

Combating Educational Inequalities: Afro-Brazilian Youth & the Bahia Street Project



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Introduction

In her article entitled “Inequity and Human Rights of African Descendants in Brazil,” Lucila Beato insists that Afro-Brazilian rights are violated everyday. Those who experience this violation the most are Afro-Brazilian, or Black, women who are considered to be at the bottom of the social hierarchy. These women are a double minority who are condemned for being both Black and women. Many women, as do men, drop out of school early in life in order to help their families, who live below the poverty line and struggle to make ends meet. Many girls turn to prostitution, pornography, and even sexual tourism in order to make money, completely disregarding their education. Some may never know the value of an education. Beato mentions that 45% of the population in Brazil is of African descent. Despite the fact that this is about half of the population, however, Afro-Brazilians are still regarded as inferior to White Brazilians. They have higher infant mortality rates and lower years of schooling. Only 3.2% of Brazilians of African descents attend a university, while the number is close to 14.3% for White Brazilians. Because Black Brazilians achieve less years of schooling they have higher unemployment rates. For those who do work, many experience discrimination in the workplace due to their race. Few Blacks hold high positions of employment, such as management and planning. In the Northeast alone, White Brazilians earn about 60% more than Black Brazilians, compared to only 8% in the South. There are clear regional and racial differences between the Brazilian population that causes many inequalities both in education and employment.

It is because of these inequalities that programs like Bahia Street must exist. Bahia Street is a non-governmental organization in Salvador, Bahia that gives supplemental schooling to Afro-Brazilian girls between grades two and eight. It is funded by donations,

grants, and money raised at events held in the United States by Margaret Wilson, one of the co-founders of Bahia Street. The program was started in 1997 by Wilson, an anthropologist that was working in Salvador at the time, and Rita Conceição, also an anthropologist and a professional photographer from Salvador. Both women decided to start an educational program focused on Afro-Brazilian girls because they believe that their education is one of the most pressing needs in today's communities. They are also the population that is in need of the most reparations. Wilson and Conceição started out with only one student whom they worked with in a room that was loaned to them by the local Teacher's Federation. In the beginning, the girls that were recruited for the program were children of friends of the founders. As the number of students grew, they rented a building for the girls in the center of Salvador. To try to increase the number of students even further, the program reached out to local public schools, asking for girls who were in need of extra educational help, but the schools did not respond very well to this. As a result, the program decided to stop working with them. By that time, however, the program was becoming popular through word of mouth. They no longer needed to recruit girls because they were coming to the program on their own. In 2003, Bahia Street bought a building that has now been its home for five years.

The goal of Bahia Street is to break the cycle of poverty and violence that exists among the Black population through education and citizenship. It works with Afro-Brazilian girls in hopes of teaching them self-esteem, self-worth, and the value of an education with a new teaching style that was developed by some of the Bahia Street teachers. These girls are taught to relate the things that they learn in the classroom to their everyday lives. They are taught about Afro-Brazilian history in hopes that this will make

them more aware of the discrimination and prejudice that exists against them. The program aims to produce activists with these realizations that will later go on to fight for their rights in their schools and lives. It offers the girls a better quality education so that they will be able to attend good quality high schools, and later universities. This will help them obtain higher paying jobs and gradually end the cycle of poverty.

Currently the program works with 57 young girls between the ages of seven and sixteen. Most of the girls live in at-risk neighborhoods where drugs and weapons are easily accessible. The girls who participate in this program go to school during the morning for about four hours and come to the program in the afternoons. They are provided with transportation, uniforms, books, and school materials by the program. They usually arrive at about 11:30 am to take showers and get ready for lunch, which is served at 12:30 pm. They are provided with one hot meal, which is, for some, the only hot meal they eat all day, and a snack during their break. Classes begin at 1:30 pm. The girls have two classes, a break, and then two more classes until 5:00 pm. They attend different classes every day. The classes offered to them are mathematics, English, Portuguese, science, capoeira, art, computers, and dance. They also have periods where they are allowed to work on and ask questions about the work that they received that day at their schools.

There are four groups of girls, all of which have their own classrooms. The girls stay with their groups all day for classes. Group one contains girls between the ages of seven and eight. Group two works with girls between the ages of nine and twelve. Group three involves girls between the ages of eleven and thirteen. Lastly, group four has girls between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. In order to participate in the program, girls must come from low-income backgrounds, be enrolled in a local public school, and have a

physical before starting the program.

Today, Bahia Street has many things to be proud of. On their list of accomplishments is the fact that for the last three years, the majority of the girls who have taken their final exams have passed them with scores of 80% or higher. In addition, three of the programs original students received full scholarships to attend universities in Brazil. One of the former students that studies at the Federal University of Salvador returned to teach Portuguese at Bahia Street a few years ago. Though she is no longer at the program, she served as an inspiration for the girls who she taught, as she came from the same situation that all of these girls are currently in. She is the perfect example of the type of woman that Bahia Street is aiming to produce.

Personal Motives Research

I have always thought of education as something that is essential in everyone's life. I have always known of its importance because my parents have taught me that that is what will get me ahead in life. I went to a public elementary, middle, and high school. All were fairly good schools. My high school was actually considered one of the best, if not the best, school in the Los Angeles School District. I always had enough materials, good teachers, and supportive parents who encouraged me to go to college. Because I had access to all of these things, I never thought about the inequalities that exist in the educational system. I was ignorant to the issues because I never had to think about or deal with them.

Last summer, however, I did a teaching internship for Breakthrough Collaborative in Long Island, New York that opened my eyes to the large differences that exist between public and private schools. I was an Algebra teacher to seventh grade students for six

weeks. The job required me to write lesson plans, create worksheets, homeworks, tests, and attend teacher meetings two times a week. I originally applied for the job because I needed a job, any job, for the summer and I thought it would be a good opportunity to visit a new state. I had no interest in teaching as a profession. Teaching the kids, however, made me passionate about the profession. I did not necessarily want to be a teacher, but my respect for teachers grew, as I began to realize how important their job is. It is the teachers that make a school. I truly believe that if a school has a lack of resources and materials but has great teachers all of its students can be successful. I understand that it will be harder for them, but it is something that can happen.

In order to participate in Breakthrough Collaborative students had to apply, write essays, and even have interviews to be accepted. These students were seen as college bound and the program was there to help them remain that way. They all went to public schools and came from low income and underprivileged backgrounds. They were bused from their neighborhoods to one of the most expensive private schools in Long Island to take summer classes. I thought this could have both negative and positive effects on the students. It could have been negative in that it would allow the students to see the things that they do not have access to at their own schools, like a swimming pool and a large library, and discourage them. On the other hand, it could have been positive for this same reason. Seeing these things could open their eyes to the things that they do not have and make them want to fight for those things at their own schools because they have a right to them. There were about 70 students in the program and the majority (about 50 of them) were Black. I thought about this and realized that there is an abundance of Black students in these types of programs, but a lack of Black students at universities.

It is because of these realizations that were sparked by my work with Breakthrough that I decided to research education in Brazil. I wanted to study the differences between *escolas publicas* and *escola particulares*, or public and private schools, in Brazil and how they affect the Black population. In essence, I wanted to answer the question, “Does education have a color?” to which I think the answer is yes. I had read a lot about how the Northeast of Brazil has the largest percentage of illiterate people in the country and the majority of the illiterate population is Black. I had heard that public schools in Brazil lack materials and committed teachers that are able to motivate their students. Teachers are often absent, leaving students with nothing to do. All of these things made me more interested in the subject of public school education in Brazil.

