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TEACHING ART IN PARADISE

Heather Hancheruk

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art Education and Art Therapy

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Art Education at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

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ABSTRACT

Teaching Art in Paradise

Heather Hancheruk

This inquiry reflects on my four years (1985 to 1989) experience as an art teacher at St. Anne's School in Nassau, Bahamas. The central question of this research is: What is the process that I underwent to become an art teacher in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. The body of the thesis will describe this process. I researched myself by looking for connections and similarities with "Julia's" experience; a fellow student who taught for three years in the Seychelles Islands and whose teaching experience most closely resembled mine. I also collected data for this research by interviewing former students and co-workers. This project allowed me to research the question: "Whose culture was I passing on to my students? Mine? Bahamian? Mother Africa's? Or Mother England's?" By engaging in a dialogue with two groups of people - those who went through experiences similar to my own and those who shared parts of this journey with me - I was able to become more sensitive to the effects of one's culture on teaching art.

By studying my experience of teaching in the Bahamas, I was able to make what was invisible, visible. I looked into my life and found myself present in the impressions and memories of my former students and co-workers.

The accompanying videotape describes my participation in the Junior Junkanoo festival, which is a student version of a folk art tradition celebrated at Christmas and New Year's. My involvement in this parade, the highlight of my teaching career, confirmed for me that I had been accepted into the Bahamian culture and that I, as an individual, added to it.

This research project has allowed me to see in hindsight teaching methodology that was successful, which enables me to be a better teacher today.

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INTRODUCTION

This inquiry reflects on my four years (1985-1989) experience as an art teacher in a high school in Nassau, Bahamas. I hope that sharing my experience will be of some value to other art educators working in foreign countries. The motivation for writing this thesis is intrinsic. By looking at my past from a number of perspectives, I have hoped to make visible what had been invisible, thus I may be able to understand what impact teaching art in the Bahamas has had on my life. The central question of this research is: What is the process that I underwent to become an art teacher in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. The body of the thesis will describe this process. I am looking for differences and similarities between my culture and the one that adopted me, and specifically I am searching for what I learned from having taught art abroad.

My interest in writing about my four years of teaching in the Bahamas began one day in the early part of the autumn semester at Concordia University. Over coffee with a fellow student, I was recounting episodes from teaching in the Bahamas. I began to tell my classmate about Junkanoo, a Bahamian festival celebrated at Christmas and then again at New Year's. Junkanoo is a folk art tradition practised in the Bahamas, and consists of groups of revellers that perform and parade for enthralled onlookers in the wee hours of the morning of Boxing Day and New Year's Day. It is a fantastic affair, full of colour and design and light and music and frenzied activity. Almost the whole population seemed to get involved in one way or another - even the (former)

Prime Minister of the country adorns his costume and "rushes" (a form of dancing) with a group called "The Pigs".

The origin of the festival is uncertain, but various folklorists link Junkanoo with a West African event called John Canoe. In the islands the festival dates back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was brought over from Africa by the slaves at the time. I remembered that in my first three years as an art teacher in the Bahamas I still felt like too much of an outsider to participate in this event but in my fourth and final year something happened that significantly changed my perspective.

That year, 1988, the Ministry of Education, in conjunction with local merchants, sponsored a Junior Junkanoo contest for interested school students, church groups, and youth organizations. I casually put a notice about the competition in the announcement book one morning, and added, "If you are interested in forming a group, meet with me in the art room at recess today." Nearly one hundred students showed up at recess, crowding in the direction of the art room. I was surprised! Formerly bored and unmotivated students were suddenly excited and keen.

I didn't fully realize the impact of what had happened, and what later ensued until a few months later when I was a student myself at Concordia. Only then, after time and distance had come between me and the event, could I begin to realize that I had rooted in this experience a central question for my thesis. As a teacher I had

brought to the classroom my own experience as a student in Quebec, and had taught art to the children in Nassau the way it had been taught to me. I now understand that there was a difference between the expectations of the Bahamian school, the Bahamian society and the Bahamian culture on the one hand and on the other hand what had been modelled to me in my schooling, my society, and my culture.

At the time of my arrival in the Bahamas I was an inexperienced teacher. I had spent one year, the preceding year, in Northern Quebec, teaching English, Art, and Moral and Religious Education to students who were primarily Cree. I had developed very few skills. I was still clinging to the familiar art-student-artist identity, having not yet made the transition to the "teacher" mode of being (Pearse, 1984). I was no longer an artist or an art student in my own eyes, nor was I an art teacher. I was in a state of transition from one role to the next. As well, I had tried to learn the craft of teaching in Cree culture, a culture that I knew very little about. Teaching in the North raised questions I was not able to resolve.

When I arrived at St. Anne's School for my second year of teaching, the differences between the culture of the Bahamas and my own background were not immediately apparent. In my first three years of teaching in the Bahamas, I did not have a firm understanding of my students. As time went on my awareness of the cultural differences, however subtle they were, and the role of the art teacher at St. Anne's School became more focused. My understanding continued to crystallize as my

thesis research progressed. The spirit or essence that distinguishes Bahamian culture from that of the British, West Indian, Canadian, American, African, or whichever culture was not a part of my curriculum. I imposed my culture onto the students, for the most part. My omission of a truly Bahamian art form, Junkanoo, was due to ignorance, and its eventual inclusion was due to an accident of circumstance, and good timing on the part of the Ministry of Education (see the accompanying videotape "Junior Junkanoo" for our school's entry in the competition). I did not grasp the meaning of this omission until I experienced the excitement of the classroom atmosphere during and after our preparations and participation in Junior Junkanoo, and compared it to the atmosphere during the three years prior to this event.

Previously it had been an effort for me to find common or shared experiences with my students. Additionally, the underlying philosophy of education at St. Anne's School leaned towards a traditional, colonial, British academic style of education. In keeping with this, Art Appreciation was taught from a western perspective, and the studio component placed an emphasis on manual dexterity and technical expertise. An example of this approach can be found in Sharon Wilson and Diana Kotzenik's article, "Seeing Myself in the Context of My Community: An International Student Reflects On Studying Art and Art Education in the United States" (1986). In this article, Sharon Wilson remembers what it was like to have been an art student growing up in Bermuda, and recalls her education in the United States. Sharon's experience of education in the United States was similar to my experience of the school system in the Bahamas, only

our situations are reversed. The following quote helps to clarify my statement (Wilson & Korzenik, 1986, p.38):

The first twelve years of my schooling were British. Oh, I was schooled in Bermuda, but the influence was British. The British system of education was stiff and inflexible. It does not teach one to think. It told me, "This is, this is not." It did not encourage questioning. Naturally I, in turn, expected college in America to tell me, to give me specific information which I would need.

My high school education was a technical kind of learning. It didn't say to me, "This is a pencil, what can be done with it?" Instead it said to me, "Take this pencil, indicate light and shade like this." From the beginning of high school we worked on a designated syllabus culminating in a six to nine hour exam which is prepared and graded in Britain.

I came to the Bahamas from a liberal fine arts background, into a system of education that expected I would teach art the way Sharon described she was taught. Clearly the values inherent in the school I was teaching at had to conflict with the values I had acquired from my own Concordia University fine arts studio-based education. Art education researcher Cheryl Abrahams discusses in the following quote the idea that art teachers pass on to their students the values inherent in the methods and concepts learned at university (Abrahams, 1986, p.64):

From here (the B.F.A.) art educators take into the school system the formal art knowledge and ideologies that go along with being an artist. For this reason, art instruction in higher education might be described as cultural patriarchy to art instruction in elementary and secondary schools. Universities claim the monopoly on defining and legitimizing what knowledge is to be transmitted through the school system to all students.

If art educators pass on to their students the concepts and methods that they learned at university, then what messages, hidden and known, were my students receiving from me? (A limitation of my proposed research is that the answer to this

question can only be individual.)

Reflecting upon my four years as an art educator in the Bahamas, I realize I sought to reconcile the opposing demands of my Canadian education, the Bahamian culture, and the British value systems, within the context of my daily curriculum. I asked myself questions like: What do I teach? Who is my audience? How do I discipline in this society? What is art in the Bahamas? I was faced with such questions frequently, as all teachers are on a daily basis in any classroom setting. At times I questioned whether or not my students and I had enough shared meaning to have clear communication.

Ethnocentrism occurs when we look at art from other cultures, and judge it in terms of our own aesthetic sensibilities. I have become more consciously aware that the aesthetic criterion for judging art varies from one culture to the next and even from one group within a broader cultural context, to the next sub-group. As obvious as the acceptance of varying aesthetic traditions may seem to me now, the notion that there was not one universal beauty and truth in art was not clear to me when I was teaching in the Bahamas. I truly was one of those art educators that Abrahams describes. I passed on to my students the ideals that I learned in university.

I now know that when living and working in an unfamiliar culture, an art educator must be willing to explore the art and aesthetics of the new culture. However,

in my opinion the boundaries between what was Bahamian, African, British, American, and Caribbean art were confusing, and they still are. They are intertwined. What was acceptable at home was not always acceptable at school. Thus, whose artistic heritage was I going to promote and validate in the school setting?

The questions are ongoing. In my thesis I will not presume to draw general conclusions in response to these questions, nor do I claim to be doing ethnography. I wish instead to highlight my own encounters within my teaching art in a foreign country, in order to make visible my own experience. Harry F. Wolcott stated that ethnography is a method of inquiry ideal for finding the answer to the question, "What is going on here?" (Wolcott, 1988, p.202). I also asked this question. I will add to the growing body of knowledge in cross cultural art education by borrowing some of the tools of the ethnographer to answer the same question in the past tense: "What went on here?"

Early in the programme at Concordia I met a fellow student "Julia" who had spent three years teaching art in the Seychelles Islands. I wondered what her experience had been like and whether there were common points that we shared. It seemed to me that compared to all of the other students that I met in the programme, she was the one with teaching experience most closely matched to mine, and I wanted to research myself by looking for connections with and similarities to Julia's experience. I interviewed her for a pilot project and since then I have found that I enjoy talking to

others who have taught outside their home country. I find I have much in common with people who have taught elsewhere and am eager to discuss their stories, comparing them to my own.

I also find that in talking casually about education with others, to both those who have taught in foreign cultures and to those who have not, I learn about myself. Co-workers and students have asked questions that have really made me think hard about aspects of teaching in the Bahamas, prompting me to recall details that I had forgotten or had not considered significant. For example, a fellow teacher who taught in England as part of an exchange program asked me if the Bahamian schools were on a semester system, like they are in Britain. This was not something that I had consciously thought about before, except to revel in the fact that in the Bahamas, we had a mid-term break every semester. Although this may seem to be an insignificant detail to some, to me it was a reminder of one way in which the teaching year was different in the Bahamas, compared to here.

The pilot project involving Julia enabled me to focus on questions that I wanted to ask in my thesis. Some of these questions were: What made you decide to teach abroad? How did your education influence your choice of what to teach? Would you describe your formative experiences in practice teaching? Many others were included. I interviewed three people who had taught art in foreign countries, and discovered that two of my subjects gave me no insight on my particular experience. The criteria for the

interviews became clear.

