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Facing Reality: The Story of Icaro Amorim

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**Facing Reality:
The Story of Icaro Amorim**

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Fall 2005

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Abstract

The harsh struggles and lack of basic necessities, which plague many low-income neighborhoods in Northeastern Brazil negatively impact children's physical and emotional development. My research follows a 16 year-old boy, Icaro Amorim, who lives in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Fortaleza, Ceara, located in the Northeastern region of Brazil. Despite his hard life where food is never a guarantee, Icaro possesses a social awareness that motivates him to improve the life of his family and his community. This social consciousness is played out in *Casa de Cultura*, a project which Icaro and his peers started in their community of Bom Jardim. This project addresses the needs of youth in Bom Jardim and motivates these youth to become active, capable members in society. What influenced Icaro to develop such a strong self-identity to help others?

Icaro's participation at *Escola de Danca e Integracao Social para Crianca e Adolescente*, EDISCA, a non-governmental organization which offers an alternative arts program to children and adolescents living in *favela*, or slum communities in Fortaleza, gave Icaro a new lens in which to see and evaluate his life. EDISCA uses the arts in conjunction with social education to provoke and support human development, which is defined by the child's freedom to create and the opportunity to take control of one's own life. For Icaro, EDISCA pushed him to develop a social responsibility in which he understood his own life through the context of the larger struggles taking place in both Fortaleza and Brazilian society. This analysis motivated Icaro and his peers to start *Casa de Cultura*, a project which mimics EDISCA's values.

Icaro's actions, along with his peers', are creating a new society in which the youth and the poor are the transformers responsible for raising a new generation, where helping without an interest and respect are the key values. Icaro's development and the formation of *Casa de Cultura* show that today's youth are capable of successfully bringing about social change to their community and thus, creating a better world for tomorrow.

Methodology

Originally, I set out to research how Icaro and his peers digested EDISCA's values and recreated these values in their community project, *Casa de Cultura*. I decided to live with Icaro for about two weeks in order to better understand the needs *Casa de Cultura* was addressing as well as the realities of Icaro and his peers' lives. I thought the best way to understand this was to fully integrate myself, day-by-day, within Icaro's family, friends and community. Once I began my research and getting to know Icaro, I found that it was much more fascinating to focus on how one individual youth was able to get to the point developmentally where he, as well as his peers, on their own initiative, could create a program that was bringing social change to their community. Thus, the focus of my research shifted to better understanding Icaro's development through understanding his life, community and participation at EDISCA.

Since I was living with Icaro, it often seemed like I was conducting research around the clock. I split my time up between going to EDISCA and staying in Bom Jardim. The days that I went to EDISCA gave me a chance to experience "a day in the life of Icaro"—from riding the bus, to eating lunch with him, to observing his classes. I also used the days at EDISCA to conduct interviews with EDISCA's professionals and students. The days I spent in Bom Jardim, Icaro's friends, Caio, Adriano and Evelini, took me around the community. I observed a few classes at *Casa de Cultura*, but the majority of the classes were cancelled during my stay there because the teachers were sick. This was one problem I encountered, as I had limited exposure to the actual activities at the project. Therefore, I spent the majority of my time in Bom Jardim interviewing key informants and observing everyday life. Caio, Adriano and Evelini were huge resources and have a lot of knowledge about their community, *Casa de Cultura* and EDISCA, which they were willing to share with me. They orientated me to the neighborhood and also shared their lives with me. They added much to my research and without them I would have been lost in Bom Jardim. Every night, I returned to Icaro's home to observe and participate in his life as well as have informal conversations about his life and family. The main problem in my research is that I never had the opportunity to interview Icaro's mother.

In sum, my methodology came from my everyday interactions with Icaro, his friends, community and staff at EDISCA. I was successfully able to integrate myself into my research in every area. Many of my interactions came in the form of informal conversations and interviews, which I found quite productive as they provided a natural setting in which to conduct my research. In addition, I used methods of formal interviews as well as observations-participation.

Acknowledgements and Dedications

I write this to honor and celebrate Icaro,
who has awakened my spirit.

I write this for Icaro's friends:
Caio, Daniele, Adriano, and Evelini and the mother's, Graca
and Salete,
all of whom have been my tour guides throughout this
process
and who have truly taught me the meaning of love for the
stranger.

Most importantly,
I write this for those who have never questioned how their
own reality affects others,
For those who forget that they have a responsibility to the
stranger,

For those who talk and preach about improving this world,
but whose actions are lacking.

**Facing Reality:
The Story of Icaro Amorim**
By, Nicole Vengrove

Preface

Icaro Amorim. When I hear this name I remember how lucky I am, as a 20 year-old American college student, to have spent two weeks living and sharing in the life of this 16 year-old, Brazilian boy who symbolizes hope in the midst of chaos. What follows is my personal account of an adolescent who lives in the world's shadow, where many struggle and few outsiders lend their opened hands. The importance of this narrative comes through in its attempt to uncover and reconnect *you* to this hidden part of *our* world, which many consider to be *their* world.

The first time I met Icaro, I knew I wanted to do my research with him. Within the first five minutes of talking to him, I was blown away by his strong philosophy of life that is defined by improving the lives of others. To me, it was inconceivable that a 16 year-old could have such a strong sense of social responsibility. As a college student studying child development and social justice and a person who has always been interested in working with children who are most vulnerable to society's injustices, I felt that Icaro could truly show me the personal struggles facing the poorest of Brazilians and teach me how it is that they are able to succumb their problems. What I found, however, was more than I could have asked for. Not only did I gain a more accurate perspective of Icaro and his community's reality, but I understood that this reality was and should be part of my reality as well.

Icaro's story is an example of an adolescent
growing up in one of Fortaleza's poorest communities.

Icaro's story shows how an alternative arts program like EDISCA can
transform a life.

Icaro's story is a celebration of life.

And Icaro's story is an example of a teenage boy who is still
growing, learning and identifying himself.

Introduction

Through the harsh struggles, which plague Northeastern Brazil and harm those who are most vulnerable, children, Icaro Amorim, a 16 year-old boy who lives in one of the poorest regions in Brazil, succeeds to live a life beyond merely surviving. While many children in this region lack basic necessities, which negatively impact their physical and emotional development, Icaro works everyday to improve both the life of his family and the life of strangers in his community. Icaro's development of a social consciousness created the inner drive to help others and affect change in one's own community. His participation at *Escola de Danca e Integracao Social para Crianca e Adolescente*, EDISCA, a non-governmental organization which offers an alternative arts program to children and adolescents living in *favela*, or slum communities, in the Northeastern Brazilian city of Fortaleza, gave Icaro a new lens in which to see and evaluate his life. EDISCA uses the arts in conjunction with social education to provoke and support human development, which is defined by the child's freedom to create and the opportunity to take control of one's own life. Through dance, theater and various other art forms, EDISCA helps the children understand their and their families' struggles. For Icaro, EDISCA pushed him to develop a social responsibility in which he understood his own life through the context of the larger struggles taking place in both Fortaleza and Brazilian society. This analysis motivated Icaro and his peers to start *Casa de Cultura*, a project in their home community of Bom Jardim, Fortaleza which mimics EDISCA's values and motivates the children and adolescents of Bom Jardim to become active, capable members in society. Icaro's actions, along with his peers', are creating a new society in which the youth and the poor are the transformers responsible for raising a new generation, where helping without an interest and respect are the key values. Icaro's development and the formation of *Casa de Cultura* show that today's youth are capable of successfully bringing about social change to their community and thus, creating a better world for tomorrow.