When I heard about the Bahia Street program, the first thing that I thought about was why programs like this have to exist. I think these types of programs are great because they do help kids get a better education and motivate them to want more, but it would be even greater if these programs did not have to exist. It would be better if schools did what they had to do for their students so that these programs did not have to exist. In an ideal world everyone would have access to a good quality education. I thought this was the perfect program for me to work with because I wanted to see how a program like this is helping to bridge the gap that exists between the education that most White Brazilians have access to and the education that most Black Brazilians have access to. In other words, the education offered at public and private schools, seeing as the majority of the students who attend public schools in Brazil are Black and those who attend private schools are White.

Education is one of the things that can lead people toward social mobility. The girls that participate in the Bahia Street program are underprivileged as they come from poor or

and low-income neighborhoods. Acquiring an education can help them get out of that situation. Education can lead them to a university, a better job and higher salary, and help them in their fight against discrimination. It is because of this that I decided to focus my study on Afro-Brazilian education, specifically the education that Afro-Brazilian women receive, in Brazil. This population is the most discriminated against. They are oppressed both for being women and for being Black. It is the population that is in need of the most reparations. Is it a coincidence that public schools are of bad quality and the majority of the students at public schools are Black? Or could it be that the government does not care to bother itself with the issue of public schools because the majority of its students are Black? Why must these programs, like Bahia Street, and policies, like affirmative action, exist in order for Black students to succeed? All of these questions rushed to my head when I thought about education in Brazil and the Bahia Street program.

Importance of Research

Unequal education is one of the biggest forms of social injustice today. All people should have the right to a good education and the opportunity to attend an institution of higher learning. Because of the lack of a quality education among the Afro-Brazilian population, they are forced to drop-out of school, take low paying jobs, and continue the cycle of poverty that has existed for many years. This is also an injustice because it is a form of racial discrimination. Not only are these people not being given the opportunity to attend decent schools, they are denied entry to certain schools and jobs because of their skin color. Reformation of the school system and its policies is one of the most important things that is needed in order to bridge the gap between Black and White Brazilian citizens.

Research in education is important because it always brings about the issue of inequalities that exist within the system. No matter what subject of education is studied, the researcher is bound to run into the issue of inequalities. When studying public schools for example, the question of why some public schools are better than others comes up. If one researches private schools, on the other hand, he may encounter the question of what students have access to these types of schools and why. The most apparent inequalities, however, are encountered when one researches the differences between public and private schools. Why is one type of schools better than the other? It is these issues that make research on education important.

Education is one of the most valuable things that a person can possess. It is my opinion that education can change the world. It can end the cycle of poverty that exists in certain communities. Many children who live in impoverished neighborhoods, do not have access to good quality education. They do not have teachers who motivate them. Most of their parents are not educated and at times they are forced to drop out of school in order to support their families economically. It is because they do not finish their education that they are forced to work at low paying jobs that, most of the time, keep them in poverty. If these people had access to a good quality education, as should be their right, they would be able to attend a university, get a degree, and acquire a better quality and higher paying job that would gradually help them out of their impoverished situations. These people will then know the quality of an education and pass the message on to their children, who will do the same, something that can slowly end the cycle of poverty.

Most important in researching educational inequalities is that it opens doors to finding solutions to these problems. It gives way for people to make change. Many people

know that there are issues within the educational system. They know that inequalities exist, but they do not know what these inequalities are. When a person finds out that some schools have materials to spare, while others do not have enough books to give to half of its students, the question arises of why this is so. How can this be changed? The researcher can either take it upon himself to attempt to make a change, or can do his part by informing others of the problem that exists. The people who then find out about the problem can go out and make change. This information can even make it back to the students at these schools who did not realize that were not being given what they need and deserve and cause them to fight for change. It is research on education that makes people value it more. It makes people realize that it is an important subject because it is significant enough to be researched.

This research is especially important to me because I want to work in education in the future. I would like to teach for a few years and then become a part of the administration. I have had a lot of experience working with children. When I was in high school I volunteered at my old elementary school. Though I did a lot of office duties, I was sometimes able to work in the classroom as a teacher's aid. Also, last summer I worked as an Algebra teacher to seventh grade students in New York for six weeks. It was after this experience that I realized that I wanted to go into education. Researching this subject is important to me because it will help strengthen my qualifications in the field. In addition to having the hands on experience, my research will allow me to have more background knowledge in the area.

Location of Research

Bahia Street is located in the center of the city of Salvador in Bahia. The building is situated on a back street in the center of town. The street looks like a residential area. It has a few stores, houses, restaurants, street vendors, and a public school a few feet away from the building. A lot of the girls who participate in the program attend this school and are from the *bairro*, or neighborhood, and other surrounding areas. This makes it easier for them to get to and from the program after school. For those girls who do not attend that school, or do not live as close by, the building is easily accessible by bus, which is the way that a lot of the girls commute to and from the program.

The building itself is not very large, but it has enough space for the number of girls that participate. There are three floors and a downstairs area. The first floor (or main floor) has a sort of lobby, teacher's lounge, bathrooms, and the group one classroom, which is the group with the youngest girls. The second floor has a capoeira room, library, computer lab, and the group two and three classrooms. The third floor holds the group four classroom and the psychologist's office. In the downstairs area are the dining room, kitchen, and a play area for the girls to use during their breaks. The building has everything that the girls have (or should have) at their public schools, only in smaller portions and sizes.

As for the city, Salvador has a population of about 3 million people, 80% of which are of African descent and live in *favelas*, or shantytowns (www.bahiastreet.org). Since my research is focused on Afro-Brazilian education and how the inequalities that exist in the educational system affects this group of people, it was important for me to conduct this research in a city with a large Black population. It was also important for me to work with an organization that helps Afro-Brazilian youth and is focused on education because I

wanted to answer the question of why programs like this have to exist in order for Black youth to succeed academically. Bahia Street was the perfect choice because of its location and focus. This program is located in Salvador, a city that has a majority Afro-Brazilian population, and focuses on Black women, one of the most oppressed and discriminated against populations in Brazil that encounters inequalities in all fields.

Methodology

Before beginning my ISP most of my research was from secondary sources. I read a lot of articles about education in Brazil, educational differences among the White and Black population in Brazil, racial discrimination in education and the workplace, and policies that are being introduced in attempts to end these inequalities. I wanted to have background information on the subject that I would be researching hands on before going into the field.

In general, however, most of my research was conducted through observations and interviews at Bahia Street. I used the first week and a half of the ISP period to conduct observations. There are four groups of girls at Bahia Street, each of which has their own classroom. I decided that it would be a good idea to observe each groups for one day to try to get to know the girls. My original plan was to interview one girl from each group, but after observing groups one, I realized that I should focus on the older girls (group three and four) because they would be better able to articulate things and understand me. I thought they would also have more patience with the language barrier.

The first day of my observations, I arrived at about 11:00 am to make sure that I saw all of the girls arrive. After seeing the arrival process, however, I started to arrive at about 12:30 pm, which is lunch time. I would have lunch with the girls and then move on to observe them in their classrooms at 1:30 pm. Depending on the group that I was observing,

I saw different things. I saw the girls in their Portuguese, capoeira, computer, and English class, as well as normal school time, which is when they work on assignments from their public schools. I found it difficult to talk to the girls because I did not want to force anything. I felt bad for talking to them just for the sake of forming a relationship for my project. I would not say that I formed close relationships with the girls because of the small amount of time that I spent with them, but I did talk to them and play with them whenever they approached me. I thought it was better to let them approach me than to approach them.