The one successful interview that I had (with Julia) was helpful because she had taught art in a British influenced education system, she had made a conscious decision to teach abroad, and finally, she had a keen desire to speak openly about the home and away experiences from her own perspective.

One of my interviewees refused repeatedly to compare and describe the differences between "here" and "there" (India) probably out of the fear of appearing ethnocentric. The third interviewee did not have a teaching diploma, and therefore her perspective was too widely different from the other participants and myself. During the interviews I found that rather than comparing my experiences to others to look for similarities and differences, I was much more interested in using a dialectic approach. The exchange of information and teaching stories prompted me to remember once again significant details that had been forgotten, buried in memories obscured by time.

The methodology that I used in this study is taken from the method of inquiry known generally as qualitative research, and I applied an approach that is related to ethnography. Ethnography is "...a picture of 'the way of life' of some identifiable group of people" (Wolcott 1988, p.188). Elliot Eisner suggests that art education research which poses qualitative cross-cultural questions could avail itself of a format called 'educational criticism' (Eisner, 1979, p.31):

The task of the critic is to illuminate through description what he or she attends to...The critic's function, as it were, is to serve as a facilitator of perception by describing vividly and by intelligently interpreting what his or her connoisseurship allows him or her to perceive .

In order to proceed with the research, I wrote a first-person account of my memories of teaching in the Bahamas. I formulated questions for the interviews based on my first person account. I organized the questions for the pilot project interviews around the following topics: Early Home Life, Education, Formative Art and Teaching Experiences and Foreign Culture Teaching Experiences.

Because I wanted to highlight my own situation I looked for descriptive data on people who taught art in foreign countries. This data would then act as a mirror for me, reflecting back my image as a teacher in the Bahamas. In light of the experience I gained from doing the pilot project, I continued to collect data for this research by interviewing former students. I also studied notes and teaching materials that I had made and used at the time and looked at pertinent visual documentation photographed and videotaped by news professionals in the Bahamas.

It is clear that the methodology of this research is qualitative. The data is descriptive and individual. I become Eisner's educational critic of my own narrative, in an attempt to portray a detail in the greater picture of the way of life of the Bahamian people, and my interaction with them. It is also clear that the justification for this research is both pragmatic and theoretical. In light of the sensitivity to global unity, and

fewer and fewer numbers of available positions for art educators, teachers in this field are now more than ever having to travel not only to remote areas and other provinces to find work, but also to other countries. As well, North American classrooms are increasingly populated by immigrant students, and there is a need for cross-cultural research. There is more than one aesthetic system that we as teachers must attend to in a multicultural class.

Studies investigating the meaning of art in other societies meet the need for cross cultural research in art education. McFee underscores the need for such research (McFee, 1986, p.7):

In the past, art educators have depended mainly on anthropology for a foundation for cross-cultural study. Other fields have been addressing this need as well, and in some cases have useful theory and research for us. These include cross-cultural psychology, cross-cultural training, which is a field of education for people preparing to work in cultures other than their own, trans-cultural psychiatry, which compares emotional and personality trends, and the comprehensive field of folk art, cross-cultural and experimental aesthetics, cross-cultural communication and our own subfield, cross-cultural art education. This body of work is becoming a resource of its own.

Ultimately I feel that my experiences will prove useful to those teachers preparing to teach art in other countries, or who face many cultures daily in the local classroom.

There are limitations in this research project. Frances E. Anderson and researchers from the field of psychology criticize the sometimes "haphazard dilettante

approach to cross-cultural research" in art education (Anderson, 1979, p.17). This kind of research is often marred by questionable methodology. Elliot Eisner (1979) points out that shared meaning is a doubly difficult task in cross-cultural studies, due to the subjective nature of beginning with what the researcher thinks is important, and working outwards from that position. "...The investigator suffers from the worst kind of ignorance; secondary ignorance - not knowing that one does not know" (Eisner, 1979, p.33).

I do not claim that my research will have universal applications. It does, however, add to a growing body of knowledge in the field of cross-cultural studies in art education. The data and analysis is subjective, introspective, totally after the fact, and descriptive in nature. In recounting their experiences the interviewees may lie or embellish the facts, or unwittingly omit important details. Often the facts are based on opinion and feelings. The limits are without question but they do not deter my purpose.

CHAPTER 2

ARRIVING IN THE BAHAMAS

It was August 25th, 1985, when I stepped off the airplane into the hot and humid air that engulfs Nassau in the summer months. I thought that I knew what humidity in the summer was like, having come from Montreal, but I was in no way even remotely prepared for the new climate that I was going to have to get used to.

Nigel Rossen, St. Anne's Business Subjects teacher had been asked to greet me at the airport and take me to the hotel that was to be my home for one week or until I found suitable accommodations. Nigel told me he had been teaching at St. Anne's for some time (thirteen years at the time, and about twenty-three years now) and on the drive "home" he began the process of educating me about St. Anne's, and the Bahamas in general. He broached the topic of my sharing an apartment with a fellow teacher, Jane, and that was how I came to live with Jane for the next six months or so. Soon after I had settled in at the hotel, Nigel came back and brought me to "Liz" Beresford's house for tea. Liz, as we called her, was the Vice Principal at St. Anne's for three out of the four years that I taught there. Nigel, Liz and Jane originated from Britain. They had all been in the Bahamas for a significant amount of time, and they helped me come to understand the workings of the school, the children, and the society from a British point of view. The school itself was built on a British model by the missionary priest who started it in the early 1950's, Canon John Pugh. In its early years the school

consisted of cement blocks to sit on under a poinciana tree, and as time went on it evolved and became a school that continues to provide quality education in a modern setting.

During tea at Miss Beresford's house I was questioned politely but thoroughly on topics related to education. Liz wanted to develop an impression of what type of teacher I was, since no one at the school had actually interviewed me as I had been hired from a distance sight unseen by the Director of Education. Everyone was curious to see who the new art teacher might be.

I was terrified when Liz gave me the third degree on discipline, as this had been my weak point in my first year of teaching. The sense of friendship among fellow workers who obviously really enjoyed one another's company, and a cup of tea, certainly helped to ease some of the tension that I felt as I was being semi-interviewed. After my week at the hotel was up I moved in with Jane. Living with Jane gave me an opportunity to slowly adapt to my new environment. She initiated me to the world of plan books and record keeping, and taught me about the students I would encounter. Jane also helped me to understand administrative expectations. I soon made friends with teachers from other schools in the Bahamas who hired ex-patriots, and I learned from discussions with them.

How long are we students of teaching? When (if ever) and how does the identity

of student merge with the identity of teacher, and become one? Is the process any different for teachers who develop their skills in a culture other than their own? Harold Pearce, art educator at Dalhousie University wrote his Ph.D. thesis (1985) about the process of becoming a teacher. He used his own journals and memories, over a three year period, and interviewed students at intervals over this same time span in order to respond to questions posed in educating students to become art teachers. I interviewed one former student, one former co-worker, one former principal and one other person who taught art in a foreign country to try and answer that question for myself. This chapter deals with my experience as it is made visible through the experience of one other teacher, who shall be called "Julia" for the purpose of this research.

Julia taught elementary school art for one year in Terrebonne, Quebec (place of origin), and then she travelled to a developing country, the Seychelles Islands, where she taught elementary art for two years and college level art for one year. Julia grew up on the South Shore of the island of Montreal, as did I.

I was born in Montreal and lived in LaSalle for the first nine and a half years of my life. My parents moved to the South Shore shortly before my tenth birthday. I loved it, because the community was more like the country than the city. I went to a tiny school (only 90 students) and got to know everybody. I enjoyed the benefits of living in a small tightly knit English community, that existed within the larger context of a Francophone community.

I went to a public English-language Protestant high school. I remember rebelling against the authorities in my life. I did not like having to tow the line, as the saying goes, and worked hard only at the things that I liked to do. I did not have much self discipline. I did not think that my parents' generation had a right to tell me what to do. It seemed to me that adults often did not model the behaviour they wanted from children. By the time high school was over, I wanted to quit school and enter the work force, but I had no skills and I was used to studying, so I succumbed to parental pressure to stay in school. My parents had come from working class immigrant backgrounds, and their greatest wish was to provide their children with the education they could not enjoy because of the circumstances of their youth.

Julia was "artistic" in school. She too rebelled against her parents' wishes for her. Julia was born into a family of professionals. Her father and mother, both French Canadians, were well educated. Julia's father was a dentist, as was her mother's father. Julia's siblings hold professional positions in law and medicine. Julia told me that she was the fifth of six children. She has three siblings that are much older than her, and she always felt like she was a member of a second family. Curiously enough, I too experienced this feeling. I am the last born of five children, but because my parents lost their first two children under tragic circumstances, I too felt like I was born into the "second" family.

When I began this thesis almost four years ago, I thought that I could prove that

a pattern existed among teachers who travel abroad and learn the craft of teaching in foreign countries. I realized during the course of research that I could only highlight and parallel Julia's and my experience, in the hopes that some patterns would emerge that may shed light for other teachers thinking of making a career out of travelling and teaching in other countries. During the past three years I have also learned that one does not have to leave one's country to feel like he or she is teaching students whose home culture does not match the larger context of the dominant culture.

My first year of teaching was in Chibougamau, Quebec. I taught Cree students and French Canadian students. After one year I left, being called to greener pastures and warmer sun. I had succeeded in securing a post in a private Anglican school in the Bahamas, where I taught for four years. At first I thought my four years teaching in the Bahamas and Julia's three years in the Seychelles would draw out sufficient data to highlight my experiences. I began to read the literature linked to my topic, and as I began to be more immersed in the research and my programme of study at Concordia I realized that much more was involved in shaping an image of the "life worlds" (Pearse, 1985) of an art educator.

It became apparent that present experience was linked with formative experiences. Persistent questions arose that demanded to be answered. Why had both Julia and I become interested in art and education to begin with? What makes a person choose teaching art over the idea of becoming solely an artist? I reflected upon the

questions posed by my family circumstances, my education, and my life experiences. My studio practice in particular informed my teaching process.

Early home life, exposure to art and culture, via the family, peers, school, and mass media, all played a significant role in shaping both my and Julia's image of who we had become as art teachers. I drew up twenty-six questions to interview Julia. In trying out these questions, I wrote a first person account of my own story. The twenty-six questions were grouped around three main topics: A) Biography, B) Education, C) Experience.

Biographical questions were intended to establish a context for the education and experience questions. They uncovered data about formative experiences in art, in the family of origin, and in education. Education questions focused on experiences as a university student and as a student teacher. Experience questions were intended to elicit information pertaining to the development of the teacher in her first few years of teaching. The questions were grouped under these topics, yet they were inextricably linked to one another. From these questions three key issues emerged:

- 1) What influences, if any, do the formative experiences in the family, art, and education have on the individual who decides to become an art teacher?
- 2) Does art education theory and practise merge in the classroom via the activity of the teacher interacting with her students?
- 3) What motivates students and teachers to work at their full potential?