Placing Icaro into a Context: Northeastern Brazil, Bom Jardim and EDISCA

Adalberto Barreto's outline of the characteristics and impacts of Brazilian *favelas* and poor communities in his book, *Terapia Comunitaria*, helps to emphasize the dire realities that many Brazilian children grow up in, especially in Northeastern Brazil. After Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, Fortaleza, which is located in the Northeastern state of Ceara, has the third largest population of *favela*, or poor, slum communities. The first *favela* communities created were located in Rio; since ex-slaves founded these *favelas*, an immediate identity of exclusion accompanied these communities. In the last decades there has been a split in the Brazilian society between a capitalistic society that accumulates a surplus of material and a population that is nomadic because they have no preference of space, and thus moves according to where they can get food and other necessities needed to live. These populations co-exist in the same space and almost never come into contact with one another (146). There are five distinct characteristics of *favela* and poor communities in Brazil: habitation, employment, health, violence, frustrations. First, individuals' houses are usually made of accessible supplies such as mud, sticks and sometimes stone. They build their houses in a city that does not have any space for them (148). Since many people who live in *favela* communities do not have professional qualifications, they are unable to find employment. Their lives are often defined by waking up early, searching for employment the entire day and returning home at night hungry. Sometimes, it is not worthwhile to return home and often children are forced to turn to the streets because they have been abandoned or because conditions at home make it impossible to live there; thus communities of street children are created (149-150). Individual's health is plagued by "emotional tension, urban violence" which thus causes physical and mental harm. Often, communities turn to alcoholism and drugs to solve their problems because they are left without hope and means of improving their lives (150). In addition, the main cause of death amongst *jovens*, ages 18-24, in these communities is urban violence. Constant violence afflicts these communities and thus, children and *jovens* often get caught in the middle (150-151). All of these factors combine together to slowly crush dreams of a better future. Children become the main victims of this chaos: without work, school and opportunities to improve the future, the situation often causes children to turn to violence, drugs and alcohol as a means of surviving (151-152).

Barreto establishes a lens in which to analyze both life in Fortaleza and Icaro's community of Bom Jardim, which ironically means "good garden." Unlike Rio and Sao Paulo, where the poor communities surround the center of the city, Fortaleza's *favela* and poor communities are located in the periphery of Fortaleza. Joacy Pinheiro, the Community Coordinator at EDISCA, notes, that the city was planned like this in order to create a "cleaning logic."¹ In other words, it was better for the government and the city to place the poorest communities in Fortaleza far from the center of the city so that the city would not have to be reminded of the filth and problems of these communities. Adding to this, the majority of the population in Fortaleza lives in the periphery; thus, the majority of the population lives in conditions of poverty, as Barreto clearly defined. Bom Jardim, located in the periphery of Fortaleza, is the largest neighborhood in Fortaleza in terms of landmass. About 200,000 people live in Bom Jardim and some say that it is the most dangerous neighborhood. Bom Jardim contains *favela* and poor communities where, as defined through Pinheiro's interviews with families, crime and health are the two major problems. The lack of police protection in this area heightens crime. In terms of healthcare, there are five small public medical clinics to address the needs of 200,000 people; to get an appointment takes months. When sick, 54.41% of the population of Bom Jardim goes first to a medical center in another neighborhood of Fortaleza. Adding to these problems, Bom Jardim lacks quality schools and professional education; trash is not collected regularly, rivers are polluted, public telephones malfunction, streets lack lamps.² All these problems together create an environment, like Barreto describes, where violence and unemployment exist and where daily life is a constant struggle.

Pinheiro defines Bom Jardim as a "sleep neighborhood" because the majority of the people who live here go outside this neighborhood for work. In addition, Bom Jardim is a rather new neighborhood; few people who live in this neighborhood were born here. People come to this community because the population increases and there is land available for building a house anywhere else. This explains a unique characteristic of Bom Jardim: much of the land in Bom Jardim is occupied, meaning that people come here, take over the land, and build their *favela* or house without ever buying the land.

¹ ISP Field Journal: Interview #2, November 22; Information about Bom Jardim comes from this interview, unless noted otherwise through footnotes

² "Sintese das Rodadas de Discussao."

While this is clearly prohibited throughout Fortaleza, people have been able to occupy the land in Bom Jardim without any problems from the police or government.³ This shows that the City is uninterested in this land—the land in Bom Jardim is unwanted, and the people are thus left to fend for themselves. All of these factors combine to explain the lack of communal identity in Bom Jardim, which therefore makes it extremely difficult to create a collective movement of change in Bom Jardim.

EDISCA, which began in 1991, recognizes the problems, which have been outlined above, facing children and families living in *favela* and poor communities in Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil. EDISCA detects the need both to engage children and their families living in these communities AND to puncture the Brazilian's elite blindness to the social problems that exist in Brazilian society. EDISCA uses the arts as a lens to look at Brazil's problems in a new light and to raise a new generation where acceptance, communication and justice exists. EDISCA believes that the "arts educate and humanize⁴"; through arts education, social and human development flourish. In addition to recognizing one's full potential and capabilities in life, EDISCA defines social development as forming a social consciousness and responsibility for the stranger. This social consciousness empowers a culture where "help without interest" exists and where one is able to pass on one's own knowledge to others⁵.

How does EDISCA bring these values to life? EDISCA only accepts children who live in the poorest of Fortaleza's neighborhoods and who prove to need such necessities as food, education, health and familial support. In this way, EDISCA's application process is embedded in a social responsibility to engage those who need the most help. Children from age 7-12 are accepted to come as to students EDISCA, but many continue on until past their teenage years—some even become employees of EDISCA. Students come either Monday, Wednesday, Friday or Tuesday, Thursday, and some even come everyday to take part in dance, drama, music, and/or English classes. EDISCA believes that in order to create an improved society and truly change the lives of children, they must work both with the whole person and the entire family unit. Thus, EDISCA is not just an arts program. EDISCA provides psychology groups, sexual health

³ ISP Field Journal, Interview #2, November 22

⁴ EDISCA Activities Report, 2004, 12

⁵ ISP Prep Journal, October 3

counseling and food at all hours of the day. All the children and their families are guaranteed a comprehensive health program in which the children are given vaccinations, personal hygiene items, health classes, and free healthcare services at Fortaleza's local hospital. In addition, EDISCA's community workers make visits to the children's home in order to foster relationships with the families. Parents are able to receive literacy skill training. An extensive women's program exists for the mothers in which they are able to create a support network, learn skills to use both in the workforce and in their everyday lives. In this way, EDISCA's full-person approach recognizes the family as a central unit and thus recognizes that in order to bring change to the lives of children in the poorest communities of Fortaleza, they must engage the entire family⁶.

