The Circle of Empowerment: The Nzinga Group's Approach to Empowering Afro-Brazilian Adolescent Girls and Women Through the Cultural Tradition of Capoeira Angola

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The Circle of Empowerment

The Nzinga Group's approach to empowering Afro-Brazilian adolescent girls and women through the cultural tradition of Capoeira Angola.

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I. Abstract

Around the world gender and racial inequality leads to lower levels of empowerment related to self-esteem, autonomy, and self-confidence. These difficulties are exacerbated for girls and women who are faced with overcoming the double-stigmatization of being both black and female. However, Afro-Brazilian girls and women, when given the tools and support to empower themselves will empower their communities.

Through a mixed-method approach of participatory research, observations, and nine interviews, this paper explores how the tradition of Capoeira Angola and specifically the roda, empowers Afro-Brazilian girls and women. More specifically, I examine how, through Capoeira, the process of “empowerment” can be taught, learned, and practiced through Capoeira as a method of overcoming double-stigmatization. The results of this study are based on a case study of the Nzinga Capoeira Angola Group in Alto da Sereia, Salvador, Brazil. The group’s pedagogy of teaching Capoeira Angola focuses on empowering all of its capoeiristas though equality, preservation of the Angola tradition, and community. By understanding their approach, other community-based organizations in Brazil can learn how, through the practice of Capoeira Angola, they can support the next generation of Afro-Brazilian women.

*Key words:* empowerment, double-stigmatization, Capoeira Angola

Resumo

Ao redor do mundo desigualdade racial e de gênero leva a níveis mais baixos de empoderamento relacionado com a auto-estima, autonomia e auto-confiança. Essas dificuldades são agravadas para meninas e mulheres que se deparam com a superação da dupla estigmatização de ser negro e feminino. No entanto, as meninas afro-brasileiras e mulheres, quando recebem as ferramentas e apoio para empoderar-se irá empoderar suas comunidades.

Através de uma abordagem mista método de Pesquisa Participativa, observações e nove entrevistas, este artigo explora como a tradição da Capoeira Angola e, especificamente, a roda, empodera as meninas e mulheres afro-brasileiras. Além disso, eu examino como, através de
Capoeira, o processo de "empoderamento" pode ser ensinada, aprendida e praticada através de Capoeira como um método de superação dupla estigmatização. Os resultados desta pesquisa são baseados em um estudo de caso do Grupo Nzinga de Capoeira Angola no Alto da Sereia, Salvador, Brasil. A pedagogia do grupo de ensinar Capoeira Angola concentra em empoderar todos os seus capoeirosistas embora a igualdade, a preservação da tradição Angola, e da comunidade. Ao compreender a sua abordagem, outras organizações de base comunitária no Brasil pode aprender, através da prática da Capoeira Angola, que pode capacitar a próxima geração de mulheres afro-brasileiras.

*Palavras-chave:* empoderamento, dupla estigmatização, Capoeira Angola
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III. Acknowledgements

Like in the roda of Capoeira at Nzinga, I have learned that almost anything in life worth doing or fighting for does not function in a linear, discrete manner, but rather in an inter-connected circle. All individuals, institutions, and organizations are vital to enabling a system, a community, and a project like this work effectively. Thus, there are many people who I must acknowledge for supporting me and making this project possible. First and foremost, I am grateful for the guidance and support of the SIT staff, especially Gabriela Ventura, Program Director of the SIT Brazil: Public Health, Race, and Human Rights program, for providing initial advising and helping me shape my research question and for always being a source of support throughout my research. I would like to thank Rafaela Loureiro, Program Assistant for answering my questions during our weekly ISP phone calls and providing assistance with navigating the transportation system to get to meetings and interviews.

A huge thank you to my project advisor, Mestra Janja, who despite her busy schedule, always made time to see me, send me articles and resources, and answer my questions even at 11pm at night! I came to Janja with a broad idea for my research, and she helped me narrow my topic. She provided me with access to Nzinga and the Alto da Sereia community by inviting me to join the capoeira group for the weekly classes and rodas. I am incredibly grateful for the families of Alto da Sereia and the Nzinga Group who welcomed me with open arms and open minds, always willing to meet me before class to do an interview at Nzinga or at their homes and allowing me to participate in events in the community.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents Rosamaria and PJ Stafford who provided me with emotional support throughout my time abroad and were always willing to hear my ideas and provide feedback on my research.
IV. Lists of figures, images, and definitions

Definition of Terms

- **Capoeira Angola**: traditional style of capoeira played lower to the ground and usually played slower. For the purposes of this paper, unless otherwise indicated, Capoeira refers to Capoeira Angola and will be capitalized to highlight its significance.
- **Capoeirista**: a person who practices Capoeira. The term applies to anyone who practices Capoeira Angola, Regional and Contemporânea. For the purpose of this paper, the term is used to describe people who practice Capoeira Angola.
- **Angoleiro/ Angoleira**: a person who specifically practices Capoeira Angola.
- **Mestre/ Mestra**: the word “mestre” in Portuguese literally translates to “master.” It denotes the greatest level of expertise and respect in Capoeira.
- **Roda de Capoeira**: literally translates to “circle or wheel,” and is formed by capoeiristas and capoeira musical instruments. It is a ritual where every participant sings the typical songs and some also play the instruments. Two capoeiristas enter the roda and play the game according to the style required by the musical instruments rhythm. Each game finishes when the person playing the gunga calls them back, or whenever another capoeirista comes in-between the two who were playing before and starts to play with one of them.
- **Berimbau**: one of the most important instruments in capoeira. It is a musical arch composed by a rope of steel, a rustic stick, and a calabash, and it is played with a caxixi and a drum stick.
- **Gunga**: biggest and most important berimbau. It directs the other instruments, conducts the rhythm and determines the end of each game during a roda de capoeira.
- **Ginga**: the most basic movement of capoeira that includes some basic steps and a sort of rocking movement as the person moves from one side to another. The term refers to a well-respected African queen named Jinga, who reigned in Angola between the 16th and 17th centuries. In Capoeira Angola, the term ginga refers to Queen Jinga’s political action, and indicates the idea of conflict, negotiation and magic. The term ginga represents the possibility of an indirect confrontation in capoeira, which is expressed through body language.
- **Treino**: translates literally to “training” and is used to refer to Capoeira classes or practice sessions.

*Figure 1: Violence Map 2015 graph

*Figure 2: Image of Capoeira Roda

*Figure 3: Image of the Nzinga Group

*Figure 4: The Roda of Empowerment*
V. Introduction

Jorge Amado (1962), arguably one of the most famous Brazilian authors once wrote about Gabriela, a female character in his book, “I believe that she has the kind of magic that causes revolutions and promotes great discoveries.” All girls and women, when given the opportunity to empower themselves can and will empower their community.

Yet, around the world, gender inequality leads to lower levels of self-esteem, agency, and empowerment and creates obstacles for girls and women every day. These obstacles are exacerbated for girls and women who are forced to overcome the double-stigmatization of being both black and female and who are often of a lower socio-economic status. The hardships increase even more in a society plagued by machismo and in developing country like Brazil. According to a report published by the Pan American Health Organization, entitled “Empowerment of Adolescent Girls: A Key Process for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals,” adolescent girls in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) find themselves in a situation of disempowerment and social vulnerability. This has a direct impact on their health and well being, especially on their sexual and reproductive health. Despite this, the issue of adolescent girls’ empowerment is rarely considered when new government policies are created.

