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Revitalizing the Human Spirit Together: A Case Study of Movimento de Saúde Mental Comunitária do Bom Jardim in Bom Jardim, Fortaleza, Ceará

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Revitalizing the Human Spirit Together:  
A Case Study of Movimento de Saúde Mental Comunitária do Bom Jardim in Bom Jardim, Fortaleza, Ceará

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Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. 3
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................... 5
Personal and Professional Motives for Research .............................................................. 6
Statement of Social Relevance ........................................................................................... 7
Location of Research .......................................................................................................... 7
Methodology ....................................................................................................................... 9
Definition of Terms ............................................................................................................ 10
Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 11
Terapia Comunitária – The Steps to Sustainable Social Change ...................................... 13
  1. Acolhimento .................................................................................................................. 14
  2. Escolha do Tema – Picking a Theme ............................................................................ 17
  3. Contextualização – Contextualization ......................................................................... 20
  4. Problematização – Problematization .......................................................................... 22
  5. Rituais de Agregação e Conotação Positiva – Rituals of Aggregation and Positive
     Connotation .................................................................................................................. 23
Reflections on a Living and Breathing Process .................................................................. 26
  • Network of connections and Personal and Interpersonal Relationships ....................... 26
  • The “Roda” .................................................................................................................... 28
  • Faith and Medicine ....................................................................................................... 30
  • Vivencia ........................................................................................................................ 32
  • Valorization of Popular Knowledge ............................................................................. 33
  • Synthesis ....................................................................................................................... 35
  • Acolhimento ................................................................................................................ 38
Conclusion ........................................................................................................................... 40
Bibliography – Primary Resources ..................................................................................... 42
Bibliography – Secondary Resources ................................................................................. 42
Indications for Further Research ....................................................................................... 44
ISP Appendix ....................................................................................................................... 45
Abstract

My research will delve into the workings of the community of Bom Jardim in Fortaleza, Ceará, in their endeavors for positive mental and physical community development through the tactics of their base organization Movimento de Saúde Mental Comunitária do Bom Jardim (MSMCBJ). Specifically I am looking at the *Terapia Comunitária* (community therapy) program, one of the many branches of MSMCBJ, and how through their projects do they fulfill their goal of organizing a community from the roots to blossom into a healthier and more vibrant one. I will also look into how this model is sustainable and why this method is unique. How is the implementation and practice of community, unity and solidarity through community therapy aiding in the positive transformation of this neighborhood?

In Bom Jardim, the movement is providing effective positive change within the residents by using a synthesis of various theoretical frameworks such as the biological, psychological, sociological and spiritual in how they run their community therapy sessions which tackle many themes such as:

1. Network of Connections and personal and interpersonal relationships
2. The “Roda”
3. Faith and Medicine
4. Vivencia
5. Valorization of Popular Knowledge
6. Synthesis
7. Acolhimento

These themes are aimed at helping realize the inner strength of individuals and use that to help transform negative energy into positive energy to combat against psychological internalization of poverty. Over the twelve years of the existence of the movement, such changes are evidenced in the cycle of once patients now turned therapists that are providing
the same services they once received in their own neighborhoods. It is a slow and gradual transformation from the inside out that in the long run is sustainable for the community.
Acknowledgements

This paper and the Independent Study Project would not be possible without the kind care and attention of various people involved. I came to Brazil having no contact with Brazilian culture or the Portuguese language, however over time with the help of my Portuguese professor Hélio and my family laughing and correcting me, I learned to speak much better and picked it up much faster than anticipated. (I also thank those that complimented me on how well I spoke when I was not so confident in myself.)

This also wouldn’t have been possible without the help of the wonderful SIT staff, Oliveira for doing a lot of work behind the scenes, Shirley for getting our contacts and helping us with random tidbits of information, Bill for being there when we needed with guidance and connections for our projects, and also Oélito, for whom greeted us with open arms and I now consider family. I thank him for his patience, guidance and for always making us laugh.

To the people at MSMCBJ for receiving me with such open arms, Padre Rino, Ana Christina, Ana Claudia and Reni for receiving me in their home, Natalia, Angela, Josué, Netto, Lindalva, Erbenia, and the list goes on. My heart always goes out to this wonderful organization and the community members that accepted me into their lives and homes and always made time for me to answer my questions and help with my research.

Lastly, I want to thank my home stay family for their wonderful guidance and always making me feel loved and at home. Without them, I don’t think this trip would have been at all possible. My deepest gratitude goes out to them for accepting me into their home. A big part of my heart will stay here in Brazil until I return, because now I know I have family to come home to.
Personal & Professional Motives for Research

Personally, the answer to this question comes from my desire to study the dynamics of community development from the roots up. I passionately believe in realizing the potential of residents and executing their potential to achieve positive results in a way that is sustainable. This process is usually seen in methods that bring in members as recipients and over time, these recipients become givers and teachers to their neighbors and/or family members. I was also able to further expand my experiences in working directly with community members in issues that are important to them and to help them find a way to harness their energies to fight for their rights as well. I also feel that I came out with a better understanding of the term, “Social Justice”. There is not just one type, it comes in various forms and in many shapes and sizes.

As an Urban and Environmental Policy major, much of the work that I do relates to listening to the wants and needs of the people, and I feel I gained more experience and knowledge working in the field, and being able to connect with people to form relationships beyond the research. As for the professional motive, I sought to move away from the traditional forms of research and find a better understanding of how to form the human connection in this professional world of work. Although it is a very different culture and environment than the United States that I am working in, these skills will help me go far in my personal and professional endeavors and show me how I can give back to the community when they give me so much already.
**Statement of Social Relevance**

This question of community and citizen participation in sustainable models of reawakening inner strength and mobilization revolves around critical social issues related to their well-being, health (both mental and physical) and living conditions. This has relevance world-wide given the large scale situations of disenfranchisement of large portions of the human community. Organizations that utilize local knowledge and capacity to promote participation and local mutual responsibility for the identification of problems and solutions are probably the most successful and sustainable for the long term. Such thinking has been adopted by international organizations such as the World Bank and IMF, once revered for their international relief work that unfortunately with previous models has not shown much permanent success. In addition to addressing the fundamental rights of citizens and communities to determine their destinies, projects of this nature may also be important sources of pride and self esteem for community residents.