EDISCA puts on professional dance performances at Fortaleza's theaters. These performances have drawn much media and government attention since each performance has to do with a real social problem. As EDISCA believes in creating relationships of trust between student and teacher,⁷ the students and teachers work together to create the entire production of the performance. Always, the students talk about the meaning of the performance and discuss how the social problem impacts their lives. The teachers probe the students and ask them why is your life like this? Why is there a difference in your life compared to others? Why is it that you are not given access to certain opportunities?⁸ Often, the students will tell the directors/teachers of EDISCA about a specific problem in their own community. Many times, the directors/teachers will create a dance or theater performance that addresses this specific problem.⁹

For the debut of these performances, the majority of the audience consists of the family members of EDISCA's students. For most of the families, this is their first time going to a theater. Gilano Andrade, one of EDISCA's artistic directors, notes that this is quite controversial for the elite of society to see as they are the ones who usually attend theater performances. Many politicians and other Brazilian elite, however, are invited to the performances to witness the fruits of EDISCA's work. Gilano stated that these performances are "a revolution without violence." EDISCA creates a new idea in which

⁶ ISP Prep Journal, October 3

⁷ EDISCA: A Arte Na Construcao do Humano

⁸ ISP Field Journal, Interview, Dora, Nov 26

⁹ ISP Field Journal, Interview, November 19

children, specifically from *favela* communities, can make a change in this world. The performances use the arts as a mode of communication and dialogue between Brazil's top elite and those who are past cast out of society. When EDISCA first began, the local Brazilian government thought that kids from *favelas* do not like fine arts and they cannot make a difference—arts programs have always been available for the elite, but never for those who live in the ruin of society. Now, EDISCA's dance troupe is professional and recognized throughout Brazil; the troupe has traveled and performed extensively, including Europe. The professionalism of EDISCA's dance troupe teaches the children the importance of quality work and more importantly, shows the children that they are able to produce such work.¹⁰

In summary, EDISCA was created from the direct interaction with the Fortaleza community. As outlined in *EDISCA: A Arte Na Construcao do Humano* (EDISCA: Art in the Construction of the Human), this interaction creates a never-ending circle to “learn teaching and teach learning” (34). Their social education through the arts helps to increase the quality of life of children living in the poorest communities of Fortaleza. EDISCA focuses on the personal and social development of each individual, through their development of: identity, self-esteem, auto knowledge, auto confidence, auto determination, resilience auto realization, and visions for the future (62). With the belief that art is the key to developing different dimensions of an individual, EDISCA's social-artistic pedagogy encourages free expression and thus allows the children to “react to a new world using their mental and emotional capacities...with these tools, they uncover the potential of art” (3).

Without EDISCA, this population of youth would continue being denied the human rights that they were born with—the rights to grow, express, create, live, dream and play. These children develop into artists and through the process of creating art, they recapture freedoms that social, economic and political conditions have denied them.

Icaro acts as an example of a child who has been affected by these conditions and a teenager who, with help from EDISCA, his family and his own personality, is able to overcome his struggles.

¹⁰ ISP Prep Journal October 14, 2005

Placing Myself into this Context

It is 11:30pm on my third night living with Icaro. Icaro sits in his bed wearing the “I LOVE NY” tee shirt I gave him and I lay in the hammock, which hangs across the full width of his home. Icaro has been studying English for almost two years at EDISCA, and is already close to fluency. As Icaro sings along word for word in English with the American music playing on his radio, he asks me to describe New York City to him. While I describe the crowded streets and the tall buildings, he closes his eyes, smiles and tells me that one-day he wants to travel there too. He tells me that next time I come back to Brazil he hopes to have a nicer home to receive me in¹¹. And then it hits me. I live in a city and speak a language that to Icaro, symbolizes a better life—a dream. And it is then that I realize how backwards our world is. I have been brought up to believe that I live in the developed world and that Icaro lives in the poor, underdeveloped part of society. After two weeks of living with Icaro, what I know as my world has been turned upside down. While my studies at college have always focused around social problems, this was the first time that I, a “privileged” white American, was actually living in the conditions with the people I have read about. We use the term *poor* to describe a physical, economical status and to imply a condition of the other in order to push away the unknown and the unwanted¹². In this terminology, I should not be learning anything from Icaro—he should be learning everything from me. Icaro lives a hard life in which food is never a guarantee and going hungry is a reality. But Icaro’s positive outlook on life, his dreams for a future and his actions that are dedicated to helping others shows me that he, and those in his community, have strong morals and drives despite the inequalities that they face everyday. I am not at all trying to suggest that before I lived with Icaro I thought that the “poor” were bad people. Not at all. Instead, it was this experience that brought my world together *with* Icaro’s world. That even though we speak different languages, live in different countries and have opposite economic levels, we still connected on a very basic human level. And it was this experience that made me realize the meaning of being responsible for each another: That my reality impacts his

¹¹ ISP Prep Journal, Feelings/Judgements, November 22

¹² Esteva, Guestavo, see Bibliography

reality, and that his reality should impact my reality. And in this way, we have both been altered for the better.

Now, I hope to paint a picture of Icaro's life in the hope that you will be as moved as I have been and realize that you too, have a responsibility to those who are excluded and ignored by society. In order to understand how EDISCA created a new lens to read his life, it is essential to understand Icaro's past as well as his present personal, everyday life.

Icaro's Story

Icaro's Home

The sand dirt road, covered with jagged rocks and potholes, makes it hard for the taxi to drive down Icaro's street. Up and down, up and down, I hit my head on the top of the car as the taxi driver gives me a look that says *why are coming to live here*.¹³ I ask Icaro if this area is dangerous and he responds no, because everyone here lives in the same situation.¹⁴ Icaro tells the taxi driver to stop and points to his house, which has a brown steel gate is a door. He looks at me with apologetic eyes and says that he woke up at 6 am to clean his house so that it is presentable for me. As I walk through the gate, there is a small room with a sink and wooden table. After that, there is another doorway that opens up to the rest of the house, which is one room. There is a wall that is open at the top, which separates the kitchen from his bedroom. The kitchen contains a stove, glass table, four chairs; pots and dishes are scattered around. His bedroom has a full sized bed with a dresser and a closet. Icaro points to the refrigerator, fan, books, and a broken TV, all of which he saved up to buy with the money he made at EDISCA. The floor is stone and has a lot of dust. The roof is made of red roman tiles and the walls are stone painted with white, cracked paint. To the side of the kitchen is a bathroom with a toilet and a shower. The toilet does not flush. Icaro makes sure to mention that he is going to hang a curtain in front of the toilet and shower so that I can have privacy when I need to use the bathroom. He also tells me that whenever I use the dishes to eat or drink, I need