My research explores the impact of empowerment as a process on Afro-Brazilian adolescent girls and women as a matter of social justice. By examining a community organization’s approach to empowerment through Capoeira Angola, the study aims to contribute to a continually growing body of knowledge on the power of grass-roots community organizations helping to better the future for the people in those communities. More specifically, this paper examines how empowerment is taught, learned and practiced by girls and women in the Nzinga Group of the Alto da Sereia quilombola community. A small body of research exists on Alto da Sereia and Nzinga’s approach to Capoeira Angola thanks to previous Independent Study Projects of the School of International Training (SIT) and a thesis written by a Masters student in pedagogy at the Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA). Thus, this research paper builds on these studies to understand not only that Capoeira Angola is empowering, but to focus on the how and the why. I also narrow the topic
study to focus on its impact on the population of Afro-Brazilian girls and women.

The community in which I studied the empowerment of Afro-Brazilian girls and women will be Alto da Sereia in Salvador, Brazil. Machado (2012) explains that before the process of urbanization, Alto da Sereia “was a community where many fishermen lived and was recognized as one of the quilombos urbanos that exist in Salvador” (p. 119). The community of Alto da Sereia is small: approximately 200 families and a handful of students. It is nestled within the tall buildings of the Rio Vermelho neighborhood, which is home to some of the most expensive real estate in Salvador (Machado, 2012, p. 109). Today, the community has become increasingly more visible and more connected to the greater community because of the Nzinga Group.

Despite this growing visibility, however, there is still a cloak of invisibility that exists due, in large part, to its quilombo status. This has hindered the growth and development of the community. Empowering the girls and women of the community to overcome the double stigmatization related to their race and gender, can, in turn, improve the economic and social challenges the community faces.

The specific aims of the research study are to understand: 1) How do members of the Nzinga Group and the Alto da Sereia community define empowerment? 2) What is the Nzinga Group’s approach to empowering Afro-Brazilian adolescent girls and women through Capoeira Angola? and 3) How does empowerment, in turn, impact gender and racial equality on a micro and macro level?

**Literature Review and Background**

In order to create a foundation for the fieldwork, I begin with a discussion of the theoretical framework on the double-stigmatization that disenfranchises black women. Then, I analyze the concept of empowerment as a method for overcoming challenges related to double-stigmatization. Finally, I describe the vehicle of empowerment I examine—Capoeira Angola. I provide a very brief background on Capoeira Angola’s origins and teachings as well as the role of women in the practice. It is important to note that I will
use a lens of gender and race for my discussions in order to show the importance of considering intersectionality when working with social justice issues, in this case, equality.

**Double stigmatization of Black Women**

The theory of multiple-categorization is used to describe the meaning and consequences of multiple categories of social group membership. Understanding how these multiple social categories depend upon one another and intersect with each other are important for identifying solutions to issues of inequality and stigmatization.

Using a lens of intersectionality to analyze issues of identity enables us to turn the attention to those who have traditionally been *excluded* (Cole, 2000, p.04). A social category is often assumed to include only certain (usually privileged) subgroups of that category, and by representing diverse experiences contained within categories defined by multiple identities (e.g., “black women”), one can better understand *all* of the factors that contribute to a community’s success and failures. The need for this representation was illustrated by early work on intersectionality that provides a framework focused on one category of identity and defines disadvantage only in terms of group members who are otherwise privileged. This systematically excludes certain members of groups (Crenshaw, 1989). Asking, ‘Who is included within this category?’ can facilitate *representation* of those who have been overlooked, and *repair* misconceptions in previous literature” (Cole, 2006, p. 04).

Black women are an example of a group that faces double-stigmatization because they claim two identities that have been historically marginalized. Universally, girls and women face challenges in a society where they are still considered second-class citizens and are pressured to conform to feminine norms. These norms include but are not limited to beauty; cultivation of feminine traits; performance of normative heterosexuality including motherhood; development of domestic skills; and sexual restraint. These norms often collide with the expectations, norms, and representation of African American-culture and provide another set of prejudices and types of stigmatization to overcome. In fact, for much of history, economic exploitation, stereotyping, and lack of legal protection (Collins, 1990) served to deny Black
women (and other women of color) the protections femininity claims to afford for white women. The creation of benchmarks of femininity that “became a normative yardstick for all femininities in which Black women [and other women of color] are relegated to the bottom of the gender hierarchy” (Higginbotham, 1992). In the past, movements towards gender equality have focused on white-feminism and have excluded other social group identities, most notably race.

Many of the issues that disproportionately affect Afro-Brazilian adolescents and women in Brazil are consequences of the double-stigmatization they face and a lack of feelings of empowerment to overcome these consequences. The challenges include higher rates of HIV and other reproductive health related problems. Although violence is a large issue for all women in Brazil, according to Waiselfisz (2015) black women face and increased rate of violence, especially against black women (66.7 per every 100 thousand) (p.34). In addition, Afro-Brazilian adolescent girls account for 75 percent of victims of sexual exploitation, abuse and pornography (Brazil Country programme document, 2012).

Literature has shown that increasing girls’ and women’s agency and feelings of empowerment have many social benefits that include closing inequality gaps and improving their overall health and well-being. When the government invests in programming aimed towards girls’ education and empowerment, significant improvements are made in these areas and in the overall economy. Since the introduction of cash transfer programs in the 1990s in Latin America (Mexico and Brazil) to their subsequent adaptation in many other countries in the world, they have been used as a strategy for reducing poverty and improving human welfare. For example, when Bolsa Familia was implemented in Brazil, girls ages 15-17 years, increased in school attendance by 9.2% and in rural areas for same age group by 9.3%; and in poorer northeastern region for girls aged 6-17 years attendance increased by 11.7%, the most effective results among poorest populations (UNGEI cash transfer programs, 2014). While education is key to the process of empowerment, especially for girls and women, there are other methods and settings (often more effective) in which the process of empowerment can occur.
**Concept and Process of Empowerment**

I continue by analyzing “empowerment” both as a concept and as a process. “Empowerment” has been well studied and critiqued in many fields as a concept and process. The greatest impediment to a critical analysis of empowerment theory and practice has been the lack of consensus over the aims of empowerment (Mohajer and Earnest, 2009, p. 425). Zimmerman (1990) states that empowerment theory is an “enigma” (p. 169) and Laverack and Wallerstein (2001) describe empowerment practice as “thorny and elusive” (Mohajer and Earnest, 2009, p. 426).

A number of feminists sustain the notion, proposed by Kabeer (1999), that empowerment is the process “by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability” (p. 435). This ability, in turn, rests on three distinct yet interrelated dimensions: a) ‘resources’, pertaining to the existing pre-conditions; b) ‘agency’, defined as ‘power to’, or as people’s capacity to define and pursue their strategic choices despite possible opposition; and c) ‘achievements’, the outcomes of one’s exercise of their ‘power to’ capacity (Kabeer, 1999).

Although one of the objectives of my research collection is to understand how participants define “empowerment” for themselves, studies have distinguished between different “types” of empowerment. I want to distinguish between the individual and collective definitions of empowerment as it is the fundamental contradiction of the term. One type is referred to as “individual” empowerment, which includes self-mastery, self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982), and the process of outcome-oriented empowerment (Fetterman and Wandersman, 2005). Internationally, the term “youth empowerment” or empowerment of individuals is used broadly and can be used to describe a range of activities including micro-credit and employment opportunities, activities related to reproductive health and self-esteem for female adolescents, women’s empowerment programs aimed at overcoming gender disparities and spiritual empowerment activities of faith-based organizations (Mohajer and Earnest, 2009, p. 426). Through empowerment, individuals not only manage and adapt to change but also contribute to or generate changes in their lives and environments (UNESCO, 2005).
“Collective” or community empowerment is generally discussed in regards to social and political action or a combination of these (Wallerstein, 2006). UNESCO (2005) defines collective empowerment: “How communities engage in learning processes in which they create, appropriate and share knowledge, tools and techniques in order to change and improve the quality of their own lives and societies.” Significantly, Kabeer (1999) strongly emphasizes that in order to bring transformative changes, women’s empowerment is dependent of collective solidarity and community action.