Julia described the context of her family life as being somewhat strict and authoritarian. This family mood or tone was set by her father. Julia identifies with her mother, who was a well-educated French Canadian woman. Julia described her mother as being "good with her hands". She is a woman who likes to do handsewing, and Julia remembers her mother making clothes for her children's puppets and dolls. Julia identifies her artistic personality as coming more from her mother than her father.

I too identify more with my mother than with my father, although my father is good at fixing things, and I adored watching him make things work. My mother used to draw for me, when she would tell me a story. When I was little I had art materials available to me, and when the real thing wasn't around, I would use whatever was at hand to transform the ordinary into the magical. I was influenced by Walt Disney and the characters that came out of his animation studio. I particularly enjoyed films and home movies, and I can recall sitting in the basement in a dark corner with my child's film projector, and watching the dancing lights of the two dimensional object projected in what seemed to be three dimensions on our basement wall.

According to the way I remember things, my early home life was at times rigid and at other times permissive and inconsistent. Both my parents strived to earn a living and provide well for their children. My mother (formerly a German citizen) met my father (a Ukrainian- Canadian) in Germany while he was serving in the Canadian Army. Shortly after the Second World War ended they were married, and came to

Canada to start their lives together. As the oldest child, my mother had been required to leave school to raise her siblings, because her mother died just three months before she was to graduate from middle school (grade 10). Julia's mother also had to help raise her siblings; she was one of the oldest girls born into a large French Canadian family. Family took care of family first, in the generation that both Julia's and my mother hail from. They are very close in age, now in their early seventies. Time passed and eventually my mother's father remarried. My mother returned to school and became a maternity nurse. Soon after she arrived in Canada my mother started a nursing home for elderly people, and she ran the home until she retired at the age of sixty-five. My father had learned a trade in the army, electronics, and he worked at his own business when he left the army. He ran a radio and television sales and repair store in LaSalle in the fifties and sixties. At that time, he was at the forefront of technology.

In elementary and high school I was always very good at drawing and making things, as was Julia. We both agreed that we received positive attention for our ability in art. Julia said she always knew that she was an artistic person, as she enjoyed music and art, but she was never sure that she wanted to be an artist. My parents approved of my artistic pursuits, and I received positive reinforcement from both adults and peers alike. I was a shy child, and this positive feedback did a lot to strengthen my self confidence.

During adolescence both Julia and I recall rebelling against our parents. I recall

disliking authority figures generally: they all belonged in one category, I thought, which I called "the establishment". A lot of my original ideas were not so original, as I had many of the ideals of the 1960's mulling about in my brain.

In hindsight, I see that I really didn't know what I wanted to do after high school, except that overall I wanted to disassociate myself from the adult world. My peers were tremendously important, and as long as I stayed in school my parents supported me. As well I worked to help finance my school life, more than anything else. I truly succumbed to my parent's desire that I remain in school because their approval was important to me. Julia did the same. We both recalled having major conflicts with our parents throughout a turbulent adolescence in the 1970's. We remembered that the seventies children did not want to be identified with the secure generation of our parents, and yet we craved many of the things money could buy. Going to school was approved by our peer groups, so long as we were studying something meaningful that would make us happy to work, rather than being slaves of work. Humanities, art, music, political science and drama were all considered worthwhile pursuits. Woe be unto you if you were going to opt for commerce or accounting!

Both Julia and I stumbled into art programmes in C.E.G.E.P., based on the fact that if we continued in school our parents would support us. I remember thinking that when I turned 18 I was going to quit school, however by that time I had switched from

a social studies programme into a creative arts one, and was quite enjoying myself. I was very happy in college.

A similar situation occurred in Julia's case. She wanted to do a set design cum window display programme that was offered as a career training programme, but her parents refused to approve of this. Julia's father wanted Julia to become a nurse. A compromise was reached when Julia agreed to do a two year pre-university programme in a public C.E.G.E.P. Julia pursued the fine arts path, and went on to study art at university. In her final year she was obliged to do a minor in either illustration, education, or art history. Julia chose education as her minor, and she eventually became a teacher. She was ambivalent about her choice, but went along with it anyhow.

I made a parallel compromise with my parents. I studied studio art at Concordia. When I graduated from school, I didn't know what I was going to do for work. Both Julia and myself worked at jobs to support ourselves partially during our schooling, but once school was over, these low paying high labour jobs no longer appealed to us. I spent an extra year in the undergraduate programme at Concordia, taking courses in psychology, art therapy and art education. Eventually I decided on teaching, and went to McGill to do a one year teacher's diploma. I worked on my art and joined Powerhouse Gallery at this time. I thought I might become an artist, but my interests were too varied and I couldn't stand the idea of just painting all day, which is

what school had taught me constituted the life of the artist. I chose education because I wanted to travel, and in the process I discovered that I really liked teaching. My best friend at the time had gone, against her parent's wishes, to live in Mexico and I thought that was exciting and daring. I wanted to do the same kind of thing, only I wanted to be able to work wherever I went.

My year at McGill was study-oriented, goal-oriented, and fun. I had a good rapport with my fellow students and my art methods teacher. We had a small class - there were only seven of us, I think, and we all got along very well. My practise teaching placements were both positive, although in my second session I did run into problems with my trained teacher, who was a very strong disciplinarian. My weakest point was classroom management, which is an issue with most student teachers. Only when I arrived in the "real world" of teaching did I wonder what I had learned in my one year at McGill. I felt that I was weak in discipline, art history, and art criticism. I carried with me into the classroom my romantic notion of the artist and the student. I was heavily influenced by the popular notion that art was about self expression, and I believed in art for art's sake. My ideals were formed by my parents, Viktor Lowenfeld's philosophy, and my studio experiences in C.E.G.E.P. and university. When I had to face my first year in the field of teaching in Northern Quebec, I was not mentally prepared for the reality of the classroom. Julia expressed some similar sentiments about her first year teaching in Terrebonne.

Julia studied etching at university. She recalled that doing art education "wasn't very well considered amongst your peers at university". I remember that studio majors at Concordia had the same attitude towards people in art education. Teachers in the studio department were, it seemed, even more biased against students from art education than we studio majors were. There existed a hostility amongst the people in the different programmes.

In her final year of university, Julia chose to do a minor in art education. This choice was made on the basis that it was "the only practical path", to use her own words. Julia was not really interested in becoming a teacher, but at the same time, she felt strongly that teaching carried a great deal of responsibility with it. Once she started taking the courses in art education, she became more interested in the idea of becoming a teacher. In this respect, both Julia's and my experience were parallel. At the outset of my studies, I did not intend to become a teacher, I just liked art. For reasons of practicality and dreams of travelling the world, I too stumbled into teaching and found out that I loved it.

Julia graduated in 1980. According to Julia, none of her "art education" friends had any luck in securing a teaching job following graduation. Julia's first job in Terrebonne was part - time, classified as a 50% workload. Many stresses were associated with this first teaching experience. The school, located north east of Laval, was difficult to get to, as Julia was living in Montreal at the time. In addition to the

stress of travelling there were other problems. The headmistress expected her to teach music as well as art. Julia recalls that "...it was my first year experience and I didn't feel competent teaching art, let alone music." Because of her ambivalence about her choice of careers, Julia had chosen to do her student teaching in ideal environments where the students were highly motivated and very well behaved, and where she was comfortable working. One of the practicums was a university-run Saturday morning art class, the other was held at the private convent school on the South Shore of Montreal that Julia had attended as an adolescent. For Julia, working as an art teacher in a public elementary school was quite different from what her education and life experiences had prepared her to expect. One could even say that Julia experienced culture shock.

My first teaching year (1984) I was similarly challenged. In early October I was hired to teach English, Art, and Moral and Religious Education to students residing in Chibougamau, Quebec. I found myself teaching two high school subjects for which I had absolutely no training, to students who were highly unmotivated by secondary education. At home, approximately 80% of my students spoke Cree as their mother tongue, 10% spoke French, and the last 10% spoke English. The language of instruction at MacLean Memorial School was English. The diverse cultures that my students hailed from did not match anything that I had been culturally conditioned to expect, and the bottom line was that I did not understand my students very well.

The only way I knew how to teach at that time was the way I had been taught in

my own home and school environment. Many of my ideas of what constituted a good teacher had developed during my university years, and my high university ideals did not match the needs of a challenging situation such as the one I faced in Chibougamau. To further complicate matters, I found myself working under the ineffective guidance of a first-year principal. In my opinion, he felt insecure and intimidated in his job, and he was unable and unwilling to support me in disciplining the students.

So as you can see, both Julia and myself had stressful first-year teaching experiences. We both agreed that the university had not prepared us for the 'real world' of the classroom. Perhaps if we had found ourselves working in contexts that we felt more at home in, the problems usually associated with first-year teachers would not have been as severe.

Julia remembers that she was taught at university that to be a successful teacher, it was important to be an artist first. I remember being told by my field placement teachers that you had to be able to do for yourself anything that you asked your students to do. For example, if you ask your students to draw portraits, you have to possess the skill to draw portraits. Julia also recalled that her training was based in the art education theories of Viktor Lowenfeld and others who supported the notion that "art was considered more as a process than the final outcome and like the product, the children would develop their potential as a human being, a whole, that they would develop themselves intellectually, emotionally, socially, so I guess that my training

hadn't prepared me for the 'gorilla' that I was to find in the schools." (Julia, from the interview)

The word that best describes both Julia's and my first year of teaching is "traumatic". Julia recalled that she was "scared to death when I entered my first class and the whole year, and I mean I wasn't prepared for manufacture, with 45 minutes and you had to prepare, like, you had the whole school that you had to see in three days you know, one group after the other."

Julia shared with me that at first she thought she had to prepare a different lesson for each class, but experience taught her to reuse the same lesson plans for the same group levels. I remember having to learn the same technique, through trial and error and hard won experience. Deciding what to buy and knowing how to make an art purchases order was another baffling challenge that both Julia and I commiserated over. I remember feeling overwhelmed by the responsibility of spending school money, and I was uncertain of what I needed to order. My principal was angry at me because it took me so long to make up the order, but I only had a budget of \$300.00! I had to be certain that I was ordering worthwhile supplies! This meant I had to preplan all my lessons, which didn't fit in very well with my ideas of the spontaneous element in art making.

Survival in the classroom becomes the top priority for inexperienced teachers.

Classroom management, budgets, materials, the economy, and cultural contexts of the students - all of these variables contribute to the total student that you will be expected to educate. In addition to trying to figure out who your students are, the inexperienced teacher must also discern how to apply the established curriculum to the actual practical concerns of the classroom and the school. These practical issues take precedence over the ideal notions of the beginning art teacher. Soon after beginning, reality sets in and the teacher who survives the process of public education is the one who is willing to compromise and who is also willing to take responsibility for achieving goals while working within a system that is basically hostile towards art education.