I also observed three meetings. I observed the monthly teacher's meeting, something that I thought was very important for my research because I wanted to see what types of issues the teachers brought up. I attended the monthly parent meeting, an even more important meeting for me because I wanted to see how involved the girls' parents are in their education and the program. I think that parents are one of the most important elements in education and the biggest motivators. The last meeting I attended was about group two's misbehavior. Group two was suspended for bad behavior during my work with the program. I was supposed to observe them the day that they were suspended, but instead Rita suggested that I attend the meeting that would be held with them and their parents about their behavior. She thought that it would be a good idea for me to attend and see how the program deals with discipline issues. I never observed group two in the classroom.

The second part of my time was spent interviewing people from the program. Since my time was limited, I settled on only interviewing two girls, one from group three and one from group four. I also interviewed a former student that now works at Bahia Street as the secretary. I thought this interview was important because it would give me the perspective of someone who has been through the program and experienced its benefits. I interviewed

the math teacher, who has been working with Bahia Street for the longest time, and the group one teacher, who has worked with the program for the least amount of time. Lastly, I interviewed my advisor who is the director of Bahia Street. I thought this was one of the most important interviews because she has been there since the start of the program and thus knows the most about it. I informed all of my interviewees that I wanted to talk to them about my research before doing so and set up times that would be convenient for them to converse with me. All interviews were held in different rooms in Bahia Street. The week and a half that I did interviews I only came into the program at the times of my interviews.

In general, my methodology involved a lot of observations. Originally I wanted to participate more to try to experience what the girls experience, but it was hard to do this since they were in class for most of the time that I spent with them. The only time that I participated in something with them was when they had a capoeira event in which I was assigned the task of playing the tambourine. In all, most of my time was spent sitting in the classroom and play area with them, occasionally taking notes, and conducting interviews.

Definition of Terms

Note: All definitions were taken from the online dictionary at www.dictionary.com.

Affirmative Action – the encouragement of increased representation of women and minority-group members, esp. in employment.

Afro-Brazilian – the term used to racially categorize Brazilian citizens who are black or mainly-black.

At-Risk – being endangered, as from exposure to disease or from a lack of parental or familial guidance and proper health care.

Bairro – one of the divisions into which a town or city is divided.

Branco – White Brazilians.

Citizenship – the character of an individual viewed as a member of society.

Discrimination – making a distinction in favor of, or against, a person or thing based on the group, class, or category to which that person or thing belongs rather than on individual merit.

Education – the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life.

Escola Publica – public school.

Escola Particular – private school.

Ensino Superior – higher education.

Evasão – to drop-out of school.

Faculdade – university.

Favela – a shantytown in or near a city, especially in Brazil.

Income – the monetary payment received for goods or services.

Inequalities – the condition of being unequal.

Oppression – the exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, cruel, or unjust manner.

Poverty – the state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support.

Preto – Black Brazilians.

Race – a group of people related by common descent or heredity.

Racial Democracy – the belief that Brazil has escaped the racism and racial discrimination of other countries.

Self-Esteem – a realistic respect for or favorable impression of oneself.

Vestibular – a competitive examination used in Brazil to select university students; similar to the SAT in the United States.

Abstract

One of the biggest issues with education in Brazil is the large differences that exist between public and private schools. Private schools offer better quality education, have better access to resources, materials, quality teachers, and are located in better neighborhoods, while public schools lack these things. These differences leave students who attend public schools at a disadvantage. It is because of this that I decided to research the differences between public and private schools in Brazil. Additionally, I wanted to research how these differences affect the Afro-Brazilian population in Brazil because the majority of the students at public schools are Black. I conducted my research in Salvador, Bahia because it has an 80% Afro-Brazilian population.

For three weeks I worked with an organization called Bahia Street, which gives supplemental schooling to Afro-Brazilian girls enrolled at public schools in Salvador. I wanted to see how organizations like Bahia Street that focus on education are helping to bridge the gap that exists between public and private school education. In addition to research that I did prior to beginning my work with Bahia Street, I did observations at the organization, participated in classes, and interviewed people (students, teachers, and the director) from the organization.

I found that this program is helping girls not only by enforcing their academic skills, but also improving their self-esteem, self-confidence, and sense of self-worth. It shows them what they should be receiving from their public schools in hopes that they will go out and fight for those things. It is helping to keep them off the dangerous streets where they could resort to drugs and prostitution. The things that the girls learn at Bahia Street transform them into girls that will not only succeed academically, but also socially.

Analysis of Research Findings

All people have the right to a good quality education. In his article “The Challenges of Education in Brazil,” Simon Schwartzman argues that “...good quality basic education is a requisite and a moral requirement of all modern societies for the sake of social equity, cultural values, and economic functionality.” This is not the case in most parts of the world. In Brazil, for example, very few people have access to *escola superior*, or higher education. When the subject of higher education is looked at even more deeply, one realizes that most people who go on to higher education are *brancos*, or White, upper-middle class Brazilians with the money to attend. Most White Brazilians have access to private schools and other resources that help them achieve a higher education. *Pretos*, or Afro-Brazilians, on the other hand, mostly attend bad quality public schools that are usually overcrowded and lack the necessary materials to help them succeed. The question then arises of whether education has a color. Most people believe that it does: White. There is a clear gap between the educational opportunities that Whites and Blacks receive in Brazil. This has been the subject of many works by authors who believe that there are inequalities in the educational system (as well as other things) that benefit Whites, while leaving Blacks at a disadvantage.

In Brazil, there is a strong belief in a racial democracy. It is believed that race is no longer an issue and that people of color are no longer discriminated against for being so. People see others for the people that they are and no longer hold prejudice feelings toward them. Gender and class are still issues that are believed to exist in Brazilian society, but race is something that, according to many Brazilians, disappeared with the abolition of slavery in 1888. The concept of a racial democracy was introduced during the time of slavery, when miscegenation was occurring between the Portuguese invaders, indigenous people of Brazil, and the slaves. The purpose of this miscegenation was to “whiten” the

latter groups and create a superior race. This was the birth of the belief in a racial democracy, as many people, because of miscegenation, now had “white blood.” If it is true that a racial democracy exists, why does the majority of the Afro-Brazilian population live in poverty? Why do they work low paying jobs that pay them less than they need to survive? Why do they not have access to good quality education?

Many people say that these inequalities have nothing to do with race, but rather socio-economic status. It is not because these people are Black that they do not have access to a good quality education. It is because they are poor. Poor people attend low quality public schools. This is a belief held by many people. The question then arises of who attends these public schools? It is the children of African descendants that are forced to attend these schools. The issue of class then becomes one of race. These two social classifications go hand in hand. Race is most certainly an issue in Brazil. It shows in the percentage of Black people that live in *favelas*, the low numbers of Blacks attending universities, the high number of Blacks who drop out of school before completing their studies, and the high numbers of unemployment among the Afro-Brazilian population. Salvador has a population of almost three million people, 80% of whom are Black. The majority of these people live in shanty towns, many without electricity, running water, or proper sewage.

Lack of education is one of the main reasons why it is so difficult for the Afro-Brazilian population to overcome their living situations. Even within education there exist a number of issues that affect Black students’ success. One of the main issues is that of kids beginning school at a late age. In the United States, it is normal for children to begin school at the age of four or five. In Brazil, however, the normal age for entering school is six or

seven. It may not seem like a large difference, but these two years are essential in building an educational base. Rita Conceição, the director of Bahia Street believes that a

“...big problem is that the government does not care about working with little children. Children here start school at about age six or seven when they should be starting earlier. There are not many kindergarten schools. These schools are very important. The sooner children start school, the better they will develop intellectually. Children need to start working toward that educational base at an early age. It is because they start school at a later age that it is more difficult for them to succeed academically.”