**Location of Research**

The three weeks of my research period was spent in the Region V section of Fortaleza in which Bom Jardim is located. This area is home to residents that earn below the poverty line and make up part of 75% of the population of Fortaleza that also live in these conditions. The base headquarters of the movement is the Casa de Aprendizagem in Santo Amaro, part of the Grande Bom Jardim district. However, they have many satellite districts in Siqueira and Bom Jardim itself. Here residents mainly identify sub-neighborhoods by which church they attend. Many of the conditions that are around the neighborhood fit the description of a favela with unpaved roads, living next to areas of high
risk (rivers, train tracks, trash dumps) and lacking access to some basic forms of infrastructure such as health centers and schools.

Pictured above: Region V area of Fortaleza
Adapted from the Prefeitura website of Fortaleza. "Regional V." Prefeitura Municipal de Fortaleza. 2008. 22 May 2008 <http://www.fortaleza.ce.gov.br>

Population: 570,000 inhabitants
Districts: 16 Bairros (neighborhoods)
Methodology

Much of the pertinent information that I gathered during my research consisted of formal and informal interviews and participating in community therapy sessions and various other events offered by the movement. During the three week period, I utilized many of the resources of the organization and attended as many events as possible related to my research. Since there is a fluid sense of time, any down-time was used to write-up notes from any previous observations. There was also an ease of access to all of the events offered by the movement, however, I was limited to those offered in the immediate area of Bom Jardim due to field conditions, transportation issues and safety.

Many of the people that were interviewed were now therapists or members of the movement; however they had already received treatment through the movement and are mostly residents of the neighborhood. No community members that shared their stories in the sessions were interviewed due to sensitivity and protection of privacy. For that reason, names have been changed of all the community participants in the community therapy sessions.
**Definition of Terms**

**Acolhimento** – For the simplest definition, welcoming and making people feel comfortable at home. A broader and more extensive research is offered in the paper.  
*For the purposes of ease in writing style and comprehension, this word has been retained in the monograph in Portuguese in its infinitive and conjugated forms: acolher, acolhe, acolhimento*

**Community** – People that pertain to the same culture, communication, religion, gender, etc.

**Community Culture** – Assumes that culture, tradition and identity are resistant to rapid change and stability.

**Community Development** – Measures to Improve the welfare of a human group.

**Community Mental Health** – Health intervention done by using the network of family, friends and neighbors to help out those families most in need.

**Community Organizing** – Stage of social organizations that creates an effort to make the community conscious of their problems to take control of them and to obtain better services from experts, organizations and institutions.

**Ecology Society** – Assumes that tradition and identity are adaptations or labile responses to the environment

**Health** - Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. (according to WHO)

**Social Capital** – Refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.

**Well-Being** - Wellbeing is a state of being with others, where human needs are met, where one can act meaningfully to pursue one's goals, and where one enjoys a satisfactory quality of life.
Introduction

The Northeast of Brazil is home to the lowest average income in the nation and the largest income gap with the top 20% earning thirty-two times the amount of income than the bottom 20%.

Individuals that live in these favela-type neighborhoods usually display the characteristics of lacking access to running water and lacking basic infrastructure such as paved roads, health centers or schools. Along with the insufficient material sustainability, these conditions breed many psychological illnesses that sometimes may be much worse than the physical conditions that they are living in, which include but are not limited to: depression, anxiety, alcoholism and drug dependency. Many residents face what Dr. Adalberto Barreto calls, “psychological internalization of poverty.” He saw that much of what was plaguing these residents is the psychological entrapment and devaluation of the valor of their own persona and potential. Through his work he created a model that today is known as Terapia Comunitária, “community therapy.” This method has now branched out its roots all over Brazil and has had a significant impact in the neighborhood of Bom Jardim, Fortaleza, CE through the work of Padre Rino.

Movimento de Saúde Mental Comunitária do Bom Jardim (MSMCMBJ) was born in 1996 as one of the first community therapy centers in the nation. Padre Rino is a medical student with a degree in psychology from Italy who is also an ordained priest in the Catholic Church. He moved to Brazil to help implement the seeds of community therapy. Padre Rino was going through his own searching as his work left him with an empty feeling, however, through the themes and goals outlined by community therapy, he found a way to

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fulfill himself and those around him through his desire to synthesize his faith and psychology to re-ignite the potential of the human spirit within others. At the beginning, they only had the Palhoça, but over the years they were able to expand and build more espaços de escuta. (Communal areas used as a listening space for community therapy) Much of this is thanks to international donors from Italy, where Padre Rino is from and recently from the government which is now helping fund the Centro de Atendimento Psico-social Comunitário (CAPS) program. It was easy to implement and identify sub-areas to create espaços de escuta because the community was very tied to their faith and they were thus divided by the members of the church. Padre Rino identified many of the psychological blocks that Dr Adalberto Barreto was noticing in the Quatro Varas project. Now twelve years since the initial start of the movement in the community of Bom Jardim, they have much to show for it with 14 espaços de escuta ranging from Casa AME, Casa de Aprendizagem and Paulo Freire and various other programs that integrate from seniors to children. However, it would take 11 CAPS to take care of the whole Region V area of Fortaleza. Much of their work applies various methods and strategies ranging from art therapy, massage therapy, music lessons, community horticulture and even offering pre-vestibular classes for students that do not have the resources to take this course. They involve the biological, sociological, psychological and spiritual in all of their goals to improving community connections and self understanding of individuals in the neighborhood. At the core of this organization is community therapy, of which all other programs base their theories and goals from. Through the synthesis of various types of theoretical frameworks and sparking the fire of the human spirit, Movimento de Saúde

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Mental Comunitária do Bom Jardim has been successful in planting seeds and harvesting positive results in a cycle that brings participants through the program as patients and then later as therapists for their fellow community members to slowly effectively bring about the process of positive change for the neighborhood through its own residents.

*Terapia Comunitária – The Steps to Sustainable Social Change*

*Terapia Comunitária* is a process that is *vivencial*. It is a recurring process that does not have a specific time or place, nor does it need to be academically studied to be understood. Overall it promotes community development internally, within an individual, and externally, throughout the community.⁶ Many therapists, such as Lindalva, do not have a degree nor have graduated from college. Rather, they have a personal connection and an innate potential to aid others through a crisis. Padre Rino attributes this to the ease of the methods because, “[they are] simple instruments, secondly they have low to no cost, thirdly, they are instruments that can be used by people that don’t have graduate degrees yet are still community leaders.”⁷ Most importantly is the ability to listen. These *espaço de escuta* is very important in the design as well to compliment the happenings in it. The palhoça (pictured below) is the space where community therapy has been going on for twelve years now with consistent attendance. The space is just as important as the methods because the two compliment each other.