Julia was not re-engaged in Terrebonne. I chose to leave Chibougamau. I applied for a job in the Bahamas and was successful in landing the post. There was little hope of getting a job in Montreal, where politics had caused many Anglophones to leave the province thus depleting the schools of enrolments. I was one of the lucky ones. I did get an offer from a private school in the Montreal region, but I chose adventure over security, which at the time was consistent with my nature. I was in my mid-twenties and I had nothing to tie me down. There was no reason not to go. The year was 1985.

After her experience in Terrebonne, Julia spent a year drawing unemployment. The recession hit Canada full force, and the economy was stagnant. Julia went back to university and there enjoyed becoming immersed in the art-making process. She re-

evaluated her direction in life, and thought about going abroad to teach. When a neighbour advised her of an advertisement for teachers needed in the Seychelles, Julia applied, but was refused the appointment. She then took a course about international development in Third World countries and, when she reapplied to go to the Seychelles she was accepted. Julia was motivated by a desire to work and influence the development of art education in a country that was newly independent from England.

In 1982 when Julia arrived in the Seychelles, universal education had recently been adopted into educational policy. The Seychelles had been colonized by France, then later it was taken over and governed by the British. Before the local socialist government took over, education had been for the rich upper class citizens only. Although Julia travelled to the Seychelles fully charged with hopes and dreams of really making an impact in art education in a developing country, she was unable to sustain this enthusiasm as the government was suspicious of foreigners. She experienced a lot of difficulty integrating into society, and she described the government of the Seychelles as "paranoid" of foreigners. Her peer group became other foreigners who had come to the Seychelles for various reasons.

Julia's expectations did not match the reality of the classroom and society. She thought that the systems would be significantly different in the new country, and that there would be less structure in place. As it turned out, the government was far more visible in education in the Seychelles than in Quebec. Julia felt that the government's

proximity was the direct result of the size of the island, which was seventeen miles long by one to two miles wide, and the fact that the political climate promoted extreme nationalism. She said that the government was the main employer, and that within a population of 60,000 inhabitants, everybody knew everybody's business. Of course, teachers were prominent, particularly because universal schooling had so recently been instituted. And so, the reverse of Julia's expectations was the reality.

According to Julia, the headmasters and headmistresses were powerless. They had to comply to the inconsistency of government educational policy. In our society, educational policy changes less often and you are basically left to yourself to decide how to interpret the curriculum.

I recall that in the Bahamas, it seemed that the government was less involved in school policy than what Julia described, but in my last year in Nassau the government became highly involved because they were responding to international changes between England and their former colonies. The Ordinary and Advanced level exams were made obsolete in 1990, and were completely phased out after 1992. Thus students could no longer write these international exams which enabled them to claim diploma equivalency in foreign countries. A new type of exam replaced the old, but the Bahamas decided to form, in conjunction with help from England, their own equivalent exams. Thus the testing seemed to be fairer as Bahamian cultural norms were featured in the new examinations.

Julia reported to me that the attitude towards foreigners was hostile. She was unable to immerse herself in the culture of the people. Foreigners were thought of as being a necessary evil. Some of this kind of attitude existed in the Bahamas, and a couple of times I can recall incidents of reverse racism as I was mistreated because I was white and non-Bahamian. However, this was not the norm. For the most part, after a couple of years I was well integrated with the culture and enjoyed my life in the Bahamas. I was accepted by Bahamian and non- Bahamian residents alike.

Julia said that in the Seychelles the people wouldn't talk to her, partially because they were extremely shy, but that some seemed to admire her. These people thought that just because you were foreign, you must be better. At one school where Julia taught, people didn't talk to her for three months! She tried to integrate and be accepted into the culture, but she was openly rejected by government officials when, upon arrival, officials refused her application to join the local artists association. She was also told that she wasn't needed to help mount a children's art exhibition.

My experience in the Bahamas was completely different. I felt welcomed from the moment I got off the airplane. I was met at the airport by a co-worker, who also in that first day found me a place to live. On the ride to the hotel, I looked at the trees, lush with vegetation. The sunlight penetrated my very core, and the aqua blue colour of the ocean was beyond comparison to anything I had ever experienced in Canada. I had been to Nassau twice before as a vacationer, and I had already fallen in love with the

people and the island before embarking on this teaching adventure. Those very vacations had been what motivated me to go into teaching in the first place.

Like the Seychellois, Bahamians are shy, but as soon as you smile at them, for the most part they smile back at you. They are also very animated when they converse, which can be extremely entertaining at times! If I experienced any difficulty at all during my first year in the Bahamas it was that I had to learn that going on vacation somewhere is completely different from living and working in that place.

I had a tough first year with the students. They tested me in every way possible. I remember they ridiculed my shoes and clothes, because they did not match Bahamian expectations of appropriate attire. That bothered me a lot. But as time went on, in my second year the children were very polite and respectful of me, only because, I was told by my fellow co-workers, I had lasted the first year and hadn't turned tail and run home. As well, I had proven myself as a competent teacher who liked the students, and they could sense that. I was still learning how to teach, considering my first year in Chibougamau had been fraught with problems.

My second year, in the Bahamas, seemed more or less what I expected teaching would be when I first discovered that I loved it. I taught at St. Anne's School, a private school with a religious affiliation to the Anglican Church. Many of the teachers were foreigners who had been at that school for a long time. As I mentioned previously,

several people took me under their wings and showed me the ropes. I was very well looked after by senior staff members and the administration. This is completely opposite to Julia's experience. She was basically left on her own to survive in the classroom, and she had to find most things out by herself.

The Seychellois were first colonized by the French, and later by the British. The dominant language spoken at home was Creole, but the language of instruction and administration was English. The older Seychellois spoke Creole and French, and the younger generation spoke Creole and English. Julia said that her students reverted to Creole constantly, and after six months she had picked up enough of this language to use it in her teaching.

The "Queen's English" was the language of instruction and administration in the Bahamas, but many Bahamians reverted to a Black language dialect that had been around since the days of slavery, and I had to learn to understand it and use it in order to communicate effectively with my students.

According to Julia, the Seychellois culture does not have an indigenous art, thus art was promoted at the school level. Julia taught in two elementary schools and in her third and last year in the Seychelles, she taught at the college level. The government of the Seychelles, like that of the Bahamas, saw a need for cultural products, as both islands are tourist destinations. The Seychelles were formerly uninhabited, but the

French colonized the island and brought Black African slaves there to work the land and serve the landowners. When the English arrived in the Seychelles, they brought with them Chinese and Indian workers. The populations mixed and limited arts and crafts survived. The people make baskets and straw hats, but the work does not compare favourably to weavers in other countries. It is functional and "cliché", according to Julia. The one cultural product that distinguishes the Seychelles from other countries are the objects made from co-co-du-mer. This is a two sided coconut that resembles female breasts which is known only to the Seychelles. Also, the way women and men dress in the Seychelles is very distinctive. Dressing very well, one can not tell what social class a person comes from by their clothing. This is also very true of the Bahamas.

The Bahamas which is comprised of eleven inhabited islands and many (seven hundred) uninhabited islands was colonized first by the Spanish, who managed to wipe out an entire race of people called the Lucayan Indians. Later the islands were colonized by the British, who also brought Black African slaves to the island to work on the plantations. The Africans brought with them a mixed up version of Junkanoo, the masquerade carnival that I mentioned in Chapter 1. It continued to grow and evolve into an annual artistic and cultural event.

For the entire period of time that I worked in the Bahamas as a secondary level art teacher, I stayed at the same school. Because I didn't move around and stayed in

one school, I believe my integration into the culture was made easier. Despite the fact that my Bahamian experience was obviously more positive than Julia's Seychelles experience, there were times when I just wanted to pack it all up and go home. At these times I felt lonely, far from my family, and totally isolated.

The constantly hot and humid weather at times was a curse, rather than a blessing. I remember my first few days of teaching. The art room had a sink in it, which made me so happy because in Chibougamau I taught art in a regular classroom, and had to haul pails of water from the downstairs bathroom upstairs to my classroom. I remember standing at the front of my class in Nassau, and the sweat just poured off of me. It ran down my back, dripped off my nose, rolled off my fingertips and generally added to my discomfort.

Like those in the Seychelles, the classrooms at St. Anne's were motel style, with no corridors. In the Seychelles, the walk ways were covered between classrooms, to shield the students from sun and rain. At St. Anne's we enjoyed no such luxuries. When it rained, students did not switch classes - they stayed with the teacher until the rain stopped. Quite often if it was raining in the morning before school started, some students would just stay home. Rain days were common, just the way snow days are sometimes the cause of school cancellations here in Quebec. However, the difference here is that the boards of education officially cancel school, whereas in the Bahamas the children and parents decide amongst themselves whether or not it is too rainy to go to

school. Since St. Anne's was a private school and the parents paid a hefty tuition fee, most children were made to attend their classes regardless of the weather.

Whereas I managed to integrate fairly well with the foreign culture, Julia remained on the fringe. Some of the reasons for this have already been mentioned. Basically it comes down to the fact that no two situations are alike, no two countries are the same, and no two people could have symmetrical experiences. I became ensconced in Bahamian culture via my co-workers and the family. I had close Bahamian friends and I was accepted into my boyfriend's Bahamian family. This enabled me to feel secure and take risks in the classroom, based on the knowledge and understanding I was gaining about my audience, the students. The family and friends that I interacted with kept me informed about what was important to the people, current in the news, and whatever else I asked to have interpreted and clarified. My British friends and the British vice-principal (who had worked and lived in the Bahamas for twelve years) helped me to decode the British influences and expectations implicit in the art curriculum and the culture. At one time I was asked to write the art curriculum for our school, and I complied, using British, Bahamian, and Canadian documents and research to complete this task.

An artistically gifted student that I taught acted as interpreter and translator of meanings between myself, the teacher, and some of the groups of children I taught. The church also played a strong role in my life in the Bahamas, offering unconditional

mothering and a sense of community.

Julia did not have these avenues to create inroads into the Seychellois culture. Both Canada and the Bahamas were former British colonies. So too was the Seychelles. However, geographically speaking the Seychelles would have been far more influenced by Africa, due to its geographical proximity, and Canada and the Bahamas were more influenced by American culture for the same reason.

I felt that I was regularly dialoguing with my students to find out what their social and academic needs were. Julia was teaching students from grades one to nine, so she had more barriers to cross than I did, considering I taught only high school-aged children. The difficulties with language, government, and culture that Julia faced in the Seychelles resulted in her being able to only partially understand her students. This however did not daunt her, as she expressed the hope that she enabled the students to become makers of their own culture, which was the mandate to which she was engaged to teach.

