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Tanya Rodrigues

AUTEUR DE LA THÈSE / AUTHOR OF THESIS

M.A. (Education)

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FACULTÉ, ÉCOLE, DÉPARTEMENT / FACULTY, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT

**Non-Formal Education and Street Youth Empowerment:
Pedagogy and Practice of Two Brazilian Non-Governmental Organizations**

TITRE DE LA THÈSE / TITLE OF THESIS

Awad Ibrahim

DIRECTEUR (DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS SUPERVISOR

CO-DIRECTEUR (CO-DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS CO-SUPERVISOR

Nicolas Ng-A-Fook

Joel Westheimer

Gary W. Slater

Le Doyen de la Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales / Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

Non-Formal Education and Street Youth Empowerment:
Pedagogy and Practice of Two Brazilian Non-Governmental Organizations

By Tanya Rodrigues

Thesis presented to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, University of Ottawa
For completion of the degree of Master of Arts (Education)

Thesis Advisor:
Awad Ibrahim

Thesis Committee:

Nicholas Ng-A-Fook
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Joel Westheimer
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa
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**Non-Formal Education and Street Youth Empowerment:
Interventions of Two Brazilian Non-Governmental Organizations**

By: Tanya Rodrigues

Abstract

Historically, many initiatives designed to assist marginalized populations in Brazil have emerged through civil society. More specifically, for the case of children and adolescents, it has been grassroots and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), at the local and national level, that have played a crucial role in not only defending the rights of destitute children and adolescents but also in creating programs to serve the needs of this vulnerable population. In this light, my aim through two ethnographic case studies is to investigate how the pedagogical approaches and non-formal education (NFE) programs provided by two NGOs foster the potential educational sites for today's street youths in Sao Paulo, Brazil, to become empowered socially, culturally, economically and politically. The two cases also serve as a point of entry to understand these urban youths as a subculture.

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Non-Formal Education and Street Youth Empowerment: Interventions of Two Brazilian Non-Governmental Organizations

Abstract

Historically, many initiatives designed to assist marginalized populations in Brazil have emerged through civil society (Klees, Rizzini & Dewees, 2000). More specifically, for the case of children and adolescents, it has been grassroots and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), at the local and national level, that have played a crucial role in not only defending the rights of destitute children and adolescents but also in creating programs to serve the needs of this vulnerable population (Volpi, 2003; Wong & Balestino, 2003). The purpose of this study is to examine how the pedagogical approaches and non-formal education (NFE) programs provided by two NGOs foster the potential educational sites for street youths in Sao Paulo, Brazil, to become empowered socially, culturally, economically and politically.

In Brazil, the growing national economy contrasts with the significant resource disparity (Mickelson, 2000). With limited jobs in the formal sector, as well as increasing market demands, this reduces the possibilities for poor families in Brazil to escape poverty (de Oliveira, 2000; Huggins and Rodrigues, 2004). In light of this reality, street youths must be offered opportunities to empower themselves, namely, to increase their opportunities for education, employment and, moreover, to challenge structural inequalities, in order to improve their living conditions.

My aim through the two *ethnographic case studies* is to investigate the selected NGOs' pedagogical approaches and non-formal education programs for facilitating street children and adolescents' empowerment. The two cases also serve as a point of entry to understand these urban youths as a subculture.

Data collection methods consisted of:

- 1) The analysis of documents pertaining to the selected NGOs and to street youths in Brazil.
- 2) Participant observations of the two NGOs' pedagogical approaches and NFE program activities.
- 3) Semi-structured interviews with the NGO program administrators as well as focus groups with the street educators.

In turn, I demonstrate not only how these NGOs can offer a means for street youths to empower themselves, but also address the current challenges and constraints faced by the selected NGOs.

In the final analysis, I am contending *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* need to pay closer attention to the street youths' political empowerment, where questions of agency are central(ized). That is, ultimately, the youths need to locate themselves socially, culturally and economically and at the same time question the adequacy of that location.

The people have to emancipate themselves, we cannot do it for them, but we can facilitate the process by conscientizing them. Political mobilization is a revolution without guns and aggression, but must be born in the communities; by the people for the people. Through our work, we are trying to awaken the consciousness of the youths, their families and communities, but it is a complex and long process, as we have to do it by respecting their pace of evolving, their reality and knowledge, their perspectives, but most importantly, we have to work together. We cannot ever impose, as it is their struggle which they must determine the terms.

- A street social educator -

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Acronyms

ABMP - Brazilian Association of Magistrates, Promoters of Justice and Public Defenders of Children and Youths

CMDCA - Children and Adolescents' Rights Municipal Council

ECA - Statute of the Child and Adolescent

FEBEM - State Foundation for Minors' Welfare

FENABEM - National Foundation for Minors' Welfare

MDS - Ministry of Social Development

MNMMR - National Movement for Street Boys and Girls

NFE - Non-formal education

NGO - Non-governmental organizations

PMMR - Street Boys and Girls Project

PUC-SP - Pontificia Catholic University of Sao Paulo

SMADS - Municipal Secretary of Social Assistance and Development

UNICEF - The United Nations Children's Fund

UNIFESP - Federal University of Sao Paulo

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Figure 1.1 Observation periods

Table 1: Interviews

Visibility for the Invisible Street Youth

It's a sunny afternoon. A light wind seeps through the skyscrapers and buildings. I find myself walking with the educators in Sao Paulo's hectic city centre. Consumers shopping and business people heading to and from work fill the streets. My eyes are restless; they wander in every direction with the flow of urban activity surrounding me. I accompany the educators as they begin their afternoon shift. They seek out the local places where the street youths usually 'hang out'. Walking around Praça da Republica (Square of the Republic), my eyes suddenly become fixed and my body paralyzed. I notice a street boy, not more than fifteen years old, passed out in the middle of the sidewalk in a busy business sector. The educators stop and observe him. They detect vital signs, as his gaunt body gently moves with his every breath. "I've never seen him", mentions one educator. "I think he's from Cracolândia (region of crack users downtown)", posits the other. These few minutes feel like hours, slowly drawing me into another universe - the street youth subculture. I am fixed on this fragile body. I notice how the youth remains motionless and his body's extensions (i.e. arms and legs) are stretched out, as if he wanted to make room for himself in this overcrowded public space. However, he is invisible. Passers-by show little attention or concern. They simply walk over or around him. I say nothing, but my perturbation is felt by the educators. One of them turns to me and says: "He probably has not eaten or slept in days because of the crack and now just passed out." Perhaps oblivious in that moment, I ask: "Why not move him from the commotion?" "That can pose a risk to us, as we do not know what state he is in and how he will react if he wakes up", one of the educators responds. Then she adds: "Maybe they choose to pass out here to be seen, to say look at me!"...



Image is an original artwork and used with permission from the artist.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Global Context

As a result of neoliberal globalization, socio-economic inequalities have exacerbated living conditions on a world-wide scale (see especially Klein, 2000). It is correlational rather than coincidental that a growing population, currently representing approximately 1 billion people, is struggling to survive on less than US\$1 a day and, moreover, that 40% of the global population are living on less than US\$2 (UNDP, 2007.) With the global economic trends, “[n]ation-states have become increasingly internationalized, in the sense that their agencies and policies become adjusted to the rhythms of the new world order”(Burbules & Torres, 2000, p. 7). In succumbing to the pressure of the free market, governments have yielded their regulatory capacities in the national economy to the corporate sector. This, in turn, has lead to a change in policy priorities, through neoliberal reforms, where expenditures on health and education have been reduced. Economic interests have taken precedence over social needs and, moreover, at their detriment (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Chossudovsky, 2003; Rhoads & Torres, 2006). In the so-called developing world, destitute families have little or no recourse to meet their basic needs and, as a result, children are deprived of adequate standards of living and of quality education and health care (UN, 2008). Consequently, young people find themselves in such privation which may lead them to working and living on the streets (CIDA, 2008).

The case of Brazil is exemplary of the calamitous effects of globalization as its growing economy contrasts with its significant wealth and income disparities (Calil, 2001; Mickelson, 2000). A total of 7.9 % of Brazil’s gross domestic product (GDP) serves for debt repayment while health and education are allocated, in comparison, a meager 4.8% and 4.4% (UNDP,

2007). As an emerging market, Brazil is gradually reaching the top five leading economies (Callen, 2007) yet, it is also currently faces high levels of poverty and inequality (World Bank, 2009). To this effect, we find Brazil gravely lagging behind its market competitors in terms of its achievement levels in human development as it ranks 70th out 177 countries on the human development index (UNDP, 2007). This quantitative data serves to highlight that in the midst of this country's turbulence (i.e. economic and political) are destitute youths and their families who have had to endure the perverse effects.

Personal Experience and Interest Related to Research Topic

I witnessed these perverse effects first hand. As Stuart Hall (1996) once put it: the heart has its own desire and investment in exploring these effects further is no different. This research project was conceptualized during my participation in a youth project in Sao Paulo Brazil (i.e. 2004). Here, I had the opportunity to collaborate with non-profit organizations who advocate social justice and human rights. This intellectual and bodily experience allowed me to gain insight into the deplorable conditions in which numerous children and adolescents are forced to live and where limited or no opportunities for schooling are provided for them. Witnessing first hand children and adolescents working in the urban centre of Sao Paulo, I asked myself why they were not in school and why this visible exploitation of youths was tolerated. These questions evidently imply very intricate responses. And the more my experience with this reality in Brazil grew, several reflections and analysis emerged, leading me to make a connection between education, the economy and international development. It became apparent that many young people were working and/or living on the street as a means of survival. And, due to many factors,

which I will discuss later, were unable to attend school. This particular case was of great interest to me and I felt compelled to examine more in-depth how Brazil, notably civil society, is responding to the issue of street youths.

In what follows, I will introduce in this chapter the purpose of the study and the research question. I will then discuss the research statement, where I argue that the two NGOs participating in this study, namely *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*, have shown to facilitate street youths' social, cultural and economic empowerment. I contend however that, due to several constraints, these NGOs' contribution to the street youths' political empowerment is limited.

Research Purpose and Question

Historically, there have been many initiatives designed to assist marginalized populations in Brazil which have emerged through civil society (Klees, Rizzini & Dewees, 2000). More specifically, for the case of children and adolescents, it has been grassroots and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), at the local and national level, that have played a crucial role in not only defending the rights of destitute children and adolescents but also in creating programs to serve the needs of this vulnerable population (Volpi, 2003; Wong & Balestino, 2003). With the plight and growing number of destitute children and adolescents on the streets in the 1970s, social movements and child advocates began working with these youths in order for them to become empowered (de Oliveira, 2000). The various entities offered a political pedagogy which enabled young people on the street to become critically conscious of their conditions, their rights and, perhaps more importantly means for becoming agents of change.