¹³ ISP Field Journal, Observation #2, November 20

¹⁴ ISP Field Journal, Observation#1, November 20

to make sure to wash them well, with soap, because the dust from the ceiling and the walls falls into them.¹⁵

As I unpack my bags, Icaro explains to me why he lives alone, without his mother or sister. Before two months ago, Icaro's mom and sister lived with him. His mom worked as a cleaning lady for many years in an office, but after getting layed off, she was unemployed for three years. While having a full supply of food still proves to be a challenge today, life was even more difficult during this time.¹⁶ Two months ago, his mother started working at a daycare. Since the daycare was far from their home, Graca needed to live in her friend's home, which is close to the daycare. Icaro's sister is 6 years old and since his mother works all the time, his sister lives with another woman. This woman is 16 years old, and Icaro's mother pays her. Icaro, however, chose to stay in this house and live alone because he does not want to live in someone else's house. His mother accepts this. Icaro sees his mother a couple of times a week. He says that sometimes it is lonely, but he likes living alone. His mom makes 200 *reais* a month (equivalent to \$100); 100 of it goes to the woman taking care of Icaro's sister and the other 100 goes to help the family she lives with or items that she and her family need. Icaro's mom is not married and Icaro and his sister have different fathers. Icaro's father lives close to the center of Fortaleza. He gives Icaro a stipend of 100 *reais* (\$50) a month and the rest of the money that Icaro has comes from EDISCA, where he gets paid 200 *reais* (\$100) a month as a choreographer. Icaro and his father have a good relationship, but his father does not give Icaro everything he needs—physically and emotionally.¹⁷ Icaro is 16 years old, but he lives alone, cooks his own meals and buys his own supplies for the home. The fact that he himself chose to live on his own and that the majority of the money he has he makes on his own at EDISCA suggests that his family's economic situation caused him to grow up fast and adopt a level of maturity way beyond his 16 years.

Living the Separation Between Rich and Poor

As Icaro skims through his photo album to show me pictures from when he was a baby, he stops and shows me a picture of him when he was seven, with his mother and

¹⁵ ISP Field Journal, Observation #2, November 20

¹⁶ ISP Field Journal, Interview #3, November 20

¹⁷ ISP Field Journal, Observation # 2, November 20

father. Icaro stands between his parents and everyone is smiling. His parents were together for the first 10 years of his life, though they never lived together. This picture makes Icaro sad and also makes him hope for a future in which him, his wife and children all live together.¹⁸ For me, this picture of his family together highly contrasts with what I perceive as his life now—a home where he lives alone.

The next picture Icaro shows me is of his father's family, sitting on a beautiful sofa with art hanging on the walls. Icaro's life mimics the separation between rich and poor. His father's side of the family, who is significantly wealthier than Icaro and his mother, does not talk to him. Why? According to Icaro, it is because *he is poor*. His father's family never liked Icaro's mother for the same reason.¹⁹ For Icaro, the act of the rich turning their back on him began *in* his family. He lives this reality everyday.

Graça

I witnessed the struggles of Icaro's reality on my second day in Bom Jardim. The woman who had watched Icaro's sister found a better job, where she could make more money and so, Icaro's sister could no longer stay with her. The six-year-old little girl came to sleep at Icaro's house for the night. Graca was supposed to sleep with her there too, but when we woke up the next morning, Icaro's mother wasn't there. His sister had nowhere to go. Icaro had no choice but to miss the morning class at EDISCA and take his sister to his mother's work. When I came home that day, his mother and sister were at home. Icaro informed me that they would now be living with us. Icaro's mom will thus have to get up every morning at 5am to make it to work on time. That night, Icaro shared a bed with his sister and Graca and I slept in separate hammocks. This new situation caused an extreme amount of stress for Graca. That second night, I went to bed to Graca's cries of *my tragedy, my tragedy*.²⁰

I would not understand the true meaning of these cries until my last night in Icaro's home. It is 8:30pm and as I am sitting in my hammock waiting for Icaro to return home, another woman from the neighborhood whom I had never met before comes into the house to talk to Graca. I keep hearing this woman say, "my responsibility is to make

¹⁸ ISP Field Journal, Interview #3, November 20

¹⁹ ISP Field Journal, Interview #3, November 20

²⁰ ISP Field Journal, Observation # 2, November 21

sure my seven year old daughter has food to eat...yesterday, she didn't eat anything." This woman asks Graca to give her the money that Graca owes her, but Graca does not have the money. Graca points around the house showing the woman that she too does not have anything.²¹ How is this situation supposed to be solved? How can Graca give this other woman money to feed her daughter when she herself has no money and barely enough food to live by? This night, put together with all the other nights that I saw how stressed Graca looked,²² helped me begin to understand the cycle that Graca and Icaro experience everyday, along with thousands of others in their community. The cycle of not making enough money to provide the basic necessities needed to live. The cycle, which thus causes an extreme amount of stress and anxiety, leading to health concerns and lost hope. Graca and Icaro's struggles are by-products of the situation they live in—a situation that could be fixed and controlled by Brazil's government or the Brazilian elite or all those who close their eyes and pretend that people are not starving in their world.

Luckily, however, Icaro does not lose hope. Graca turned to me one night and told me how lucky she is to have Icaro, her son who does so many things for her.²³ At this moment, Graca showed me that Icaro is the one who gives her strength to keep going. Between the stress and the cries, it is Icaro that makes her smile.

Before EDISCA

Icaro's childhood and home life, as described above, provide a context in which to better understand how Icaro became the person he is today. Before EDISCA, Icaro began developing a social consciousness. Icaro always knew that his life was different from others because he lacked money. Starting when he was nine years old, he began taking part both in theater classes at his school and in theater projects in his community. Always, the theater performances were about social problems both in his community and in the world. Icaro believes that the performances were about reality because his community wanted to protest and show other people what is wrong with the world.²⁴ Icaro's participation in these performances exemplifies how his strong sense of social

²¹ ISP Field Journal, Observation #2, November 29

²² ISP Field Journal, Observation #3, November 26

²³ ISP Field Journal, Observation, November 23

²⁴ ISP Field Journal, Interview 11:30pm-12am, November 22

responsibility began at a young age. In addition, the themes of these performances suggest that those who are struggling the most, such as the residents in Bom Jardim, are the ones who are the closest to reality and thus the ones who need to show others the wrong doings in society. The performances also exemplify a nonviolent approach to dealing with societal problems. In this way, the community is regaining its dignity and grasp on reality.