No teacher ever knows for sure whether or not he or she has made a difference in a student's life. The influence of a teacher is immeasurable, and goes beyond the classroom and touches the lives of each student. Upon her initial rejections at attempts to integrate with the culture, Julia maintained her equilibrium by confining herself to a community of friends who had university educations

Working in the classroom here and abroad came down to the same basic principle of survival for both Julia and myself. Julia found it hard to discipline the students whom she described as wild, for two main reasons. They were not afraid of her authority, as she did not hit them as a form of discipline, and the students were really going to school for the first time in the history of the country, and were not used to the structure and restraint of school.

I experienced similar problems when I refused to use corporal punishment in the classroom. The students concluded that I was weak because I would not "beat" them when they misbehaved. Many teachers from other Caribbean cultures who also worked at St. Anne's, as well as the administration, had no such qualms about "beating" the students. They were not brutal, but the cane and the switch were acceptable forms of punishment for misbehaviour. At parent teacher interviews I often had parents who would give me permission to "beat" a child who misbehaves. This was clearly a cultural norm that I could not adopt.

There were other societal values that I could not fully embrace. For example, one time when my car was on the blink for awhile, I would ride my bike to work. The children interpreted this as a sign of poverty. I thought it was healthy and prudent. Outward signs of material wealth were important to Bahamians who, because they were formerly enslaved, continued to equate freedom and status with money and objects. In

hindsight I see that it is no different here, except that we have a larger middle class in Canada. The middle class in the Bahamas is quite small in my opinion; most people were either rich or lower middle class.

Bahamian students suffer from the effects of being frequently abandoned by adults and educators. The family unit is tenuous, the teachers don't stay, and fathers are often absent. Usually both parents work, and often enough children are born out of wedlock and there is only one constant parent that they are frequently attached to, usually the mother. The families are large and often everyone lives together in one house until such a time as the children pair up with partners and get married. At this point they usually leave home.

Teachers do not stay in the Bahamas because they are foreigners and after awhile they either wish to go back home or the government does not renew their contracts. A non-Bahamian is allowed to stay and work for up to five years. Frequently the contracts are renewed on a yearly basis following the five year limit. The cost of living is high, the work load is heavy, and employee benefits are minimal compared to those in countries like Canada and England. The salary does not compensate for these losses, but the sun, sand, and sea are alluring to young teachers with few commitments. Educated Bahamians usually opt for the higher paying professions such as law and medicine.

I was responsible for teaching an examination-oriented curriculum. I had to see to it that my students passed their exams in art, which were administered by the Bahamian government in the ninth grade, and the University of London in the eleventh grade. Students with good exam results would have a secure future in the work force. Bahamian society valued competitive children who did well on exams, and all private school exam results were published in the newspapers. This went against my grain. I had to learn to teach towards the aim of passing skill-oriented exams and so my process-versus-product ideology was pretty well put on the back burner. In doing this, I was called to examine my own personal goals in education, and forced to make some compromises in order to function effectively at work.

Compared to my positive and supportive experience in the Bahamas, Julia's experience seems negative. However, Julia was able to find her place in education during her last year in the Seychelles when she taught at the polytechnic and discovered that the post secondary pre-university level student was the kind of student that she liked teaching the most.

My most positive teaching experience in the Bahamas also came in my final year of teaching there. In my fourth year at St. Anne's, feeling more confident and competent in my craft as well as at ease with the people, I risked loss of classroom control in favour of creative chaos in the entire school when we decided to participate in Junior Junkanoo. Participating as a school in the Junior Junkanoo competition

showed me that motivation for making art must begin with the personal, in order for it to be intrinsic and rooted in living experience.

Both Julia and myself speak about seeking to improve our methods and approach to teaching by allowing the voice of the student to be heard and validated by the teacher. I have found that the problems of teaching art in a foreign culture are the same problems that I face teaching art at home in my own province or country. No matter where you go, as an art educator you are always dealing with real people, and facing the challenge of making sense out of the curriculum to educate students and management about the importance of art education in our society.

One's formative experiences at home, at school, and in art help shape who you are and how you will approach teaching. The advantage of teaching abroad or in culturally different contexts is that it helps you to understand more fully your own personal teaching practises. When you are faced with something that you don't understand you have to work harder to achieve clarity and comprehension. I learned that my own education as an art student or a student art teacher bore little resemblance to the role I play as a teacher of art. Being in a foreign country and succeeding helped me to gain much needed self confidence, and gave me the opportunity to experiment and hone my skills as an art educator. Researching my experience as it was mirrored by Julia's experience has allowed me to gain a wider perspective on my own teaching practice.

CHAPTER 3

RETURNING TO THE BAHAMAS

In January 1991 I interviewed Nigel with the goal in mind that he would reflect back to me his impressions of what I had been like as a teacher at St. Anne's. At the time of the interview Nigel had been teaching at St. Anne's for seventeen years; he had seen many teachers come and go. Before arriving in the Bahamas Nigel had taught for four years in England and one year in Papua, New Guinea, with the Voluntary Service Overseas.

I also interviewed Father Patrick Adderly, Headmaster at St. Anne's, and Father Sturup, a priest from Christ the King Church and a music teacher who just happened to be visiting with Father Adderly at the time of the interview. From my former co-workers I hoped to glean some descriptive information which would allow me to portray the child I taught, the family he or she came from, and Bahamian society in general. I wanted to find the answers to the following questions: What is Bahamian art and culture? I know that art teaching is a vehicle for the transmission of culture so I asked can a foreigner teach art without imposing personal cultural norms on the people? What kind of teacher was I? What kind of students were they? Was I truly different?

I started my interview with Nigel with the following statement: "I remember I had a hard first year". In fact, the students mocked my walk, my clothes, and my

shoes. Later I learned that outward appearances are very important to Bahamians and people from other Caribbean islands as well. One of the Jamaican teachers proposed an hypothesis as to why this was so. She said that when Blacks came out of slavery they knew that they would be judged on their outward appearance more severely than Caucasians and from that time forward Blacks always made the effort to look their very best. Casual clothing, I soon learned, did not have the same definition in the Bahamas as it did in Canada.

Nigel told me that from his experience he had seen the children give every new teacher a hard time. He said:

Well I think these children give everybody that is new a hard time. I think it takes them a year. And they seem to zero in on everybody new. And it really doesn't depend on experience too much. That is the one thing I found about these particular set of children. They really go for the throat of all new members of staff and if they survive a year, its almost as if well, okay, they survive the test. They've got a new target the second year. 'Cause we have had over the years a lot of people who ended up very good, but the kids nearly destroyed them in the first year.

Nigel thought that my experiences the first year at St. Anne's were typical and no different than any other new teacher. I suggested that I had a difficult time because I was foreign, and not Bahamian, but he disagreed with that notion, stating that being new is what the children focus on, rather than foreign. He went on to say that after the first year the children begin to classify the teachers according to the patterns the community has against certain nationalities, mirroring the attitudes that proliferate from

the home front.

Nigel was curious to know what my thesis was about, and I explained to him that it was a personal description of what it was like for me, as an outsider, to come to a foreign culture and teach Art in that culture. I pointed out that when I was in high school fifteen years ago, we had no practical examination, only a theoretical art history exam. And now, the final marks are determined differently by each high school teacher and submitted to the Ministry of Education. Some teachers do only practical exams, others do practical and theoretical, still others use only a theoretical exam combined with the class work mark to determine the final mark for a student. In the Bahamas during the time I was there, the General Certificate Of Education examination syllabus from London University, "Ordinary" level ("O"levels, we used to call them) determined the structure and goals of the Art curriculum. I recalled to him that when I was about sixteen years old I had heard about these exams from a British girl who had come to Canada as an exchange student. Her description of these exams certainly made them sound as though they were quite challenging and stressful. The person who first showed me an "O" level exam was Miss Beresford. Liz really showed me the ropes, as did Jane, my fellow co-worker and house mate. I noticed that not all new teachers who came into the system would get that same orientation as I did and I could see, in hindsight, that I was very fortunate to be working for and with such competent people.

Nigel did not think that the work that I had the students do was all that different

from other Art teachers he had seen working at St. Anne's over the years. He noted that the system tested achievement, not aptitude, and students who did not do that well on the examination date scored poorly. We agreed that this was a failure in the system, but that it provided students with a good education in the reality of life, that is, that no one is really interested in what you are capable of doing, only in what you actually do. Nigel felt that a lot of Bahamian students were hampered in their studies by the lack of structure in their home lives. He felt this affected their studies because they were coming to school from an unstructured home life into an environment that was very structured and disciplined, and sometimes the differing expectations between home and school creates such a wide chasm that the student does not know how to cope. I asked Nigel to give me an example of what he meant. He replied:

The children's living arrangements I think are very strange....because you are (taking them from the undisciplined home/social structure) putting them into a system which is very disciplined which is completely contrary to everything they've grown up doing. You know, it's very much instant here. A lot of children don't know where they are going to eat, where they are going to sleep on a regular basis. They eat wherever they end up and sleep wherever they end up. The extended family is so big, that they don't have a daily routine. And I found that if I asked a group of thirty children how many of them have a formal supper (that is everybody sits together for at least this one meal almost every day), how many of them sit down to eat together, you might find four. Everybody just seems to go their own way.

When I first started teaching in the Bahamas, I was not privy to this information about the child and the family. This came to me through experience from dealing directly with the children, and through discussion with other teachers who helped me understand the child I was teaching. As well, I had access to the Bahamian family

through my Bahamian friends and I learned a lot from these sources, primarily through observation.

The society as a whole takes the examination results very seriously. This includes examinations in Art. A subject is deemed worthy as long as it culminates in a final examination mark. Children are ranked on their report cards, from first to last, according to their examination and class mark results. This means that in a class of thirty children, somebody will be coming first while others land in the middle range or come last. This was a practice that I found very difficult to adopt, as I find it hard personally to ascribe a measurement to a child's effort and call it a final mark. However, I had no choice. Nigel and I talked about the pressure on the students to perform. He felt that the prevailing attitude was that if you work hard enough, you can achieve good grades, and he did not think that was true. Some of the children, he felt, just didn't have the aptitude necessary to do well in some courses. The emphasis on academics is very high in the Bahamas, especially in the private schools. Courses like art were also given importance because the education hierarchy realized that visual art was necessary in helping the children become involved and knowledgeable about their own culture. People travel to the Bahamas not only for sun, sand, and sea, but also to experience a unique cultural environment, which in turn positively influences the tourism industry.

The members of staff at St. Anne's came from all kinds of different

backgrounds: Jamaican, Guyanese, Canadian, American, Bahamian, English, Welsh, and African was the cultural make-up of the staff when I arrived there. I asked Nigel if he thought foreigners have a more difficult time adjusting to the new environment and to their co-workers. Nigel said no, he didn't think that foreigners had a harder time adjusting. He felt that it depended on the type of person the foreigner was: "Some will have problems but they will have problems wherever they are. I don't think it would necessarily be a problem here." Nigel did not think that I had any more difficulty adjusting to the cultural changes than anyone else, and he felt that I soon learned how to get the children to work at their full potential. I felt that because Nigel was so experienced working with Bahamians and so comfortable in his job that perhaps it was somewhat difficult for him to see Bahamians as a culture separate from his own.

