on dat very same lan'  
five she-goats an' a big black ram.

and in the rhyming couplet that Jones employs after each eight-

lined stanza, Jones' banana man asserts that,

dat, by God an' dis big right han',  
is the property of a banana man.

Then follows the common image of the early start of a typical Jamaican farmer to his field that is usually several miles from

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<sup>1</sup> Evan Jones, "The Song of the Banana Man", in Caribbean Voices, (Evans Brothers Ltd.), pp. 4-6.

his home, the climatic conditions under which he works, and his journey home in the evenings.

I leave me yard early-mornin' time,  
an' set me foot to de mountain-climb;  
I ben' me back to de hot-sun toil,  
an' me cutlas rings on de stony soil,  
ploughin' an' weedin, diggin' and plantin',  
til Masa Sun drop back o' John Crow mountain,  
Then hom again in cool evenin' time,  
perhaps whislin' dis lickle rhyme.

Praise God an me big right-han',  
I will live and die a banana man.

In the next stanza Jones pictures the farmers' joy at harvest time when they cut and sell donkey-loads of bananas. Jones' banana man says, "dat is de night when you, touris' man; would change place wid a banana man". Then in the next two stanzas Jones gives a realistic description of the "calm bay", the "bright moon", the waiting "English ship" and the "monstrous 'hustle' and 'bustle of the tallymen" as the fruits are loaded for export. That is followed by yet another picture of the happiness and frivolities of the banana man on pay day:-

...  
Down at de bar near United Whart,  
We knock back a white rum, bus a laugh,  
fill de empty bag for further toil  
wid salt-fish, breadfruit, coconut oil;  
den head back home to me yard to sleep  
a proper sleep dat is long and deep.

In the last eight-lined stanza Jones recapitulates the images of the first stanza. In addition, his banana man cautions the tourist:-

...  
don't judge a man by his patchy clothes,  
I'm a strong man, a proud man, an' I'm free,  
free as dese mountains, free as dis sea;  
I know m'self, and I know me ways  
an' will sing wid pride to de end of' me days;

Praise God an' me big right han',  
I will live an' die a banana man.

The next selection is Bongo Jerry's "Mabrak". Bongo Jerry has been described as "the most exciting and controversial of Jamaica's new poets."<sup>2</sup> The initial reason for choosing "Mabrak" was because Jerry is a Rastafarian poet; and in the interviews there were varying and conflicting opinions of the Jamaican Rastafarians. Nettleford argues that the wider society of Jamaica could neither ignore nor destroy their belief system because young Jamaicans were adopting many of the Rastafarian values.

Bongo Jerry did not use the dialect. Yet, to say that his mode of expression is standard English, is debatable. In his unique welding style and content he gave a picture of the roots, the conflicts, the hopes, the fears, the frustrations and the aspirations which underlie many of the expressions of the Jamaican identity. He uses the imageries of lightening and thunder to demonstrate the force of black awareness. He introduced his narrative with the assumption that black awareness brings hope for ideological changes.

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<sup>1</sup> Bongo Jerry, "Mabrak" in Livingston, Ed., op. cit., pp. 258-262.

Lightening  
is the future brightening,  
for last year man learn  
how to use black eyes.  
(wise!)

He gives a version of the thought-pattern of black awareness, and implies that black awareness has become a reality which conflicts with the traditional ideologies. That awareness, has interrupted the ideologies of the wider society in the same way that lightening interrupts darkness.

Mabrak:

NEWSFLASH!

"Babylon plan crash"

Thunder interrupt their program to  
announce

BLACK ELECTRIC STORM

IS HERE

He gives one version of the cause of the aggression against traditional ideologies:-

"How long you feel 'fair' to fine  
(WHITE)" would last?

How long calm in darkness  
when out of BLACK  
come forth LIGHT?

How long dis slave caste  
when out of  
the BLACK FUTURE  
comes

I  
RIGHTS  
?

and expressed the inevitability of ideological changes:

Every knee  
must bow  
Every tongue  
confess  
Every language  
EXPRESS  
W  
O  
R  
D  
W  
O  
R  
K  
S

He implies who should promote the changes, and what educational  
measures should be taken to bring about the changes:

MABRAK  
Enlightening is BLACK  
hands writing the words of  
black message  
for black hearts to feel.