Through coordinated efforts, numerous social groups organized a national mobilization, in the late 1980s, where they created a space for street youths to stand at the frontline to proclaim their rights as young citizens (de Oliveira, 2000). With the ongoing support of civil society, their struggle eventually lead to legislation and social policy reforms related to children's rights and notably the adoption of the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) in 1990, where children's civil and political rights became an integral part of the Brazilian Constitution (Klees, Rizzini & Dewees, 2000).

Unfortunately, however, as Klees & Rizzini (2000) argue "[i]t is easy to romanticize and exaggerate the successes Brazil has achieved" (p.96). But "[g]overnment enforcement of the Statute remains very weak, with little political and fiscal power being brought to encourage implementation" (p. 69). Furthermore, since the adoption of the ECA, the political engagement by civil society as well as the politicization of children and adolescents on the streets seems to have weakened (de Oliveira, 2000). And so, the reality in Brazil today has not significantly improved for street youths (de Oliveira, 2000). In this light, I believe, critically examining the social responses being taken by civil society, notably, by gaining a deeper understanding of two NGOs, notably their pedagogical approaches and non-formal education (NFE) programs, in the present context is valuable for exploring these NGOs' strengths, limitations and possibilities for facilitating street youths' empowerment. In addition, although the concept of "empowerment" has been subject to different interpretations and has shifted over time, it has nonetheless permeated the literature on NFE for street children and the poor, in general, in Brazil. Consequently, the notion of empowerment is a key focus of my research analysis. However, because my methodology consists of two ethnographic case studies, the research design aimed at

minimizing theoretical preconceptions. Therefore, the purpose of my research was to construct two ethnographic case studies with as few theoretical preconceptions as possible. In this way, I examined the case of two NGOs, notably their pedagogical approaches and non-formal education programs, in relation to youths' life experiences, as a point of entry, to allow me to further explore the street youth subculture. Through studying the selected NGOs who work with children and adolescents working and/or living on the streets in the centre of Sao Paulo, I aimed to understand (see especially Chapter 3):

What, if any, and how these NGOs contribute to the empowerment of the street youths?

In examining *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*'s pedagogical approaches and non-formal education programs, it has allowed me to take a closer look at the street youth subculture, notably where I could, to an extent, enter the enigmatic reality of this group. Through my encounters with the street educators and the street youths themselves, I could begin to identify the needs, struggles and hopes of these young people in the urban streets of Sao Paulo, as well as understand how the pedagogical approaches and non-formal education programs offered by the two NGOs reached these young people and if these helped them in their empowerment process.

Research Statement

Through my study, I am arguing that, despite the many constraints facing these *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*, these organizations have still shown to help the children and adolescents on the streets become protagonists in creating their life projects. These NGOs contribute to these youths' empowerment process to an extent, as it is mainly social,

cultural and economic in nature. In the final analysis, I am contending *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* need to pay closer attention to the street youths' political empowerment, where questions of agency are central(ized). That is, ultimately, the youths need to locate themselves socially, culturally and economically and at the same time question the adequacy of that location.

In Chapter Two, I discuss the relevant literature to street youths in Brazil, policies pertaining to children and adolescents and the history of street social education. In Chapter Three, I outline the methodology of the research and how the study was conducted. In Chapter Four, I describe *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*'s conceptualization of street youth and their pedagogical practice. I also present an empowerment typology and discuss the strengths, limitations and possibilities of these NGOs' pedagogical approaches and non-formal education programs for facilitating street youths' social, cultural, economic and political empowerment. In the final chapter, Chapter Five, I conclude with the implications and limitations of the study, as well as the possibilities for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents the literature review relating to the main concepts of the study, namely, street youths, subculture, critical pedagogy, street social education and empowerment.

I. Street Youths in Brazil: The Color of Poverty

Background and Context

...the “barren lives” of Brazil are overwhelmingly nonwhite. While the roots of inequality have much in common with other developing countries, there are singularities that shape and influence their contours and the perspectives for policies designed to address them. In the case of racial inequality in Brazil, as compared to the United States and South Africa, the outstanding singularity is the absence of racial segregation by law and the accompanying national culture of “racial democracy” that has acted as a smoke screen to mask very stark racial inequities.

do Nascimento & Nascimento, 2001, p. 105-106.

Understanding the plight of children and adolescents living and working on the street of Brazil requires a multidimensional lens by which we must examine the historical, socio-economic and political landscape of this particular context. From a historical perspective, the colonial period left imprints on today’s Brazilian society. The arrival of Portuguese colonizers in Brazil, in 1500, marked the beginning of enslavement of indigenous people for sugar production (Telles, 2004). However, with the native population being decimated, Africans soon became a growing cheap commodity for slave labor (do Nascimento & Nascimento, 2001; Telles, 2004). By 1888 Brazil, being the last country in the Western Hemisphere, finally abolished slavery (Telles, 2004). Repression and exclusion however took other forms as Afro-Brazilians were not socially nor economically integrated in society (do Nascimento & Nascimento, 2001). Furthermore, having a colored majority in Brazil as a result of slave importation, national minority elites introduced whitening policies, in the late 1800s, to remove, what they perceived

as the nation's "black stain"; these consisted of "massive state-subsidized European immigration under laws excluding undesirable races" as well as indoctrination of the whitening ideology which was "based on the subordination of women and the slogan "Marry White to Improve the Race" " (do Nascimento & Nascimento, 2001, p. 121). The result of miscegenation, eventually served to promote national unity, where "racial democracy" was promulgated creating an illusive image that racism and racial segregation was nonexistent (Nascimento, 2007; do Nascimento & Nascimento, 2001; Telles, 2004).

The era of industrialization, emerging in the 1930s, eventually generated mass migration of rural populations to the large cities, who were in search of work and of increased earning opportunities (Schwartzman, 2005; Telles, 2004). Though many of these migrants' hopes were shattered as, decades and generations later, these groups remain marginalized (Moulin & Pereira, 2000). Many, which constitute a majority of Afro-Brazilians, continue to reside in slum dwellings or *favelas* located on the urban peripheries, often on the hillsides of larger cities, such as Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and are limited to work within the informal sector (do Nascimento & Nascimento, 2001; Inciardi & Surratt, 1997). Furthermore, the transition from an agricultural to a capitalist economy, which occurred once the military dictatorship took control over the country in 1964, engendered the "Brazilian Miracle" (de Oliveira, 2000; Moulin & Pereira, 2000; Telles, 2004). This development produced a rapid increase in economic growth, yet at the same time, it resulted in the reduction of social expenditures as well as of purchasing power of the working class (de Oliveira, 2000; Inciardi & Surratt, 1997). With strong mobilization to restore democracy in Brazil, which was achieved in 1985, progressive social movements in the late 1980's emerged defending human rights which eventually influenced

antiracist, antisexist as well as child's rights laws into the 1988 Constitution (do Nascimento & Nascimento, 2001; Telles, 2004). Since then, advances on all fronts have been made but lack of effective policy implementation as well as culturally embedded discrimination remains a great challenge (do Nascimento & Nascimento, 2001).

Thus, although Afro-Brazilian culture is now widely accepted and recognized as part of the national culture, the deep-rooted racial inequalities continue to exist. The legacy of slavery has created new forms of colonialism in Brazil. In considering a race theory perspective, Telles (2004) highlights Blumer's (1965) take on industrialization in Brazil which proposes that this social change contributed to reinforcing "the prevailing racial ideology, ensuring the continuation of racial inequality" (Telles, 2004, p. 121). And today, with neoliberal globalization, yesterday's injustices and inequities are reflected in the contemporary oppression and exploitation of, what is still, an Afro-descendant population in Brazil. Great disparities remain between rich and poor which essentially translate into whites and nonwhites (Telles, 2004). High levels of income inequality, abysmal living conditions, as well as a lack of access to and quality of health and education provision are what characterize the color of poverty. The historical, social, economic and political circumstances have had a long standing impact on large segments of the Brazilian population, notably destitute Afro-Brazilians. As a result, this has led many children and adolescents to face a volatile way of life as they must often engage in criminal activity and work on the streets to support their families with supplemental income (Graciani, 1999; Inciardi & Surratt, 1997).

Profile of *Street Youths*

Findings from research involving Brazilian street children and adolescents have found that poverty and family violence are common characteristics among this group (de Moura, 2005; Huggins & Rodrigues, 2004; Raffaelli, Koller, Reppold, Kuschick, Krum & Bandeira, 2001). Many of the street youths have reported experiencing physical or sexual abuse and living in unsanitary and unsafe environments (de Oliveira, 2000; Huggins & Rodrigues, 2004). Street youths' family background may often include parental death or illness, the absence of the father where, in this case, a female is generally head of the household as well as under- or unemployment, mental illness, substance addiction and incarceration of one or both parents (de Moura, 2005; Gregori, 2000a; Inciardi & Surratt, 1997; Raffaelli & Koller, 2005). These circumstances, although varying for each youth's life situation, all tend to be push factors rendering children and adolescents to turn to the streets, necessarily, to work to help their families financially, to escape the hardships at home or both (de Oliveria, 2000; Raffaelli et al., 2001).

The demography of street youths in Brazil consists predominantly of, but not limited to, boys from African descent (de Oliveira, 2000; Huggins & Rodrigues, 2004; Volpi, 2003). Gregori (2000a) argues that the assertion that fewer girls are found working and/or living on the street, compared to the numbers of boys, could be explained by the fact that often girls bear the responsibility of domestic duties as well as caring for their siblings. This author also points out, that in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of street-bound girls. Reasons for this rise could be explained by more prevalent tendencies to crack use and addiction, incentive from peers as well as violence and sexual abuse (Gregori, 2000a). There is still, however, a lack

of research on this issue and, moreover, on gender differences of street youths (Dybicz, 2005, Gregori, 2000a; Raffaelli, Koller, Reppold, Kuschick, Krum & Bandeira & Simões, 2000; Volpi, 2003).