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The basic script of the community therapy sessions gives an insight to the work done by the movement as a whole and identifies various themes that are woven throughout the fabric of people's lives through their engagement with MSMCBJ. What follows is a brief analytical description of the steps for each community therapy session catering to the problem statement posed in this research project.

1. **Acolhimento**

   *Acolhimento.* This is a word that is used every day, many times a day and still, a complete definition is a struggle to formulate. It is difficult to put into words what can be done with a simple look in the eyes. For this reason, I have retained the word in its native Portuguese infinitive and conjugations where deemed appropriate. I asked three different
people (Padre Rino, Ana Claudia and Ana Christina) and from there, I received different meanings, all of which are correct yet do not offer a complete definition:

- Welcoming
- Feeling at home
- Feeling comfortable
- Acceptance
- Putting a smile on someone’s face
- Acknowledging another person’s presence
- Looking someone in the eye
- Valorizing someone’s worth.

_Acolhimento_ is not just a process that has its time and space in community therapy sessions, but rather as Ana Claudia explains, she does this process from morning till night.8 From when we wake up until we go to sleep, making sure that we _acolher_ the human spirit is one of the primary goals of us as humans to one another and for the movement. Many of the community therapy sessions that I attended used various types of techniques and methods to _acolher_ the participants.

When I attended _Terapia Comunitária_, the first activity was singing a song that involved everyone. Often the songs have a religious theme, further emphasizing the connection between faith and the community. It is very important to sing a song that is recognized by the group because it creates a feeling of inclusivity. This effectively grabs everyone’s attention so that a co-therapist can address the group and welcome them to the session for the week. It is hard to identify who are the therapists of the group when they first walk in because they do not look any different than anyone else in the group, nor are they treated any differently. The fact that they are very integrated in the group in this horizontal structure roles makes it more comfortable for the residents because in reality, what it all comes down to is that we’re all human beings. The therapists are then identified as they sit

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down and start taking notes or passing out song books. After bringing the group to
to attention, they take this time to identify anyone that is there for the first time. One of the co-
therapists gives a warm welcome and the group sings a welcoming song for all the new
people. Birthdays are then announced and accompanied by singing “Parabens”. The
therapists commence to lay out the rules for the new people and as a reminder for people
who have been through the process before. Rules that were outlined every week were:

- We are here to listen to one another, so please be respectful to your fellow
  community member when they are sharing their story.
- When responding to someone, please speak from your own experiences and be sure
to use “I” statements. This is not a group to give suggestions, we are all here to speak
  from our own personal experiences.

Next there is a visualization period. This is a time and space for the individual to
step back and realize their own beauty and potential or even just a time to focus on just
them. Roberto uses the symbolic imagery of a flower to emphasize this. There is usually a
connection to nature in these visualizations and breathing exercises to follow. It helps to
clear the mind of the individuals and to focus on what the group is going to be working on
that day. After this point in the acolhimento process, I visibly notice a change in the
atmosphere of the group as people are more comfortable in their seats and recognizing their
neighbors all around the circle through simple gestures as looking over and smiling. Here is
an example of what happened every week during the visualization period:

“Imagine your feet on the ground sprouting roots into the earth. These roots are
releasing all the negative energy that you have inside of you. Now imagine your whole
body growing roots into the ground, connecting you with mother nature. Look up and
find your guiding star. Let it fill you as you feel the light travel through your veins.”

You are now both connected to father sky and mother earth. Hug yourself, love yourself and now prepare to come back. Come back, stand up and stretch it out.”

-Lindalva

Sometimes the activities would be physical, requiring one to hug a neighbor or give a kiss on the cheek. Often there are symbolic offerings of our hearts to the group, and it is important for every therapist that is leading this process to fully believe and be involved in the activity. Without that, it would not be possible to get the group to take these activities seriously or have them be effectively implemented into their lives. The space is being warmed up to throw out timid feelings and to feel at home and comfortable to share our problems with those around us. It is all a part of the acolhimento process which is vital to the next step.

2. Escolha do Tema – Picking a Theme

The therapists at this point open up the floor for people to share their stories. Lindalva or Irmã Isabel are always ready with tissues whenever someone is overwhelmed with emotions and starts to cry while Francisco, the group guitarist, will start strumming the melody of a song so that everyone can sing along. It is a show of solidarity between the community members, especially when they sing the songs. The sound of their voices represent the strength in numbers that are there supporting the person sharing their story of crisis. Choosing a song is also very important because the words help ease the person to continue sharing their difficulty. Although the therapists are busily taking note of who is

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talking, everyone else in the group is listening attentively or to the best of their ability. Some examples of the problems that were chosen in the sessions I attended were*:

1. Jenny Maria is mourning the loss of her mother who passed away 8 months ago. She has been coming to these sessions for four years now and never with any problems, and now she feels that she can share her issues. Then she starts to cry. The therapists quickly attend to her with tissues. She has a single child, so now she has been left alone. Her only child then got sick. In this time of depression, she forgot to take her medication for two weeks. Now she is lonely, no one to share with or talk to since her mother passed away. When her story finishes, they choose a song from the book, page 120, #131 – Vence a Tristeza.

2. Claudia since December 27 of last year, had a job and was in with someone until she was betrayed. Then she became depressed and she came to community therapy. From there she found the strength to overcome her obstacles, and it took a while, until she considered herself cured. However, now she feels that she is falling back into that same depression.

3. Wesley is scared, depressed, gets no sleep, wants to hide, cries all the time and feels suicidal. It is his first time here and he was referred by a doctor. He left his home 6 to 7 months because his wife was abusive.

From these three real life situations, the words in bold are some of the common issues that are dealt with or heard on a weekly basis. Some of the more common issues are alcoholism, drugs, depression or dealing with the death of a loved one. The importance of taking note of the issues that come up, and even those that are not chosen, is to look at the

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issues that are plaguing the neighborhood as a whole. Community therapy is a small open window into this world. It is just one way that the organization can take action to respond by either changing their methods or offering new services depending on what feedback they are receiving from the group. The therapist then asks the group which problem they want to work on this week and why. A few people are allowed to speak out and verbalize the issues that they connected with the most and they are also asked to give a short explanation as to why. As a part of inclusivity, the therapists can also voice their opinion, but it has the same weight as any of the other participants. It is important to note that the issues that are chosen are the ones that most people in the group are able to identify with, whether they are going through the same issue or they know a neighbor or a family member, or they recognize that it is the reality that they are living in. From there they take a vote, and the individual that is chosen is asked to speak more in depth on their issue and the group is allowed to ask more question for clarification.