Despite its ambiguity, “empowerment” has been successfully incorporated into a variety of disciplines (social work, anthropology, development, education and human rights) including critical theory, participatory or action research and the educational theories of Bandura (1982). It is seen as a vehicle for reducing poverty and other development issues including those that stem from the stigmatization race and gender identities. For several decades there have been many examples of programs that use pedagogy of empowerment in order to improve health, educational, and economic outcomes.

In Brazil, for example, in 1962, Paolo Freire’s successes with the empowerment of illiterate peasants led to the Brazilian government supporting him to start thousands of cultural circles around the world until his death in 1997. Freire denied he had a theory or model of empowerment (Taylor, 1993); rather, he described a pedagogy that used the power generated from knowledge to of empowerment bring about social or cultural action (Freire, 1999). An essential component of Freire’s pedagogy is the idea that not having control over one’s destiny is one of the factors that impacts the health of marginalized populations (Wallerstein, 1992). In order to bring about that sense of control, Freire described the importance of the facilitator of empowerment, understanding the worldview of the participants through a process he called decoding: a shared dialogue between both parties (Mohajer and Earnest, 2009, p. 427). This dialogue can refer to spoken dialogue or more of a physical dialogue between bodies, such as in a ritualistic activity of playing Capoeira.


**Capoeira Angola**

**Background**

I study Capoeira Angola as method of raising levels of empowerment as discussed in the section above. Capoeira, often referred to in popular culture as “the game of capoeira,” is one of Brazil’s most characteristic cultural expressions and has become a vehicle for social inclusion. Shilcutt (2014) provides one definition of capoeira: “a blend of athleticism, combat, culture, camaraderie, and music”, as well as a physical conversation or “dialogue-in-motion”.

Capoeira has evolved throughout a number of transformations that have occurred over the last several centuries. Its history and development help us to understand the nature of its importance in Brazilian society and beyond. The most well-known theories about the origins of Capoeira suggest that it was created by African slaves that were brought to Brazil at the start of the 1500s. It is thought that Capoeira was created in “sezalas” or slave quarters, and originated from forms of African combat that they used to practice (Machado, 2012, p. 32, own translation).

According to Lima (1992), Capoeira’s historical development in Brazil can be traced throughout four basic stages. Before the abolition of slavery, the main purpose of Capoeira was self-defense. After Brazil became a republic, Capoeira gained added attraction as a visible aspect of black culture and became known as Capoeira Angola. In the 1930s, there was a development of a new, regional style of capoeira created by Manuel dos Reis Machado (Mestre Bimba) of Bahia, which today is known as Capoeira Regional. Under the nationalist regime of Gatulio Vargas in the mid 1930s, Capoeira was organized as a form of gymnastics and adopted as a sport in 1972.

As a product of grassroots culture, Capoeira was the target of prosecution by the ruling cultural elite and in 1890 became part of the criminal code. It was not until the 1930s when Capoeira began to be legally allowed and recognized by society. Thus, today, the practice seeks to eliminate or resist some of the social ills for which it was identified in the past. Bahia and more specifically, remaining quilombo communities, are often considered to be the cradle of Capoeira because it was there that capoeiristas kept their
traditional art alive despite its official prohibition in the late 1800s through the early 1900s. Through its roots and development, it is clear that Capoeira and its impact transcends its definition as a sport or game.

**Fundamental Teachings**

For the purpose of this paper, I do not delve into a comparison of Capoeira Angola and other forms such as Regional or Contemporary Capoeira, but instead focus on the style and its teachings as it can be considered the most “pure” form of Capoeira rooted in African origins and culture.

Capoeira Angola’s teachings derive from Mestre (master) Joao Pequeno de Pastinha, who is considered the living history of Capoeira Angola. In his discourse and teachings, there is an emphasis on the perseverance of tradition and fundamental virtues. Among these are respect, justice, humility, and patience and are taught through the movements, instruments, and songs and practiced in the ritual of the roda (Simoes, 2009, p. 62).

At the heart of the practice is the Capoeira roda, or circle, which is thought to represent “this world of God’s” or the universe (Simoes, 2009, p. 63). Participants usually arrange themselves in a circle with the instruments and their players at the front of the circle. The instrument section in Capoeira is called a bateria with instruments ranked as follows: the three berimbau (gunga, medio, viola), one or two tambourines, agogo bells, a reco-reco and a conga drum or atabaque (Simoes, 2009, p. 64). The songs and their lyrics played and sung usually tell a story, say a prayer, sing a praise, issue a social challenge as is often prompted by a leader of the circle—a master, teacher, or experienced capoeirista.

The main goal in Capoeira is not to attack but to defend oneself. The moves, such as ginga the basic move that centers the game and helps players find their balance, not only within the circle but representative of preparing to find balance in real life (Simoes, 2009, p. 65). Therefore, Capoeira is in itself an exercise in the control of violence. The attitude with which a player approaches the circle or faces life is one of challenge and struggle for social justice—resistance. The other person, one’s partner in the
practice, is someone who makes it possible for you to learn and grow as a person in the world outside Capoeira.

*The Role of Women*  
Historically, Capoeira has been a male-dominated space and activity, originally practiced only by male slaves. However, over the years women have integrated into groups and *rodas*, playing with each other or with other male capoeiristas. It was Mestre Pastinha, founder and respected icon of Capoeira Angola, who first invited women to train with him and to join the *rodas*. Other *mestres* slowly began to follow his lead (Assunção, 2005, p.184). However, it was not until the 1990s when women began to be welcomed and joined more frequently into Capoeira groups throughout Bahia. Although it is now universally accepted for women to participate in Capoeira, women still struggle to play as equals.

There are currently only three female capoeiristas in Bahia—Janja, Jararaca, and Paulinha who have achieved status as contra-mastres, the highest title in Capoeira (Assunção, 2005, p.185). Mestres Janja and Paulinha are two of the three founders of the Nzinga Capoeira Angola Group, where this study was conducted. They have made it their life’s work to ensure that Capoeira Angola is a vehicle of social inclusion in terms of race, age, and gender. The Nzinga Capoeira Angola Group was created in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1995, and aims to preserve values and foundations of the traditional Capoeira Angola, according to the lineage of the greatest master in this field: Master Pastinha. Masters Janja (Rosângela Araújo - historian and educator), Poloca (Paulo Barreto - geographer) and Paulinha (Paula Barreto – sociologist) coordinate the group.

As a space symbolic of the outside world and of daily life, Capoeira Angola has become a space to fight or resistant gender and race roles in a society that is still under the strong influence of machismo and racism.
VI. Methodology

Research Site

To study how Capoeira Angola empowers girls and women, I conducted my research in a setting that is conducive to collecting results containing a variety of perspectives. This study was conducted with the Nzinga Capoeira Angola group based in the quilombo community of Alto da Sereia in Rio Vermelho, Salvador, Brazil. This site was chosen for several reasons. The first reason is because of the opportunity to use a participative method of research by learning and practicing Capoeira Angola with the community of study. I had access to a diverse sample population who is willing to participate in interviews and observations. Second, this site was selected because of the unusually large number of girls and women who form part of the Nzinga Group as compared to other groups. And finally, I chose to work with the Nzinga group to study and highlight their pedagogy of empowerment.