The Start of EDISCA and Icaro

Icaro started EDISCA in October 2002 after he and two of his best friends, Caio and Andersen, prepared a theater performance for the director of EDISCA, Dora. After seeing their performance, Dora gave them special permission to attend EDISCA.²⁵ The youth's initiative to prepare a performance in order to gain entrance into EDISCA shows their maturity and their willingness to take part in an alternative, stimulating activity. This suggests that Icaro and his friends, at the age of 13, already had the quality of looking outside their own community for opportunities.

Icaro brought his childhood and past experiences with him to EDISCA where he began to reexamine his life, dream for the future and develop a social consciousness that would affect his life as well as the lives of children in his community. By looking at Icaro's active participation at EDISCA as well as his words—how he describes EDISCA's impact—we find a better understanding of just how EDISCA was able to give him the new literacy tools to reinterpret his life, Bom Jardim community and the greater society.

Every weekday morning, Icaro wakes up at 6 o'clock in the morning to take the hour and a half bus ride to EDISCA.²⁶ From 8am-5pm, he takes part in dance, theater and English classes at EDISCA. At 5pm, he leaves EDISCA for school, which he attends every weekday from 7pm-10pm. At 10pm, he returns to his home to go to sleep and start the day over the next morning. Normally, Icaro spends all day Saturday at *Casa de Cultura*, but because he is currently part of a new EDISCA performance, he has spent the last couple of Saturdays at EDISCA all day as well.²⁷ Icaro spends the majority of his

²⁵ ISP Field Journal, Observation #2, November 28

²⁶ ISP Field Journal, Observation #1 November 22

²⁷ ISP Field Journal, Events #2, November 18

time at EDISCA. This shows his dedication to EDISCA and probes the questions: What does he find at EDISCA that he lacks at home? And why does Icaro choose to spend his time like this? Below, I hope to begin to answer these questions and show how Icaro has reintegrated EDISCA into his everyday life.

In Icaro's Words

Icaro speaks with a calm, soft voice and has a way of using simplistic words that fully communicate his perspective on life. According to Icaro, EDISCA taught him how to: specialize in being a good person, look outside of his own life for opportunities, cultivate a social relationship with others, and be an artist. EDISCA gave him the means to overcome his problems and told him that yes he does have a future.²⁸

Icaro states, "EDISCA gave me this view to look at my life and family and want to change it. Before, everything was normal. To be poor was normal, but now I want to change it." Icaro defines being poor as²⁹:

- To not have enough food
- To not have the necessities to do that best he can do
- To suffer from the prejudice of the city, which to Icaro, is the worst aspect of being poor

Icaro says that, "if you are poor, you cannot go shopping because people look at you. In my neighborhood, I can do anything, but in the richest neighborhood, I cannot go and stay there. People look at me and think that I am a thief. The city does not accept the poor. Everything is separate." Icaro digests his own reality in the context of the larger society of Fortaleza and in this way, he is able to define how being poor impacts his life. His definition of being poor shows how Icaro is able to take a step back and recognize how and why he has suffered. In addition, his articulate definition reflects a refined social consciousness: he recognizes that the separation between rich and poor has a clear impact on the way he lives his life.

Icaro Today

²⁸ ISP Field Journal, Interview #1, November 19

²⁹ ISP Field Journal, Interview #1, November 20

Icaro continues to develop at EDISCA today. He has been chosen as one of the seven student choreographers for EDISCA's dance/theatrical production which will debut in May 2006. The performance accents the realities and the struggles in Fortaleza. The idea for Icaro's choreography came straight from his own experiences in Bom Jardim. Icaro said that in his neighborhood of Bom Jardim, "everyone has the same situation" but in each neighborhood, there are gangs that fight against one another for territory. These gangs have members ranging from age 13-30 years old. In his dance piece, there are two sides who face each other and fight through dance.³⁰ The music has a fast beat and the piece includes 15 female dancers. The two gangs enter from different sides of the room and each girl pairs up with another girl from the opposite gang. They dance in front of one another and at one point, everyone exits the stage except six girls. In pairs of two, these girls walk around one another. Their eyes glare at the other and when the music makes one loud drum beat, the pairs lift their hands up like they are about to fight and run off stage.³¹

Icaro uses dance to analyze the problem of gangs in his own community. He noted, "some boys want to show that they are strong so they fight. There are gangs because they don't have anything to do." Since many boys are unable to go to school or find a job in his community, they join gangs. He believes that because the governor does not try to address these problems, people suffer; and the people who suffer are the poor.³² This shows not only Icaro's knowledge of the causes of the problems in his community, but also that he understands how these problems are being perpetuated. Icaro's choreography will be part of a performance which the Fortaleza public, rich and poor, will witness. Icaro's choreography is a silent protest and thus, his artistic skills, combined with his awareness of the problems in his community, are being used as a mode for social transformation.

Icaro on His Future

³⁰ ISP Field Journal, Interview #1, November 22

³¹ ISP Field Journal, Observation #1, November 22

³² ISP Field Journal, Interview #1, November 22

Before EDISCA, Icaro said that he had no dreams, no ideas to help others and did not have strong reasons to believe in a future.³³ Now, Icaro says that if he doesn't dream, he wouldn't have anything to do. Icaro takes his future into his own hands. He recognizes that just because he lives in a bad neighborhood, does not mean that he is "obligated to be a bad person." Icaro was awarded special permission to take part in a four-year English course that EDISCA offers. After not even two years, his English is close to fluency. He hopes to be an English teacher or a journalist one day. Icaro says that he studies and loves English because it is the language of the world. He believes that his English abilities will help ensure that he has a good job in the future. Adding to this, Icaro believes in education and recognizes that without education, he will not be able to improve his future. To Icaro, English symbolizes a greater dream and ability: a dream to be part of the international community and an ability to converse with all people. On a more practical level, English teachers in Brazil make a respectable salary. To be an English teacher would also fulfill Icaro's dream of having a comfortable life where he "doesn't have to worry about food for the next day."³⁴ These dreams are not complicated; instead, they represent a 16 year-old boy's hopes for the future. Practical hopes, which he already is able to start achieving.

Icaro's dreams also show just how hard his life can be—he wants to live a life where he does not have to worry about food. After a full Saturday at EDISCA, Icaro and I arrive home at night to Bom Jardim where everyone is getting ready to begin celebrating the weekend. People are sitting outside laughing, dancing and drinking. The atmosphere seems to be light and fun from a distance, but the amount of drinking that I notice on the streets suggests an uneasiness—like the people of Bom Jardim are trying to forget their troubles. As Icaro and I walk together, he tells me that sometimes he hates coming home from EDISCA because he remembers all his problems.³⁵ At this moment, I see a deep sadness in Icaro. As he talks about his dreams to visit New York City and asks me what he would need to make it there, I can't help but think that for Icaro, EDISCA and thoughts of New York City are his escapes. What does that mean that EDISCA, a program that works with youth to help them understand the implications of

³³ ISP Prep Journal, October 17, page 109

³⁴ ISP Field Journal, Interview #1, November 22

³⁵ ISP Field Journal, Observation #4, November 26

the children's own problems, is an escape from these troubles? While Icaro is aware of the reality of his troubles, he is still a 16 year-old at heart, with all the potential that every 16 year-old holds. EDISCA gives him a productive escape where he can take his troubles and reinvent them through art. This process of reinterpreting his problems is a means of coping and a means of beginning to live out his dreams for the future. In addition, his dream of traveling to New York City is still untouchable. This dream, however, begins to come true when he learns English.