The therapists always make sure before hand to thank those that opened themselves up to share their stories and did not get chosen. It is important to remind an individual that even though their topic was not chosen, they should not completely shut off their ears because later in the session, they may be able to take away something positive that they can work with for their own issue. This is possible because although they are working with a specific person’s case, they do not shut off general themes that come up, but rather offer paths to solutions to general problems such as depression instead of being depressed because a loved one passed away. Many people may feel that they are depressed for other specific reasons, and by working with the general concept, they are reaching a wider audience and bridging connections through the community members. This shows that they are not alone
in their suffering and with one another's help they can hopefully get through it. As Lindalva notes, “Sometimes people don't even need to share. They’ll come, listen and take from there to help them with their own problems.” It is important to have this aspect for those that do not yet have the courage to share their stories publicly. For now, it is the group’s job to have open ears.

3. Contextualização - Contextualization

Contextualization of the issue is a very important time during the session because it is when the individual completely opens up and goes in depth on what they are suffering from. It is also a time for the therapist and the group to ask questions. These questions provide an insight into the deeper roots of the problem and also to what values, dreams and strengths that this individual bases him or her self on. Throughout this whole process, the therapist keeps taking notes as it is time for the community members to take the reigns. However, sometimes it can get out of hand and one of the most common problems is, “God is the answer” at this point, the therapist takes over and redirects the questions while trying to respect anyone’s faith, but to also suggest other ways of trying to find solutions to problems. This type of thinking is what Barreto calls the “Salvador da patria” complex. There are many issues with this way of thinking in the context of community therapy. First off, it is not sensitive to the fact that some people may not share the same faith, excluding them from the connection that other people may feel to their own faith. Secondly, it excludes any of the participants from being included in the problem and the solution.

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12 Oliveira, Maria Lindalva. Personal Interview. 7 May 2008
throws off the balance of everyone carrying the weight and gives it to one entity; a super
power, stripping the community members of their potential strength to find their own
solutions. Despite this the therapist speaks very little in the session compared to the
residents. It is up to the therapist to be aggressive, but also be sensitive to other community
members that may want to help someone else in their situation. The therapist’s role is more
of a facilitator of the process that the community members often times lead on their own.

It hearkens back to what Lindalva says—they are really helping people find the
strength within themselves to change their lives.\footnote{Oliveira, Maria Lindalva. Personal Interview. 7 May 2008.} A woman may come in with alcoholism
problems because she is depressed, but after being heard and participating in the group, she
may come back a month later to the community therapy session to say she has stopped
drinking and has changed some personal things in her life. From listening to the stories of
others that have been in similar situations it can help a great deal to a troubled person in
finding a light to their own issue. At times, some individuals may come in thinking that
their issue is the worst out of the bunch, but after listening to their neighbors speak out, they
may in fact realize that there are some people who have or are going through some worse
situations yet have found ways to overcome their problems.\footnote{Bonvini, Padre Rino. Personal Interview. 16 May 2008.} In another view this can be a
successful connection between humans in this space wanting to help each other.

As much as the community has control, the therapist is always attentive during the
question and response period to begin formulating a conclusive positive outcome of the
session. This is the period that allows the therapist to formulate the key question that
everyone will answer. From my observations, the therapists start out asking general
questions and as soon as they start hearing a key word over and over, they hone their questions in and eventually ask the individual the key question. Some examples are:

*What am I doing to take care of myself?*

*What do I want to kill inside of me to help me become a better person?*

The question is first posed to the individual as a model, not expecting it to be answered, and then it is posed to the general group. It is always started with a volunteer from the group, and from that person, it goes in order around the circle so that everyone can answer the question. This is really the only portion of the therapy session where everyone is required to speak. There are only a few exceptions where some individuals are not in a state of mind to answer because they themselves are seeking medical attention from Padre Rino. However, in the community therapy session that I attended on May 13, 2008, Linialni goes so far to point out people that have not answered because, “everyone that takes has to give back in this small form,” even if they arrived for the last ten minutes of the session. Many of the individuals while answering the question look directly at the therapist while sharing some eye contact with the person whose issue is being worked on that week. It is not only a connection of emotions, but a human connection that is being made in the “Roda”.

### 4. Problematização - Problematization

This part of the community therapy session is connected to the contextualization period as it leads directly into it. This is the period where the therapist asks the key question to the group or asks if anyone has gone through a similar crisis. If there is anyone in the group that struggled through a similar problem, they are asked to share briefly the situation.

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and to say what had helped them get through their crisis, or what they are doing to work through it. It is important to ask people and be curt with them in this process. As I watch Lindalva when she runs this part of the session, she is very specific in her questions and the answers that she is looking for. The overall purpose of this is to show that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. After the individual has heard all the things that have worked with their neighbors, Lindalva or any of the therapists asks how the individual is feeling afterwards. Has any weight been lifted? Regardless of the answer, it is the end of the session and participants usually feel slightly better after sharing to the group.

5. Rituais de Agregação e Conotação Positiva – Rituals of Aggregation and Positive Connotation

The closing invites everyone in the circle to stand up and join hands while those that shared are invited to the middle of the circle. It is asked if anyone has any final words to share to the group, these are usually positive responses. We then sing a song to those standing in the center offering them peace, love and friendship. After it is sung once, then people from the outer circle go in and physically pull people to the “Roda” and we put our hands on each others shoulders and start to sway to the natural rhythms of the group. This is important because it symbolizes that without one another, the group would not be able to balance themselves. The song that is sung together is as follows:

*I’m balancing
But I’m not going to fall.
But I’m not going to fall*

Lindalva stresses that we cannot have gaps in the group, even inviting little children to grab onto the legs of their mothers to feel the warmth that emanates from our friends, family

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members or neighbors. The therapists want everyone in the group to feel comfortable feeling the warmth and support of our fellow human beings around us. She emphasizes to keep this proximity because it is important to maintain these connections with others around us. With that the session is over and the group is free to have snacks that are brought out after the session. People usually mingle around and the therapists attend to those seeking individual attention. There is usually a line of patients waiting to see Padre Rino for prescription refills and others talking to their neighbors as they sit and have tea and crackers set out by workers of the movement.

Not all community therapy sessions are as widely attended with such regularity as this one. In fact, some of the smallest sessions that I attended had only four community members and three therapists or the sessions did not start at all. The main sessions that I attended were on Tuesday afternoons. It was started by the movement and has been going on every Tuesday for 12 years now. However, Irmã Elda offers some other explanations as to why there is such a wide attendance of this session compared to others, because they offer medical treatment as well. She does admit that some people here, through her experience, only come for the medicine or to see Padre Rino. Regardless of this added factor, Irmã Elda still strongly believes in the movement and the powerful effect that is has on the individuals and the overall community.  