MABRAK is righting the wrongs and brain-whitening-  
HOW?  
Not just by washing out the straightening and  
wearing dashiki ting:

...  
Save the YOUNG  
from the language than MEN teach,  
the doctrine Pope preach  
skin bleach.

HOW ELSE?...MAN must use MEN Language  
to carry dis message:  
SILENCE BABEL TONGUES; recall and  
recollect BLACK SPEECH.

cramp all double meaning  
an' all that hiding behind language bar,  
for that crossword speaking  
when expressing feeling  
is just English language contribution  
to increase confusion...  
delusion, name changing, word rearranging  
...left us in a situation

where education  
meck plenty African afraid, ashamed...  
NOT AGAIN!  
Never be the same!  
Never again shame!

Three novels are summarised in this study to exemplify how the themes, plots and characters created by Jamaican authors relate to the cultural identity of Jamaica.

Vic Reid, the author of "The Young Warriors"<sup>1</sup> concentrates on a theme recognized and discussed by Walsh, the agony and pride of race. This novel is included in the high school curriculum in Jamaica.

#### The Story

The sound of the "Abeng" silenced the "talking and laughing" of "Mountain Top" Maroons gathered on the "parade-ground in the early morning sunshine.

Their chief arrived to conduct the tests in which the boys showed what they know about their race, and demonstrated their skill at "shooting" and "knife-throwing". Then followed the "test of honour".

The boys "hungry" since they could not eat before their tests, promised to run to "Lookout Rock" and back to the parade ground without eating. Their "five-mile" path wound through "open country" where trees of "ripe fruits" and juicy "sugar canes" filled the air with mouth-watering aroma. A "red stone" from Lookout Rock was the

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<sup>1</sup>Vick Reid, The Young Warriors, Longman Structural Reader Stage 6 (Longman Group Ltd.) 1967.

symbol of proof that each boy had fulfilled his promise. Charlie was the first to return.

At home after the tests, the boys ate and slept. In the evening they left for the forest to hunt. For the first time they went unaccompanied by their fathers. A camp site was found and Tommy appointed leader. They ate. David told an Anancy story. They climbed to "Rabbit grounds", captured many, and returned to their camp.

They "awoke with the first light of day," and went bird-shooting in "Pimento Walk". While gathering the fell-birds, Tommy detected sounds of "Redcoats" - dreaded enemies of the Maroons.

By brave means the boys estimated the number of Redcoats and informed their village. The old warriors devised strategies for battle. Two of the boys bravely crossed the Redcoats' camp to summon help from the "Mocho Maroons". On returning to Mountain Top amid the preparation for battle, four of the young warriors persuaded their chief to grant them permission to rescue Charlie who was captured by the Redcoats. They ventured by night into the fire-lit enemy camp. David tricked the soldiers into listening to an Anancy story while Tommy tried to rescue Charlie. He was rope-bound so the rescue failed. On signal, David ended the story and the four returned safely to their village.



Charlie felt doomed. The chief and his friends knew he had cheated on his test of honour. But indeed, "Charlie saved all the village!", because he had been captured in an attempt to help, and with the information he had whispered to his rescuer, the Maroons prepared the trap in "Star-Apple Gully", into which he led the Red-coats on the day of battle.

Another common theme in West Indian literature is described as a "Dickensian indignation" at the lives of the poor (Walsh, p. 51). The late Roger Mais deals with such themes. The late Honourable N.M. Manley says of Mais' novels,

the educator, the social scientist, the angry young man, the reflective thinker... will do well to look and understand the people they represent so vividly...

"The Hills Were Joyful Together" is included in this study.

In it Mais gives a picture of a tenement yard with its barrack-like shacks, its knarled ackee tree and its thrifty black-mango tree. These give succor and shade to the tenants as they wash by the water cistern or just sit and gossip.