Studies have indicated that few children in Brazil are homeless and seldom are those who have no contact with either their immediate or extended family (Huggins & Rodrigues, 2004; Mickelson, 2000; Schwinger, 2007). What is common among street youths is the use of drugs, notably inhalants such as glue, for suppressing hunger as well as their emotions, that is, to escape their somber reality (da Silva, 2005; de Oliveira, 2000; Inciardi & Surratt, 1997; Perez, 2005). Although based on imprecise and varying data, the literature suggests that street children and adolescents in Brazil are found working and/or living on the streets as early as 4 or 5 years of age (de Moura, 2005; de Oliveira, 2000; Raffaelli & Koller, 2005). Also, de Moura (2005) underscores that for many who reside on the street, it is generally a transitional or/and intermittent stay. Gregori (2000b) points out that the street youths find themselves often in an eventual pattern of moving between the street, home and institutions. Thus, children and adolescents essentially turn to the street when they feel that there is no other alternative.

Street Youths and the Notion of “Work”

In terms of earning income on the streets of Brazil, work for children and adolescents generally consists of begging, selling goods, washing windshields, guarding cars, shoe shining, stealing, prostitution (notably girls) as well as drug trafficking (de Oliveira, 2000; Goncalves, 2006; Huggins & Rodrigues, 2004; Inciardi & Surratt, 1997; Moulin & Pereira, 2000; Neiva-Silva & Koller, 2002). Also, in studying adolescents in Latin American, Welti (2002) notes that

youths under the age of 18 are considered a minor and punishment for a crime is less severe for a minor than if charged as an adult. For this reason, young people are often sought for recruitment in criminal activities. “Also, the difficulty that [Latin American youths] have in finding work makes crime an attractive activity” (Welti, 2002, p. 300). Thus, in the case of street children and adolescents, because they are indigent and vulnerable, it makes them easy prey for drug dealers and gangs. The work of street youth is often intensive and generates meager profits. Huggins & Rodrigues (2004) have found that street youths worked long hours on the streets of Sao Paulo. These youths had reported working as much as 12 hours a day, often 5 days a week and only earning an average of 5 Reais or US\$2.50 per day. Thus, because their time and energy are dedicated to work, numerous street children and adolescents do not attend school (de Oliveira, 2000; da Silva, 2005; Raffaelli & Koller, 2005; Rizzini, Barker & Cassaniga, 2002).

Exposure to Violence

Once working and living life in public spaces, children and adolescents in Brazil are faced with other challenges, risks and adversity. Street children and adolescents generally encounter different forms of violence, which are sexual, systemic and physical in nature (Huggins & Rodrigues, 2004; Raffaelli & Koller, 2005). Street youths are subjected to sexual exploitation, abuse and rape by police, gangs or strangers and, even more at risk, if exposed to and involved in the sex industry (de Oliveira, 2000; Huggins & Rodrigues, 2004; Welti, 2002). Street youths are also affected by systemic violence, namely, stigmatization, discrimination and exclusion (Huggins & Rodrigues, 2004). This translates into lack and poor quality of services and resources, as well as limited educational and working opportunities (Raffaelli & Koller,

2005; Rizzini et al., 2002; Welte, 2002). Furthermore, there is a general perception within the Brazilian society that street youths represent a threat and are considered delinquents (da Silva, 2005; de Oliveira, 2000). Thus, it is not uncommon that by their very presence, street youths are often taken into police custody or incarcerated without being convicted and having no legal representation (de Oliveira, 2000).

Huggins & Rodrigues (2004) refer to a study by Rizzini on street youths in Rio de Janeiro which reveals that “conditions have worsened for [these] youth; children now enter the streets younger and face much more violence than in previous periods” (p. 508). They are exposed to violence in cases where conflict arises with street members among their group or with other street youths or adults, but also experience police intimidation and brutality (Huggins & Rodrigues, 2004). These children and adolescents have also expressed their fear of authority figures, such as security guards and police officers, as these have exerted their power through a range of tactics from intimidation to physically assaulting the street youths (da Silva, 2005; Huggins & Mesquita, 2000; Huggins & Rodrigues, 2004). There have also been unnumbered cases of torture and homicide (da Silva, 2005; Graciani, 1999). It is argued by de Oliveira (2000) that “[i]n Brazil and other third-world countries, violence against street youth has taken the form of “genocide” perpetrated by “death squads,” often by the police themselves” (p. 6).

Furthermore, an ethnographic study by Raffaelli, Koller, Reppold, Kuschick, Krum, Bandeira & Simões (2000) examined gender differences in Brazilian youths’ experience on the streets and found that girls were less susceptible to police violence in comparison to boys. Girls expressed more negative experiences at home than boys (e.g. abuse and family conflict) but showed to be more resourceful in terms of establishing contacts, finding support, accessing

services as well as obtaining food and shelter while on the streets, compared to their male counterparts (Raffaelli et al., 2000).

Street Youth *Subculture*

Subcultures can be defined as “groups of people that are in some way represented as non-normative and/or marginal through their particular interests and practices, through what they are, what they do and where they do it. They may represent *themselves* in this way, since subcultures are usually well aware of their differences...” (Gelder, 2005, p.1). In this way, street children and adolescents working and/or living on the streets generally share common values, beliefs and practices from the mainstream (de Oliveira, 2000). The street subculture encompasses “street groupings, street aesthetics, and street lifestyles” and the connection among its members “may be based on common interests such as the performances of activities, alliances for individual or group advantages, or survival” (de Oliveira, 2000, p. 9). Like other subcultures, street youths in Brazil undergo a form of initiation and must adhere to the norms, such as the distinct appearance, behavior and language to gain the trust and acceptance of the group (de Oliveira, 2000; Perez, 2005). They abide by an order defined by set rules within the street universe and in gradually immersing, they distance themselves from a world that is no longer part of their reality (Perez, 2005). Identifying with this subculture allows street children and adolescents to develop a collective identity and, in turn, to find a sense of belonging as well as security (de Oliveira, 2000). It is through their micro-interactions with each other that street youths make meaning and construct their world (Huggins & Rodrigues, 2004). Also, these youths become transient where they “ping-pong” between home, streets and institutions (Gregori, 2000b). Due to the ties that

they build within the subculture and the universe of the streets, they find themselves in a pattern of comings and goings between two worlds (Gregori, 2000b).

Furthermore, these young people are differentiated from others in society as they are omnipresent on the urban streets; their private and public lives are intertwined (de Oliveira, 2000). They are found working, sleeping, eating, playing and learning in the street environment which can become their home, school and work place (da Silva, 2005; de Oliveira, 2000). A study on street children and adolescents in Sao Paulo found that some street youths experience freedom on the streets (Raffaelli et al., 2001). This feeling of liberation can be explained by their capacity to play and work without set boundaries, in terms of space and time, as well as having no ties to institutional constraints and are under no adult supervision (da Silva, 2005; Gregori, 2000b; Perez, 2005). In this line of thinking, da Silva (2005) posits that street children and adolescents in Brazil demonstrate a resistance to the dominant discourse in society. Their counterculture deems the “others” (members of mainstream society) as indifferent and unsympathetic, as a result of experiencing negative treatment (da Silva, 2005; de Oliveira, 2000). Rosemberg (2000) also suggests that these youths’ presence on the street can be an expression of challenging “adult authority (both male and female) at home and in school” (p. 129). Many street youths have rejected school as it contradicts their reality (da Silva, 2005). Indeed, Brazil’s education system imposes the use of a language foreign to the street subculture. It fails to recognize the history and culture of the street youths, to legitimize the experiential knowledge which they possess and to adapt learning content to their reality (da Silva, 2005). Thus, in the educational context, the streets youths’ resistance identifies with their struggle against a cultural imperialism and moreover, oppression. In the larger society, what is perceived as delinquency

and anti-social behavior is rather the manifestation of dissent (Graciani, 1999). The children and adolescents within the street culture are aware and are reacting to the structural inequalities they face which are denying them real opportunities to change their lives (de Oliveira, 2000).

In retrospect, literature on street children and adolescents in Brazil suggests that this group has been viewed as delinquents living in an underworld and threatening the social order (da Silva, 2005; de Oliveira, 2000). These youths have also been perceived, posits Huggins & Rodrigues (2004), as victims of adversity and, alternatively, as active agents in the construction of their reality. Consequently, the way in which scholars, policy-makers, practitioners, such as street educators and social workers, as well as the populace at large (attempt to) understand street youths will have an influence on how professionals and communities contribute to the empowerment or disempowerment of children and adolescents on the streets.

II. Shifting Policy Responses to Street Youths

There has been a progressive shift in paradigms for street youth intervention in Brazil since the 1940s. At that time, the National Social Assistance Agency had adopted a correctional model where abandoned and delinquent youths were institutionalized (de Oliveira, 2000). This penal approach was considered as a means to re-educate children and adolescents who were seen as a potential danger to society, but these youths were subjected to abysmal and abusive treatment (de Oliveira, 2000; Klees et al., 2000). After much protest and pressure, the military dictatorship, which took control over the country in 1964, established that same year, the National Foundation for Minors' Welfare (FENABEM) and the State Foundation for Minors' Welfare (FEBEM) in 1976 (Perez, 2005). The first consisted of a national body responsible for

creating child welfare policies and providing funding to the states, while the second was in charge of implementing those policies as well as allocating funding to assist marginalized children and adolescents (de Oliveria, 2000). These institutions were eventually publicly contested as simply inheriting the previous “punitive incarceration model” (Klees et al., 2000, p. 84).

Realizing FENABEM/FEBEM’s ineffective system as well as of the growing number of young people on the street, many grassroots and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in the late 1970s, attempted to respond to improve street youth intervention (de Oliveira, 2000; Klees et al., 2000). Although not in a coordinated effort, numerous alternatives programs were created for children and adolescent working and/or living on the street (Klees et al., 2000). In 1982, government ministries in partnership with UNICEF launched a nationwide study, namely, the Alternative Services Project for Street Youths (Projeto Alternativas de Atendimento aos Meninos de Rua) to examine the significant problem of children and adolescents on the street (de Oliveira; 2000; Klees, Rizzini & Dewees, 2000). More specifically, this project aimed to “synthesize ideas and principles emerging from the experiences of those working with street children in the whole country” (UNICEF/MPAS, 1983 in de Oliveira, 2000, p. 58). This successful endeavor served to set adequate standards and methods for street work (de Oliveira, 2000; Marques, 1999). As a result of the project, different groups involved with street youths gathered at the first Latin American Seminar on Community Alternatives for Street Children in 1984 to discuss alternative approaches to the ones used within the state programs (de Oliveira, 2000; Klees, Rizzini & Dewees, 2000; Marques, 1999). From this meeting, arose the National Movement for Street Boys and Girls (Movimento Nacional de Meninos e Meninas de Rua - MNMMR) in Brazil. This

NGO was to address the needs of street children and adolescents, to promote their rights and moreover, to enable them to become agents of their own lives through critical consciousness (de Oliveira; 2000; Klees, Rizzini & Dewees, 2000; Marques, 1999). The MNMMR also aimed to advance child policy, notably “from an assistance or charity model to [one focused] on children "rights" ”, within the legal framework of the new Constitution (Klees, Rizzini & Dewees, 2000, p. 86). With mobilization reaching its zenith, Brazilians were seeing a democracy unfold, as the military dictatorship was overthrown in 1985 (de Oliveira, 2000). At this time, through a concerted effort, numerous organization and social movements were opportunistic to push child rights on the new civilian government’s agenda (de Oliveira, 2000; Klees et al., 2000). With much public support, Article 227 in the Brazilian Constitution which focused on children’s rights was approved in 1989. Moreover, in 1990, the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) was passed into law. This legislation officially recognized and granted all young people rights as citizens (e.g., protection, health, education, etc.) (Klees et al., 2000; Rizzini et al., 2002).