By the end of the session, the energy being shared is much different. There is chatter, laughter and everyone is filled with life. It is something that was there before only hidden, and like Padre Rino explained, it really is about realizing someone’s potential and helps remove this block that does not allow them to be themselves to their fullest extent in order

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to form these changes personally in their lives.\textsuperscript{21} Lindalva stresses that these sessions are not here to provide solutions; in fact, they discourage people from talking from an experience that did not help. Instead they provide, “various lighted paths [so that] they will slowly start discovering the strength that they have within themselves.”\textsuperscript{22}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{21} Bonvini, Padre Rino. Personal Interview. 16 May 2008.
\textsuperscript{22} Oliveira, Maria Lindalva. Personal Interview. 7 May 2008.
\end{flushleft}
Reflections on a Living and Breathing Process

Over the three week period of observations I attended various community therapy sessions, all following the same script outlined above. They varied little in their methods, and really all that changed were the therapists for that week and the people that attended. It follows what Lindalva stresses, that even though there are only four people in some sessions, it’s still important to provide this space for them to eventually build a strong base of participants every week.\(^23\) It is also important to show that every case matters, even with just one individual. The organization as a whole works on making these themes presented a part of everyday life, *vivencial*, to stress that everything and everything is connected to one another.

Network of Connections and personal and interpersonal relationships

Social capital refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.\(^24\) This mutual benefit is seen in the exchanging of ideas and energies within community therapy. One helps one another because we are all part of the problem and all a part of the solution. The work of the movement attempts to connect everything and not see them as separates.\(^25\) No one has just one problem, you relate it to the grander scheme of things to see what problems the individual is going through and how it relates to each other; a window into the community and the issues or values that relate us together as human beings. In other words,

\(^{23}\) Oliveira, Maria Lindalva. Personal Interview. 7 May 2008.
there is a connection to the self and society.\textsuperscript{26} Many times this connection is forgotten, but it is one of the most important as many residents that live in conditions of poverty feel excluded and outcast from society. This type of exclusion further drives in the notion of a mental distance that is blocking the relationship from one person to another. The psychological internalization of poverty hearkens to the ecology society approach of a community and has to do with these physical and mental conditions complimenting one another in keeping a person dwelling in their own misery.\textsuperscript{27} These blocks do not allow people to look around and see who is actually living next to them. Community therapy helps realize and create these networks and bonds with the human spirits and the potential strength of the individual to overcome many of the outside stressors of society. Already these networks and sub-communities existed in the area of Bom Jardim as they were divided by the congregations of their church, to which Padre Rino now structures the movement around. Although there are already these community divisions in place, there might not be a familiarity with those around you.

Much of the work that is done in the community therapy involves getting to know the people around you. Some of the work that was done in Geisa and Candida’s \textit{Auto-Estima Adolescentes} group worked with relating with other people and finding ways to communicate and link yourself with them through bodily expression. They also connected it to everyday situations explaining that at some moments, words are not enough and that you need to find other ways to connect yourself to another person, and this was through bodily expression.\textsuperscript{28} Barreto stresses this in his book as one of the theories that he bases his work on is positive

\textsuperscript{26} Bonvini, Padre Rino. Personal Interview. 16 May 2008.
\textsuperscript{28} Câmara, Cândida and Geisa Sombra, \textit{Auto-Estima Adolescentes}. 2 May 2008.
reaffirmation of existence through communication with another being. When everyone is in the “Roda” they are all equidistant from the center and are sharing this space as they hold hands and not only physically realize the connections, but also psychologically and spiritually. It is also part of the acolhimento process to look someone else in the eyes, recognizing the existence of their being as laid out by Padre Rino. The symbol of the circle represents the superfluous connections we have with one another as we realize the people next to us, but also look across the room and see that the other person is never too far away.

The “Roda”

The “Roda” is a very strong and useful tool for the organization and for the development of the community. It is very simple and yet represents so many ideals that the organization tries to emphasize. The circle can be seen in all places such as community therapy, self-esteem groups, capoeira circles among many more. Pictured below is one example of the setup for the community therapy sessions:

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30 Ibid.
Inside the “roda”, there is a transformation, a changing of energies as the synergy of all the concepts that they are working on are coming together to transform and connect the human to a more positive nature. I’ve seen this many times as a group will come around from sad to happy, and turning around the lives of these residents is just some of the positive effects on the community.

There is also stress on changing the mindset of definite cause and definite effect, a linear way of thinking. The purpose is to provide many options that an individual in crisis can choose from to hopefully eventually find a solution to the issue that has been troubling them. This open flow of ideas allows for exchange of knowledge for the caregiver to take care of the caretaker and vice versa. Paulo Freire believes that there is much to learn from

each other because in reality as humans we are incomplete, and in order to start the process of filling ourselves, we need to keep the constant dialogue between our spirits. This concept of filling a void has been verbalized as part of their life experiences by Padre Rino, Lindalva and Ana Claudia, each finding fulfillment in the work of the movement. The roda allows for this space, an *espaço de escuta*. It is a type of “safe space” because no one is there to critique another person. The synergy of energies within the “Roda” can also be attributed to science and spirituality.

*Faith and Medecine*

This question of faith arises many times within the movement and easily so since the president, Padre Rino, is a priest. It can also be observed in how the community itself is divided, by the congregations of the churches in the neighborhood. The church you attend is also the community you identify with. This question of spirituality is very important in the lives of the community residents of the greater Bom Jardim area. Many times this question of faith was not a question at all, but rather, “Where is God in your life?”

Padre Rino explains that,

“I am a father, but we are not a space conditioned by the Catholic Church because we acolhe every faith that comes here. We are not here to convince anyone that our faith is better, but rather we believe that our mission with our faith is to receive everyone well and to take care of them and to help people be more autonomous. In our 12 years of existence we have had many people come, take part in the therapies and just leave.”

-Padre Rino

Many residents of the movement explained that their faith was in addition or a compliment to whatever treatment they were receiving at CAPS. One woman also

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explained that she appreciated the fact that Padre Rino was a priest because she felt that he understood her problem more profoundly and was even praying with him some nights for her son that was going through a life crisis at the time. Faith is very important in their lives, but they realize that they cannot just rely on their faith. They can use it in conjunction with whatever medication and vice versa.35 Ana Claudia, the general coordinator of MSMCBJ also is in agreement with these views as she explains that she felt good coming to work with Padre Rino because,

“For me, I've already been to many other psychiatrists, but for me, I liked to go see Padre Rino because he could also orient me in that question of spirituality within my religion.”