They include Ditty who lives with her mother - Goddie whose man Puss-Jook claims that Ditty is not his and assaults the girl sexually. Cassie lives with her man Ras who pushes his hand-cart and scuffle for a living. There is Zephyr the prostitute with whom Lennie a respectable guy has fallen in love. There is Shag who gives no indication that he's aware that his woman Euphemia is having another affair with Bajun-Man; but eventually he murders her.

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<sup>1</sup> N.W. Manley, "Introduction" to The Three Novels of Roger Mais, (Sangsters' Book Stores in association with Jonathan Cape Ltd.), p. vi.

There is the married couple - fearful and deceitful Bedosa and hymn-singing wife Charlotta with their children wayward Manny and his sister Tansy the unpunctual school-girl. Rema lives with her man Surjue who has a slick friend Flitters. These two friends plan a robbery but Surjue is caught and imprisoned because Flitters deserts him and escapes with the loot. Flitters is eventually butchered by "under-world" crooks, Buju and Crawfish. There are "The Three Sisters of Charity" - members of a religious cult.

The narrative moves backward and forward to reveal activities in the yard and in the prison where Surjue is. Finally, on the same night, Rema who became mentally distraught, sets herself ablaze, and Surjue is shot and killed as he attempts to escape.

The concept of sharing, a profound trust in God, as well as a mixing of dialect and standard English, which are expressed themes in Jamaican cultural life style, are exemplified in the following extracts from the novel. One night there was

...a big fish feed... The fish had died from a lack of oxygen... the recent heavy flood rains seemed to have been responsible... People shouted 'ha! ha! we got fish fo' nothin! Fus time I ever see anything like it in my life... Mus be de lawd sen dem'... The waters in the harbour was still as a pond... and more and more fish swam into the shallow water,... and died, and were thankfully piled in baskets and taken away... Ras (who had filled his hand-cart) sold what he could... and took the rest home, to the yard (where) everybody had one hell of a feed...

It had been a good day scuffling... He was not a religious man but he never doubted the Lord had a hand in his affair that day, and many other scuffer felt the same...

That evening they built a big fire... sat around..., and the woman fried the fish and johnny-cakes;... They sang (folksongs) and told stories and cracked jokes and forgot their worries, their fears, their jealousies and their suspicions.

Another novel included in the high school curricula in Jamaica is "The Hummingbird People"<sup>2</sup> by C.E. Palmer. The characters are everyday people whose ordinary experiences were disrupted by preparation for a special event. While it is the pride of race and scenic features that made Reid's novel culturally suitable for Jamaica, it is the pride of everyman, a wide range of cultural situations, themes, and scenic features which make Palmer's novel relevant.

### The Story

Two neighbouring villages try to outdo each other in plans to celebrate the home-coming of their war heroes. "Kendal" expects one and "Grange" expects two. In the subplot of love Jocinda who is in love with "Sam" the hero returning to her village, breaks the engagement her father has arranged for her with his friend Jake.

Kendal's village-bum, Tawny, spies, blackmails and benefits from the schemes of both villages. His intrigue causes the war heroes to arrive in the thick of a battle between the villages. But their arrival ends the violence and both villages join in a combined

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<sup>1</sup>Roger Mais, The Three Novels of Roger Mais, (Sangsters' Book Stores in association with Jonathan Cape Ltd.), p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>C.E. Palmer, The Hummingbird People, (Andre Deutsch Ltd., 1971).

celebration.

One of the usual characters in a novel or play is a villain. I shall try to show how the villain "Tawny", in Palmer's novel, is culturally relevant to Jamaica.

Tawny had eavesdropped on the secret meeting held by Kendal's celebration planners. He knew that Grange leaders were also planning and each village would love to know what the other was doing. He had a motive for mischief, since his village had often spurned him because he drank too much at the expense of others. Bent on revenge, which was in part justified (if only by himself), on the morning after his eavesdropping,

Tawny woke,... he greeted the orange sun...  
and turned towards the great house of Casper  
Miller (a wealthy farmer called Busha).

What are you doing here you... I've told you  
a hundred times not to trespass (said Mr. Miller).

...Maybe I ought to go visit the Grange people...  
There's people there who wouldn't mind seeing  
a Kendal Man snuggling up to them...