National Initiatives

The most recent government response for reducing the incidence of children and adolescents working and/or living on the street has been the Family Grants Program (PBF) launched in 2003 which essentially combined various social assistance programs into one (Maharaj & Town, 2007; Noriega, 2006). This conditional cash transfer program provides families facing extreme or moderate poverty with supplemental monthly income (Ministry of Social Development - MDS, 2008; Maharaj & Town, 2007). With beneficiaries complying with educational and health requirements, the PBF has seen, according to recent surveys, an increase in school enrollment, a

decrease in child labor as well as a decline in the overall poverty rates (Maharaj and Town, 2007; Lindert, 2005). Maharaj and Town (2007) posit that this program can reduce inter-generational transmission of poverty in the long term. However, Armstrong (2006) argues that the program limits possibilities for the poor, as it will unlikely generate openings in the formal market and, thus, having little effect on upward mobility. He further explains that in Brazil, “[the poor] lack the human capital that would make their labor marketable, and there are large tax and regulatory barriers to hiring semi-skilled workers in the formal sector that artificially raise the cost of doing business and thwart small business opportunity” (2006). Also, in the educational context, no study to date has shown any link between the success of enrollment and attendance within the PBF, with the overall learning and achievement levels of the children beneficiaries. What have been raised are the high repetition rates amongst destitute students, as well as the overall poor quality of education within the public system which needs to be addressed, to improve the overall PBF as well as its outcomes (Maharaj and Town, 2007).

Municipalization (*municipalização*)

The Brazilian government has progressively evolved in developing policies and programs to address the issue of street children and adolescents, notably through decentralization as well as by way of partnerships with civil society (de Oliveira, 2000; Klees et al., 2000). Since the 1990's, municipalities have organized Children and Adolescents' Rights Councils and Guardianship Councils allowing for power to be shifted onto local communities. The Children and Adolescent's Rights Council in each municipality is made up of both government officials and NGO representatives equally. This council is responsible for managing funds and ensuring

policy and program implementation. As for the Guardianship Council, it consists of elected community members who serve as advocates for children and adolescents and have the responsibility to investigate cases of right violations or abuses as well as ensure that these youths receive appropriate social services. Rizzini et al. (2000) have noted, however, that the level of success of the Statute's enactment has varied according to municipality. It is the presence of strong community engagement and advocacy for child rights that influence policy and program implementation. These authors also point out that although municipal governments have gained increased leverage in decision-making, they are challenged with limited means, notably as the federal government has shortchanged them, in a sense, by "passing on responsibility without the resources to fulfill them" (Rizzini et al., 2002, p. 90).

Despite these limitations, decentralization has also allowed for strengthening collaboration between civil society and governments. For example, in the area of education provision for street youths, there has been a successful partnership between Projeto Axe, an NGO, and the municipal government of Salvador (in Bahia) (Wong & Balestino, 2003). Projeto Axe has introduced *Pedagogy of Desire*, a creative and integrated approach to reach street children and adolescents as well as to provide them with opportunities and support to enter or re-enter the public education system (Almeida & de Carvalho, 2000; IADB; Wong & Balestino, 2003). The presence of civil society in Brazil has been favourable in increasing the effectiveness of government agencies. Wong & Balestino (2003) argue that through their experience and knowledge, NGOs have been instrumental in influencing policy and program development and implementation for street youths. In other cases, NGOs have essentially filled in the gap where governments have either been inactive or ineffective in responding to the plight of children and

adolescents working and/or living on the streets and, more specifically, addressing their educational needs (Klees et al., 2000).

III. Education and the Empowerment of Street Youths

In the late 1970s, street social education emerged as a response to the growing number of street youths in Brazil (de Oliveira, 2000). Street social educators' practices were essentially guided by Paulo Freire, who proposed a critical pedagogy for the emancipation of the oppressed. Street social education began as a theologically oriented pedagogy, but became politically driven in the late 1980s, as it intended to politicize street youths, notably for them to mobilize and defend their rights (de Oliveira, 2000).

Paulo Freire: *Critical Pedagogy* as Means to a Transformative End

"To teach is not *to transfer knowledge* but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge."

Paulo Freire, 1998, p. 30.

Through his critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire has contributed significantly to the realm of education, and more specifically, to popular education, which can also be regarded as non-formal education (LaBelle, 1976). Growing up in an impoverished region in northeastern Brazil, as well as experiencing "firsthand a struggle against poverty and hunger when the depression of 1929 struck his middle-class family," Freire was greatly affected by these life events (Elias, 1994, p. 2). He also faced difficulty in elementary school where he was labelled as having intellectual challenges (Elias, 1994). However, his family's move to another city due to their financial situation as well as his father's death could be considered setbacks contributing,

ironically, to his stellar academic performance later in life (Elias, 1994; Walker, 2008). In this way, his early life influenced his vision of the world and his desire to work alongside the poor. Furthermore, the socio-economic and political climate in his country compelled him to critically examine how education can otherwise be a practice of freedom (McLaren & Leonard, 1993).

It is worth noting that Freire acknowledged and, so has his critics argued, that he has never partaken in any revolution as such (Elias, 1994; Freire, 1997). Notwithstanding this, he had been involved in several social movements, including a Catholic radical reform movement, namely the Popular Culture Movement in Brazil, which had political relevance as it aimed at raising awareness as well as encouraging action (Elias, 1994; LaBelle, 1976).

This movement pushed for the democratization of culture through discussions on such themes as nationalism, remission of profits, economic development, and literacy.

Moreover, students and men like Freire attempted to raise class-consciousness and to increase the popular vote (Elias, 1994, p. 3).

Involved in literacy projects, Freire eventually gained international attention for his alternative political pedagogical method, which was a response to the formal traditional approach to education (Elias, 1994; Graciani, 1999; LaBelle, 1976). He denounced the former as being a means to indoctrinate and impose the ideology of oppression (Freire, 1997). Domesticating, ignoring students' existential experiences, as well as using rote learning and an authoritarian approach all consisted of elements that reinforced the culture of silence (Freire, 1997).

Conversely, Freire argued that education should foster creativity, stimulate curiosity, promote critical thinking and be emancipatory (Freire, 1997). Also, rather than the transfer of information which he identified as the banking method, Freire emphasized the importance of knowledge to

be exchanged and created through a dialogue between teacher and student through a problem-posing method (Freire, 1997). “[Teachers] must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relation with the world” (Freire, 1997, p. 60). By doing so, it can allow for the unveiling of reality and the discovery of contradictions (Freire, 1997). Freire also explained that empowerment constitutes a social act and is a means rather than an end in itself; it serves as the impetus for the emancipation of the oppressed class or group and for the transformation of society through praxis (Shor & Freire, 1987). Empowerment, according to Freire, is an embodied social process and must be defined in terms of for whom and against whom we privilege empowerment. Otherwise,

[e]ven when you individually feel yourself *most* free, if this feeling is not a *social* feeling, if you are not able to use your *recent* freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 109).

Thus, liberating education, for Freire, creates a social space for raising critical consciousness and promoting political action. In this way, education fosters the empowerment process which strengthens the social struggle (Shor & Freire, 1987).

Furthermore, the theories developed by this educator, greatly inspired the pedagogical practices and methodologies of street social education in Brazil (de Oliveira, 2000). These were defined by the principles of his critical pedagogy which is based on the assumptions that the oppressed have the ability to transform their conditions and society, through a simultaneous process of reflection and action, that is praxis (de Oliveira, 2000). By critically reflecting on their reality and conceptualizing the possibilities for transformation, liberating action begins to

crystallize (Freire, 1972). In this line of thinking, education can be seen, as opposed to its oppressive role in reinforcing inequalities, as an instrument for the empowerment of street youths and taking on an emancipatory function, namely as a critical revolutionary pedagogy. Educators who side with the disenfranchised and are committed in the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed must support curricula which are essentially “designed with the active participation of students” (de Oliveira, 2000, p. 75); this allowing for the power and the construction of knowledge to be shared. Thus, the dialogue that takes place between educator and students is the process where creating and transforming the world, to humanize it, can occur (Freire, 1972).

This introduction to Freire’s principles served to present this educational revolutionary’s contributions to street social education’s theoretical foundation. In the following section, I will show how street social education evolved from a theologically oriented pedagogy to a politically driven pedagogy while maintaining critical pedagogy as its underpinning.

Legacy of Street Social Education

Street social education has been characterized as having a different purpose and theoretical foundation from the North American conception of youth or outreach work (de Oliveira, 2000). Street social education, which emanated in the late 1970s, was driven by a pedagogy which intended to empower street children and adolescents - to enable them to be agents of change (de Oliveira, 2000). Oriented by liberation theology and Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy, street social education was inspired to take a critical and revolutionary pedagogy to the streets (de Oliveira, 2000). With a growing opposition of the ineffective models adopted by

government agencies to respond to the issue of street children and adolescents, youths advocates and professionals began collaborating with members of the Catholic Church, namely the agents of the *Pastoral do Menor* which had already been supporting the struggle of the oppressed and destitute youth population, to develop a practice to work with street youths (de Oliveira, 2000; Oliveira, 2008; Perez, 2005).