-Ana Claudia36

Even throughout the DVD on the links between community therapy and faith, there is a stress on receiving anyone and everyone with open arms regardless of their religious affiliation. In this way, the group is effective, because during the community therapy sessions, there are some references to God, and songs that are mostly geared towards a Christian type of faith, but most of the songs do not contain that content and they are optional to sing. The only required part of the therapy sessions is during the problematization period. Although the ending of all the community therapy ended with the phrase, “Mesmo Deus que mora em me, mora em você.” this was another optional activity as it was now a free space to leave the group or grab snacks. The group is much more effective to reaching the community members because their approaches are those that the organization members believe in and also because the community members can implement this in their lives.

It is also very important that these tactics become a part of their everyday lives, and that these tools be so as well. The way they support the sustainability of the program and the positive changes that are affecting the lives of individuals that participate in the process is crucial. Ana Claudia explains that part of her work in the movement is to help with the acholhimento process. However, it is not just something that she does for her job, but that she does it from morning till night because it is her desire to do so. These simple instruments were designed around connecting with the human spirit and using personal life experiences to help one another. Without that, I do not believe that this work would be successful in the community. It is seen from the people that work at the movement, once seeking help and now community therapists, to the ease and simplicity of the methods. Padre Rino simply puts it as trying to reconnect people with the world around them and finding the spark that will reignite their purpose in life. It is not a process that comes from above, but rather from within. Every moment is personal with the help of a group process to guide them to this light.

Other such methods of help for communities living in poverty reflects back in the IMF and World Bank models that throw money at communities to help the infrastructure, but it does nothing to realize the potential of these individuals in their everyday lives. What happens when the money runs out? Being dependent on one sole entity as a superpower can spell drastic results when the help disappears. It also shows them that they can overcome the situations that they’re in. For example, during one of the Auto-Estima Adolescentes session that I attended with Ana Christina and Marcio, one of the activities related symbolic actions

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in relation to one another in the group to dynamics out in the real world.\textsuperscript{38} It is stressed even in the students that Padre Rino teaches in psychology classes. He invites his students to participate and get out of the theoretical world, and he mentions that many of his students are astonished for what they see. He takes them out of the 10\% of the population in Aldeota and introduces them to the reality that the majority of the population lives in.\textsuperscript{39}

\textit{Valorization of Popular Knowledge}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Savior of the Father</td>
<td>Participatory solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompetency/Deficiencies</td>
<td>Competency/Potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solitary (Technical)</td>
<td>Community driven</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concentration of information</td>
<td>Circulation of information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passive objective</td>
<td>Active Participant</td>
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<tr>
<td>The solution comes from external forces</td>
<td>Solutions come from the family</td>
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<tr>
<td>General dependence</td>
<td>Soliciting co-responsibility</td>
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<td>Diminishing a person’s capability</td>
<td>Creating the capacity of another</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on clientele</td>
<td>Citizen perspective</td>
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Table 1. Adapted from \textit{Terapia Comunitária: Passo a Passo}.

The above table is a description of the transformations that Dr. Adalberto Barreto sees changing in the individuals in the processes of community therapy. These theories have been reinforced by my observations and people that I talked to in the organization. The steps of community therapy compliment and foster these changes within individuals. In the final steps of answering the key question, residents share from their experiences the answer to the question presented to them. All residents take co-responsibility of the problem and also to help the individual find a solution.

\textsuperscript{38} Alves, Ana Christina and Marcio Firmiano. \textit{Auto-Estima Adolescentes}. 12 May 2008.
\textsuperscript{39} Bonvini, Padre Rino. Personal Interview. 16 May 2008.
This way, community therapy exercises a democratic model of community development, aiding in the general welfare of a human group. Democratic in the sense that at some point in the community therapy, every member of the group can get their chance to share their experience and their knowledge and the therapist acts as a facilitator to move the group through the various steps of the community therapy model. This valorization of popular knowledge is also evident in the fact that therapists that have already taken the course on how to lead a session are often time community members that do not have degrees or higher formal types of education. Rather, they are pre-equipped with the knowledge of how to relate to other humans and the knowledge of the community and their cultural traditions. This is a crucial aspect because it is this knowledge that has helped the organization see positive results in their community therapy session. From seeing how other people may have tackled their anxiety or have gotten over the death of a loved one provides real life examples that fellow community members can mimic if they choose to try something that worked for their neighbor.

Putting worth and weight on the knowledge of community members helps improve the self-esteem of participants. To see people return after a session, saying that their son was able to sleep better after last weeks session, and to see them come back the following week to share that information is a great reaffirmation for the therapists and the work they do, and also makes it worthwhile for people that keep coming back. It realizes the power that every individual has within themselves to make change. This change is not immediately seen outside in the community. Many times the change is in reconnecting a person to their family or their home. Helping them see how they can relate to individuals that are close to

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40 Pereiro, Dr. Xerardo. Antropologia e desenvolvimento comunitário. Portugal. 10 Apr 2008.
them. The reincarnation of this negative energy into positive energy will display itself in the cycle of patients to therapists and regaining social capital. Bridging the mental gap will eventually bridge the physical gap between humans, and the first step starts in the palhoça, from there, continuing the therapy, people are then referred to other sorts of methods provided by the organization, referring that it is combination of many methods that will help a person get back to a healthy mental state.

**Synthesis**

“The Movement for Mental Health in the Community of Bom Jardim acolhe the human being, respecting the aspects of bio-psycho-socio-spiritual, promoting development of personal potential, trying to save human values and cultures in the sense of adding value to personal and interpersonal relationships and community relationships to promote the fullest extent of life.”

The work of community therapy at MSMCBJ is based on the synthesis of the bio-psycho-socio-spiritual theoretical frameworks as seen in the mission statement above. They are taken out of theory and applied to real life situations. Padre Rino explains that community therapy does not offer all the solutions, nor is it the end all or be all of what the organization offers. Many times people come to community therapy and share their issues to the group while the therapist is there taking note of who said what. Sometimes the individual’s problem cannot be resolved in the group, but rather they need to be directed to other sessions first. One example is self-esteem. Ana Claudia participated in self-esteem sessions because she was going through her own personal life crisis. Through there she learned how to fit into part of her role as a mother, a wife and a worker.