Nigel pinpointed the notion that if I had difficulty at all it was because I was new to teaching myself, and I was a new teacher for the children to target. He also stated that I learned from the administration that showmanship was important and I learned to tow the line and perform in ways that were acceptable to my employers. I agreed with him that this was true.

There were numerous art competitions in the Bahamas, and I entered my students' work in as many of them as I could. Toward the end of my third year in the Bahamas, we were formidable competition for other schools. This kind of thing brought very positive publicity for not only the school, but for my art program itself.

The art competitions gave me practice to know what to do when it came time to enter the students in Junior Junkanoo. I was ready for it, emotionally and pedagogically. I trusted my students and myself to get this thing done and to do it well. I was greatly disappointed when I was told by the administration that we were not, as a school, permitted to enter the Junior Junkanoo competition because by its very nature it would cause a disruption to the smooth running of the school.

With the school's blessing I went to Father Pugh who still lives in the rectory on the school and church grounds (we went to mass every week as an entire student and staff body) and asked him if he would allow me to enter the competition as a church youth group. He also gave me his blessing to go ahead, so I did. I rallied all of the students together and we entered our work in the competition and did very well indeed, placing first for the banner competition and fourth place overall. I was satisfied that I did not directly defy the school rules, I just found a way around them.

One of the biggest challenges that I faced as a teacher in the Bahamas was the understanding and usage of the Bahamian dialect. Once I had mastered that, my students could no longer talk in circles around me. I had a gifted and talented student, Dwight Glinton, who in my first semester at St. Anne's entered the Bahamas National Trust competition and won. He was presented the award by the Prince of Wales, and wanted me to go along and be present when he received the reward. Since there was no arrangement for substitutes Father Adderly did not think it was a good idea that I leave

school for this purpose, but I learned that he was very pleased that Dwight had achieved such a high honour for both himself and the school.

From that time onward I worked to bring the best out of the students, because I could see that their self esteem was really boosted when they did well in competition, and I could also see that they worked well when the goal was clear to them. I learned to please the powers that be, I taught towards the examination-oriented curriculum, and since I had proven that I could be trusted, I was left alone to do what I thought best.

Nigel summed it up very well when he said:

...as a young member of staff who is fresh, you obviously are going to have new ideas and there is some education of the administration that you have to do in your subject area. And you just hope your administration is flexible enough. But firstly you have to play by their rules, and keep to their rules. Because if you show that you can play by their rules, and keep to their rules, they no longer feel threatened if you wish to change the rules, because if you change the rules they'll be aware that you'll play by them also. But if you don't play by their rules to start with, they're never going to listen to any change because they say well, you know, you can't keep the set of rules that are in force now. So you can't enforce any new ones.

Father Adderly is the headmaster at St. Anne's School. He has a keen interest in art and music, and culture in general. Several times I visited his home and admired his art collection, which is representative of several strong Bahamian artists. I felt very comfortable working at St. Anne's because I knew that I had Father Adderly's support in all areas of school life, including my subject area, Art.

In 1990, only six months after I left the Bahamas, Father "Pat" as his members

of staff used to affectionately call him, wrote me a letter expressing his views on art and Junior Junkanoo. He said:

I have a high regard for Art, as you know. It has so much to do with the images presented to us about ourselves and the world and the very perception that is ours between flower and stone. I believe it has so much to offer a people in terms of their development. So for me it is not merely a matter of pretty pictures (ugh!) or just representational. Like music, it is able to reach corners of our perception which often we ourselves are not aware of. Beyond the purely aesthetic value, I think that Art in all of its expressions has a revolutionary role and function....Anyway, the thing is this Junior Junkanoo shows us what can be done. Students get involved - they work hard late into the night (the same ones who won't do their assignments) they take pride in what they do. They show their creativity, they work together, the barriers between teacher and student dissolves - all in the cause of this Art that will be discarded come midnight hour or the dawn, whatever it may be. The Art transforms those whom it touches.

On January 3, 1991 I had the good fortune to interview Father Adderly and Father Sturup. Father Sturup is a music teacher and priest at Christ the King in Nassau. His presence at the interview was not planned, but proved to be most helpful in meeting the objectives of this thesis. I asked them to reflect on Bahamian culture, and the transmission of cultural values.

Father Sturup felt it was very difficult to define Bahamian culture, because many of the things that lend themselves to encouraging and drawing out or naming cultural activities and patterns are so often missing in the Bahamas. For example on the Family Islands you may find a school that doesn't have a music or art teacher.

Radio and television help in promoting and defining culture in the Bahamas. On

the radio you hear Bahamian dialect, which has a precise structure and sound of its own, but which cannot be understood by people who have never learned how to speak dialect. Some members of Bahamian society speak dialect frequently, and this concerned the government which at the time of this interview had asked the radio station to stress standard English in advertisements in order to set a good example for the public.

Father Adderly and Father Sturup were visibly upset by this semi-controlling attitude of the government and they felt that you cannot deny a people the right to use their natural form of communication. The larger issue at stake is the implication that standard English usage is far more acceptable than speaking in dialect. Father Adderly was particularly frustrated because the controversy surrounded the use of dialect in advertisements only, when it was never even used in the reading of the news or in the broadcasting of programs.

Because the Bahamas is so close geographically to the United States, the American culture influences Bahamian culture, I feel adversely. I spoke of this concern to the two interviewees, and they agreed that young people in particular have little appreciation for Bahamian culture, except perhaps in Junkanoo, which is unique to the Bahamas. I had met a man from Grand Bahama who said that Nassuvians were losing their Bahamian culture. I told Father Adderly about this and he replied that he didn't think that a people could lose their culture. Culture is the way a people do things:

marriages, worship, even politics, and the general way you go about things defines your culture. Father Sturup pointed out that in the case of music, the government allows a lot of imported music and musicians to play and perform in the tourist industry, which takes away work from Bahamians. He was distraught primarily because this sends a message to the people that the way Bahamians do things isn't acceptable to tourists. In my opinion, tourists who do get a chance to hear a live Bahamian band are usually happy because they have had a truly Bahamian experience.

Church is a main vehicle for the transmission of cultural values. The Anglican church in the Bahamas is very strong, and Father Sturup and Father Adderly both agreed that in church mother England is kept alive, while mother Africa is choking for air! In other words, parishioners prefer to sing hymns of Irish and English origin, over songs that reflect a more African/Bahamian sound.

Father Sturup sung a verse that is Bahamian in tune which has a calypso beat to it. The words are:

Let us talents and dance employ
Reaching out with a sound of joy
Bread is broken, the wine is poured
Christ is spoken and seen and heard
Jesus lives again, earth can breath again
Loves abound!

Whenever this song is sung in church, Father Sturup said he hears grumbles that they are singing Kingston Market or, in other words, a Jamaican sounding song! This is a

way of saying they don't like it and they would prefer to sing from the Anglican Hymns Ancient And Modern book. I argued that part of the Bahamian heritage is British in origin, but both Father Adderly and Father Sturup felt that as a people Bahamians are culturally closer to Africa than England.

There exists a jumping around of identity. Sometimes, Bahamians identify strongly with Britain, as in the case of worship and education, sometimes they feel closer to Africa, as in the sounds of music and in dance which is manifested in Junkanoo. Popular music and clothing styles from the United States of America influence young Bahamians in particular. When I was teaching in the Bahamas, the syllabus was English, and we were expected to organize our curriculum based on the British model. Now, with the introduction of local examinations, I assume (I have not read a copy of it) the syllabus is more Bahamian in nature. What is truly Bahamian? The Bahamian people are a blend of the countries that have influenced their development as a proud nation. In trying to define the Bahamian spirit, Father Adderly had this to say:

And I think too that when we say Bahamian its not an anti-foreign, its not a Black - White thing even, you know? Let me explain. When we stress, I had to explain to the (white) teacher when we are saying use Black Art or encourage them to see things from a Black point of view it has nothing to do with a racial thing. It's an aesthetic thing I believe, you know? It's part to do with the self. So there are certain ways people of African descent do things. There's certain things they appreciate, they like. I think that is what we have to get in contact with. Dance is very important. There is a sense for music, there is a deep love of story telling and there is also a deep love of the word, in a sense, they like the word that is why a lot of rap music appeals to a lot of Black students here, they like it. And there is also the sweet talk, jive talking, they like that. I

believe that is part of the history, that is part of our culture. They are emotional too. You see? I think that is very emotional, so this emotion has to come out of things. This emotion has to be expressed in religion, it will be in art too. And so we have this conflict whether you are trying to say no, it must be like the European or British; quiet and dignified - no, not dignified, is not the word...reserved! That's not part of Caribbean. The Caribbean culture celebrates. It's a carnival spirit that's there. And I think we must recognize this, and give it expression. It has to be disciplined and channelled but I don't think you can deny that. If you listen to Bahamians chat its usually animated, you know? Loud and animated? I think that is the national spirit. Cultural roots.

I asked Father Adderly if he thought that I had instilled some of my foreign values onto the Bahamian students. He said that I had brought in some of my values. He also said that anyone coming to teach is bound to bring their values with them. Even Bahamian Art teachers who have to go abroad to study are going to bring back new values learned while they were away at school. He said he didn't know what true Bahamian art is, but that probably Junkanoo expressed a popular form of Bahamian art, as it was a public expression that almost everyone participates in one way or another. With the exception of Junkanoo, the making of art and buying of art belonged primarily to an elite community of people. Father Adderly expressed the hope that Bahamian art was becoming a more middle class activity. I asked him what he expected from an art teacher at St. Anne's, and he replied:

I expect them to encourage first of all an appreciation for art, for the visual. I see art as helping them (the students) to develop as human beings because art can be so subtle. And can focus your attention on the world you are in and can take reality apart and put it together again. And get you in touch with your self! What is it in you and how would you express it. I like the children's art. Children show us how the world is from their point of view. So I see their art as very important. And as you know, I encourage art. I think Bahamians have to see art as more than pretty pictures. I think there has to be something more than

just copying.

At this point in the interview Father Sturup left the discussion and Father Adderly and I talked about topics pertaining to art education. He said he was trying to encourage the art teacher to display student work in the assembly hall and in the office, as had been done during the time I taught at St. Anne's. He realized that there was a period of adjustment for new teachers coming in to the school and that usually the first year was a transition period. I suggested that new teachers be given some kind of formal orientation to the cultural differences and expectations of the school, so that teachers do not experience so much culture shock. Father Adderly agreed and said he had already been doing that kind of thing, informally.

With regards to the art department at St. Anne's, Father Adderly said that he felt there was some confusion as to how to teach the students and what should be expected of them, but they needed to develop more links with their African heritage. He felt that I had done an excellent job in teaching the students because they had confidence in me and this seemed to engender in them the ability to do work of high quality. I maintained that the first year of my four years at St. Anne's was definitely a transition year, during which time I started to learn how to do my job to the best of my ability, considering I was working in a foreign culture.