The beauty of Icaro shines in his unwillingness to never stop believing in himself and to always push through. Icaro movingly stated, "I am calm, and try to get another life, but I accept this situation. I don't hate my life, but I want a better life."³⁶

Icaro told me that the phrase of his life echoes in John Lennon's words:

*You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one,
I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will live as one*

Casa de Cultura

Casa de Cultura symbolizes the fruits of Icaro's, as well as his peers', social consciousness and their dream for a better tomorrow. *Casa de Cultura* began in April 2004 out of Icaro and Caio's, who also attended EDISCA, recognition that their Bom Jardim community needed help. This organization shows how Icaro and his peers used the values they learned at EDISCA to address the needs and problems facing their community of Bom Jardim. The creation of *Casa de Cultura's* was based on their awareness that EDISCA helped them and now it was their turn to help others.³⁷ Icaro and Caio joined together with Daniele, another EDISCA student, and Evelini, who did not attend EDISCA, to start *Casa de Cultura*. At the time they began their project, the four teenagers ranged in age between 14-16 years old. The development and success of this program proves that youth have the capability to transform society. This realization points to a new definition of development where age, privilege and economic status are replaced with the ability to look outside one's own life and take responsibility for the stranger.

A new meaning of development inevitably leads to a new definition for the so-called developed and underdeveloped worlds. Gustavo Esteva writes in his article titled “Development,” that since every day man continues to suffer and is often denied sufficient means to live, communities have had to create their own ways of surviving and thriving. Esteva calls these creative programs “new commons.” The new commons act as a social interaction between the common man’s life and the outside world. The communities at the bottom of society have created new commons where learning is redefined and where local creativity and culture is used to transmit knowledge. Individuals in local communities are redefining their needs, which were thrown out by the West’s definition of development, and creating an “autonomous way of life” (21). Most importantly, these new commons prove that common man has the ability to reshape society. The development goals for the underdeveloped world, which are defined by “a step from the simple to the complex, from the inferior to the superior,” are inaccurate. The new commons “are heralding an era which ends privilege and license” (22). Using Esteva’s philosophy, Icaro and his peers have created a new common in their community and therefore, *Casa de Cultura* helps to reshape the definitions of the developed and under-developed worlds.

EDISCA’s Influence and the Need for *Casa de Cultura*

Once EDISCA began to assist Icaro and Caio, they were able to relate their lives to the lives of other children in Bom Jardim. They realized that EDISCA had helped them to understand and overcome their problems and now it was time to pass their own knowledge and hope to others. Icaro and Caio consciously embedded EDISCA’s values and practices into *Casa de Cultura*. Their project adopted EDISCA’s theory that the arts help to develop and transform individuals into better people.³⁶ In addition, they wrote up a professional proposal, *Apresentacao: Casa de Cultura*, which clearly outlines their objectives, goals and methods for the project through the need for this project to exist in their community:

³⁶ ISP Field Journal, Interview #1, November 22

³⁷ ISP Prep Journal, October 17, page 109

This region is the most populated and has the biggest population of street children and possesses one of the smallest incomes for its habitants. These statistics show the social aspects of this community that cause an uncontrollable amount of problems. It is impossible for people here to have a worthy human development, which all citizens have a right to. In addition, the youth are not given the opportunity to change through their human potential.

Just like EDISCA, their main objectives are to invest in youth, who have been denied basic means of development and human rights, through the arts in order to contribute to “the formation of children and adolescents’ consciousness, self-determination; activists and protagonists in transforming their own community, city and nation” (*Apresentacao*). In other words, *Casa de Cultura*’s pedagogy focuses on the youth as capable beings who can transform their own life and community, a noble value which mirrors EDISCA’s pedagogy.

Taking EDISCA to the Next Level

While *Casa de Cultura* adopts many of EDISCA’s values, the true beauty of the project is that it was started and is run solely by teenagers. During my time in Bom Jardim, I had the opportunity to visit many social programs that exist in the community, many of which address similar needs as *Casa de Cultura*.³⁹ *Casa de Cultura*, however, was the only project I visited that was run by teenagers; when I asked others if they knew of any projects that teenagers had started on their own, not one person could mention another project besides *Casa de Cultura*.⁴⁰

The founders of the project were able to gain the outside support of those in the community. After writing up the *Apresentacao*, Caio, Icaro, Caio, Daniele, and Evelini presented it to Rosarina Sampaio, the president of the *Associacao de Prostitutas do Ceara* who lived in Bom Jardim. Rosarina ran a theater project in Bom Jardim, which Icaro and Caio had participated in. After they submitted their objectives, goals and methods to Rosarina, she was so moved by the project that she decided to dedicate part of her home to house the project, which includes paying the electricity bills. When asked why she decided to help these youth, Rosarina responded that she saw that they had

³⁸ ISP Field Journal, Interview #2, November 20

³⁹ ISP Field Journal, Interview #1, November 23; these projects seems to suggest that like *Casa de Cultura*, those who are affected most by society’s ills are the ones who know how to best address the needs and problems that come out of these ills.

⁴⁰ ISP Field Journal, Interview #1, November 23

dreams, potential and a rich future full of opportunities. She respects their work, learns a lot from them and realizes that they have planted wonderful resources in their community.⁴¹ This exchange, between youth and the president of a professional social organization in Bom Jardim, shows how Rosarina considers the founders of *Casa de Cultura* to be equally capable in affecting change. Rosarina and Caio supported this when they said that they believed that everyone has the *freedom* to impact their community. While EDISCA taught them about the importance of social responsibility, this project puts what they learned into action. Because the teenagers are the leaders of this action, they have the freedom and power to enact change. Rosarina supports this idea through her gesture of donating a section of her house to project. Rosarina does not watch over the project; it is Icaro, Caio, Daniele, and Evelini who are responsible for both the physical upkeep of the space and the planning of activities that take place at the project.⁴² Therefore the freedoms that the leaders of *Casa de Cultura* are afforded allow them to truly live out EDISCA's value of youth as transformers, the idea that youth have the potential and capability to change their own and other's lives. The leaders of the project use this value and are able to pass it on to the students at *Casa de Cultura*.