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Even now in the course of this monograph, there is really no clear difference between the themes because they all compliment each other or dip into aspects of the organization. It is also seen in the way that the organization is structured. There is no hierarchy, but rather, everyone has their role in this horizontal structure of professions. It is a superfluous design of integration in the movement. There are always open doors; there are very few boundaries, even for the animals that are kept at Casa de Aprendizagem. Within the other programs that are offered, some individuals may be participating in Jovens Aprendizes and also participating in self-esteem sessions and also computer proficiency classes. It reflects the notion that there is no one cure. The movement embraces diversity and melding the human spirits together. People may be different, but it does not necessarily mean that they have a sickness or illness. It goes along with also combining the possibility of different religious faiths attending their services at the movement. However, the biggest synergy that I have noted is the synthesis of faith and medicine.

At times this may be the most critical and possibly the most sensitive in the matter of accepting people into the sessions. In my three week period of conducting research at the organization, I did not experience any situation where I felt uncomfortable with the mention of religiosity. The focus was on one human relating to another. In the closing of the community therapy sessions, the offering of God to one another was important because it connected people to their faith and spirituality and also to the person next to them. Connecting their faith and the person around them, reinforcing the power of the connection with their neighbors and family members.

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Another example within some of the other sessions is in the *Auto-Estima Adolescentes* that I participated in. In each, there was always a changing of dynamic from physical, to mental to artistic and musical expression. There was always a variety of approaches being taken, which reflected somewhat the structure of community therapy. An example of one session is with the therapists Claudia and Olga:

1. **Physical** – connection to the body- Yoga exercises
2. **Visualization period** – going on a journey with a loved one close-by
3. **Mental** – Brainstorming to answer questions based on a DVD they watched last week.


As explained by Olga after talking to her for a bit, they always try to bring in many different elements into the sessions; interacting the students with themselves and with each other. This session brought in more elements that involved the self within their personal space, sometimes so much so that people stayed asleep after the visualization period. Another session that I attended was led by co-therapists Geisa and Candida. The session consisted of:

1. **Mental** – Brainstorming in groups to answer questions based on a text.
2. **Physical** – Dancing around and communicating with each other without words.
3. **Musical** – Singing bits of our favorite songs to each other
4. **The “Roda”** – We came back at the end to form a circle, closed our eyes and slowly took steps forward until we were in contact with everyone in the group.


As seen in the group led by Ana Christina and Marcio, many of these activities have symbolic applications in life. Being close to each other communicating without words helps bridge the gap with one another and helps us relate as humans on a deeper level. It
emphasizes that we all have the same beating heart, we all share something in common and we should try to harness and maintain those connections.

**Acolhimento**

Although this theme is last to be analyzed, it is definitely not the last thing that movement focuses on. It is an on going process that welcomes, comforts and includes a person to another or to a group. Here are a few definitions of the words:

“Welcoming. An expression of looking someone in the eye. It is to recognize that this person is present. So someone that comes here and is suffering, no one looks in their eyes, gives them a hug, guides them to hopefully find help. Acolhida is also about a space. If you look at the Palhoça, it is a very welcoming space, right? You feel good when you go over there. The plants, the Palhoça…and we just acolhe people normally by smiling, laughing, greeting them, etc. Community therapy involves itself in this process to acolher the person that attends. But you also have to be careful about the type of person you are dealing with. Some people, if you try to get close to give them a hug, they’ll back away and you have to respect that space of theirs until they are ready to get closer to other people.”

-Padre Rino

Here is another definition:

“For me, Acolher is for you the make a moment of happiness for people, and the word often gets confused with attending to people or leaving everything completely free. In the movement, acolhimento is to leave people feeling good, and it is an everyday process. The management of the government here thinks that it happens just once. But here in the movement, it is a process that happens everyday and at all times. For me it is a continuous process, from the morning to the night. I attend to people, I listen, I comfort, converse with people. My acolhimento is independent of the structures of the day or the therapy. For me it’s a process to make people feel good, with value, and to feel like a good human being.”

-Ana Claudia

Acolhimento is the very first step within the community therapy sessions. It is a time to make everyone feel comfortable. As seen by the two examples, they are very similar in

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their responses. These definitions have more pertinence to the actual use of the word because a dictionary cannot fully grasp the entirety of what the word is used for in the organization. I experienced acolhimento the entire time I was at the movement. Padre Rino whenever he walked downstairs to do work or to talk to people, would always take time recognize and greet whoever else was in the room. It also didn’t matter if he was with someone else at the time, he formed the human connection, practicing in his everyday life what is so vital to the community therapy sessions. Without this step, it would be much more difficult, in my opinion based on observations, because at first many people are very reserved. Sometimes the process is led on by individuals that have found peace and tranquility through the community therapy methods, so they share their experiences to the group. This type of acolhimento opens up the floor for those that would like to share an issue to the group to hopefully find a solution. It is a process that when internalized, is no longer thought about, but rather comes out naturally and helps build bonds and relationships with those around you.

* Names have been changed in the course of the research as how they are produced in the monograph to protect the identity and respect the privacy and intimacy of members that shared their stories in community therapy sessions and any other events attended by myself, excluding staff members that worked at the organization.
Conclusion

Community therapy is not the end of the road, but rather opens new avenues for individuals in their time of crises. Through the model of community therapy and the steps involved:

1. Welcoming
2. Picking a theme
3. Contextualization
4. Problematization
5. Closing - Rituals of aggregation and positive connotation

Each aspect introduces an important part of the community therapy process. This is the script that the therapist uses as a facilitator role. This also includes the singing of songs and asking the key question. However, there are some key concepts that were abstracted from community therapy and how the organization was run.

1. Network of Connections and personal and interpersonal relationships
2. The “Roda”
3. Faith and Medicine
4. Vivencia
5. Valorization of Popular Knowledge
6. Synthesis
7. Acolhimento

These are main themes that were present in the sessions of community therapy and in the lifestyle of the people that worked at the organization and the movement itself. Most important is the synthesis of all of these aspects of human and community development.

MSM CJ prides itself on the use of popular knowledge in this cycle of patient to therapist, to reignite the potential within individuals to help themselves with their crises. The solution does not come from outside, and once realizing this strength, individuals can perform changes in their lifestyles and in the lives of those around them. The most evident examples of the successes is just looking at the organization itself. Ana Claudia, Lindalva
and even Padre Rino found a voice, a place, a family, and a deeper connection with themselves and the people around them. They created positive changes in their lives and now they are using their experiences to help those around them. However, as said earlier, it would take 11 CAPS to attend to the whole region V area of Fortaleza.