The street social education movement began in the centre of Sao Paulo and eventually expanded across the country by the mid-1980s (de Oliveira, 2000). The work of the street educators involved providing basic education in open spaces as well as vocational education but, more importantly, it aimed at consciousness-raising (*conscientização*) (de Oliveira, 2000). The practices of street social education consisted of the *Pedagogy of Presence* which enabled educators to enter the world of streets youths (de Oliveira, 2000). Rather than aiming to resocialize, this pedagogy was utilized to assist youths in becoming present within themselves and with their reality, that is, to examine their own oppression and conditions (de Oliveira, 2000). It also entailed the educators to be authentically present in the youths' lives and assume a libertarian role (de Oliveira, 2000). In this way, the Pedagogy of Presence involved praxis, as it impacted both the educators and street youths' personal and social development. Eventually, the initial "romantic phase" of the Pedagogy of Presence evolved where "political pragmatism was emphasized over the theological interpretations" (de Oliveira, 2000, p. 102).

The National Movement for Street Boys and Girls (MNMMR) advanced the Pedagogy of Presence in a way to engage street youths in political action. Street social education became the driving force behind the national mobilization - in the late 1980s, which, in turn, gathered numerous street youths, with their advocates, to stand at the frontline and proclaim their rights as

young citizens. This was a milestone as the practice of a political pedagogy was instrumental in empowering youths (de Oliveira, 2000; Rizzini et al., 2002). It gave them an opportunity to have a voice in public forums (e.g. National Meeting of Street Boys and Street Girls) (Klees et al., 2000). Furthermore, the street social education movement, which included the participation of street youths, influenced social policies, notably the adoption of the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) in 1990, where children's civil and political rights became an integral part of the Brazilian Constitution (Klees et al., 2000).

According to de Oliveira (2000), the theoretical foundation guiding street social education allowed educators to realize the necessary dialogical relationship to be developed between themselves and the street youths, notably by entering the world of these young people and understanding their subculture yet without being intrusive. Rather than intending to save them, educators prepared themselves morally, psychologically and politically to help the street children and adolescents in their empowerment process and, moreover, to commit to these youths' struggle for liberation and social justice (de Oliveira, 2000). To do so, educators had to be self-reflective and critically examine their role as well as their positionality within the social structures (of race and class), to then develop a relationship of equality with the street youths and mutual trust (de Oliveira, 2000).

Street social education also extended to the larger society, as it served to change public attitudes and to educate its members of the human cost of ignorance, as well as to remind them of their social responsibility to care for the youths on the streets, as these young people are equally entitled to rights (de Oliveira, 2000). It was intended that by rehabilitating members of society, this would facilitate the transformative process and humanize the issue of street children

and adolescents. Thus, the political dimension of street social education, during what de Oliveira (2000) describes as its golden age in the late 1980s, promulgated children rights, notably those of street youths, and placed the emphasis on children as being agents of change and social transformation. Street social education, through the Pedagogy of Presence, was a potent tool for the empowerment of street children and adolescents in Brazil, as it provided the impetus for these youths to critically reflect on their conditions, to speak for themselves as they claimed their rights and to participate in a movement for social change, which resulted in program, policy and law reforms.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Design

The research adopted a qualitative design, namely *two ethnographic case studies*. The study aims to investigate two NGOs working with street children and adolescents as well as to understand street youths as a subculture. An ethnographic case study “is more than an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a social unit or phenomenon. It is a sociocultural analysis of the unit of study” (Merriam, 1988, p.23). Thus, for these two ethnographic case studies, I have used ethnographic methods (i.e., techniques such as participant observations, fieldwork and interviewing) to examine what, if any, and how the selected NGOs’ pedagogical approaches and non-formal education (NFE) programs facilitate street youths’ empowerment? These set of methods also afforded me the opportunities to understand street youths as a collective identity or culture-sharing group (Wolcott, 1994). Examining the NGOs’ pedagogical approaches and NFE programs targeted at street children and adolescents served as a point of entry to understand these urban youths in the centre of Sao Paulo, notably as a subculture (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Thus for this qualitative study, the ethnographic case study approach was best suited for this research and allowed me to meet the research goals (Wolcott, 1992).

An ethnography it “recreate[s] for the reader the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of some group of people” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 2). To do so, it requires exploring, interpreting and describing a culture by learning from the people (Spradley, 1979). Thus, an ethnography refers to both a process and a product (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Spradley, 1979; Wolcott, 1992). For this study, in examining the NGOs pedagogical practices and NFE programs through fieldwork, I was able to engage and immerse myself, to a degree, in the street youth subculture in downtown Sao Paulo. More specifically, by participating in

program activities as well as observing street youths in their day-to-day interactions, I intended to develop an interpretive narrative based on the way these young people created meaning in their lives and constructed their Weltanschauung (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). I sought to shed light on the lived experiences of the children and adolescents pertaining to life on the streets and to their participation within the NGOs' non-formal education programs, as well as to capture how these experiences have shaped their reality. Here, I have also regarded as important the NGO program administrators' and the street educators' personal experiences, views and concerns regarding the street youths. In light of this, Schram (2006) underscores

[t]he representation or interpretation you construct of people's lives and behavior is neither "theirs" nor "yours". Instead, it is built upon the points of understanding and misunderstanding that occur between you and them (p. 95).

As for a case study, it can be defined as “an empirical inquiry that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 1989, p. 23). The two cases examined in this study, namely *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*, are both exploratory and instrumental. Exploratory because the research question focuses on “what” and “how” which are pertinent for exploring the means used by the selected NGOs to facilitate to the street youths' empowerment process (Yin, 1989). The two cases are also instrumental as the focus is on the issue of facilitating the street youths' social, cultural, economic and political empowerment rather than on the cases itself (Stake, 1995). To this effect, I offer an in-depth examination of the selected NGOs' pedagogical approaches and

NFE programs for the purpose of exploring how these contribute to the empowerment of street youths in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Therefore, my study consists of two ethnographic case studies because they are characterized by an analysis that is historically, geographically, socially and culturally bounded (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1988). By investigating the cases on the two NGOs working with street children and adolescents in Sao Paulo, notably by examining their pedagogical approaches and non-formal education programs, it allowed for a greater understanding on the current strengths, limitations and possibilities of these NGOs for providing means to empower as well as for enhancing opportunities for these young people. Furthermore, the two ethnographic case studies provide an entry point for understanding the street youths. In this way, these ethnographic case studies allowed for discovering the street youth subculture and for generating a cultural portrait of this group.

Data Collection

For the two ethnographic case studies, data collection methods consisted of document analysis, participant observations and interviews:

Document analysis

I obtained *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*'s non-formal education (NFE) program reports, policy statements, informational pamphlets, webpage material as well as several of their publications. Also, local newspapers, scholarly articles and books which I found in Sao Paulo have been collected. All these documents were examined in order to provide a

description of the missions and goals of the two selected NGOs, the scope of their NFE activities and their pedagogical approaches, as well as to further understand the reality of the street youths phenomenon in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Furthermore, this documentation has been used to complement the perceptions and experiences of the stakeholders.

Participant Observations

I sought to collect data by entering the environment where non-formal education programs for street youths took place. Here, as DeWalt & DeWalt (2002) have argued, “[t]he method of participant observation is a way to collect data in the naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied...includes the use of the information gained from participating and observing through the recording and analysis of this information” (p.2). Thus, by taking the *observer as participant* stance (Gold, 1958; cited in Kawulich, 2005), I gained access to the participants of *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* by engaging in program activities. Participant observations involved mainly attending the artistic and cultural activities that would take place on the streets in the downtown regions in the city of Sao Paulo as well as, at times, in the NGOs office. To this effect, *Fundação Projeto Travessia*’s educators would occasionally organize activities in a room within their office space. I had the opportunity to observe four street youths participating in the production of a music video on two occasions. The first time, I observed these youths composing their lyrics to accompany the music, which had already been previously selected by them. The second time, which was the following week, I observed the youths’ planning process for creating the music video. Together the educators and

the youths decided on the accessories to be used and the roles each youth would play in the video. As for *Projeto Quixote*, the street youths would occasionally drop in the NGO office to play with the games and toys, and to make crafts in a space within the NGO office which was set up for them. In returning to the office with the educators who I accompanied on their morning working shift or in returning from lunch, I had the opportunity to observe the youths play and interact with the educators. I would also participate in playtime as a means to observe more closely the educators' pedagogical approaches and to understand the effects on the youths they were working with.

Most of the observation periods, however, took place on the street. I would meet the educators at the NGO office in the morning and inquire which educators would attend which region on that day. The educators would not have a pre-determined schedule for the regions where they would be working. Their decision was generally based on the number of youths they would find in a specific region on the previous day. Since I wanted to explore the main regions downtown Sao Paulo where the street youths were found, namely Praça da Sé (Square of the Cathedral), Praça da Republica (Square of the Republic), Vale do Anhangabaú (Valley of the Anhangabaú) and Cracolândia na região da Luz (Crack Land in the Light region), I would rotate between the group of educators, as they always worked in a team of two or more. Becoming familiar with these different regions where the street youths were located was important for comparing and distinguishing between the street youth population in each region.

I spent one month in each NGO (see Figure 1.1.). In turn, I developed a rapport with the educators and established connections with the street children and adolescents. My role as a researcher became blurred with that of a participant which enhanced comfort level for interaction

and inquiry. In accompanying the educators to the street, they became my informants, facilitating my entry into the street youths' universe. In my first encounters with the youths, the educators would introduce me as the tia (auntie) from Canada. All educators were called tia (for female) or tio (for male) by the street youths. As I was a newcomer with a distinct Portuguese dialect, the youths were curious and asked me cultural and personal questions. For example, they would inquire where was Canada geographically located? What language is commonly spoken in this country? What type of music do the people in Canada listen to? If I am married and have children? I considered these moments as an opportunity to interact with the street youths and gradually immerse in their environment. After a few days of getting acquainted with the youths, I began participating with them and the educators in the program activities. These would encompass various games and crafts provided by the educators and would take place in the street or on occasion in the NGOs' office. The number of street youths participating in these activities would vary between two and seven. Thus, participant observations allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the street youths' universe as well as the selected NGOs' pedagogical approaches and non-formal education programs. Through participant observations, I was also able to familiarize myself with the roles of the educators and the street youths, as participants, as well as to examine the dynamics and relationship among them.

Furthermore, as a means of collecting data, I also attended the NGOs staff meetings, a forum and a seminar. More specifically, I participated in:

- 1) Weekly staff meetings at *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*'s head office which were scheduled on Mondays for both NGOs. Here, the educators discussed the program activities, followed up on their cases on the specific street youths they worked with

and would offer one another resources when they were faced with constraints regarding a particular case. For *Projeto Quixote*, I attended the meetings from 10am-12pm on March 2, 9, 16 and 23, 2009 and from 11am-1pm on April 6, 13, 20 and 27, 2009 for *Fundação Projeto Travessia*.