You mean... you would snuggle up to them?

Why not Casper? If my own people turn me away...

What do you want?... a drink, no doubt?

But Tawny demanded more than just a drink. To prevent his  
ambling off to Grange and spilling secrets, Casper paid him well  
and Tawny was off to lavish his first funds from blackmail.  
Some mornings later Tawny arrived at Grange. Immediately he  
arrived, he sensed the villagers hostility.

nobody accepts my hello.... (he complained).

...maybe we don't like spies (said Roseo)..

...me a spy?... (he lamented).

He then complained that his village hated him, called him a "village drunk" and had decided to get him out of sight before their hero arrived. Grange's leaders were quite taken in by his anguish. They decided to "spring a coup on Kendal by siphoning off some information from Tawny". Rum was to be the chief drink at the celebrations and each village wanted to know it had more than the other. Tawny lied to them that Kendal had only a small quantity, and having promised to gather his friend to finish that on the Sunday before Sam the hero arrived, he left Grange with more financial profit after saying:-

Yes, gentlemen, you'r more cordial than my own village. Threw me out... I'll show 'em!

but not before studying the location of their filled demijohn.

That Sunday afternoon, Kendal village was quiet. Most people had gone to the "evening service at church". Armed with an auger Tawny revisited Grange where, like Kendal the people were in a church service. He worked his way beneath the liquor store and positioned himself below the floor exactly under the large demijohn.

The auger went through reluctantly... broke through... rum squirted on his chest... he cupped his hands and drank... rain fell...

Tawny slept in the open fields that night out of fear of stumbling and spilling the bucket he had filled with rum at Grange. When on

the morning of the heroes' arrival Scouts reported that Grange men were approaching with clubs, only Tawny knew why.

Magic is another usual element in a novel. Obeah is the cultural magic element in Jamaica. Palmer uses it to link the sub-plot with the main plot. Jake is encouraged by his maid to seek help from "Cudjoe" the obeah man in order to regain Jocinda's love.

Palmer also makes reference to Jamaican foods. On the Sunday before the heroes arrived, one of the village house-wives feared "she would not be well enough to finish her Sunday dinner, "a wallop of a dinner, rice-and-peas and cooked cows' trotters". It is evident that the chicken did not make it to the table that Sunday, as the undergraduate says "happened sometimes. "Ackee and cod-fish with fired pork...roasted breadfruit and coffee" was the breakfast menu for some of the villagers on the morning of the celebrations.

Food, music and togetherness, were expressed as constant features of the Jamaican identity. Palmer uses these dominant features to link all the characters together in the combined celebrations of the two villages. The heroes arrived on the truck that brought Kendal's hired musicians.

They were joined are-over-shoulder...(and one may) imagine the effect of this togetherness of the RAF trio on the rabble...Shame on you men! (said one of the trio).

On the spot where the righting ensued, "street dancing at its wildest began". The truck was unloaded and soon,

all animosity was forgotten...The musicians began to set up their instruments. The sun was laughing.

Each selection has its particular generative themes relating to social interaction. But the poem "Mabrak" will be used to exemplify how this situation may serve as the pivot for dialogue. Teacher and students can analyze the patterns of behavior by Jamaicans who accept the Rastafarian tenets and those who reject it.

The author implies that the type of society that exists in contemporary Jamaica is one in which certain ideologies predominate and submerge other ideologies. He sees "brain-whitening" through the educational system which makes one race feel "afraid, ashamed". He implies that the dominant trend is for the majority of Jamaicans to adhere to "Babylon plans" (Babylon being the name Rastafarians give to the ruling Jamaican ideologists).

He further implies that the kind of society likely to emerge in the future is one in which the submerged ideologies will surface. And when those ideologies surface, the disadvantaged race will no longer be ashamed as they were previously:-

NOT AGAIN NEVER AGAIN SHAME.

After presenting the poem to the students, the teacher may ask some simple questions; for example,

1. Is the author a man of the people?
2. What aspects of your culture are presented in the poem?
3. Does the poem speak to any of your personal needs?
4. What kind of society does the author want?
5. Is that the kind of society that you would like?
6. Is that kind of society similar or different from that in which your parents grew up?