Father Adderly expressed the concern that many artists and students see art as

having a commercial, material value, and thus perhaps the artists paint only the kind of work that would sell well:

I noticed that a lot of students, they see art as a commercial enterprise, even from here. The prices they put on their work! I think that is an initiative that is given in the society, this is a money making venture so you do things to make money. And I don't know if they ever will be going to be doing the kind of work that needs to be done once they just see it as a thing for money. They paint what people want.

He said he didn't know what the answer was, and that since the need for money is a reality of life, it will always be a driving force, even in the life of the artist.

Father Adderly did not think that it made a difference to the students whether their art teacher was a foreigner or not. He said that as long as the students felt they were learning from the teacher, and that the teacher could help them, they usually worked up to their potential most of the time. At the time of this interview, no one who had been an art teacher at St. Anne's during Father Adderly's time at the school had been local:

They have responded to all of the art teachers I have encountered at St Anne's. None were local. All came from abroad. Some were good, some were not too good. And the good ones they responded to, like I said. Miss Beason, (formerly at St. Anne's) they responded to well. The ones they were not to sure of, nothing much happened. And the ones who allowed them to get away with anything, well, that happened.

Both Father Adderly and Nigel agreed that the effectiveness of the teacher was not dependant upon whether they were local or not.

Father Adderly felt that a person with experience and training, sensitive to the

cultural nuances and values of the people they were working with would be able to do a good job. He acknowledged that cultural sensitivity was a process learned over time, after having experienced the students first hand. Father Sturup lamented the fact that many of the institutions needed to preserve and display the culture of the people are not firmly established in The Bahamas. There is no museum of fine arts, and particularly on the Family Islands, the lack of formally trained music teachers makes it difficult to develop local musical talent.

Nigel was keenly aware of the children's home circumstances. Primarily an unstructured home life, Bahamian students come to school and are expected to perform well in a system that is truly not reflected in the home environment. This can create a lot of conflict in adjusting to school life. In addition, St. Anne's is a school that prides itself on its fine academic tradition and standards, and the students have to work very hard and often independently to achieve and maintain good grades. I have come to realize that perhaps some of the problems that I encountered in being a teacher at St. Anne's were not wholly dependant on my being a foreigner, although I will not agree with Father Adderly and Nigel that this does not play a part in the life of a newly adapting non-Bahamian.

Becoming a good teacher where ever you are takes time and is always a learning process. Of course it is easier to teach to students who are from the same sort of background as you are, but in this global village called Earth which we all now reside

in, it is highly unlikely that even the suburban school is going to be devoid of many different cultures. And who would want them to be? It is a great pleasure to learn about the diverse cultures in the world, and now you don't have to travel much further than your own backyard to do so.

CHAPTER 4

THE FINAL CHAPTER

I interviewed some former students of mine to find out from them whether or not my struggle towards the "teacher" mode of being (Pearse, 1984) was successful, and whether or not my difficulties were a direct result of my being a foreigner in an unfamiliar culture. As well I was curious what they thought about me and what they thought about the ways and content of my art teaching. In many cases their ideas and memories surprised me. At the time of my interview with Scottie he was still only in grade ten, or form four as it is called in the British system. He talked about many aspects of interest to me and to this research. First and foremost I was interested in how St. Anne's had done in the Junior Junkanoo competition that year. In the following excerpt from the interview, Scottie refers to his art teacher as "she":

Most people were a little upset this year because, she was upset too because nobody wanted to take part in Junior Junkanoo. She asked me if I would help. I told her yeah as long as plenty other people was willing to help because I was the only one willing to help. Some of my friends, well, Tio, Tio was there he was doing some of the stuff like he did last time. They had other people who was doing the music it was just the people who was doing the costumes and nobody wanted to do that and so we had to go and join with St. John's so us and St. John's we took part as one.

The fact that the students didn't feel motivated to take part in Junior Junkanoo really shocked me. Part of what this thesis hoped to determine is built on the notion that once you discover what motivates a student body intrinsically then that is what you use as subject matter in your curriculum. Obviously I thought that Junior Junkanoo was a big

motivator when I had taught at St. Anne's, having never seen so many people so excited about participating in one event.

I also felt that this motivation was rooted in the culturally appropriate experience. I had some rethinking to do. The year I did Junior Junkanoo at St. Anne's we had a terrific student leadership in one or two artistic students and we had a strong art department that I had worked hard to build up. As well Junior Junkanoo hadn't been done at the school before and so we were not burned out by the enormity of the task. Perhaps these had been some of the reasons the competition had taken off so well the year we participated in it. Junior Junkanoo was a very energy and time consuming task, so I could see why after a few years a small school like St. Anne's may have exhausted its student artists. However it still did not explain why something as culturally exciting as Junkanoo did not take off as it had in 1988. My only conclusion is that it was not just because of its cultural appropriateness that Junior Junkanoo was so appealing to my students at the time.

In this interview Scottie also revealed to me that I had had the respect of the students. I had felt this to be true but to a much lesser degree than he reported. I always felt as a teacher that I was floundering a bit, that I didn't always have control of what was going on in the classroom. However he said from his perspective, I had the students well disciplined:

When you was there you didn't have us talk and to make noise in the class but

with her you could talk and say stuff out of the way she don't know what some of the stuff means but, she just is take it as a joke sometimes like just be talking all kind of nastiness in class I mean I don't like to say but we just is talking for fun she just laugh and tell us be quiet.

According to my memory it was not easy learning how to keep discipline in the Bahamian classroom. I had to learn Scottie's everyday language before I knew what was being talked about behind and in front of my back at times. I had mastered the language after about a year of listening hard and actively participating in Bahamian life and culture. My connection with my Bahamian boyfriend at the time, and my eagerness to learn, all contributed to my success. By the time I had Scottie in my form one class I had already two full years of teaching in the Bahamas under my belt and I knew his mother on a social level. Word gets around fast and in the Bahamas these things made a difference.

I told Scottie that I had planned to come up to the school to visit upon its reopening after the Christmas vacation in January. He told me that school didn't open until the following week. I found this conversation interesting because it showed me some aspects of the way some of my Bahamian students thought. Here is an example of what I mean:

H: I'm coming up to hail you all at school you know.

S: You mean when school open on the seventh?

H: No! It doesn't open on the seventh does it?

S: Yes that's a Monday.

H: What happened to the third?

S: I look in the book, the third is only a Thursday. School can't open in the middle of the week. That don't make no sense cause you go to school on

the Thursday you ain't going to learn nothing until the Monday anyway.

I had occasion to talk to two other students, Dwight and Rhonda. To begin with, Dwight did most of the talking as he had always been more forward than Rhonda in his personality. Both of these students had been leaders in the Junior Junkanoo adventure, and I had taught them both for four years. Dwight and Rhonda were what I would call artistically gifted, in that they had a facility for drawing and painting and both possessed creative imaginations. Dwight in particular needed very little instruction to improve his skills. I asked these two ex-students whether or not they thought that I as a Canadian taught them differently than their other teachers, especially their art teachers. They answered:

Dwight: Well being at St. Anne's, most of the teachers were foreign anyways so when you saw a foreign teacher it wasn't like such a big thing. You had to adjust.

Rhonda: We never really had a Bahamian art teacher at St. Anne's anyhow.

Therefore from the point of view of these two students I was new and foreign, yes, but this was not unusual in their experience. It was something that required an adjustment.

What was unusual to me at first was the emphasis the art curriculum placed on competitions. I talked with Dwight about the first competition he entered while under my tutelage. Truthfully, he followed up on the entry of this competition on his own, as I had no idea about competitions yet. As his teacher I reaped some of the rewards when he won. I said to Dwight:

Dwight do you remember the first competition you won when I was there? Do you know which one it was? That was my first introduction to competition. I had no concept of art competitions before really. I found that while I was here I got more and more involved in competitions as the years went on because I realized that is what Bahamian schools wanted. I wanted it too like I learned it and wanted it and I got into it but the first one you entered was Bahamas National Trust.

The Bahamas National Trust is a Bahamian wildlife association, and Dwight painted two flamingoes for this competition. Earlier Nigel referred to the competition phenomena when he said I learned that some showmanship was required in my job. You know there is nothing like winning and once we got St. Anne's in the running and a school to be contended with, it was fun!

I asked Dwight and Rhonda if they remembered any of the projects that we did in the beginning when I first started teaching at St. Anne's. They remembered an Egyptian type relief sculpture in plaster, and the reams upon reams of notes on the Egyptians that I gave them. They did not like the notes and thought this was a foreshadowing of what was to come. Dwight conceded that "...when you came I could see you were more into art you know. I liked your style much better." In referring to the fact that it was not because I was foreign that I was a good teacher, Dwight said: "I guess when you came there you were just, automatically you had more energy. I guess your personality had a lot to do with it." I tried to bring the conversation to a practical concrete level and asked Dwight if I had actually taught anything. He replied:

You sure did a lot for the other kids. I saw for the first time I saw people learning how to draw. Like when you came there like, if they couldn't draw before you showed them how to make things look real and you know people

actually started to make things look real.

I admitted it was a learning experience for me. I had to learn what a B.J.C. (Bahamas Junior Certificate) exam was. The first year I discovered that you needed to submit portfolios for each of the students. I can't remember why now but somehow I had not been given the dimensions of the art folders and the various pieces of work you had to submit for each student, and I submitted works that were 18" x 24". The size required was something like 9" x 12". I had to appeal to the Ministry of Education to accept our oversize works. Luckily for me they accepted them without complaint.

In my first year I learned as I went along. Mrs. Beresford, the former vice principal, showed me as much as she could. She showed me former exams, she gave me examples and explained aspects of the curriculum to me to the best of her knowledge. I looked at work left behind from former art teachers and students which also acted as clues on the map to discovering how to teach in this new country. These old art works were left buried deep in the darkest area of the art room cupboard.

Rhonda, Dwight, and I reminisced about how you could never find anything in the cupboard, especially since it did not have a light in it. One time Dwight had brought some apples and oranges from home, for a still life composition, and had left them overnight in the cupboard. It takes very little imagination to figure out that they next day when he went to get them he found them half eaten. The rats had had a good

supper. Rhonda and Dwight reminded me of the daily adventures with mice (rats did not show themselves in the day time) cockroaches, centipedes, and scorpions. On top of the heat, the bug adventures made teaching in my Bahamian classroom very different from that of the one I had previously known in Chibougamau. Most of the buggy activity took place around my most treasured feature in the classroom, the sink. The storage area was next to the sink, and the mice used to eat the papier maché and the paint off of the students paintings on a regular basis. After Chibougamau, I was happy to have a sink but I was loathe to look in the cupboards under it as the silver dollar size roaches would go scurrying off into their hiding places when I opened the doors.

The most important thing I learned from my interview with Rhonda and Dwight was that I really cared about my students. The students who graduated in Rhonda and Dwight's year were very special to me, probably because I grew alongside of them. When it came time for their G.C.E. (General Certificate of Education, London University) exams I had extra classes at night and on Saturdays. Their results were outstanding. They as a group achieved four A grades, five B's and seven C's. There were no failures. I certainly had not had so much success in the past, the G.C.E. examination being a very difficult exam to do well in.