- 2) Seminar organized by *Fundação Projeto Travessia* on the “Street Education Program: Actions in Street Education”. This seminar was very informative as the panelists provided an overview of the NGO’s program and discussed the role of street social education and the effective use of play with street youths. Seminar took place at Sindicato dos Bancários de São Paulo on March 12, 2009 from 9am-6pm (includes 1 hour lunch break).
- 3) Meeting on phase one of *Projeto Quixote*’s latest pilot project. The NGO’s coordinators and educators discussed the vision and objectives for their first school which they plan to open sometime in 2010 (set tentatively). This meeting was held at *Projeto Quixote*’s head office on March 16, 2009 from 2-4pm. I attended this meeting, after *Projeto Quixote*’s weekly staff meeting.
- 4) Forum of the network of service providers attending children and adolescents in street situations in the centre of Sao Paulo (facilitated by the Municipal Secretary of Social Assistance and Development – SMADS). The different entities, namely NGOs and government agencies (including *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*) who work with the street youths, in downtown Sao Paulo, met for a second forum to discuss the

challenges they faced and possible solutions. Forum was held at the Instituto Dom Bosco in Sao Paulo on April 8, 2009 from 9am-2pm (includes 1 hour lunch break).

- 5) Meeting between *Fundação Projeto Travessia* educators and those of *Street Boys and Girls Project* (PMMR), former street youths as well as the President of the Brazilian Association of Magistrates, Promoters of Justice and Public Defenders of Children and Youths (ABMP). The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the youths' participation in an upcoming seminar on the rights of children and adolescents in street situations. Meeting was held at the Social Service of Commerce (SESC) on April 23, 2009 from 9am-2pm (includes 1 hour lunch break).

Furthermore, I obtained data from several informal interviews with the educators from *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*. These consisted of discussions with the educators before meeting with the street youths and upon returning from the streets. Although these discussions were of an informal nature, they offered much insight and clarifications to my observations. The educators also provided me with background information on the cases of the youths, notably those whom I had already met. I would say that I had approximately twenty-four informal interviews with the educators from both NGOs. I would generally obtain a total of one hour of discussions per day. The duration is estimated, as I was unable to record the start time and end time of the discussions, due to the fact that these would take place mainly on the streets and, at times, in the NGO office and were at various intervals throughout the course of the day. However, the data deriving from these discussions was recorded in a journal at the end of the day.

Figure 1.1 Observation periods

NGO	Period of observations	Location	Hours	Days	Total hours in one month
<i>Projeto Quixote</i>	March 9-30, 2009	NGO downtown office	5 hours	Over the course of 4 days	5 hours
<i>Projeto Quixote</i>	March 9-30, 2009	On the streets of downtown Sao Paulo	10am-12pm & 1pm-4pm (5 hours per day)	4 days* per week during 3 weeks	60 hours
<i>Fundação Projeto Travessia</i>	April 6-27, 2009	NGO downtown office	2 hours	Over the course of 2 days	2 hours
<i>Fundação Projeto Travessia</i>	April 6-27, 2009	On the streets of downtown Sao Paulo	11am-1pm & 2-5pm (5 hours per day)	4 days* per week during 2 weeks	40 hours
Other – attending meetings, a seminar and a forum	March 2, 9, 12, 16, 23, and April 6, 8, 13, 20, 23 and 27, 2009	Locations detailed above.	Hours detailed above.	11 days	34 hours
Approximate days and hours of observations scheduled for both NGOs for March and April, 2009				31 days	141 hours
Day and hours deducted for non-observation (*see details below)				2 days	10 hours
Total days and hours of observations in both NGOs for March and April, 2009				29 days	131 hours

In Figure 1.1., I present the number of days and hours of observations of *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*'s non-formal education programs as well as of the street youths. Periods of observation of the street youth participants commenced on March 9th, 2009 for *Projeto Quixote* and April 6th, 2009 for *Fundação Projeto Travessia*. In my first week with *Projeto Quixote* (i.e. March 2-6) as well as in my first week with *Fundação Projeto Travessia* (i.e. March 31-April 3), my time in the field was mainly to familiarize myself with the NGOs, the staff and the various programs. Also, it is worth noting that, in the month of March 2009, I would attend weekly staff meetings on Mondays with the educators from *Projeto Quixote*. I would meet them in the morning at *Projeto Quixote*'s downtown office and would travel with them to the head office (30 minutes travel time). On Monday afternoons, I would remain at this office and conduct formal interviews with the program coordinators as well as examine documentation pertaining to this NGO. As for the month of April, I attended with the educators from *Fundação Projeto Travessia* their weekly staff meetings. This NGO also scheduled their staff meetings on Mondays, but these were held at their downtown office which is also their head office. After the meetings in the morning, I spent the afternoons conducting formal interviews with *Fundação Projeto Travessia*'s program coordinator and manager as well as examining documentation pertaining to this NGO. Thus, observations of the street youths with *Projeto Quixote* during the month of March and with *Fundação Projeto Travessia* during the month of April took place from Tuesday to Friday (see Figure 1.1. for daily hours).

Furthermore, because I attended a seminar in March, and in the month of April, I attended a meeting as well as a forum and (as described above), a total of three days for the period March/April were not spent observing the street youths. I however still collected

observational data in these three days. Also, there were two days in March where the educators were unable to find the youths on the street and thus, observations were not possible. To this effect, police operations had taken place the prior evening, on both days, causing the street youths to disperse and relocate in more hidden areas. For these days, data was collected through document analysis and informal discussions with the educators. NGOs were also closed on April 10th and 21st as these days were statutory holidays (i.e. Good Friday and Tiradente's Day). Thus, four days in all were not spent observing the street youths during the month of March and April. I have deducted the two statutory holidays from the total number of days and hours (see total days and hours of observations in both NGOs in Figure 1.1.).

Interviews

In addition to document analysis and participant observations, formal interviews were conducted with program administrators, namely the NGO manager, coordinators as well as the street educators. The interviews were essentially used as a means to elicit their insights, notably, by examining their understanding of the various program implementation and outcome issues in relation to the street youths' empowerment. While considering time constraints as well as informants' availability and willingness, I carried out ten semi-structured, open-ended audiotaped interviews individually with the program administrators from *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* as well as with a former youth participant who is now working for *Projeto Quixote's* video production team. I also conducted four focus groups with the street educators from both NGOs. The duration of the individual interviews and focus groups were on

average and hour in length each (see Appendix 4). All formal interviews and focus groups were conducted in the NGO offices in the city of Sao Paulo (see Appendix 4).

As for the street youths, no interviews as such were conducted with the children and adolescents participating in the NGOs' non-formal education (NFE) programs due to ethical concerns. As explicitly stated in the ethical considerations section below, interactions with the street youths were of an informal nature and any information collected was noted in a journal at the end of the day. However, these informal encounters as well as the interviews with the adults were instrumental for clarifying and substantiating observation data, as well as for facilitating the identification of emerging themes and generating working hypotheses (Merriam, 1988). The data which was segmented into common themes and categories, served to develop a rich description on the street youth subculture as well as on the two NGOs' pedagogical approaches and non-formal education programs (Merriam, 1988).

Furthermore, additional interviews were also conducted individually with the general director and one of the program supervisors of the renowned NGO *Street Boys and Girls Project* (PMMR). These interviews took place at the NGO's offices located in the peripheries of the city of Sao Paulo (see Appendix 4). The data deriving from these two interviews provided me with the history of PMMR and the *National Movement for Street Boys and Girls* (MNMMR) which is PMMR's partner institution. Both informants also explained to me the PMMR and the MNMMR's contributions to street social education and to children's rights in Brazil. The duration of my interview with the PMMR's general director was four hours and one hour with the program supervisor. I also had the opportunity to interview Lutegardes Costa Freire from the Paulo Freire Institute in Sao Paulo. I conducted two interviews in a meeting room within the

Paulo Freire Institute of one hour each. In reading my thesis proposal, Mr. Freire offered me valuable comments regarding my theoretical framework, namely critical pedagogy, to understand street youths and their empowerment process. He also underscored the crucial importance of ensuring that these youths' voice is heard throughout the narrative in my study. Thus, although these interviews were not directly related to the specific cases on the two NGOs pertaining to my study, the data collected served to substantiate my findings, notably on the issue of street youths' political empowerment.

All interviews and focus groups were conducted in Portuguese, Brazil's official language, as most of the participants were not at ease with French or English. A language barrier was not an issue, as I speak and write fluently in Portuguese. These interviews were then translated into English.

Data Analysis

The two ethnographic case studies involved investigating *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*'s pedagogical approaches and non-formal education (NFE) programs for facilitating street youths' empowerment. Identifying and better comprehending the strengths, challenges and potential of these NGOs for providing means to empower the street youths in downtown Sao Paulo and for enhancing opportunities for them provided me a background and the contextual knowledge to develop a descriptive account of the street youths. Thus, examining the selected NGOs' pedagogical approaches and NFE programs targeted to this population offered a point of entry to understand the urban streets youths in the centre of Sao Paulo, notably as a subculture (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). By analyzing the multiple sources of data

collected (interview transcripts, fieldnotes, documents), through a coding process, I specify how the two selected NGOs' pedagogical approaches and NFE programs have been tailored to meet the needs of the youths, notably by identifying their strengths, limitations and possibilities, to empower street youths. In the re-coding phase, I reached a saturation of categories and themes, which then lead me to explore the notion of empowerment, as understood through the various stakeholders. Being a key focus of my research analysis, empowerment is problematized through the different perceptions as well as the dimensions that it takes (i.e. social/cultural, economic and political). As the typology of these dimensions have already been preselected based on a preliminary literature review (see Appendix 1), the analysis involved identifying the units of information which defined these three dimensions of empowerment. In addition, the theoretical framework, namely critical pedagogy, has served as the critical lens in which I analyzed the data to understand empowerment. In this light, the data has provided nuances of meanings and interpretations, while at the same time, it has allowed for the significance of empowerment to crystallize (Merriam, 1988).

Moreover, the data collected, that is, the information deriving from an investigation on NGOs working with street youths in Sao Paulo has also allowed me to explore the street youth subculture. By identifying the regularities within the data, I discovered socio-cultural patterns (Merriam, 1988). More specifically, I attempted to develop a holistic description and interpretation of this subculture by examining the groupings, aesthetics and lifestyles of the street youths working and /or living in the centre of Sao Paulo in Brazil (Spradley & McCurdy, 1980). To do so, I referred to a coding process, where units of data deriving from the documents obtained, fieldnotes as well as interview transcripts were identified and coded (McMillan, 2004).