Undoubtedly, the needs of the student as an immigrant, as well as problems of social and political changes and the effect of these on the students' academic interests will become key-points for the dialogical curriculum model.

#### Situation Three: Problems with Language

In this selection "No Little Twang"<sup>1</sup> that follows, poetess Louise Bennett touches on two features that are constant to the culture of Jamaica:-

- (a) Jamaicans' practice to migrate and return,
- (b) An example of changed attitudes among contemporary Jamaicans.

A third feature presents itself in the author's use of Jamaican patois/dialect as her mode of expression. The poem refers to a repatriate Jamaican, who unlike others, returned home with an unchanged accent. The attitude can be seen clearly from the argument of a

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<sup>1</sup> Louise Bennett, Jamaican Labrish, (Sangster's Book Store, Jamaica), 1966.



domestic worker here. She says she is practising to speak "good" because she hopes to return home in April and when she speaks, she would not like anybody to wonder what she has been doing in Canada for four years. She was encouraged not to practise too much because she might practise herself out of what is in Jamaica. In Miss Lou's poem, the boy's traditional mother was happy to see him return but she was not proud of him:-

Me glad fe see you come back bwoy,  
But lawd you let me dùng,  
Me shame o' yuh so till all o'  
Me pròudness dop a grung.

Yuh mean yuh goh da 'Merica'  
An spen six whole mont' deh,  
An come back not a piece, betta  
Dan how you did go wey?

Boy yuh no shame? Is soh you come?  
Afta yuh tan so lang!  
Not even lickle language bwoy?  
Not even little twang?

She was proud of his traditionally inclined sister who returned with a changed accent:-

An you sister wat work ongle  
One week wid 'Merican  
She talk so nice now dat we have  
De jooce fe undastan?

Travel should not only have improved the boy's speech, but his general appearance. So his mother asks him,

Bwoy you couldn' improve yuhself!  
An yuh get soh much pey?  
You spen' six mont a foreign, an  
Come back ugly same way?

Not even a drapes trouziz? or  
a pass de rydim coat?  
Bwoy not even a gole teet or  
A gole chain roun' yuh troat.

One would expect the boy to reply; but she reprimands:-

Noh back-ansa me bway, yuh talk  
Too bad; shet up you mout,  
A doan know how yuh and yuh puppa  
Gwine to meck it out.

Ef yuh want please him meck him tink  
Yuh bring back someting new  
Yuh always call him 'Pa' dis evenin'  
Wen him come say 'Poo'.

Reference was previously made to Nettleford's argument that in Jamaica standard English has always been used in "all that apparently mattered". Hence there are Jamaican students who will deny that they speak the dialect. There are others who will use it to poke fun, or to create laughter. Many are ashamed of it while many adore it as a pal-link; and because it is incomprehensible to the untrained ear, it becomes their secret code - their mark of identity.

Present attitude towards the use of the dialect is exemplified in "No Lickle Twang". The traditional mother was ashamed that her son returned unchanged. She remarked,

Me shame a you so till all me  
prouddness drop a grung.

But the boy was neither ashamed of his speech nor his appearance.

Although the teacher's method of introducing the poem will depend on several factors, a possible method is to begin by saying "many countries have their dialects; this poem is written in the dialect on one country". He may then read a portion of it and ask the students if they recognize it, and quickly note their reaction. He may then ask such questions as:-

1. Is the poem from your culture?
2. How would you react to your parents if you were the boy?

3. Do you think the boy remained unchanged to please his friends who did not travel?
4. Is your mother like the boy's with regard to the way you speak?

Undoubtedly, the discussion will eventually lead the student to give his views on problems of parental expectation, parental values versus offsprings' values, the advantages and disadvantages of using the dialect as a mode of communication.