Mixed-Methodology Approach

I used a mix of methodological approaches to collect data for the research study. First, I felt strongly about using a participatory research method, so that I could approach the data collection in both an objective and subjective way. I define participatory research as “the co-construction of research through partnerships between researchers and people affected by and/or responsible for action on the issues under study” (Jagosh et al, 2012). As a researcher using the lens of a cultural anthropologist, I wanted to gather information beyond the limits of an interview or as an outside observer. I participated in ten treinos and four rodas at Nzinga. In order to position myself as a capoeira student, I first received permission from my project advisor and clearly explained my motives and role to the teacher and other students in the group. After each class, I recorded what occurred during the classes, my feelings, observations, and thoughts about how I felt and what I noticed about those around me.

The second method of collecting primary sources included observing and recording observations. I observed one roda and four treinos at Nzinga, that are primarily for kids in the community ages three to ten. These treinos
are taught by both female and male teenagers from the Alto da Sereia community. The method of observation consisted of sitting in the back of the room, listening and recording activities, instructions and reactions from the kids and the teachers. I also focused on noting the differences in the girls and boys in the group and the method used to teach the treinos.

As a third method, I collected data by conducting nine interviews with participants between the ages of 12-58. Seven out of the nine participants self identify as being Afro-Brazilian. Eight of them were semi-structured interviews in Portuguese with students from the Nzinga Group, a mother of one of the students, and one master of the Nzinga group (See Appendix 4 for the full list of participants). One of these interviews was an informal conversation with a student under 18 who was given permission to talk to me by her guardian and by my project advisor. However, none of her responses are directly included in my results and analysis due to limitations of working with anyone under the age of 18.

I used a template of questions for each interview (See Appendix 3 for the template. The interviews were categorized by 1) personal experience with Capoeira Angola, 2) definitions, methods, and impact of empowerment, and 3) women’s role in capoeira. This format enabled a variation in the questions depending on the participant qualities (i.e. age, gender, background and experience) and the type of information I was looking to gather. Most of the interviews were recorded and transcribed and all quotes or references to their responses in the results and discussion section are my own translation from Portuguese to English.

The mixed-methodology approach of collecting data provided a wide-range of perspectives to understand the how and why Capoeira Angola is empowering. To analyze the results, I focus on Nzinga’s three main methods of empowerment-equality, roots/origin, and community- that came out of the primary source data collected and use secondary sources to help explain and support the findings.

Limitations

The main limitation of my study was not receiving approval to conduct interviews with anyone under the age of 18. It would have been interesting to
have perspectives from adolescents in addition to the rest of the data collected. Another limitation was the allotted time of each interview and the location. Most participants wanted to do the interview before Capoeira class and at Nzinga. I wanted to make it as easy and as comfortable for the participants as possible, so all the interviews except three were conducted at the Nzinga location. I scheduled interviews at least an hour before the start of *treinos* or *rodas* to have enough time for the interview, but often participants arrived late and the interviews has to be shorter than planned. This limited the amount of information I could collect and the privacy in which they could feel comfortable sharing their responses.

**Ethical Considerations**

The main ethical consideration was also a limitation. Although the age group focus was originally on adolescent girls, I had to be careful to ensure that all of the participants were over the age of 18. This proved challenging when many wanted to participate with permission from their guardians, but I had to turn them down in order to abide by IRB limitations. In addition, I needed to distinguish formal conversations from participatory research interactions with minors in order to fulfill the ethical standards of the study.

Also related to the first consideration was how to approach my role as a participant observer. I sought to integrate within the community and to develop mutual relationships built on trust and respect. However, as a researcher, I had to keep in mind my ultimate goal while keeping the emotional risk to any of the community members as low as possible. I did this by ensuring a balance of methodology and continually reminding the community of my purpose and position as a researcher.

Lastly, as mentioned in the ‘Limitations’ section, the interviews were usually conducted at the Nzinga site. Although I insisted on holding the interviews in the back office, other students and teacher would come in and out of the room throughout the interview. This has potential for causing distractions for both the interviewer and the interviewee. In addition, this reduced the amount of privacy we had for each interview and could have interfered with participants’ responses. I worked to reduce the amount of interruptions; however, it was challenging to find a place that is accessible
and comfortable for the participants, but also that provides the privacy and silence needed for an interview.
VII. Results and Discussion

Defining Empowerment

As I started to conduct interviews with participants, it became clear that the uses of the term and concept of empowerment are not widely recognized in Brazil, in part because it is associated with negative consequences, especially for women. In some interviews, when asked to define empowerment, participants responded with, “do you mean autonomy?” In others, participants immediately associated empowerment with women’s empowerment. Mestra Janja explained, “in our language, in our culture, the use of the word empowerment is not very common” (Personal Communication, November 24, 2015). Instead, words such as autonomy, self-confidence and self-esteem are used to describe feelings of empowerment.

To exemplify this, during the interview, Janja described the results of a recent study about deaths related to violence against women in Brazil, shown in Figure 1. “The Violence Map 2015: The Homicide of Women in Brazil”, found that the rates of death due to violence of white woman has diminished by nearly 12%, from 2003 to 2013, while the rate of black women has risen by 20% (Waiselfisz, 2015, p. 35). The average age for the death of women in both categories is highest between 18-30 and usually occurred in the house by someone known to them. Although there are many factors that influence

![Figure 1. This figure from the Violence Map 2015 shows the evolution of homicide rates of black and white women in Brazil.](image-url)
the difference in these rates, Waiselfisz (2015) summarized one possible reason for the raise in the rate of mortality for black women. He concluded that due to the more recent development of social movements including the black movement and the feminist movement, black women have become more comfortable occupying spaces that they historically have not occupied. This collective empowerment has lead Black women to feel more in control of their bodies and a greater recognition of their rights. These spaces have been historically occupied by white men, then white women and then black men, so as this generation of black women begin to break the structures of racism and sexism, their male partners feel they are losing their control over spaces that used to be “theirs.” Violence, then, becomes a way for men to take back their control.

In general, participants tended to define empowerment in two ways. About 70% of the participants responded that being empowered, for them, is individualistic. In other words, it relates the ideas of knowing their own rights, being able to exercise those rights, and having control of their own bodies. In addition, feeling able to occupy whichever spaces they would like regardless of their gender. Student B, one of the youngest participants, defined empowerment as “feeling equal to men” and having the ability to overcome challenges that confront her as a black woman (Student B, Personal Communication, November 16 2015). Several of the other participants who identified as Afro-Brazilian discussed how empowerment means feeling equal to others both in terms of race and gender. “As black women, we face two types of discrimination-being black and being female-so feeling empowered is important to thriving in this kind of environment” (Mestra Janja, Personal Communication, November 24, 2015).

The other 30% percent of participants expressed that empowerment was related to a collective experience. For activists or community organizers like Student E, empowerment is used in reference to “not only having autonomy one-self and having the ability to intervene in the lives of others to help them find their autonomy” (Student E, Personal Communication, November 25, 2015). In other words, she described empowerment as a way to lift yourself up, so that you can lift others up with you. Capoeira can be a method of empowerment because it requires one to work with and in relation
to others. It is not about getting ahead or being in a higher position, but rather being in a space where you are free to express yourself; “In capoeira we focus on the collective experience of the group, especially in the roda, and not the individual” (Student E, Personal Communication, November 25, 2015).