The work of the movement is not creating an immediate change in the physical structures of society, not does it tackle the source of the problem. Rather, it is providing individuals with personal resources to take advantage of what they have to better themselves and to eradicate the persistence of psychological internalization of poverty. The next step in this research would be to follow up on the people that have received help from the community therapy and note any physical changes in the space that they live in. Given more time, I would have followed the case of individuals with their permission to see exactly what changes they are making in their lives and what aspects of community therapy they are applying. A three week period of time is too short to see the effect of the work of the movement on any individual. It is a gradual slow process. To better answer the question, I would need to further study the background of the neighborhood and conduct my own surveys within the neighborhood to collect this raw data.
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**Indications for Further Research**

There are many indications for further research as I do not consider this an extent work and study on the methods and theories used in community therapy as tactics to create positive change in a group of people. There are still left unanswered the question of the source of poverty for many of these people, and also looking at the structures that perpetuate this cycle of poverty.

There is still much to look at such as following individuals after the community therapy or the turn-out rate to see how many people return after one week. There are many factors that still have yet to be studied such as what are the most recurring issues that are brought into the organization that would alter or compliment the results obtained in this three week period.

Research into an organization such as this and the problem posed require a stay for longer amounts of time. A year in the field would barely start the scratch the surface as residents would begin to be comfortable with your presence and thus have more willingness to share. There is also the question of refining the research question to the results being obtained. There is still much to be done on this topic that I would be more than glad to continue if given the opportunity.
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?
The parameters of this specific project would not have allowed for applications in the USA. This case I feel is very specific to Brazil and other countries that extensively use the model of community therapy. I also feel that solidarity and connections with other people and society are characteristics unique to Brazil that allowed for such an implementation and success of community therapy tactics.

2. Could you have done any part of it in the USA? Would the results have been different? How?
I could have done studies in how community organizations are mobilizing the population in gaining their rights, however the results would be drastically different. I feel as though the American culture is very much tied to the belief of one man’s struggle to get to the top, and it is revered when a person does it on his own and pulls himself out of poverty. I believe my results would have shown a dependence on the capitalist way of lifestyle and that solidarity and connection with community members are not as important as seen through even the physically and psychological distance between family members.

3. Did the process of doing the ISP modify your learning style? How was this different from your previous style and approaches to learning?
It definitely helped me learn how to do research and what to do for myself to keep up with my work. My previous style of learning was to take notes on everything, but that would make it impossible to pull out key points and ideas that are actually relevant to my field of work. I learned to work with a set thesis in mind and only take notes and participate in events that were directly related or complimentary. If I did participate in any other events, it was to compliment my background knowledge and to integrate myself not as a researcher, but rather a participant and activist in the organization.

4. How much of the final monograph is primary data? How much is from secondary sources?
The secondary sources are mainly used to give background information and statistics and also providing a name for the theories to which the work at MSMCBJ is based on. Much of the analysis of my ISP monograph is based on primary sources because that was more pertinent to addressing the problem statement of my research, and also very pertinent to the work of the organization, to get out of theory and step into real life.

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 excluded certain data that did not add anything new or was a repetition of previous events. Inclusion of data was based on its pertinence and how much detail I would
6. How did the “drop-off’s” or field exercises contribute to the process and completion of the ISP?
They helped me understand that I needed to be prepared before I stepped into the field whether with a mental list of questions or things that I want to introduce about myself. It also helped me see what to expect in terms of level of Portuguese language skills.

7. What part of the FSS most significantly influenced the ISP process?
How to do interviews and how to collect data in the field. These helped tremendously and especially on how to collect field data. My notes were always organized and I always had information that I needed because I did not wait until the last minute to write it all down.

8. What were the principal problems you encountered while doing the ISP? Were you able to resolve these and how?
One of the biggest issues was transportation to and from my organization because I wasn’t staying there. Due to safety concerns, I could not stay late much because I had to carry around a big back pack with all my books and taking a bus late at night meant waiting much longer for it to arrive. At times I was able to get rides with people heading back to the center of the city or even spend the night when there were many events going on.

9. Did you experience any time constraints? How could these have been resolved?
The only constraints that I experienced was everyone else’s time. There are so many things to do and everyone is always

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 original topic did not change drastically. I found much supporting evidence and information to answer my main problem statement. The resources available were limited due to lack of knowledge about them.

11. How did you go about finding resources: institutions, interviewees, publications, etc.?
Resources were not found out until the very end when they were mentioned by one of the coordinators. There was a little library of information DVD’s made by the organization.

12. What method(s) did you use? How did you decide to use such method(s)?
Most of my methods involved direct participation from the perspective of the participants and also interviewing key members of the movement that also happened to be receiving services from the movement at one point in their lives. I also
depended greatly on impromptu interview sessions.

13. **Comment on your relations with your advisor:**
   My advisor was very willing and open to help with any of my concerns, but due to my time constraints and theirs, there was very little meeting time to go over the process or the requisites of my research. However, my advisor was amazing at making me feel at home and even opening up her house to me for one night.

14. **Did you reach any dead ends? Hypotheses which turned out to be not useful? Interviews or visits that had no application?**
   Some dead ends were days when I arrived at the organization and could not get any interviews or attend any sessions. Those days I wrote my observations and tried to keep updated in my field journal and work on my monograph.

15. **What insights did you gain into the culture as a result of doing the ISP, which you might not otherwise have gained?**
   I reaffirmed the openness of the brazilian culture because I was welcomed so warmly by everyone that I met as if we had been friends that hadn’t seen each other for many years. Also the emphasis on strong connections between humans, but mostly between family members.

16. **Did the ISP process assist your adjustment to the culture? Integration?**
   Somewhat, although I felt that going back every night to my homestay helped more with my adjustment to the culture and integration. I definitely strengthened bonds with my homestay family as a result of staying three extra weeks with them.

17. **What were the principal lessons you learned from the ISP process?**
   Listen, participate, take advantage and be prepared. Since it’s such a short time, I had to be sure that I would take advantage as much as I could of every moment that I was there.

18. **If you met a future student who wanted to do this same project, what would be your recommendations to him/her?**
   Integrate yourself and participate. Get to know the people that work around you and learn about their lives. Many times they are individuals that have already gone through this project, and by talking to many people around you, you may find other fountains of resources that you didn’t know you had right in front of you.

19. **Given what you know now, would you undertake this, or a similar project again?**
   Under these conditions in another country experiencing another country, in a heartbeat I would do it again and I would recommend it for anyone that wants to gain more knowledge and appreciation for the world around them.