But my best memory was that I had fun with that class. We did exhibitions, competitions, and Junior Junkanoo. We enjoyed one another and I got out of the teaching experience at least as much as I put into it. Margaret Mead said "I have spent

most of my life studying the lives of other peoples, faraway peoples, so that Americans might better understand themselves. ...I bring my own life to throw what light it may on how children can be brought up so that parents and children, together, can weather the roughest seas." (Mead, 1972, p.1)

I have humbly studied my experience of teaching in the Bahamas, my interactions with students and co-workers, and how this is reflected in the experience of one other teacher who taught in a foreign country. In doing so I hoped to uncover part of the story of my life in order to make what was invisible, visible. I believe I have done this, and in so doing I feel a sense of wonder and satisfaction that I could look into my life and find so much of myself present in the impressions and memories of others. It is particularly gratifying that as a teacher, I am able to find myself reflected in the lives of my former students. In relation to how something is much more meaningful and perhaps valuable when it is personally connected to you, I have an additional quote from Margaret Mead (Mead, 1972, p.69):

All my life I have felt that a painting or poem composed by someone I know is far more meaningful to me than work by a greater artist or poet whom I do not know. I like to have my experiences buried deep in a personal context - my experience of knowing the life of the artist or of being in the company of someone I love while I see - and later remember - a particular play or hear a favourite opera.

I am not famous or important. I am a single individual with a story to tell of my life and times as a teacher in the Bahamas. I am deeply rooted in the context of my own experience, and I have, through an in-depth exploration of my experience, undertaken

to describe the nuances of that experience.

I have tried to find scholarly examples of inquiry that reflects upon teaching art (and learning as a teacher) in foreign settings, and have not, in my opinion, been very successful in uncovering direct links. I have found relationships in the broader field of education (Teacher by Sylvia Ashton Warner, 1963, 36 Children by Herbert Kohl, 1967) as well as cultural anthropology: Margaret Mead's Blackberry Winter; My Earlier Years, 1972. Ashton-Warner and Kohl both chronicle their experiences in the classrooms of children culturally different from themselves, the former in New Zealand and the latter in Harlem, New York City.

Ashton-Warner discovers something that is not new, as I did, that children have their own personal life experiences. When what is going on in the daily life of the child is linked to school work, the school work is no longer a chore but becomes instead a joy. As a white teacher of black children in Harlem, Kohl was as much a fish out of water as he could be, even though he did not have to leave his country of birth to experience culture shock. He surrendered himself to the situation and did not try to control it, allowing the students to tell him what to teach them. Kohl provided the structure and the knowledge, and the students created the context and the content. Among School Children by Tracy Kidder (1989) is a book that takes a look at the American classroom via an in-depth description of a teacher and her students. Tracy Kidder describes what it is like to be a teacher in a multicultural, lower middle class

neighbourhood in New York City. The story of one teacher and her students is told, and the teachers reading this story can see themselves mirrored in it often.

Margaret Mead in Blackberry Winter used material gathered from her own life to make a picture in the present of how she understood the world in the past (Mead, 1972, p.5):

This week, searching through old photographs among the archives that Marie Eichelberger keeps safe for me - the photographs taken through the years by so many people with whom I have worked closely-...I found no break with the past. Setting side by side pictures of my daughter and my granddaughter, of my grandmother as a young woman and as I last knew her, of my father with my young sister and, many years later, with my mother, of myself, as a child, with my brother, and with my brother and sisters growing up, I found all these pictures echoed each other. Each was a picture of a person at a particular moment, but spread out before me I saw them as a pattern my family had made for me.

Working from memory, photographs, letters, paintings by her sister, written recollections and other memorabilia used lovingly to structure her story, Margaret Mead reflected upon her early years long after they had passed. In my thesis I did a similar task. I used artifacts from the past, combined with interviews, journal texts, photographs and video to shed light on my experience as a Canadian art teacher teaching art in the Bahamas. Mead studied other cultures in order to shed light on her own culture. She said: "Experience of another culture can be gained by work in any other society, not necessarily an isolated and technologically simple one, and in a modern society, can complement the work of other disciplines." (Mead, 1972, p.296) It is my aim in this research to complement the body of knowledge in art education.

In "Towards A Phenomenology Of Becoming An Art Teacher" (1984), Harold Pearse describes the "emerging life world" of the student teacher. Pearse points out that reflecting on the state of one's being during the student teacher stage of becoming a teacher is helpful. Via an in-depth process of self-reflection, the student teacher begins to see him or herself as a teacher and a learner, and can better identify with students as learners and young persons (Pearse, 1985).

In trying to understand the meaning of the influence that teaching in the Bahamas had on me, I looked to Ralph A. Smith. He describes the process of culture shock in his discussion of the "dialectical approach" or "humanistic approach to experiencing other cultures." (Smith, 1980, p.86):

Persons entering into dialogue with another culture actually invite culture shock, though they resist being annihilated by it. Since they are not prone to prejudice, they are committed to finding the culture's distinctive voice, to understand it, and to assess their own values in light of it. Because this approach treats the alien culture respectfully - as a 'you' or perhaps as a 'significant other' - it is best suited to producing genuine appreciation of cultural differences. In addition, it yields important personal benefits: an enlarged perspective and greater entitlement to one's own views won through honest comparison with alternative ones.

I experienced the culture of the Bahamas dialectically. I was open, and yet "resisted annihilation". My approach was one of exchange, and to me the above quote has a ring of truth that enables me to identify with it.

How did I adapt to the environment of the Bahamas? Graeme Chalmers

discusses enculturation and the anthropologist's central concern which is to study how an individual adapts to his or her environment. "In our case we are concerned ... with what type of art, and how art making, owning, and displaying helps the individual tribal member in this adaptation" (Chalmers 1980, p.130). My question had been to my students: what did I teach you? And to myself the question was: did I teach anything different to my Bahamian students than what I would have done here?

The art teacher who goes to another culture to live and work undergoes the process of acculturation. Acculturation looks at how somebody outside of the culture gains entry into their second culture. This inquiry examined both the acculturation of myself as teacher, and the enculturation of my former students as perceived through my eyes as teacher, and now, retroactively, as researcher.

June King McFee (1986) quoted Herskovits who defined art as follows: "...art is a cultural phenomenon, ...its appreciation is best gained through the broadest possible understanding of the cultural matrix out of which it comes." (Herskovits, 1959, p.59) McFee takes this statement and reinterprets it: "...culture is maintained, transmitted, and changed through art; its appreciation can be largely enhanced by understanding its art." (McFee, 1986, p.8) Perhaps I felt that finally after three and a half years teaching art in the Bahamas I finally understood the culture well enough to take part in an indigenous Bahamian art, Junkanoo.

Many scholars have written about aesthetic response to art as a key component in understanding the art of the people who made it. Smith says that aesthetic response is insufficient information, although a necessary link, in gaining the broadest possible understanding of the art of a society or group (Smith, 1980). Similarly, McFee states that art and culture are difficult to talk about separately, as they are inextricably dependent on one another for their form and meaning. Neither art nor culture are static processes, but have emergent qualities which keep them in a state of transition. "Culture (and art) has objective, subjective, universal, collective and individual dimensions" (McFee, 1986, p.13).

Writing about the role of the art teacher in settings where the art practised at home is different from the art modelled at school (to a partial degree this was the case in the Bahamas), Dan Nadaner suggests that the task of the curriculum developer and the art teacher is quite complex. There is no recipe for knowing what to teach, but "The art educator then must be a cultural critic as well as an ethnographer to help a group...negotiate the path between home and dominant culture" (Nadaner 1985, p.53).

In looking at art teacher education programs in Australia, where multicultural education in general has been the national education policy since 1973, Doug Boughton highlights the achievements and complexities in his article: "How do we prepare art teachers for a multicultural society?" when he stated (Boughton, 1986, p.94):

Over the past one hundred years one of the most consistent rationales for art

study has been that it promotes transmission of the cultural heritage. Since World War II in Australia, the original simplicity of this idea has been transmuted into goals fraught with ideological difficulties. Whose cultural heritage should be transmitted?

In the case of the Bahamas as Father Adderley and Father Stirrup both said previously, whose culture is dominating? Mother Africa, or Mother England?

The major advantage in doing this project is that it allowed me to highlight my foreign culture teaching memories, by engaging in a dialogue with two groups of people: others who went through experiences similar yet different to my own, and others who shared parts of my journey with me. The research allowed me to delve into an understanding of my past teaching experience in the Bahamas. Participating in the Junior Junkanoo activity with my students has been the highlight of my teaching career. This research project has allowed me to see in hindsight teaching methodology that was successful, which enables me to be a better teacher today.

Finally, I feel this research will surely be of much value to others encountering cultures other than their own in their teaching experiences.

APPENDIX

JUNIOR JUNKANOO VIDEO

This tape chronicles the 1988-89 Junior Junkanoo competition. It shows elementary and secondary school groups wearing their competition costumes. Each school develops a theme, and creates costumes according to that theme which is kept secret until the day of the competition.

The St. Anne's Youth Group theme was "The 150th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery in the Bahamas". In keeping with this theme, we developed a banner with the portrait of a Bahamian in the center, a slogan on top, and rays of colour extending outwards from the portrait. The name of St. Anne's is on the bottom of the banner. It won first prize in the banner competition. We placed fourth in the competition out of the four high schools which participated.

About ten minutes into the tape, you can see the first St. Anne's costumes. The lead girl, who is dancing, is wearing a hoop dress and is carrying an umbrella. Next to her is a slave girl, who is fanning the lead girl. A boy dressed in a black tuxedo is also dancing about.

They are followed by the group banner carried by two boys. Behind them are "slaves" dressed in prisoner costumes and wearing chains on their wrists. The fringed

paper costumes of the prisoners are made out of both newspaper, as is Junkanoo tradition, and black stripes of crepe paper. (Newspaper was used by early Junkanoo artists. This was our attempt to form a link with Junkanoo history.) The prisoners are followed by a larger-than-life three dimensional costume worn by one student. He is a slave master and two slaves, in the fields of corn. The slave master is wearing a black hat and his head is bowed.

Next, you catch a glimpse of another three dimensional costume, a slave woman feeding a chicken. This is followed by musicians dressed in head, chest and skirt pieces. Lastly, is a group of butterflies dressed in yellow Ambrosia (native batik dyed) cloth, wearing masks and wings. This symbolizes the freedom of the people.

At approximately 41 minutes into this amateur video of the entire Junior Junkanoo competition, is another shot of the St. Anne's group. There is a clear view of the banner in this shot.

Participating in the Junior Junkanoo competition was a very exciting and fulfilling experience. The students worked hard to prepare for the event. I took us more than two weeks, working nights and weekends, to produce our costumes but it was well worth it. It was an unforgettable adventure for all involved.

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