In addition to distinguishing between individualistic and collective empowerment, participants described empowerment as both a concept and a process. As a concept, the majority of the participants defined it as being or existing as equals. As a process, participants defined empowerment as the active pursuit of racial and gender equality. The fundamental ambiguity lies in the distinction between empowerment as a concept and as a process. The process, in particular, can be a vehicle for overcoming challenges presented by stigmatization related to health, education, and economic well-being (Mestra Janja, Personal Communication, November 24, 2015). As a concept, empowerment is passive and implies an individual or a community is either empowered or it is not. As a process, empowerment emphasizes the journey and the tools needed to overcome barriers and challenges. For the purpose of this study, the following section focuses on the process of empowering versus the concept of empowerment.

**Nzinga’s Approach to Empowerment**

The observations and participation in the treinos and rodas, and interviews with participants from the Nzinga Group have demonstrated that Capoeira Angola has many benefits for men, women, adults and kids alike. Though the style itself is founded on values of justice that are related to empowerment, I found that it is Nzinga’s approach that creates the space for Afro-Brazilian girls and women to feel empowered. Not all Capoeira groups place the same emphasis on bringing youth and women into spaces of power, but Nzinga provides a community of inclusion, of reaffirmation of identity and culture, and of support, all of which are related to increasing empowerment.

In the following sections, I present and analyze the results of how the Nzinga Group empowers its female students through tradition of Capoeira.

**Empowerment through Equality**

For Janja and Paulinha, the inclusion of girls and women was and continues to be an important focus of their Capoeira pedagogy. Student C
stated that there are many more women who consistently train at Nzinga than in other groups because inviting and including girls and women into the group is part of Nzinga’s mission. The masters have worked to maintain the traditional structure of Capoeira Angola including respect for the more experience and/or older capoeiristas in the group, which are often men. However, Student A notes that the Nzinga Group has found a balance between maintaining those values of respect, without diminishing women’s role within the group.

The results from my research indicate that although it is generally accepted for women to participate in any Capoeira group and especially in Angola groups, there is a hierarchical and patriarchal structure still in place. Two participants I interviewed discussed the differences they observed and felt in their experiences practicing Capoeira at other groups and at Nzinga. Student C described feeling limited and not taken seriously in other Capoeira groups that were more closely associated with the Regional style. In reference to practicing with other Capoeira Groups, Student C said, “It was not the same experience. I did not feel like I could occupy the space in the same way as the men” (Student C, Personal Communication, November 18, 2015). Student F said, “When I first practiced Capoeira, I did not know there was a difference in styles, and did not like the first group.” She goes on to describe how she felt excluded from the group and was uncomfortable with the romantic relationships she saw develop between the very few women capoeiristas in the group and the masters or teachers (Student F, Personal Communication, November 23, 2015). “Nzinga is very different” (Student C, Personal Communication, November 18, 2015).

As a woman, I was encouraged and expected to practice the same moves as the men regardless of my upper-body strength. I played a game of Capoeira with men and women alike in treinos and rodas. Women in the group played the gunga, the most important instrument in the Capoeira roda. Essentially, there were no differences in the way men and women are treated in Capoeira at Nzinga. “We are all equal here, on the same level and that makes me feel empowered every time I leave Capoeira” (Student B, Personal Communication, November 16, 2015). Student D is only 18 but has been practicing Capoeira since she was six years old. She told me that she feels
most empowered when a male student or master asks to play Capoeira with her at a *roda*. “I think that is when I feel most powerful and confident in my abilities” (Student D, Personal Communication, November 25, 2015)

Throughout my time at Nzinga, I observed and heard from participants several instances of how men in the group promote equality through the practice of Capoeira. When I interviewed Student G, a young-adult male, he described not seeing any differences between women and men in the group. “I do not think women have a different role than men in Capoeira.” This has changed his perception of the role of women in his community and in society as a whole. (Student G, Personal Communication, November 27, 2015).

Deemphasizing gender roles begins with the young boys in the group as they learn they cannot speak over the women in the group. Several times I would hear the teacher say, “Let her finish. Speaking over women is machismo. Did you know?” Student G went on to discuss how Capoeira has influenced his relationships with the women in his life and how he is starting to blur the line between gender roles. “I am also trying to influence my friends to change their mindset,” (Student G, Personal Communication, November 27, 2015).

Although women make up a large population of the group, when asked whether these women were from Alto da Sereia, general the response was “no.” Many of the girls from the community participate attend *treinos* and *rodas* at Nzinga, but generally stop attending consistently after the age of ten. When I asked the girls and a mother who has one daughter in Capoeira and one who is not about this, the general reasoning was that once girls reach a certain age, they start receiving messages from peers and society that Capoeira is a “man’s space.” The mother I interviewed said she believes the reason one of her daughters stopped doing Capoeira is the same reason she stopped as well as the reason other girls in the community.

*By the time they hit adolescence, their bodies start changing and they start feeling pressure to find a boyfriend. Once they find a boyfriend, they get busy with other responsibilities.* (Mother, Personal Communication, December 4, 2015)

However, for her other daughter, who I also had the opportunity to interview, Capoeira has changed her life. She noted that despite early pregnancy being a huge problem in the community, the girls who have
consistently participated in Capoeira have not become pregnant. The mother also observes a vast difference in her level of confidence and self-care—the way she cares for her belongings, and in her dedication to her studies. “Because of Capoeira, she has chosen a different path and encourage her friends to do the same.” At the age of 12, she recognized acts of sexism and racism at her school, among her peers, and within society as a whole—“and she is not afraid to fight against those acts of injustice” (Mother, Personal Communication, December 4, 2015).

**Empowerment through Roots**

It was clear from the start of my research that unlike other styles of Capoeira, *angoleiros* and *angoleiras* practice Capoeira, at least in part, as a way to connect and preserve the African culture. Through the music, instruments and movements of Capoeira Angola, capoeiristas learn to multi-task, prepare, defend, and practice resilience in the face of uncertainty. It differs in origin and values from other methods of Capoeira that are characterized by violence and as a competitive sport. Based on interviews and observations, however, the characteristics that enable Capoeira Angola to be a vehicle of empowerment versus other styles are deeper than the body movements, musicality or uniform. According to Student A, we first must understand the history of Capoeira Angola and how she [Capoeira] developed in order to understand its values and methodology. Capoeira Angola was the originating style of the art form. In fact, it was not until the creation of other styles, most notably the Regional style by master Bimba that a division in the styles began to exist (Student A, Personal Communication, November 16, 2015).

Today, groups that do not identify specifically as Capoeira Angola, generally practice a style more closely associated with Regional. Capoeira Regional founded by Master Bimba, like Capoeira Angola, has its own systematic process of practicing, of teaching and of organizing the ritual. However, even groups that identify as Angola style, have strayed from the original style. Student A said,

> *my personal critique is in the way capoeira today has been seen as a sport and has become a lot more touristic and competitive. It has lost*
its relationship with the philosophy of capoeira stemming from its African ancestry. Other styles of capoeira have strayed from being a space for expressiveness and the criticism of capitalism, creating relationships between the master and his/her students and the community, fighting against racism, and so on. (Student A, personal Communication, November 16, 2015)

The Nzinga Group stays close to Capoeira’s roots and emphasizes remembering and practicing the teachings of Capoeira Angola’s origins, including the roda. The roda is a symbolic representation of the history, values, and traditions of Capoeira Angola. During my participation and observations of the rodas that occur every Friday from seven to nine at night, I noted the incredible pride and meticulous care in which the students ritualistically prepare for the weekly rodas. The roda incorporates the body, community, musicality, ancestry, and rituality. “The game is not played with the body but also how the message of social issues are transmitted through the songs” (Student A, Personal Communication, November 16, 2015). During and after treinos, the teacher and other members remind each other of the central theme of circularity within Capoeira. The circularity of time and of movements, and that everything in the roda circle, like in the world, does not occur in a liner manner. We are all interconnected and must learn to communicate and work together. Through the practice of Capoeira, we are doing just that-preparing for the world outside of the game of Capoeira.