Learning at this age may not be very academic, but children learn about things like discipline, manners, and organization, all things that they will need when they move on to study their academic subjects.

Another big problem that exists in education is retention. According to the Bahia Street website, Salvador has the highest proportion of youth with irregular school histories. Many children are held back in school and forced to repeat the school year. Most of the time, however, they are not to blame for having to do this. It is because these public schools are overcrowded that kids find it more difficult to learn. Many students do not have the personal attention that they need because they are in classrooms with about 40 other students. Even worst is that the teachers in these classrooms are under qualified and are thus not able to handle such a large amount of students. Schwartzman agrees that retention is a huge problem in Brazilian schools stating that, “In secondary education, about half the students are 18 years or older, and should have already left school. In higher education, which still enrolls only 9% of the age cohort (18 to 24), about half the students are aged 25 or older” (7). These older students are taking the place of other, younger students, who are more entitled to those places because of their age.

Probably the biggest issue within the educational system in Brazil is the vast

differences that exist in its public and private schools. Most public schools in Brazil are of low quality. All of my interviewees agree that the most apparent difference between the two types of school is the quality of education. Private schools, very obviously, offer a better quality education. The teachers at these schools are more dedicated to their jobs and students. They are penalized for being absent and dismissed from their positions if they miss work more than three times. More materials are available for the students. At most schools there are enough books for each student to take one home. They have computer labs with internet access and libraries with a large variety of books. The structure of most public schools is also dramatically different from that of private schools. Private schools are usually better kept. They are clean, have good installations, and are in nicer parts of the city. Also, the number of students who attend these schools is smaller. As a result, classes are smaller and students are more easily able to interact and have personal attention from their teachers. Students at private schools usually go to school for about five to six hours a day, while students at public schools only attend for four hours. Private school students tend to come from the upper-middle class. This implies that they have supportive families that encourage them to continue in their studies. They think about their future and have plans for it. The things available to private school students not only develop them into intelligent students able to attend universities, but also mature individuals that are able to succeed in the real world. The reason why these things are so available to these students at private schools is because the students pay to be there, meaning that the schools have more money to spend on those things. This is something that public schools do not have.

The Brazilian government shows a huge disinterest in public schools. It does not

contribute nearly as much money as it should to public schools or education in general. As a result, public schools are not able to offer the same quality education that is offered at private schools. Teachers who work at public schools are not as qualified as those who work in private schools. Not many people want to teach at public schools. It is because of this that the schools allow even the least qualified to teach just to fill the position. Many of the teachers are not dedicated to the students. They simply teach because it is their job to do so. "I think that teachers at public schools are not given an incentive to work," said Brisa, the group one teacher at Bahia Street, during her interview. This could be a result of the low salaries that the teachers receive. Since the government does not invest as much as it should on education, there is not enough money to maintain the school and pay the teachers well. Materials are lacking. At times, teachers use their own money to buy things that they need for their classes. Many students are not given books throughout the year and do not have computer labs with internet access. Ypiranga, the public school that I visited during my work with Bahia Street, had a chemistry lab that could not be used because they did not have sufficient materials to use it. It is one thing to not have materials, but to have them and not be able to use them is worst. Ypiranga is an old building. The walls have graffiti on them, the classrooms are disorganized, the desk chairs are written and scratched on, the white boards are also scratched, the floors are dirty, and there is trash everywhere. The classrooms are large, with about 45 desk chairs in them. This does not allow for the all of the students to receive the personal attention that they may need. As a result, a lot of students are ignored. The teacher may be preoccupied with some students and thus forget about the rest. A lot of teachers do not show up to work everyday, leaving the students with nothing to do. Unlike in the United States, there is no such thing as substitute teachers in

Brazil. Because of the lack of good quality teachers, students are not motivated. They are not pushed to want more. They are not stimulated to educate themselves, look into their futures, and plan them.

It is these differences between public and private schools in Brazil that, many times, account for *evasão*, or drop-outs. In their article “Race and Educational Opportunity in Brazil,” Nelson do Valle Silva and Carlos A. Hasenbalg assure that there is no difference between the drop-out rates of Whites and Blacks in Brazil. However, “nonwhite children who entered school at a later age and lagged farther behind tend to drop out with fewer grades of school completed than White dropouts” (Silva & Hasenbalg, 61). Many students develop inferiority complexes because they become aware of the inequalities that exist and are affecting them. They may think that they are not valuable because they do not have access to the same things that private school students do. This may cause them to drop-out, as they may not see the worth of staying in school and getting an education. Other students, on the other hand, may want to stay in school but are forced to drop out in order to work to help support their families. Since the majority of the poor population in Brazil is Black, it is mostly Black students who leave school to work without finishing. Many poor Brazilian adolescents begin to work before the age of 15. This contributes to high illiteracy rates. The Northeast of Brazil has the largest number of illiterate people. In 1980, 36.5% of nonwhites in Brazil were illiterate compared to only 14.5% of Whites. 4.2% of Whites received a college diploma, while only 0.6% of Blacks were able to achieve this level of education (Silva & Hasenbalg, 54). Afro-Brazilian students are 50% more likely than White students to drop out of school without learning to read (www.bahiastreet.org). Illiteracy is definitely one of the biggest problems in Brazil.

Educational inequalities result in employment inequalities. These are two other things that go hand in hand. Edward Telles, in his article entitled, "Industrialization and Racial Inequality in Employment: The Brazilian Example," thinks that this is because White Brazilians in the North have a 3.9 times more chance of finishing 12 years of school than do Blacks. Because of their lack of education, Afro-Brazilians obtain low paying jobs that, at times, do not pay them enough to support a family. This keeps them in their situation of poverty and sacrifices their children's education, who must leave school in order to help support their families. Telles also states that in the Northeast, White workers make 60% more than Black workers. In her article entitled "For Brazil, First Steps Toward Affirmative Action," Ana Toni states that, in 2001, a Black man earned 30% less than a White woman and that, in general, a Black worker receives 57% of a White man's salary. The average Black family's income is 43% of a White family's income. One interesting fact that Toni mentions is that a White man with a high school degree is still paid more than a Black man with a bachelor's degree.

Because of these inequalities, many policies are being instated to repair the educational system. The most popular one is affirmative action. Though this concept is not new to the United States, it is one that was instated in Brazil a mere seven years ago (2001). Affirmative action sets aside quotas for Afro-Brazilians in government positions, as well as higher education in an effort to equalize the opportunities available to both Whites and Blacks. This policy is now being used by many universities in order to ensure that Blacks have the same opportunity as Whites to obtain a higher education. Mala Htun's, in her article "From 'Racial Democracy' to Affirmative Action," states that, in 2001, the Rio de Janeiro state legislature established that 40% of spaces at their two state universities would

be reserved for Blacks. A similar bill was also approved saying that 50% of those students should come from public schools, which is where the majority of Afro-Brazilian students study. Many people argue that affirmative action results in reverse racism and that the policy is an insult to Afro-Brazilians because it assumes that they cannot get in to college on their own. However, the policy is favored by most as it has helped to give Afro-Brazilian students better educational opportunities by helping them enroll at universities.