Details of Casa de Cultura

The outside of *Casa de Cultura*'s house is painted with bright colors and has a mural of children smiling, dancing and painting. As you walk through the front gate, there is a large aqua blue room with a bulletin boards with posters about AIDS, child sexual exploitation, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, and trafficking of women.⁴³ This room is used for Capoeira, theater and dance classes which are normally held Monday through Saturday. Another room contains desk chairs with English verbs and phrases posted all over the wall. This room is used for English classes. The back room, painted all different colors with children's names written everywhere, is used as the art room where children learn how to make organic stationary.⁴⁴ Currently, the project has about

⁴¹ ISP Field Journal, Interview #3, November 22

⁴² ISP Field Journal, Interview #3, November 22

⁴³ ISP Field Journal, Observation #1, November 23

⁴⁴ ISP Field Journal, Interview #1, November 21

80 students, mostly between the ages of 7-12, though they have older students as well.⁴⁵ In order to take classes at *Casa de Cultura*, the students must prove that they go to school—a value which reinforces the importance of education.⁴⁶

Once a month, *Casa de Cultura* holds discussions for both the children and parents about one topic. The founders of the project lead the discussion and then they ask the students and parents to get involved as well. Past topics have included sexual exploitation, drugs and STDS. These discussions stem directly from conversations which Icaro and Caio took part in at EDISCA.⁴⁷ By talking about problems in the community directly with parents and children, *Casa de Cultura* is inevitably having a positive impact on the community. Thus, this program provides positive reinforcement both for the children and families.

Impact on Bom Jardim

While *Casa de Cultura* has only existed for one and a half years, the influence of this project is beginning to be felt in the community. Icaro believes that the project is a success because the children “spend their time here instead of stealing, killing or becoming bad people. Here we talk about problems of the city” and teach that “to be a thief is not a good thing”.⁴⁸ Parents of children emphasize Icaro’s words and add that *Casa de Cultura* provides reinforcement for their children.⁴⁹ The project gives their children a space to learn and grow, rather than playing on the street and getting into trouble.⁵⁰ The parents’ comments echo the founders of *Casa de Cultura*’s original observation that children in Bom Jardim get into trouble because they do not have any positive activities to take part in. Thus, the parents are confirming that the project is meeting a need in the community.

The most concrete result that exemplifies *Casa de Cultura*’s influence on the community came about when five girls at the project reported to Rosarina that they were victims of sexual exploitation. These girls went to a house where men come to sexually

⁴⁵ ISP Prep Journal, October 17, page 109

⁴⁶ ISP Field Journal, Observation #2, November 23

⁴⁷ ISP Field Journal, Observation #2, November 27

⁴⁸ ISP Field Journal, Interview #2, November 26

⁴⁹ ISP Field Journal, Observation #1, November 23 and ISP Field Journal, Interview #5, November 28

⁵⁰ ISP Field Journal, Interview #5, November 28

use young girls. At the time, the girls' ages ranged from 13-16 years old. After six or seven months at the project, two of the five girls (13 and 16 years old) came to Rosarina and told them about the sexual house that they go to. After this conversation, Rosarina reported this house and it was shut down; there were a total of 15 young girls who had been going to this house. Rosarina clearly stated that "because they received information about sexual exploitation at the *Casa de Cultura*," the girls had the knowledge to denunciate their actions. Without the project, Rosarina believes that the girls would not have told anyone about their situation.⁵¹ This instance shows the impact that the project had on five young girls of Bom Jardim. Without the project, these girls could very well still be involved in sexual exploitation. In addition, because these five girls came to *Casa de Cultura* and were able to tell Rosarina about their experience, Rosarina was able to close down the sex-house. Therefore, the project had a large-scale affect on the community and the other girls who went to this house as well.

Another measure of success of *Casa de Cultura* can be found in the fact that the project has become a bridge connecting back to EDISCA. In the past few months, a total of about 15 *Casa de Cultura* students have been accepted as EDISCA students.⁵² While the project was the start of many of these children's participation in an alternative program, the project is also opening up doors to EDISCA. Since *Casa de Cultura* is still a small-scale project, EDISCA is able to provide additional services and thus positively influence the lives of more children in Bom Jardim who may have never been introduced to EDISCA otherwise. In this way, *Casa de Cultura* and EDISCA are supporters of each other and both are helping the poorest youth in Fortaleza.

Lastly, the success of *Casa de Cultura* is exemplified in the numerous community members who volunteer their time at the project. For example, because the main leaders of the project have been busy preparing for an EDISCA performance, Evelini and Tuty (18 and 19 years old, respectively), two women who live in Bom Jardim, have taken on the responsibility to help run *Casa de Cultura*. In addition, besides the founders of the project, there are now other individuals, youth and adults, who volunteer to teach Capoeira and the organic card making class.⁵³ The involvement of community members

⁵¹ ISP Field Journal, Interview #3, November 22

⁵² ISP Field Journal, Observation #1, December 2

⁵³ ISP Field Journal, Interview #1, November 21

proves that *Casa de Cultura* is integrated into the community and as Esteva writes, this shows that *Casa de Cultura* is a “new common” as it uses the creativity and skills of community members to enact social change.

Conclusion: Creating A New Culture

Icaro’s development, which was influenced by both his personal life and his participation at EDISCA, helped him form a social consciousness that provided the inner motivations and tools to create *Casa de Cultura*. His personal development as well as the development of *Casa de Cultura* suggests that the youth living in the poorest communities are creating a new kind of societal structure. These youth, who experience the daily problems that the larger society has put upon them, recognize that they cannot live a productive life within the boundaries of today’s societal structure. A structure which benefits the few, the wealthy and a structure that blinds its eyes to the cries of suffering and the pains of hunger. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Friere states that change in society must come from the people—that is, the people whose voices are never heard and who are oppressed by the rest of society. While the oppressors’ way of life also plagues their own well being, true change will only come when the oppressed rise up. In doing so, the oppressed will free BOTH themselves and the oppressors. Freire writes, “only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both” (44). The oppressed have always been the insiders of society and thus, they know the needs of the people and often the best way to transform the societal structure (74). *Casa de Cultura* is an organization which springs from the needs of the oppressed and recognizes the chaos and inhumanity present in our current society. Icaro’s inner strength as well as *Casa de Cultura* are symbols of hope, calling all of us, rich and poor, to change our ways. To lend our hands, minds and eyes in order to create a society where we all are responsible for one another. To truly live together in one world.

Definition of Terms

Apresentação: Presentaion, refers to *Casa de Cultura*'s formal write-up of their goals, objectives and methods. See bibliography.

A Arte Na Construcao do Humano: Art in the Construction of the Human, refers to EDISCA's publication. See bibliography.

Associacao de Prostitutas do Ceara: The Association of Prostitutes of Ceara

Bom Jardim: Neighborhood in Fortaleza

Casa de Cultura: House of Culture; Icaro, Caio, Daniele, and Evelini's project, located in Bom Jardim

EDISCA: *Escola de Danca e Integracao Social para Crianca e Adolescente*, School of Dance and Social Integration for Children and Adolescents

Favela communities: Communities where people live in houses, usually made out of mud, sticks and stones, and without water and electricity. These communities are plagued with violence. Refer to the section titled, Placing Icaro into a Context: Northeastern Brazil, Bom Jardim and EDISCA.