Nzinga is committed to Capoeira’s founding principles. According to Student E, Capoeira Angola originated from the African diaspora and fight for freedom. Therefore, Capoeira, specifically the roda, represents resistance; the resistance to oppression and violence that the slaves who first practiced Capoeira faced. At the first roda I attended, we celebrated the life and teachings of Mestre Pastinha. “Mestre Pasthina cared a lot about staying true to the founding values of capoeira, especially that of justice through non-violent ways” (Student A, Personal Communication, November 16, 2015).
Rodas require the involvement of all of the participants as it is a community ritual and tradition. Although everyone plays an important role in the circle, the goal of the circle is to work collectively in music and movement to enable the circle to go round and round (See Figure 2). As a participant in the circle, I felt both the individual and collective forms of empowerment. It was very different than as an observer of the circle. In the circle, I felt energized and connected to those around me and to the action taking place in the center of the circle. As an observer outside the circle, I did not experience these same feelings. I describe the experience as an individually empowering experience as well because I feel supported, strong, and confident in my abilities to play a role in the ritual.

**Empowerment through Community**

A large part of Nzinga’s success is due to its role in the community, and in this way, we see how C empowers in regards to its more collective definition. Nzinga, as a community-based organization seeking non-profit status, has brought the community closer together through celebrating culture and emphasizing social justice. Everyone in the community knows the masters, the teachers, and many of the students in the group. In addition, several foreign students have come to train with Nzinga, so through Capoeira, they have brought the community together through new cultures and perspectives.
All of the participants, whether habitants of the community or simply frequent visitors, described Alto da Sereia as an incredible, close-knit community that is family oriented and relatively “tranquilo,” or calm (See Figure 3). Despite this, as a marginalized community of families with generally lower levels of economic status, they face many challenges. Participants described a wide-range of challenges adolescents in the community face, but the common responses included early pregnancy, lack of access to the formal job market, and easy access to drugs.

Student E stated that Capoeira has helped adolescents in the community overcome these challenges by facilitating an uncovering of their own potential and exposing them to an alternate path. “My daughter used to come home from school and spend the rest of the day on the street, playing around with her friends” (Mother, Personal Communication, December 4, 2015). Now with Capoeira, her daughter has a structured activity three times a week and knows she must contribute to the community by arriving early to clean and organize the room, assisting with classes for the younger kids, and helping with the group’s events.

Throughout my time at Nzinga, I attended three community events organized and run by the group and helped with tasks before and after trainings. For example, once a month the group holds a cultural movie night where they show a short video or film on a variety of social justice themes.
attended one where they showed a short film on popular African culture. Many people from the community were in attendance—adults and children, men and women. The organizer of the event, Student E, described these events as a way to expose adolescents, especially young women, to topics that are not discussed in school. These topics often relate to identity including race and gender. Student B describes that helping to organize these events gives her purpose and the opportunity to be a leader in the community.

The Roda of Empowerment

Based on the results and data collected through my study, I began to envision a representation of how, through Capoeira Angola, the Nzinga Group empowers Afro-Brazilian and girls and women. I interpret the *roda* as the fundamental and most symbolic representation of Capoeira Angola and the core of Nzinga’s approach to empowerment. In Figure 4, the significance of the smaller, lighter green circle within the larger darker green circle is two-fold. It exemplifies Nzinga’s role within the community and presents the *roda* as microcosm of the larger community, society and world. Furthermore, participants’ definitions of empowerment reflected the importance of feeling equal to others—whether in regards to gender or race. In the *roda*, those sitting in the circle, have the same role and opportunity as the person sitting next to them regardless of their gender and/or age. Thus, to represent the participants’ definition of empowerment and how Capoeira empowers in
Figure 4, each person is shown as the exact same size square, equidistant from the center of the circle and from each other. Through the simplicity of the figure, it symbolizes that although everyone has an equally important and individual role in the circle, ultimately the ritual is a collective experience.
VIII. Conclusion

This paper discusses the findings of a four-week long period of research, during which I observed, participated and interviewed members of the Nzinga Group in the Alto da Sereia community in Salvador, Brazil. The objective and specific aims of the study were to understand how the community defines “empowerment,” especially in relation to the empowerment of women, to analyze the group’s pedagogy, and finally to understand the impact of empowerment on Afro-Brazilian girls and women.

My findings support the literature on the concept and process of empowerment, illustrating both the ambiguity of the word as a concept and the different types of empowerment processes. The results also add to the body of knowledge on the importance of its role as a process of individual and collective social development rather than a concept. For the purpose of this study, this “development” was specifically in relation to a process for overcoming challenges presented by double-stigmatization. However, unlike the literature, the results highlighted the potential negative consequences associated with the term empowerment that I came across through the research.

In addition, it was clear from my participation, observations, and interviews, that learning and practicing the tradition of Capoeira Angola is an empowering experience. The symbolic nature of Capoeira transcends the game itself and emphasizes values of tradition, respect, justice, and loyalty, while integrating a celebration of culture and identity within the roda. However, the data also illustrates that learning and practicing Capoeira Angola itself is not necessarily as empowering for women as it is for men due to the patriarchal mind-set and origins. Founded by two female masters with a focus on social inclusion, it is Nzinga’s specific approach to Capoeira that empowers its female students. Their focus on equality, community, and tradition is unique among other groups and is key to giving Afro-Brazilian girls and women the space to negotiate issues of race and gender.

Although four weeks was a sufficient amount of time to participate, observe and interview the community, more time would have enabled me to continue to build a relationship with the community and conduct more interviews on which to draw conclusions. Future studies should be conducted
on the topic of empowering through Capoeira to understand how other Capoeira groups and organizations—potentially outside of Brazil—can implement Nzinga’s pedagogy. Furthermore, after observing the Nzinga’s success as a community-based organization, it would be interesting to study the role, approach, and impact of other community-based organizations in other marginalized communities with gender and racial disparities.
IX. References


X. Appendix

Appendix 1: ISP Monograph Appendix Questions

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 topic I chose—empowerment of girls and women through Capoeira Angola—could have been researched in a Capoeira school in the U.S. Capoeira has been expanding to places around the world in the last several decades and empowerment of girls and women is something that can be studied anywhere. However, studying this in Salvador was unique for several reasons. First, because the Nzinge Group is based in a small, quilombola community, I had access and opportunity to interview members of the group, families, and others who live in the community. I was welcomed into the community as a capoeira student. I was able to see the impact it has on a community because of the some-what controlled sample population. Also, while capoeira has expanded, most schools outside of Salvador, practice Capoeira Regional, which is not rooted in the African tradition in the same way as Capoeira Angola. I believe the results of this project could have a greater influence in a place like Salvador, where there is a dominant machista culture that contributes to a lack of empowerment for girls and women. Finally, understanding potential ways to equalize the playing field for men and women is especially important for females who face double stigmatization and who live in a historically marginalized community, such as Alto da Sereia.

2. Could you have done any part of it in the USA? Would the results have been different? How?
I could have done it in any part of the USA where capoeira groups exist, but I do not think the results would have been the same. The reason for this, most notably, is because capoeira is not such a big part of the culture in the U.S. like it is here in Salvador. Capoeira Angola in Salvador, and specifically in Alto da Sereia is practiced more as a ritual than a sport as it is considered in the U.S.