Also in existence are educational organizations, like Bahia Street, that help Afro-Brazilian youth by providing them with educational opportunities and offering them the support that they need in order to succeed academically. Bahia Street is an organization that works with Afro-Brazilian girls between the ages of seven and sixteen. These girls are in second through eighth grade. What this organization does is provide supplemental education to the girls. The girls study at normal schools in the morning and attend the program in the afternoons. The goal of Bahia Street is to end the cycle of poverty and violence through education and citizenship. In order for girls to participate in this program they must come from a low-income background and attend a public school. The girls are at the program from about 11:30 am, when they arrive, take showers, and have lunch, until 5:00 pm, when classes have ended.

Jean, the math teacher at Bahia Street, believes that the reason why this program is focused on Afro-Brazilian girls is because "Black women are the most discriminated population." This population is discriminated against for being both Black and women. It is because of their double minority status that it is even more difficult for them than it is for Black men to complete their education. Most girls do not finish their studies for a variety of reasons. One reason is that they begin to work to help support their families. These girls are

always the first to be sacrificed. The majority of the time they work as domestic workers, seeing as 67% of Afro-Brazilian women work as domestic servants (www.bahiastreet.org). Other times, they are simply taken out of school to care for their siblings and homes, since their mothers are out working. In her interview, Juliana, a former student of Bahia Street who now works as the secretary at the project and is studying for the vestibular, mentioned that if it was not for Bahia Street, she would be working as a domestic worker rather than studying for the *vestibular*, as she is doing now. These domestic service jobs are very close to slavery, as the women who do them are expected to live in the house of their employer for six out of seven days of the week and are paid very little for doing so. Studies have shown that Afro-Brazilian women earn 75% less money than White Brazilian men (www.bahiastreet.org). The women who work these jobs also experience a lot of abuse, both physical and mental, as many times they are raped and belittled by their bosses.

Another reason why many Afro-Brazilian women do not finish their studies is because they become pregnant at an early age. Many surveys have shown that most girls who have stopped attending school have done so because they became pregnant. The bad quality education that these girls receive also contributes to pregnancy rates, as studies have also shown that fifteen to nineteen year old girls with low educational levels have two times the chance of becoming pregnant and having a child than do girls with more years of schooling. Another study showed that 51% of girls between the ages of fifteen and nineteen with no educational background already had children and 13% of fifteen through twenty-four year olds dropped out of school because they became pregnant. This indeed shows that a relationship exists between pregnancy and levels of education (www.bahiastreet.org).

Bahia Street hopes to end this with their educational practices. “Programs like this

exist as a strategy of survival for Blacks,” said Rita during her interview. Without these programs, it would be much harder for Afro-Brazilians to succeed both academically and economically. When these girls leave their homes, everything is against them. Everyone looks at them thinking that they are bound to fail. Bahia Street hopes to disprove this belief. Many of the girls who participate in the program come from similar family situations. Most come from single parent households. A few have fathers in jail, some of the girls’ fathers are deceased, and others never knew their fathers because they left their families when they were younger. Many of the girls have experienced physical violence and others have at least one family member who is involved with drugs. They live in at-risk neighborhoods where drugs are easily accessible. Without a program like Bahia Street to motivate them, many of the girls would resort to prostitution and drug-use.

Bahia Street is best known for providing Afro-Brazilian girls with supplemental good quality education. “It fills the gaps of the government...Education in Brazil is a long way from being good. So the program does a good job in helping a big part of the minority,” says Brisa. Bahia Street offers classes in English, Portuguese, mathematics, science, computers, capoeira, art, and dance, all important classes that are at times not offered or given importance in public schools. Mathematics and Portuguese, for example, are classes that are essential for success in Brazil. These two subjects involve everything from history, to geography and science. Without a good base in these two subjects, it is more difficult for the girls to make academic progress. Providing these girls with a good quality education is important because many studies have shown that women who obtain high levels of education are more likely to use that education to help their families and communities. It is said to decrease pregnancy rates and improve health conditions within

their families. Female education brings many benefits that could improve a country's negative situation.

In addition to academic education, Bahia Street also offers education in other areas. Each week, three different girls are chosen to wash the dishes after everyone has finished eating lunch. One girl is also chosen each day to clean up their groups' classroom when the day has ended. During one of my visits at Bahia Street, I also noticed that the girls were cleaning and organizing the library.

“Everything that we do at Bahia Street has to do with education. The girls learn not only how to read, write, and do math and capoeira, but they also learn to pick up after themselves. They learn that they have responsibilities. We teach them to value themselves as women. We want them to know that they have options. They are capable of doing and becoming anything they want to be” (Personal Interview, Rita Conceição).

These girls are taught to be independent and fend for themselves. It is important for them to know that they are responsible for things outside of academics. Being academically intelligent, but knowing nothing about the real world would be a disadvantage to the girls. They would be able to learn and enroll at a *faculdade*, or university, but they would not know how to live on their own. They would have to depend on other to care for them. It is because of this that it is important for programs like Bahia Street to use some of their time to focus on things other than academics.

One of the most important things that this program offers to the girls is good quality and caring teachers. When asked what she thought about the teachers at Bahia Street, Ana Maria, a student in group four who has been with the program for two years, said that “Everything is very different here. They give you more attention, support, everything. You do not find that at school.” Bahia Street has fifteen staff member, most of which only work part-time. There are two directors, a secretary, a cook, a Portuguese teacher, math teacher,

English teacher, capoeira instructor, art teacher, dance instructor, science teacher, a group one teacher, a group two teacher, and two psychologists. A lot of these teachers are university students and others have graduated with degrees in education and have experience working at public schools. The majority of the staff at Bahia Street is Black, something that helps them better understand the girls' situations and shows the girls that they too have the opportunity to attend a university. During her interview, Ana Maria mentioned that a few years ago a former student of Bahia Street who is now studying at the Federal University of Salvador came back to the program to teach Portuguese. It is things like this that serve as motivation for the girls.

“She was an example for us because she was part of the program and was at a university. She is Black and poor. I know that I am going through everything that she went through, like public school. But now she is at a university. She is going to graduate with a degree in journalism. She is an example for all of us who participate in the program” (Personal Interview, Ana Maria).

The difference in these teachers is noticed as soon as one enters the doors of Bahia Street. These teachers have a much closer relationship with their students. They are more affectionate with them and ask them about their home and school lives. “I have a close relationship with the girls also. Some of them call me. They tell me about their problems at home and ask me for help. I give them advice,” says Brisa. This is a program whose teacher actually care about their students' success. “When I started the program I was in forth grade. I started in group two. The teacher from that group helped me a lot. I started to do a lot better in school. You have a lot of support at Bahia Street,” says Naiane, a student who is currently in group two and has been participating in Bahia Street for two years. I truly believe that the number one thing that students need in order to succeed is support from both teachers and family.

An interesting thing about the teachers at Bahia Street is that they have a different teaching style than you would normally see at a public school. Since the start of the program in 1997, teachers at Bahia Street have developed a curriculum which they refer to as “The Bahia Street Method.” Unlike the depository method that Paulo Freire discusses in Pedagogy of the Oppressed, this type of teaching style incorporates the girls’ lives into what they learn in their classes everyday. At Bahia Street they explore concepts of citizenship. Their classes require the participation of everyone. At times, the program holds workshops for the girls about things like identity and health. The girls watch videos, have field trips to museums, libraries, and other historic sites in Brazil. Things like these are done to keep the girls interest. One of Ana Maria’s biggest complaints about public school teachers is that “She talks too much in class. She isn’t as open to activities as other teachers are. We are always writing.” It is normal to have lectures in college, but at such a young age, girls have short attention spans and require constant change in order to remain interested. This is what Bahia Street tries to offer to them through their workshops, field trips, and incorporation of the girls’ lives in the lessons.