Jovens: Individuals who are between 18-24 years old

Reais: Brazil's currency

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Indications for Further Research

My research indicates numerous different areas for future research:

Bom Jardim

- This community has an incredible amount of social projects. Why do so many projects exist in this community and what does it suggest about the residents who live here?
- I met a number of youth who are enacting social change in this community-either through volunteer work or through their schools. The youth in this community definitely have an important role that is worth being researched.
- His name is Caio Feitosa, he is Icaro's best friend, and he is a lot to teach everyone.
- The physical environment of Bom Jardim is frightening: sewage in the streets, unpaved roads, trash everywhere, and no street lamps. How does this impact the health and safety of Bom Jardim residents and why is the government not taking a more active role in this community?
- There are a million and one different aspects in this community that are waiting to be researched, including: individuals' lives, school systems, police presence, violence, gangs, and life in the *favelas*.

Casa de Cultura

- Since this project was only 1.5 years old when I conducted my research, I encourage someone to further research the impact that the project is having on the community and the children involved.

EDISCA

- Talking with other EDISCA students and parents, I found that EDISCA was creating small units of transformation in which individuals were taking back what they learned from EDISCA and using their new skills to help their community. In this way, individuals were acting as bridges between EDISCA and the Fortaleza community. A research project that looked at a variety of these "bridges" would highly benefit and celebrate EDISCA's work.

ISP Appendix

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

EDISCA and *Casa de Cultura* are unique organizations to Fortaleza, Ceara, Brazil. In addition, *favela* communities are a unique characteristic to Brazil. While similar living conditions could be found in certain areas of the USA, the conditions in *favelas* and poor communities in Northeastern Brazil exist on a much larger scale than in the USA. Lastly, there is only one Icaro Amorim, and he lives in Fortaleza.

2) Could you have done any part of in the USA? Would the results have been different? I suppose I could have identified an arts organization in the USA that works with children from the poorest communities. I could have then picked one of their teenager students to live with and evaluate the impact of this organization on his life. While I have no doubt that there are many organizations in the USA who work with children from poor communities and help the overcome their problems, EDISCA and Icaro are truly unique elements to Fortaleza and thus the research and the results would have been different.

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

The ISP was the first time that I conducted a research project based mainly on my own fieldwork experiences. Never before had I used primary sources for the majority of my research. In addition, the ISP taught me how to ask productive questions and critically analyze what I was observing. I found that because I was passionate about my research topic and I was the one in charge of conducting the fieldwork, I took more care and was more interested in my work. The ISP process taught me to rely and trust myself—trust that my experience and how I was interpreting my data was in fact valid.

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

Well over the majority of my final monograph is primary data; I would say about 10-15% comes from secondary sources.

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

I wanted to include all my data because I felt that it was all important, fascinating and necessary. This, however, was not possible. Therefore, I chose the data that provided insight into Icaro's personal, family and community life as well as into the creation of *Casa de Cultura*. I had enough information to write another ISP on the conditions and community of Bom Jardim, but I didn't feel that this spoke directly to my topic at hand.

6) How did the "drop-off's" or field exercises contribute to the process and completion of the ISP?

The community stay drop-off helped me to begin sorting through data and resources needed to conduct a primary source research project. Being basically alone and speaking only Portuguese helped me prepare for my experience in Bom Jardim.

7) What part of the MTFSS most significantly influenced the ISP process?

Writing of DIES, the readings about how to conduct a productive interview and field observation, and the process of writing my final ISP proposal influenced my ISP process.

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

There were times when I did not feel safe living in Bom Jardim. This, however, stems from the warnings that people who live outside Bom Jardim told me before I left for the ISP process. I always made sure to be with another Bom Jardim resident whenever I walked outside. I introduced myself to all of Icaro's neighbors and always said hello to the children in the neighborhood. This helped Icaro's neighbors know that that I was a friendly person and did not mean any harm. I took taxis when I felt it was necessary and I usually did not carry a bag with me.

9) Did you experience any time constraints?

There were a few interviews where I would have liked more time, but for the most part I did not experience any time constraints. I actually left Bom Jardim a few days early because I had finished my research ahead of schedule.

10) Did your original topic change and evolved as you discovered new and different resources? Did the resources available modify or determine the topic?

Yes, originally I was planning on focusing my research on *Casa de Cultura*, but I soon realized that it was much more fascinating to focus on how Icaro got to the point developmentally that he could even think of the idea to start *Casa de Cultura*. In addition, the first week I was there, the project did not have many classes because the teacher was sick. Therefore, I could not spend as much time at the project as I had originally thought.

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

Icaro paired me up with his friends in the community and they are the ones who really took me around Bom Jardim. I was lucky because Icaro's friends were always willing to help me. All I had to tell them was where I wanted to go or what I needed to see and they took me there. As they got to know my research and me, they introduced me to people and places without even me asking.

12) What methods did you use? How did you decide to use such methods?

I used informal and formal interviews as well as methods of observation and participation. Many of my interactions came in the form of informal conversations and interviews, which I found quite productive as they provided a natural setting in which to conduct my research. Because I was living with Icaro and Bom Jardim, I had the chance to really experience life there and integrate myself into the community.

13) Comment on your relations with your advisor. At what point was he/she most helpful? Were there cultural differences?

Throughout the ISP Process, Gilano was incredibly helpful and supportive. Before the ISP process began, Gilano oriented me both to EDISCA and to Bom Jardim. He followed through on all of his promises. Gilano let me lead the way and do my own research, but he was always there when I needed him for support. He was the most helpful when I needed assistance framing my research. I know that when I return to Fortaleza, I will definitely go visit EDISCA and Gilano.

14) Did you reach any dead ends? Hypotheses which turned out to be not useful?
No. Because I was living in the community where Icaro lived, everything that I did could somehow be connected back to his life.

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

All the Brazilians I met in Bom Jardim are collectively the most welcoming, loving, and genuine people I have met in such a short period of time. They took me in as their family and treated me like their home was my home. They showed me that while they themselves face many struggles in their daily life, they are still able to reach out to other people and express their love.

16) Did the ISP process assist your adjustment to the culture? integration?

The first time I felt FULLY immersed in the Brazilian culture was during my ISP period, when I had no other Americans around to lean on. There were days when the only language I spoke was Portuguese.

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

I learned that I am capable of anything—I am capable of living in a country where I don't speak the language, of living with people who I have never met before and of immersing myself in a community which is totally different from anything else I have known before. Most importantly, I learned that the problems that face Icaro and his community are universal problems. I realized that just as Icaro knows he has a responsibility to those in his community, I have a responsibility to him and his community as well.

18) If you met a future student who wanted to do this same project, what would be your recommendations?

Live in the community with the people or person you are studying. This allows you to gain a real and accurate perspective into their life.

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