3. Did the process of doing the ISP modify your learning style? How was this different from your previous style and approaches to learning?
Yes, it certainly did. The ISP period taught me that learning can occur in many different forms. Attending a lecture or conducting an interview is not the only way to conduct field work. In fact, putting yourself in your research as a participant, walking around a community, listening and observing others converse and interact can be ways of collecting meaningful data. It was also the first time I was exposed to a two-way street of learning. In other words, in order to learn about a community, a practice, a person, I needed to allow others to learn about me. For this most part, this occurred by making myself vulnerable and learning capoeira, so that I was as much a student as a researcher.

4. How much of the final monograph is primary data? How much is from secondary sources?
I chose to focus on primary data for my monograph. Although I found a
lot of secondary sources on my topic or areas related to my topic, I strived to use the information mainly to support the primary data.

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 used data that related to the three common themes that arose through the collection of my data. All of responses from my interviews touched on these themes, however, some more than others. In addition, I wanted to ensure I included perspectives from all different categories of people (i.e. males, mothers, teacher, female students).

6. **How did the "drop-off's", community projects, and/or field activities contribute to the process and completion of the ISP?**

They helped me come up with interview questions in Portuguese that would help me collect the type of data I was looking for. I realized early on in my drop off experiences that phrasing questions in the same way I would phrase them in English do not necessarily have the same meaning when translated. This made it hard to gather the information because the interviewees did not understand the type of information I was looking for. Thus for my ISP, I learned how to better phrase my questions so that my questions were clearer with the help of my project advisor. The experiences also made me more comfortable asking people for interviews without an initial introduction. Finally, I learned to be “okay” with simply waiting and observing and realized that I could collect valuable information that way. Fieldwork does not just entail interviewing or attending an event.

7. **What part of the FME course most significantly influenced the ISP process?**

Learning about the theoretical model and framing my ISP around a theory or group of theories was most important for me because it was a new idea for me. I had already taken an ethics and basic methods class at Duke and had learned a lot of main lessons about ethical considerations, asking questions, and evaluating data. The lectures about developing a theoretical framework were especially helpful when I was finding secondary sources and developing interview questions.

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

In general the principal problems were ones that I expected. These included lack of response for potential interviews, a difficulty conveying a question or explanation in Portuguese, and sometimes an inability to understand a response. In addition, because the topic of my project focused on girls, not being able to interview anyone under the age of 18 was challenging. I was able to resolve all of them by being flexible and by slightly modifying my topic as I went along. If people did not respond through whatsapp or email, I would go to the community to speak to them in person or arrive at capoeira practice early. If it did not work, I would think about who else could provide me with the type of information I was looking for. In order to resolve the age problem, I widened my topic to include empowerment of women as well. I also spoke to mothers of the girls to gain perspective on how capoeira has empowered their daughters. This worked, but, of course, it was from the perspectives of the mothers, not the girls themselves.
9. Did you experience any time constraints? How could these have been resolved?
   No, I think the type of project worked well with this time frame. I was able to attend over 10 classes/rodas, interview over 10 people, and spend time doing observations at Nzinga and in the community. It would always be nice to spend more time with the community, and I am sure I could learn more the longer I was there, but in general, I felt as though I gathered enough information to draw initial conclusions.

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?
    The topic itself did not drastically change, but the target age group widened to include women, and I focused on Capoeira Angola versus Capoeira in general based on responses I received from initial interviews and information collected from secondary sources.

11. How did you go about finding resources: institutions, interviewees, publications, etc.?
    Because my advisor founded Nzinga and is one of three masters there, I had easy access to the group to conduct my research with the students and the community. During interviews, people would recommend other people to interview or types of people (families, males, etc.). Some also sent me articles, websites or videos to help with my research. My advisor lent me 4 books with information about Capoeira Angola, African culture, and women in Brazilian society, which provided most of the additional information for my literature review.

12. What method(s) did you use? How did you decide to use such method(s)?
    I used participant observations, observations, and interviews as my main methods of research. Since I had never practiced Capoeira, the balance of participant observation and observations helped me understand how Capoeira can be an instrument of empowerment by how it influences the participants and how it influences me. By becoming a Capoeira student, I also felt I built a sense of trust that allowed me to interview more people and made people more comfortable during our interviews.

13. Comment on your relations with your advisor: indispensable? Occasionally helpful? Not very helpful? At what point was he/she most helpful? Were there cultural differences, which influenced your relationship? A different understanding of educational processes and goals? Was working with the advisor instructional?
    Mestra Janja, my advisor, was really helpful. In fact, she was the one who helped me narrow down my topic and it is because of her that I was able to work at Nzinga and with the community of Alto da Sereia. Janja invited me to participate in classes and rodas and added me to the Nzinga group whatsapp so that I had access to reach out to anyone in the group. Although it would have been nice to meet with her more often, she was always available to talk and answer questions over
email or whatsapp. I appreciated having that support while also having to learn to be proactive about my research. If I wanted to meet with her or ask her a question, I would be persistent about reaching out to her, I made the introductions and reached out to all of the people I interviewed, and I attended Capoeira Rodas and classes.

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

There were definitely interviews that were more helpful than others, but no, I think all the interviews and visits influenced my research in some way. Although my research supported my hypothesis, there were many unexpected and interesting results that I had not considered when I started the project.

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

The complexity of interactions between males and females in a machista society was really interesting to learn about and I think Capoeira allowed me to have a deeper understanding of it, one that went beyond what is presented through stereotypes and media.

16. **Did the ISP process assist your adjustment to the culture? Integration?**

Becoming a capoeira students and attending various classes and rodas certainly made me feel more part of the culture and less like a visitor to Brazil. The ISP period also helped with my every day language skills and learning some of the customs when it comes to cultural practices, community organizations, and relationship dynamics.

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

I learned or reinforced several important lessons throughout the ISP process:

1) **Flexibility and Patience** - I learned this lesson throughout my entire semester here, but the importance of these virtues was reinforced during my ISP. Being able to change plans last minute or not having interviewees show up is part of adventure. Having patience when people do not respond or do not understand why you are there and then being able to explain is equally as important. These lessons also influenced the topic of my project and allowing the interviews and observations to alter or change the focus of the research.

2) **Structure and balance** - Structuring my time was important as I had a lot of free time that could have easily gone to waste. Making the use of all the time even if it was just going to Capoeira class early and watching or helping to teach the kids’ class was all part of my research. With that, comes balance and being okay with taking some time on the weekends or during the week to see friends and explore Salvador.

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

I would recommend spending more time with families from the community outside of Capoeira and potentially getting IRB approval for interviewing minors with parental consent in order to gain the perspectives of the age group you want to study. I would also
recommend interviewing more males to get their perspective and to understand how Capoeira Angola has influenced their perceptions of the role of women.

19. **Given what you know now, would you undertake this, or a similar project again?**
   Yes, I would! Even though it was not as related to my topic of study (public health) as I would have had, I gained a deep understanding of a culture through this project and it allowed me to practice and participate in an activity that is a big aspect of Brazilian life.

**Appendix 2: Interview Questions**

**Perguntas de Entrevista em Português**

*Sobre sua vida:*
Conte-me um pouco sobre sua vida: De Onde você é? Você é estudante ou trabalhar?
Quando você começou a fazer capoeira? Por que começou a fazer-la?

*Sobre a capoeira:*
Qual são os maiores diferenciais entre a capoeira angola e a capoeira regional? Como a capoeira angola pode empoderar as mulheres ou as crianças quando esta baseado numa sistema tradicionalmente hierárquica?
Como o tema de patriarcalismo está relacionado com a capoeira? Como a capoeira influencia a sua fila?