It is through this curriculum and other educational practices that the girls learn other important concepts, like self-esteem and self-worth. A common theme that I heard in my interviews was self-esteem. “One of the advantages is that it increases your self-esteem,” said Juliana when asked what the advantages of participating in Bahia Street are. Girls come into the program with a low self-esteem, thinking that they are incapable of achieving anything, the result of living in *favelas*, attending low quality schools, and being treated as second class citizens everywhere they go. “We try to teach them that they are worthy and valuable in order to help them with their self-esteem,” says Rita. The best example I saw of

this was during the monthly parent meeting that I attended. The meeting began with an activity run by Natalia, one of the psychologists at Bahia Street. She had a folder with something in it that all of the parents were to come up to the front of the room to see and not say anything about. The parents went up one by one and laughed as they saw what was in the folder. Inside the folder was a mirror. When all of the parents went up they saw their reflection in that mirror. This meant that everyone saw something different. Natalia explained to them that the purpose of the activity was to show them that they are loved and appreciated by their daughters and that they should learn to love and appreciate themselves. Natalia then said a quote that I did not fully catch, but was something to the extent of “I am a woman and mother and I deserve respect.” Though this activity happened in the absence of the girls, teaching these things to their mothers is like teaching the girls, as mothers go back to their homes and transfer this information to them.

The girls are also taught more about their identity as Black women in Brazil. This is done through the teachings of African history in Brazil, something that is not done enough at schools. When asked if they thought they learned enough about African history at school, both Naiane and Ana Maria said they did not think so. “They do not talk about it a lot, but they touch on the subject,” said Naiane. It is because of this that Bahia Street holds identity workshops and does presentations on African history for the girls. The majority of the time of the teacher meeting that I attended was spent discussing events that the teachers wanted to hold for the students. They spent a lot of time talking about May 14th, which is the National Day Against Racism. The teachers wanted to cancel the classes after the break and give a presentation on the abolition of slavery. I visited the project on the day of this event and saw that teachers had prepared a power point presentation that included facts about the

abolition of slavery, quotes from documents released during that time, and had a discussion with the girls at the end. The teachers took turns talking to the girls and asking them question about today's society. They asked them if they thought everything became equal after 1888, when slavery was abolished. Most of the girls agreed that it did not and that Black people were still being discriminated against today.

The most important lesson, however, that the girls learn at Bahia Street is to never quit. "To not give up no matter what and to fight with respect and wisdom," was Ana Maria's answer to my question of what the most important thing she had learned throughout her time at Bahia Street was. Juliana had a similar answer, saying "Not to give up easily if you fail." A former student of Bahia Street, Juliana is currently working as the secretary at the project and studying for the *vestibular* in the evenings. This is her second try with the exam. She told me that the first time she took the test she did not pass it. She described to me her feelings of failure and wanting to quit. Studying for that test took over her life. After studying for it so much and failing, she did not have a desire to go through the process again. Her aunt, the director of Bahia Street, however, did not allow her to quit. She told her that "I needed to try again and that she was sure that I would pass it the second time around. That definitely helped and encouraged me a lot" (Personal Interview, Juliana). The girls who participate in Bahia Street are faced with difficulties everyday. They have all odds against them. Since they are expected to fail, it makes it easy for them to do so when they encounter difficulties. Bahia Street is there to offer them the support that they need to keep trying. Juliana told me that she does not have the support of her mother, whom she lives with, and she never knew her father. It is the teachers at Bahia Street who have supported her throughout her educational career, something that she

recognizes and appreciates, as she believes that if it was not for the program she would not be studying for the vestibular, but rather working as a domestic worker like all the other girls who do not finish school.

Conclusion

“As a Brazilian and descendant from African slaves myself, I feel very grateful for the work Bahia Street is doing with girls in Salvador. I feel proud that Daza passed the exams for the University. Please continue to support her, as she faces the challenges that Brazilian colleges place in every student. She will have to fight prejudice and prove herself constantly. I wish my nieces, who live in Brazil, had a place like Bahia Street where they could find support to pursue their dreams” (www.bahiastreet.org).

This quote, taken from the Bahia Street website shows the success of the Bahia Street project. All of the students that I interviewed from the program agreed that it has changed them for the better. Without the program, Juliana believes that she would be working as a domestic worker because she would not know about all the educational opportunities she has and would not be encouraged to attend a university. Ana Maria thinks that “I would be like I was before. I would be on the streets with my friends having fun. I used to cause a lot of trouble before joining the program. After I began the program I changed a lot.” The program caused her to change her ways. She learned that there is a better world out there for her and that she should begin to take advantage of it. Naiane first joined the program because she was doing badly in school. After participating in the program for two years, however, she has become one of the best students in her group. Her accomplishments have not gone unnoticed, as it was the English teacher who recommended her to me for an interview because of her high scores in class.

Bahia Street gives these Afro-Brazilian girls the opportunity to become leaders in their communities and the world at large. They become aware that they are the most

oppressed members of society, but learn ways to change that reality. “One of the benefits for the girls of participating in this program is that they will have a new vision and know how to defend themselves from those things that may happen to them in the future and even the present,” says Jean. Their self-esteem improves, along with their self-confidence and sense of self-worth. They learn to value their education and make it a priority in their lives. Their knowledge in a variety of academic subjects improves as a result of the better quality education they are receiving at the program. This causes them to rise to the top of their classes at their public schools and makes academic success a possibility, something that would be more difficult to achieve without the program’s help. The girls leave the program with a new appreciation for life and a new vision of the world. The goal of Bahia Street is to awaken the girls’ consciousness and turn them into activist. The program shows them what it is that they are entitled to and deserve through teachers, materials, support, and many other things in hopes that they will go back to their schools and fight for these things.

“Success, to me, is when the girls are more conscious. Success is when they are able to take the things that they learned here and apply them somewhere else. I want them to take the things that they learned here and use them to fight for change in their schools. Success is when the girls are more conscious of what it means to be a Black woman in society. They are more conscious of the importance of getting and education. They have a higher self-esteem. I think success is when the girls leave the program knowing more than what they came in knowing” (Personal Interview, Rita Conceição).

Bahia Street is definitely meeting this definition of success. Three of its original members received full scholarships to different universities in Brazil and all of the girls who are currently participating in the program have the potential to do the same. Rita did mention that not all of the girls who participate in the program go on to study at a university, however, all of the girls who participate in the program leave it differently than they came in. “Any girl who passes through the program, even if they just participated for a short

amount of time, leaves the program different than the way she came in,” says Jean. Naiane, Ana Maria, and Juliana are all proof of this statement and show that Bahia Street is indeed being successful in changing these girls’ lives for the better. Juliana assured me that “What I learned at Bahia Street I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

Indications for Further Research

For further research it would be interesting to work with another organization that focuses on education, but works specifically with boys. I am sure that the dynamic at this sort of program would be much different than that of Bahia Street. At Bahia Street, for example, the girls learn not only academic subjects, but also responsibilities that they may have in their homes, like washing dishes and cleaning their classrooms. I am almost positive that a program that focuses on Afro-Brazilian boys would not have the boys do these things. Since this is the case, it would be interesting to see what types of things the boys are made to do. It would also be interesting to see how the teachers behave toward the boys, seeing as at Bahia Street the girls are very affectionate with the teachers and vice versa. I would be interested in researching which organizations, those focused on boys or those focused on girls, have the best success rates and why.