This process led to the construction of categories, concepts and themes, specifically related to the youths' context (i.e. historical, social, economic, political), values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and practices (Spradley & McCurdy, 1980; Wolcott, 1994). While reviewing, analyzing and interpreting the data, the coding and re-coding of data occurred as new categories, concepts and themes emerged (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). I then attempted to establish sound relationships between these constructs, in order to generate a holistic cultural description of the street youths in the urban centre of Sao Paulo (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

The data analysis consisted of examining the two NGOs' pedagogical approaches and NFE programs as well as to understand the street youth subculture systematically and distinctively, to then develop an interpretative narrative. In the findings (Chapter Four), I respond to the research question by presenting the several perspectives of my participants and the multidimensions of street youth empowerment. In this way, I also simultaneously bring to light the street youth subculture.

A Provision for Validity

I acknowledge that my personal biases and assumptions, such as my own perception of the reality which I have witnessed during my previous experience in Brazil (i.e. in 2004), as well as while pursuing fieldwork for the current study, have both had an influence on the data analysis (Creswell, 1998). For this reason, I endeavored to be self-reflective via journaling for the purpose of identifying how the interpretation of the data has been shaped and I have explicated this in the research findings (Creswell, 1998; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Clarifying my personal stance and biases is a necessary measure which has been taken to ensure the validity

and reliability of my study. Furthermore, the use of triangulation, where multiple sources employed for data collection and analysis, have served to substantiate research findings (Anderson & Arseneault, 1998; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1988). Data deriving from the interview transcripts, fieldnotes, documents and personal journal were gathered and compared to generate relationships as well as to discover contradictions and inconsistencies (Merriam, 1988). As the data collection and analysis is a simultaneous process (Merriam, 1988), I consulted with the adult participants in the study, to solicit “informants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations” (Creswell, 1998, p. 202). Member checks allowed for clarification and precision of my cultural account pertaining to the street youth subculture in the centre of Sao Paulo in Brazil as well as the selected NGOs’ pedagogical approaches and non-formal education programs.

Ethical Considerations

In considering the delicate nature of working with vulnerable children and adolescents, it was anticipated that the data collection instruments would be modified and adapted once I began my fieldwork. Through discussing these ethical concerns with the NGOs’ program administrators as well as the street educators, it was understood that I would mainly be an observer and limit my inquiries with the youths on the streets, primarily to not interfere with the work of the educators (Stake, 1995). This degree of participation was also considered for reducing the risk of developing strong ties with these young people, as my presence was temporary and brief. I was, at all times, accompanied by the street educators, as they were my key informants allowing me to enter the universe of the streets and to establish a contact with the

youths who were working and/or living on the street. Conscious of my position (as a researcher, white, middle-class, foreigner), I informed the children and adolescents who I was (i.e. of Portuguese descent and living in Canada), as well as my interest in understanding the NGOs' work involving them as participants. In attempts of being on par with the street youths by sharing personal information, I also felt important to gradually immerse in the street youths' environment by respecting their personal space and comfort level. For these reasons, my interactions with the youths consisted of informal conversations which they would initiate and direct, notably as I wanted any dialogue that would take place to be open-ended.

Furthermore, I wish to convey that as I was permitted to undertake a participatory role for my study and enter within the spaces of the educators and street youths, I made a conscious effort to refrain from judgment and intrusion, as well as to respect the values and beliefs of my participants. Maintaining this awareness also contributed to developing an understanding from a cultural perspective, as I aimed to seek (Spradley & McCurdy, 1980).

Data Sample

The selection of the two non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to be studied was based on the following set of criteria (Creswell, 1998):

- Offer non-formal education (NFE) programs
- Work with street youths located in the urban centre of Sao Paulo in Brazil
- Focus primarily on children and adolescents who are out of school
- Define their methodology as pedagogical

Although there are numerous entities, such as NGOs, religious groups and government agencies, who work and attend the street children and adolescents in downtown Sao Paulo,

very few seem to have adopted a pedagogy to guide their work. As per the scholarly literature on the issue, most assistance tends to be remedial and comes in the form of providing food, clothing, shelter and a place to shower (de Moura, 2005; de Oliveira, 2000). Some NGOs even offer esthetic services (i.e, hair cutting and styling, manicures, pedicures) on the street. Since my study focused on NGO-sponsored NFE, *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* were, according to my preliminary research, the only ones to correspond to all the selection criteria. Once I contacted these NGOs, they had each confirmed my findings and both accepted to participate in my study.

Selected Non-Governmental Organizations

I spent approximately one month in each NGO (i.e. March and April 2009) where I accompanied the educators to the downtown regions where the children and adolescents were found working, playing, sleeping and/or living on the street. The educators, from *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*, planned their day with specific objectives; they would determine which area they would be attending, which youths they aimed at and why. They would discuss these collectively before and follow up after they met with the youths. Both NGOs have been working with children and adolescents on the street since the mid-1990s, through non-formal education, although their pedagogical approaches differ in certain ways. It is also important to note that since their inception, these two NGOs have evolved and undergone several changes (i.e., staff, programs and projects, funding mechanism). Incidentally, during my fieldwork, I found both NGOs experiencing another transition.

Projeto Quixote

In 1996, a group of clinicians from the Federal University of Sao Paulo (UNIFESP) was concerned with the situation of children and adolescents on the street and their drug use; thus, initiating a project destined to this population, which they called *Projeto Quixote*. Today, *Projeto Quixote* assists street children and adolescents and also those in situations of social risk (Projeto Quixote, 2007). This NGO still collaborates with UNIFESP for the purpose of improving their practice and contributing to research and development in the area of public policy (Projeto Quixote, 2007). Through the means of creative alternatives, *Projeto Quixote* aims to inspire and give hope to youths and to then help them re-create their life story (Projeto Quixote, 2007). *Projeto Quixote* offers workshops in graffiti, breakdance, *capoeira*, corporal expression, multimedia (i.e., movie and photo production), recycling, as well as courses in computer science, cooking, citizenship, sexual education, vocational training and internships (Projeto Quixote, 2007). They also provide the youth participants' mothers who face socio-economic challenges educational opportunities to participate in craft workshops and generate income through the sale of their products (Projeto Quixote, 2007). *Projeto Quixote* is known for their tridimensional approach, as it is clinical, pedagogical and social, creating a holistic program for high-risk and street youths. They offer these youths socio-educational programs, as well as several services, such as street outreach, counseling, drug rehabilitation and psychiatric treatment as well as family support (Projeto Quixote, 2007).

This general overview of *Projeto Quixote*'s various programs and services brings me to introduce their work specifically with the street youth population downtown Sao Paulo and also their Urban Refugee Program, which I participated in for this study. Although this NGO has

been working with children and adolescent on the street since 1996, it has been an “on-off” process mainly due to lack of funding. In 2005, *Projeto Quixote* opened a space which they named the Moinho da Luz (Mill of Light) in Cracolândia, an area downtown where we find large groupings of crack users, young and old. In this abandoned building, previously used by the drug users themselves, were workshops (i.e. graffiti, breakdance and *capoeira*) which were offered by the educators to stimulate the curiosity of street youths in this volatile region. The intent was to attract the children and adolescents to enter the space and participate willingly, notably as educators, at that time, were not involved in street outreach. With the eventual success of this program, the government’s Municipal Secretary of Social Assistance and Development (SMADS) and Safra Bank partnered with *Projeto Quixote* to open a shelter in 2007, for the street youths. Called Moinho do Bixiga (Mill of the Bixiga), this provisional shelter served as a passage between the streets and the return to the street youths’ communities of origin and, thus, giving continuity to the NGO’s work. Unfortunately, with the closing in 2007 of Moinho da Luz (Mill of Light), educators were left without a space and, paradoxically were also on the streets, as they conferred and met in public spaces (e.g. park benches, coffee shops, shopping malls).

Projeto Quixote, eventually, succeeded in obtaining a contract with the municipal government (SMADS) allowing it to fund the Moinha da Republica (Mill of the Republica), a new location to continue the Urban Refugee Program (which I will discuss further in Chapter Four). They also received an office from Real Bank allowing them, as of November 2008, to offer a work space for their staff and to attend street youths, as it is strategically located in the downtown region where children and adolescents are found working and/or living. In my short time here, I have witnessed an evolution of this space and how it has become an adequate

professional space with several working stations, computers, as well as a lunch and a meeting room. It is also a beautiful and welcoming environment covered with vivid graffiti (by the educators), artwork (by the youths), photos of the educators and street youth participants on the walls, as well as filled with toys and games. The number of young people has been increasing, as the word gets around. Their visits may be for the purpose of discussing with educators personal and life issues. Based on my interviews and ethnographic observations, this takes place when young people feel they have no one to turn to or trust or when obtaining referral services or seeking alternatives to leave the streets. The youths may also drop in when they simply have the desire to play or bond with the educators. This space, interestingly enough, also allows for non-*Projeto Quixote* individuals (professionals or otherwise) to consult with the staff for the purpose of networking or to follow up on cases. Furthermore, because the educators are immersed in the universe of the streets, as they work mainly from them (i.e. street interventions), they take the role of intermediates between the street youths and the outside world. Having the Urban Refugee Program office in proximity to the street youths, this facilitates and provides a place where the street youths and their families can re-connect.

Also worth noting that during my participation within *Projeto Quixote*, I was informed by the NGO staff that after two years in operation, the shelter Moinho do Bixiga (Mill of the Bixiga) was sadly closing, as per the municipal government's decision. I recall hearing, on occasion, the street youths asking the educators if there was any upcoming availability at the shelter, and then expressing their disappointment upon receiving news of the closure. The shelter became well-known amongst the children and adolescents and, for the most part, their willingness to access it was due to *Projeto Quixote*'s innovative approach within the setting, and,

moreover, in their overall interventions with these young people. The pedagogical approach adopted by *Projeto Quixote*'s Urban Refugee Program will be further discussed in the findings section (i.e. Chapter Four).

Urban Refugee Program

*** Organizational structure:**

- 1 Program Coordinator, 1 Educator Team Coordinator, 2 Social Workers, 2 Psychologists, 8 female and 8 male Street Educators, 1 Administrative Assistant, 1 General Services

*** Funding source(s):**

- Municipal Secretary of Social Assistance and Development (SMADS) covers all project expenditures
- Real Bank provides office space

(Data based on information collected during fieldwork).