*Sobre o empoderamento:*
Porque você acha que é importante para as meninas serem empoderadas?
Em sua opinião, qual é a relação entre o empoderamento e autonomia pessoal ou tomada de decisão?
Quando eu digo empoderamento o que isso significa para você? [Como a sua definição de empoderamento se transformou através de sua adolescência?]
Baseado na sua definição de empoderamento, como você acha que o grupo Nzinga trabalha com o tema de empoderamento?

Quem faz parte da sua vida social? Por exemplo, amigos, família, instituição, ETC. Por quê? O Que outras atividades/instituições estas ligados?
Quem faz parte da vida social dos meninos do grupo do Nzinga?
Conte-me sobre alguns momentos / uma época/ um período o situações em que você se sentiu mais poderoso?
Aponte, em você os seus pontos fortes? Quais são seus pontos fracos? Eles se transformaram durante a sua adolescência?
Como você descreveria a comunidade da Alto da Sereia?
Qual e o maior desafio que você enfrenta com as adolescentes na comunidade de Alto da Sereia?
Como você acha que esses desafios podem se superados?
Sobre a mulher na sociedade:
Como uma mulher, qual foi o maior desafio que você enfrentou durante sua adolescência? (para mulher)
Como você vê o papel das mulheres no Alto da Sereia?
Como Você vê o papel das mulheres na capoeira angola?
Você acha que as mulheres têm um certo papel na sociedade? Você acredita que você faz/exerce esse papel?
Como você vê a diferença de meninas em capoeira e a fora de capoeira?
Como você vê a diferença de meninas em o grupo Nzinga e outros grupos de Capoeira?
Como a capoeira a reconstruido sua definição o percepciones do papel de ser mulher?
Como a capoeira reflete e/ou inteirers o movimento feminista no Brasil?
Agora em Salvador, qual e o foco do movimento feminista? Por que?
Como a capoeira reflete as movimentos quilombizmo no Brasil?

Interview Questions in English
About your life:
Tell me a little about your life: Where are you from? Are you a student or do you work? Both?
When did you start doing capoeira? Why did you start it?

About capoeira:
What are the biggest differences between Capoeira Angola and Capoeira Regional?
How can Capoeira Angola empower women or children when it is based in a traditionally hierarchical system?
How is the theme of patriarchy related to capoeira?
How does capoeira influence your daughter?

About empowerment:
Why do you think it is important for girls to be empowered? In your opinion, what is the relationship between empowerment and personal autonomy or decision-making?
When I say the empowerment does this mean for you? [How has your definition of empowerment transformed throughout your time in capoeira?]
Based on your definition of empowerment, how do you think the Nzinga group works with the theme of empowerment?
Who is part of your social life? For example, friends, family, institution, ETC.
What other activities / institutions are you connected to?
Who is part of the social life of the students of the Nzinga group?
Tell me about some moments / a time / period the situations in which you felt most powerful?
What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? How have they changed during your adolescence?
How would you describe the community of Alto da Sereia?
The Circle of Empowerment

What is the biggest challenge you think teenagers face in Alto da Sereia community?
How do you think these challenges can be overcome?

About women in society:
As a woman, what was the biggest challenge you faced during your teenage years?
How do you see the role of women in Alto da Sereia?
How do you see the role of women in Capoeira Angola?
Do you think women have a certain role in society? Do you believe that you exercise this role as a woman?
Do you see differences between girls/women who practice capoeira and do not?
Do you see differences between girls/women in the Nzinga group and other groups of Capoeira?
How has Capoeira rebuilt or transformed your perceptions of the role of being a woman?
How does Capoeira reflect the feminist movement in Brazil?
Now in Salvador, what is the focus of the feminist movement? Because?
How does Capoeira reflect the quilombizmo movement in Brazil?

Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form

Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido

Prezado(a) Senhor(a)

Gostaríamos de convidá-lo(a) a participar de nosso estudo: Empoderamento de garotas adolescente afro-brasileiras (através da comunidade Alta da Sereia), que tem como objetivo estudar como jovens afro-brasileiras entendem o conceito de empoderamento; como o empoderamento afeta resultados na saúde e educação; e como a 41abriel Nzinga Capoeira e a forma de arte da capoeira em geral promove empoderamento.

A pesquisa, consistirá na realização de entrevistas, observações e/ou participações junto aos participantes do estudo e posterior haverá a análise do conteúdo destas entrevistas e/ou observações. Será conduzida dessa forma, pois pretendemos trabalhar com a experiência de vida dos(as) participantes da pesquisa.

Trata-se de um estudo, desenvolvido por Sofia Stafford orientada pela Profa. Dra. Rosângela Araújo.

Garantimos que, a qualquer momento da realização desse estudo, qualquer participante da pesquisa e/ou estabelecimento envolvido, poderá receber esclarecimentos adicionais que julgar 41abriela 41es. Qualquer participante selecionado(a) tem o direito de recusar-se a participar ou retirar-se da pesquisa em qualquer fase da mesma, sem nenhum tipo de penalidade, constrangimento ou prejuízo. O sigilo das informações pessoais dos participantes 41abriela preservado, especificamente, quanto ao nome, à identificação de pessoas ou de locais. Todos os registros efetuados no decorrer desta investigação científica serão usados para fins 41abriela-científicos e
serão inutilizados após a fase de análise dos dados e de apresentação dos resultados finais na forma de monografia ou artigo científico.

Em caso de concordância com as considerações expostas, solicitamos que assine este “Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido” no local indicado abaixo. Desde já agradecemos sua colaboração e fica aqui o compromisso de notificação do andamento e 42 abertos dos resultados desta pesquisa.

Qualquer dúvida ou maiores esclarecimentos, entrar em contato com a responsável pelo estudo:

**e-mail:** Gabriela.ventura@sit.edu  **Telefone:** (71) 99719.6010 (do SIT Study Abroad: Brasil-Saúde Pública, Raça e Direitos Humanos).

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Aluno: Sofia Stafford

Estudante no Programa do SIT Study Abroad: Brasil-Saúde Pública, Raça e Direitos Humanos

________________________ , ______ de __________________ de 2015.

(cidade)

Orientador(a): Gabriela Ventura

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Orientador(a): Rosângela Araújo

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Eu,

________________________, ______ de __________________ de 2015.

(cidade)

assino o termo de consentimento, após o esclarecimento e da concordância com os objetivos e condições da realização da pesquisa “Empoderamento de garotas adolescente afro-brasileiras (através da comunidade Alta da Sereia)”, permitindo, também, que os resultados gerais deste estudo sejam divulgados sem a menção dos nomes dos pesquisados.

________________________ , ______ de __________________ de 2015.

(cidade)

Assinatura do Pesquisado(a)

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**Appendix 4: Interview Participants**

Thaila dos Santos Rodriguez, Student, *The Nzinga Group*

Sara Abreu da Mata Machado, Student *FICA-BA and Nzinga Group; Masters in Education, UFBA*

Celeste Anahi Mintzias, Student, *The Nzinga Group*

Elizia Cristina Feneiro, Student, *The Nzinga Group*

Bruna Karine Naseimento S Ferreira, Student, *The Nzinga Group*

Rosangela C. Araujo, Project Advisor, Associate Professor of Education, *UFBA, The Nzinga Group*

Rejane Souza Costa Matos, Student, *The Nzinga Group*

Leonardo N. Ferreiro, Student, *The Nzinga Group*

Thaila Limo Dos Santos, Mother, *The Nzinga Group*