It would also be interesting to look at both an organization that focuses on education and one that focuses on the arts and compare the way both programs influence a child's human development. Both organizations are meant to increase a child's self-esteem, keep him off the streets, and teach the value of education. But how do they do these things? What are the different strategies used by both organizations? During our excursion, we visited organizations like Olodum and Bagunçação, which teach kids self-esteem through drumming and dancing. Both of these programs and Bahia Street have similar objectives, but achieve them through different means? What are these means and how do they all lead to the same results? All of these questions would be interesting to explore.

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Appendix

1. Could you have done this project in the USA? What data or sources were unique to the culture in which you did the project?

I could have done this project in the United States. The only difference would have been that I would focus my study on African American students rather than Afro-Brazilian students. I think that Black people face these problems of discrimination all over the world, therefore a project focusing on the Black population could be done in any place where there are large numbers of Black people. The fact that I focused on the Afro-Brazilian population in Brazil is what made my project unique. I could focus on this population outside of Brazil, but it would be a lot more difficult to do. The fact that I was in Brazil not only allowed me to research Afro-Brazilian education, but also things like Brazilian traditions, culture, language, and society, things that I probably would not have learned had I studied Afro-Brazilian education anywhere else. It is possible that if I did my project on Afro-Brazilians in the United States, for example, that my research would have been in English and I would have seen a lot of American culture. I would have skipped over something that contributes greatly to education.

2. Could you have done any part of it in the USA? Would the results have been different? How?

I think the results would be both similar and different. They would be similar in that they would still show that the Black population is discriminated against in education and that women of African descent are doubly oppressed, but it would be different in the degree to which these people are oppressed. It is true that Black people are discriminated against in the United States, but they are so to a different extent. They are discriminated against on a lesser level than are those in Brazil. The number of Black students at universities in the United States, for example, is larger than the number of Black students at Brazilian universities. However, when focusing on the United States and comparing the number of Black students and White students who move on to higher education, the number is relatively small.

3. Did the process of doing the ISP modify your learning style? How was this different from your previous style and approaches to learning?

I am an auditory learner. I can be a kinesthetic and visual learner, but I have always learned best through listening. Working with Bahia Street taught me how to use other learning styles. Through my work with Bahia Street I learned from the girls and teachers through interacting with them. I learned through eating and playing with them. I learned through having conversations with them, observing them in their classes, and reading their body language. I would not say that my learning style has changed as a result of the ISP process because I think that that is something that cannot change this late in my life, as I have already grown used to and developed this learning style. Even so, I would definitely say that I learned to use and appreciate other learning styles.

4. How much of the final monograph is primary data? How much is from secondary sources?

I think it is about half and half. The way my problem statement was designed called for both types of sources. I think that both types of sources were important because the primary sources served to prove the things that I had read about in the secondary sources and vice versa.

5. What criteria did you use to evaluate your data for inclusion in the final monograph? Or how did you decide to exclude certain data?

I included and excluded data based on how relevant it was to my problem statement, though that was difficult to do because I felt like all of the information that I collected was useful. At times I felt overwhelmed with the amount of data that I had collected and did not know where to start eliminating. One problem that I had was that I felt like a lot of the information that I collected was incomplete. It was the type of information that needs more time and probing to develop more fully. I touched on things that I could have elaborated on better if I had more than a three week period to conduct my research. I decided to exclude this information because most of it left me wanting more, and I did not want to leave my readers that way.

6. How did the “drop-offs” or field exercises contribute to the process and completion of the ISP?

The drop-off and the community project helped me a lot when it came to completing my ISP because all were very similar in that I was put in a place that I knew very little, or nothing, about, and I was to find out as much information about it as I could in a short amount of time. Each assignment increased in difficulty, but was easier to do as a result of the last. The drop-off assignment was the hardest to do because of my limited language skills and knowledge of the city. I had to find my way to the organization I was assigned to visit without any knowledge of the bus system, and then find out specific things about the organization with my limited Portuguese. This assignment was similar to the community project, the only difference being that I had more knowledge of the city and the language. I also had to work with the organization longer and had a more in depth assignment. From the community project I learned a lot of things that I did not know before, like how to write field notes and conduct formal interviews, something that would be very necessary for my ISP project. Not having the community project experience would have made my work with Bahia Street a lot more difficult. But since I had to meet people, observe, and conduct interviews for my community project, I was more prepared to do it for my ISP.

7. What part of the FSS most significantly influenced the ISP process?

The community project most significantly influenced my ISP process. Doing the community project gave me experience for when I began my ISP. I had never worked with an organization that I was to observe and write field notes about. I also did not know what

the process would be like. What would I say to the people who work there? How would I introduce myself? These were things that I needed to know for my ISP project. Working with EMAUS during my community project and gaining that experience in doing observations, writing about them, and conducting formal interviews definitely prepared me more than anything else because it put me out in the field. Though I am more of an auditory learner, it is in cases like this where I need to have more than words. I need to actually be put out there to experience things in order to learn from them.

8. What were the principal problems you encountered while doing the ISP? Were you able to resolve these and how?

The biggest problem that I had was forming relationships with the girls. Since the first weekend of ISP was a holiday, I really only had two and a half weeks to get to know the girls. I do not think this is enough time to do anything. I feel like if I would have had more time, I would have been able to get to know the girls better and learn from them more as a result of my relationship with them. It was a lot easier for me to interact with the little girls because they were more playful and less aware of what I was doing there. The older girls, however, were a lot more distant. This was a big problem because they were the ones that I wanted to get to know the most. I was not able to resolve this because I did not want to force myself on the girls. Because they are children, they pick up on these things. They know when people are being fake. I wanted my relationships with them to develop more naturally, but that is hard to do in such a short amount of time.

Another problem that I had, though it was very minimal, was language. This was a big problem during interviews. I solved this problem by recording my interviews and going back to listen to them later. There were still small parts of the interviews that I could not understand, but for the most part, I got all of the information that I needed.

9. Did you experience any time constraints? How could these have been resolved?

The biggest time constraint came when I began to write my ISP. I was told not to wait and write my ISP during the four day time period allotted specifically for writing, but it was difficult to write it during the actual ISP period. The reason for this is that field notes were very time consuming. Writing about one day, at times, took me two days to do. By the time I finished writing about one day I was a day or two behind because I had gone to my organization again. Also, interviews were difficult to transcribe because many of them were long and the quality of them was not good. Not to mention I struggled to understand the Portuguese. All of these things took up a lot of my time and did not give me the opportunity to begin my ISP until I returned to Fortaleza. The written part of our ISP is supposed to be our culmination. It is what we have been working toward the entire semester. I do not think that such a big assignment should be put in a four day span. A few more days would definitely help ease the stress and probably even better the quality of a lot of people's papers.

10. Did your original topic change and evolve as you discovered or did not discover new and different resources? Did the resources available modify or determine the topic?

My topic did not change as a result of working with my organization. I wanted to study the differences between public and private schools, how these differences affect the Afro-Brazilian population, specifically Black women, and how programs like Bahia Street are helping to bridge the gap between the education available to mostly White Brazilians and that available to Afro-Brazilians. I also wanted to answer the question of why programs like this must exist in order for Blacks to succeed. I found answers to all of these questions and developed a few more in the process, like why is it so difficult for Black women to remain in school, but no questions dramatically changed my topic.