#### Situation Four: Cultural Mismatch in Identity

During the discussions of the preceeding pieces the themes would be directly linked to each other through discussion. The final selection in this program would represent the larger theme of identity. Mervyn Morris portrays that in the poem, "To a West Indian Definer"<sup>1</sup>

Your intellect feels discontent  
With having and not labeling  
Three million people  
And our several territories,  
Africa England America Portugal and Spain  
Black brown yellow pink and cream  
Young middle-aged decrepit vital,

He alludes to the cultural differences of the islands:

John-Connu Kelee Carnival  
Hosein La-Marguerite and  
Independence-Day  
Our English hymns creole proverbs  
Steel-band calypso rock-'n'-roll  
Anancy-stories obea and Christ  
The village bram and Yacht Reggatas  
Poverty clay-pigeon-shooting  
Slavery bastards laughter riots  
My uncle's waistcoat and his

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<sup>1</sup> Mervyn Morris, in Livingston, op. cit., pp. 236-237.

gardener's sweat,  
Libba creek-water flying fish  
Bush-tea hot-dog and coca-cola  
Black pudding roti cuckoo dalpourri  
Drought and hurricane, mountain soil  
and sea --

and then he asserts that a single definition for such a conglomeration cannot be found.

All these  
All these and more you wish  
To fix in one quick-drying definition.  
You must not try to cram us all  
Into your little box;  
Your definition must perforce be false  
Or we are dead.

This poem is admirable for a class with West Indian students from different islands, because several islands are represented in it. The teacher may ask each student to locate a concept that belongs to his island. These concepts will then become "generative words" central to dialogue. For example,

<u>Concept</u>	<u>Island</u>
"John-Cunnu"	Jamaica
"Carnival"	Trinidad
"flying fish"	Barbados
"Anancy-stories"	Jamaica

Phase IV: Thematic Classification and Demarcation

The issues that emerged through discussion of the imaginative literature to which the Subjects were exposed and which were discussed would then be the basis for the construction of related 'fans' of relationships and interpenetration. From this, the next series of literary discussions would emerge as the continuing bases in the English curriculum.

Phase V: Problem Posing/Problem Solving

Once an awareness of the connection Jamaicans have with the larger community of human endeavors is achieved, a basis on which to decide ways with which to deal with cultural mismatch would be identified and form the next focus of discussion.

EPILOGUE: SUMMARY AND COMMENTARY

This study is an illustrative presentation of an alternative to traditional models of curriculum design -- a dialogic model. It is organized around the principle that some of the problems of immigrant education can be overcome by basing instruction on the problems of students in their relations to their world (Freire). In this model, the role of the teacher is combined with the student and each are taught by one another. The content of the curriculum is based on the results of exchanges between teacher and student. After the preliminary interviewing, themes are re-presented through literary selections based on what the students want to know more about.

The teacher takes on the role of investigator, seeking to fulfill two primary tasks: (1) to provoke insights that transcend the immediate concrete situation; and (2) to transform reality - fixated consciousness into "potential consciousness", which is oriented to exploring new possibilities for 'testing action'.

Freire suggests a technique to accomplish this, is to develop simultaneous projection of different situations which embody a "thematic fan" of examples of interrelated themes. He suggests doing this by 'decoding situations' or moving from the abstract to the concrete. By doing this, an individual can learn to perceive his reality more critically. The theoretical insight gained from this exteriorization of an individual's view of the world helps him take possession of that reality and recognize himself within it.

The frustrations encountered in the teaching of immigrants often result in a spectrum of related teacher behaviors from autocratic control to pity and indulgence. These reactions are usually formed as a result of the teacher being expected to "know" and "do" all. Sharing the task not only lightens the teacher load for "perfection-expectation" but is the initial stage in guiding the student to an awareness of his ability to think critically. This ability, in turn, can ignite the motive for developing the capacity for transforming one's life situation and the repudiation of a fatalistic attitude.

It has been said that "freedom is not something given at birth, but must be won".<sup>1</sup> For a young person, the process of winning one's freedom resides in the capacity of his teachers to liberate as well. The teacher must be able to teach the student new ways of seeing the world while at the same time relinquishing control of those views.

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<sup>1</sup>Ann Margaret Sharp, "The Teacher as Liberator: A Nietzschean View", Paedagogica Historica, Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 388.

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