11. How did you go about finding resources: institutions, interviewees, publications, etc.?

Before the ISP period a lot of my resources came from personal research. I found a lot of articles online about education that would be helpful for my ISP project. I also got a lot of articles and books from Bill, who has more knowledge about this subject in the context of Brazil and was thus able to find more materials on it. During the ISP period, most of my resources came from Rita, my advisor. She put me in contact with the man who gave me the tour of the public school. She was also going to take me to visit a private school, but she was never able to get in contact with the administration. She gave me advice on which teachers I should interview for my project and suggested some girls that she thought would be good for me to interview because they would be talkative and offer me good information.

12. What method(s) did you use? How did you decide to use such methods?

I wanted to participate more, but in the end most of what I did was observe and conduct interviews. The majority of the time I observed the girls in the classroom, dining area, and play area. Bahia Street has four groups of girls, separated by both age level and academic needs. I observed each group one day. I followed them to each of their classes from 1:30 pm to about 4:30 pm. During this time, they attended different classes like capoeira, dance, math, science, computers, Portuguese, English, and they are allotted some time to work on assignments that they were given in their public schools that day. I was able to observe a capoeira, English, Portuguese, and computer class. I also observed three meetings that happened throughout my work with Bahia Street. I observed the monthly teacher meeting, parent meeting, and a meeting that was held with the group two parents because of the groups' bad behavior. All of these observations contributed a lot to my research. Lastly I interviewed six people, my advisor, who is the director of Bahia Street, a former student who now works at Bahia Street and is studying for the *vestibular*, two teachers, and two students. I wanted to do as many interviews as I could because I felt like this would be where I got most of my information. I felt like my interviewees could tell me things that I would never be able to find in my research online or read in articles.

13. Comment on your relations with your advisor: indispensable? Occasionally helpful? Not very helpful? At what point was he/she most helpful? Where there cultural differences which influenced your relationship? A different understanding of educational processes and goals? Was working with the advisor instructional?

I could not ask for a better advisor. I am very grateful to her because she was both helpful when it came to things related to my project and things not related to my project. She was only at the program half the time that I was there because she had travel plans, but that did not change our dynamic. She made sure to help me with everything that I needed before she left and told everyone else on the staff that I would be around so that they could help me if I needed anything. She gave me great ideas for my project, helped me make a schedule, and was always concerned about how I was doing. She constantly asked me how my project was coming along and always encouraged me to start writing as soon as I could. She knew exactly what I was looking for and was very willing to help me with it because it is something that she is very passionate about. I learned a lot of things from her both inside and outside the context of my project.

14. Did you reach and dead ends? Hypotheses which turned out to be not useful? Interviews or visits that had no application?

I did not reach any dead ends. There were some parts of my interviews with people that were not useful, but that tends to happen to everyone. Not everything that a person says will always be relevant. All of my observations, interviews, and my visit to the public school contributed a lot to my research. I would have liked it if the girls' interviews went more in depth and had more details, but it was hard for me to probe in Portuguese. That, and I did not want them to feel pressured to talk about things that they did not want to talk about. I would have also liked to have more interviews. My original plan was to interview four girls. However, time constraints did not allow me to do that, so I had to settle for two.

15. What insights did you gain into the culture as a result of doing the ISP, which you might not otherwise have gained?

In addition to learning the language more, I learned a lot about things like music, which the girls sang and danced to all the time, food, which people asked me if I had tried all the time, and different games that the girls like to play. All of these things are very different than those in the United States. It may not sound like something that is very important, but the games that these girls play taught me a lot about them. I found one game that they play especially interesting. They use a sort of string/rope thing that two girls hold for another girl to jump and step on repeated amounts of times. I had never seen this game before and it amazed me how fun the girls thought it was. They would even fight and argue with each other over who could play the game. It was a piece of string and the girls were happy to play with it. Another day, I saw the girls ball up a lot of pieces of paper and put them in a bag to form a ball. They tied two jump ropes together, and then to a tree, and started playing volleyball with the plastic ball. These girls don't have the same games that kids in the United States do, but they have fun just the same. I don't know that kids in the United States would have fun with these things. I don't want to say that it is because they are spoiled, but they do have access to a lot more things than these girls do.

16. Did the ISP assist your adjustment into the culture? Integration?

I think that it helped me with my language skills a lot, which helped me adjust to

the culture, but I do not think it helped me integrate into the culture. Learning and speaking the language more helped me practice and better it. It made it easier for me to understand others who speak it. I was better able to speak to both people inside the program and people outside of the context of the program when it came to asking for directions, for example, or ordering food. Language is one of the number one things I think is needed to adjust to a culture because it is the primary way of communication. As far as integration goes, I do not think it helped me to integrate myself because I would always go back home to Americans where I would speak English. I would go out with my fellow SIT classmates to dinner where we would only speak English and people would stare at us for doing so. Many people have told me that physically I look like a Brazilian, but that once I start talking it is apparent that I am not one. I think that if I would have lived with a host family I would have been better able to integrate myself into the culture.

17. What were the principal lessons you learned from the ISP process?

This is not necessarily something that I learned, but it is a belief that was greatly enforced throughout my time working with Bahia Street. I learned that all a person needs to succeed in life, or turn their life around, is one person to care about them. One of the girls that I interviewed told me that she does not have support from her mother, whom she lives with, and she never knew her father, but she is in school because her aunt supports her. Her aunt is the one that pushes her to ask for more. Another girl told me that she used to be a trouble maker before she joined the program. Now, however, she knows the value of her education and even aspires to be an electrical engineer. I did not ask about her family, but it is possible that she does not have much support from them because she was out on the street causing trouble. In the teachers at Bahia Street, however, she found the support that she needed to change. She realized that people really do care about her well-being. During the parent meeting my advisor made a comment that I really agreed with. She told the parents that she wished more parents participated in their children's education because, even if they do not think so or see it, it actually helps the kids do better. Knowing that their parents went to the parent meeting makes them feel good about themselves and causes them to do better in school. I truly believe this to be the case.

18. If you met a future student who wanted to do this same project, what would be your recommendation to him/her?

I would tell him/her to not try to collect too much information. I know that it is tempting because he/she will be working with the organization so he/she will have access to all the information he/she wants, but three weeks is not enough time to focus on too many things. That was one of my biggest issues. I had all of this information that I did not know what to do with. I wrote down every single thing that happened and had trouble eliminating things to include in my project in the end because I thought everything was relevant. My advice would be to know what you want. Go into your work with the organization knowing what you want, state it from the beginning, and focus on those things. I know that other things will come up (they always do), but try not to pay too much attention to them if they are not relevant to the topic you originally chose.

My other piece of advice would be to be flexible. My observations and interviews

were canceled or moved back many times. There were times when I went to Bahia Street thinking that I was going to do one thing and I ended up doing another completely different thing, or nothing at all. One time I went to Bahia Street and left a few minutes after arriving because the person that I was going to interview had to cancel. We rescheduled and I had to go back another day. This was something that was very difficult for me to get used to because I am such an organized person. I write everything in my agenda planner, I am punctual, and I like everything to go as planned. This experience, however, taught me that sometimes I have to be flexible because not everyone is like me.

19. Given what you know now, would you undertake this, or a similar project, again?

I would undertake this project again, mostly because I feel like it is incomplete. I feel like there is so much more left to learn and write about that the short ISP period did not allow me to do. I would love to come back to Brazil on a Fulbright or another type of grant to have more time to form relationships and gather better and more in-depth information. I am proud of the work that I did for my ISP, but I feel like I would feel better about it if I would have had more time to both work with the organization and write about it.