Fundação Projeto Travessia

Similarly to *Projeto Quixote*, *Fundação Projeto Travessia* works with both youths on the street and those in high-risk situations. However, this NGO emerged in 1995 from a joint effort between labor unions, associations and private sector (i.e., enterprises and banks) as these aimed to elaborate strategies to deal with the street children and adolescents in the centre of Sao Paulo (Dias, 2003). The issue received increasing attention, notably at a State meeting pertaining to the children and adolescents in the State of Sao Paulo where over 700 representatives from civil society, government, unions, religious organizations and universities gathered. As a result of these discussions, *Fundação Projeto Travessia* was created as a legal entity to promote the return of street youths to their families and communities of origin. The first group of educators were selected in 1996 and trained with the assistance of Projeto Axé, a renowned NGO working

with street youths since 1990, as well as the Institute of Special Studies of the Pontifícia Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), which specialized in social and public policies. Today, *Fundação Projeto Travessia* offers workshops in theatre, rap, break dance, video production, *capoeira*, *maracatu* as well as popular and civic education (Fundação Projeto Travessia). In addition to programs for street youths, they have also created programs targeted to children and adolescents living in the peripheries of the city of São Paulo, as in these regions are vulnerable communities (i.e. high incidence of violence, poverty, unemployment as well as overpopulation). The artistic and cultural activities offered serve as a preventative mechanism, to reduce the risk of these young people turning to the streets. For example, in the region of M'Boi Mirim, prevention has also consisted of strengthening partnership with schools, allowing for the assessment of high-risk youths who could benefit from *Fundação Projeto Travessia's* program. Networking with local organizations has also been fruitful for promoting and creating awareness in the community.

, The focus of my study was centered on *Fundação Projeto Travessia's* Street Education Program (Programa de Educação de Rua - PER) in downtown São Paulo. The PER office is situated near the regions where the children and adolescents are found working/living on the streets of the city center. It is mainly set up as a space for the NGO staff, as it is also *Fundação Projeto Travessia's* headquarters, but do welcome the street youths to participate in their activities which are organized occasionally on site. I found it interesting to see how two worlds intersect, as the NGO's office is located in a corporate building; business people commonly encounter the street youth participants (e.g. in the elevators). As a result, the street youth's presence in this environment has engendered a change in the posture of the people who pass

them, in the sense that, they seem to no longer perceive them as simply bandits or troublemakers (Calil, 2001).

The educators from PER use arts and culture as a means to raise street youths' awareness regarding their life conditions and their rights as citizens. Also, by developing relationships with the street youths, the educators' aim to facilitate and support them in their reintegration process, notably by building bridges with their families and schools, as well as to help them discover their communities, namely the services available to them or rather those which they are entitled to receive. Furthermore, within PER, street youths who participate within the program are provided with referral services as well as legal assistance, particularly in cases where they have committed an offence or have been incarcerated. As part of my data analysis in Chapter Four, I will examine *Fundação Projeto Travessia's* methodology, focusing on the Street Education Program's pedagogical approach.

Street Education Program in the Centre of Sao Paulo (PER)

*** Organizational structure:**

- 1 Program Coordinator, 1 Educator Team Manager, 1 male and 7 female Street Educators, 1 Administrative Assistant

*** Funding source(s):**

- Sindicato dos Bancários de São Paulo, Bankboston Foundation, Bradesco Bank, Fibra Bank, Pires Enterprises, DTS Latin America and EMC2 Brasil maintain all structural costs
- Petrobras covers all project expenditures

(Data based on information collected during fieldwork).

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

I. NGOs' Conceptualization of Street Youth and Pedagogical Practices

In what follows, I will discuss and compare how *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* approach the concept of street youth and how each of their conceptualization impacts their pedagogical practice. Both *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* attend street children and adolescents in downtown Sao Paulo through the means of street social education. I have found, as we shall see, that these NGOs' conceptualization of street youth as well as their practice differ from one another. I have noted, however, that in similar ways, *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*'s practices have evolved with the presence of new educators who contributed to the synergy of the team. These individuals' diverse academic backgrounds, experiences and personal baggage (i.e. life stories) influence their pedagogical approach. Also, as it will be discussed later, due to the changing nature of the street environment (i.e. youth population, other social actors, climate, etc.), the educators' practice and lens are adapted accordingly: consequently, giving way to their creation and re-creation of knowledge as well as their *savoir-être and savoir-faire*.

Projeto Quixote

The name *Projeto Quixote* was inspired by Don Quixote who was known to be an ingenuous dreamer, a utopian.

"Via-à-via the great social injustice that abandon and sadden so many children and adolescents in Brazil, Project Quixote was born from a dream: the affirmation of life, the subjectivity, the potentialities of these boys and girls".

Conceptualization of Street Youth: The “Urban Refugee”

“...the streets become a refugee camp”.

While I have conceptualized the street youths, in the literature review, as a collective identity, namely as a subculture within the Brazilian society, very interestingly, *Projeto Quixote*’s general coordinator has presented these youths as “urban refugees.” For him, this concept is placed within a global context and stems from the idea that refugees, although not a homogenous group, are found in various regions of the world, where they have been displaced from their territory and their rights violated. He explains that “refugees have to leave their motherland, their relationships and their collective identity due to situations of violence, privation and insecurity.” He then makes the comparison between refugees and the case of street children and adolescents in Sao Paulo. He considers that for many youths “the streets become a refugee camp.” More specifically, what might be described as asylums are “the deteriorated and lifeless regions in the downtown streets of Sao Paulo.” Here, he adds, “the youths resist returning home, just like other refugees, as they fear the suffering and reliving the pain.”

In this sense, I can say that through my own observations, I have come to understand that these youths’ homes and communities are symbolically war-stricken by arms of ignorance and neglect and, as a result of the conditions of misery, of this war, the youths end up living in exile.

Projeto Quixote’s general coordinator also points out that the notion of refugees transcends a nation, becoming an international human rights issue and thus concerning “all citizens.” From this, he contends that the notion of “urban refugee” is understood in a broader perspective, with a new paradigm which carries implication for all governments and citizens. He

addresses the importance of fostering the local to meet the global in an effort to humanize the phenomenon and to encourage social responsibility on both local and global scale.

Furthermore, he depicts the experience of the young exiled on the streets of Sao Paulo and explains the role of the educators within this reality:

Living in exile, in the street, the youths also experience painful, difficult and threatening situations. Although it may include moments of excitement and freedom, they are not living but rather surviving; through these experiences, the youths develop great strength and resilience which transform them. The significant relationships the exiled establish with the educators offer them alternative sociabilities to those in the camp of refugees.

These relationships bring possibilities for transformation, for their rematriation.¹

In this context, where the educators enter the street youths' reality, they can build bridges between the refugee camp and the outside world. In doing so, the educators raise these children and adolescents' social awareness and help them return on the path to their 'motherland'.

Pedagogical Practice

"We are ETs because we are extraterrestrials in the street world."

The *Projeto Quixote* educators who work in the Urban Refugee Program are called "ETs." This acronym stands for therapeutic educators (*educadores terapêuticos*), as they offer a therapeutic practice to the children and adolescents on the street. The concept of the ET also

¹ Rematriation is used to refer to the process where the children and adolescents on the street return to their 'mother'land, or in other words, their home and community. *Projeto Quixote* shows to value the matriarchal nature of the street youths reintegration process and, as a result, it permeates this NGO's discourse.

refers to the educator as an extraterrestrial, which has been essentially inspired by the beloved “ET” film character.

I discovered, through my interviews with *Projeto Quixote*’s general coordinator and with the street educators, that the initial proposal for the Urban Refugee Program was to provide therapeutic guidance to the children and adolescents on the streets. The educators’ role consisted of being by the youths’ side and accompany them throughout their reintegration process. It was explained to me by the educators that, typically, interventions by entities who worked with the youths would offer remedial services and referrals. There was, however, no one present to support and guide these young people on their trajectory, notably during the circuiting of the various services (e.g. placement in shelters, accessing health and education, obtain legal documents, family assistance, etc.). This process could end up being a frustrating and bureaucratic process. Consequently, “it would hamper the youths’ integration (the return to their home and community) as they would get discouraged and stay or eventually return to the streets”, as one of educators explains.

Conversely, the general coordinator noted that within *Projeto Quixote*’s vision, the crucial role that educators could play in facilitating this process for the youths was clearly spelled. It was with the inception of the Urban Refugee Program, in 2005, that the “AT” was born. As explained by one of the educators, “the notion of the educator as a therapeutic accompanist [acompanhador terapêutico = AT] soon evolved to that of a therapeutic educator [educador terapêutico = ET], as we realized our role was also pedagogical.” According to the educators, the new concept which emerged from their practice, assumed the therapeutic role in providing psychological and moral support, but also the pedagogical role, as the educator

adopted a pedagogy based on arts and culture to facilitate the transformative process. As for the present context, the general coordinator elucidates that

Today, the ETs are seen as tridimensional, as they attend to the psychological, educational and social needs of the youths. The intent of the ETs is to essentially build a relationship of trust with the children and adolescents on different levels, and this tridimensional approach can allow them to do so.

The educators also drew my attention to the ET concept's dual meaning, as it also refers to the educator as an extraterrestrial. The educators from *Projeto Quixote*, who I interviewed, explained that the ET is no longer a person looking in from the outside but rather gradually entering the unknown - the youths' reality and the street world. In this light, one educator expressed

I will always remain an ET even though I have been working with the street youths for years, because there are new youths on the streets and because I do not live in these spaces, I am not part of the street circuit, I am a stranger.

When asked "What pedagogical practices do you adhere to?", the majority of the educators who participated in the study responded that the innovative concepts that emerged from their daily interaction with the youths did not accompany a set of already defined practices or formal training. For the educators, knowing how to approach the youths, establish a contact with them and enter their universe consists of "learning through practice." This approach is how the educators' work began and how today it continues to evolve. They underscored however that offering an "unconditional hospitality" is the guiding principle of their practice. The educators define this unconditional hospitality as listening, being present, not judging and showing

affection to the youths, regardless of the condition or situation that they are in. “We accept them as they are, if they are bare-footed, dirty, ragged, smoking crack or sniffing glue” shared one educator.

Because these ETs are entering the youth’s story and invading their space, they understand the importance of respecting the pace and the path that the youths are each on. “There are days where the youths do not want to talk or play with us because they are searching for food, money or drugs” expressed an educator. The educators understand that the youths do not always feel like engaging, as they have moments where they withdraw. They realize the importance of being attentive to the particularities and necessities of each youth. To this effect, one educator states that, “we discover what works and what does not: that one approach may be effective with one youth and not the other.” Thus, sensitivity, awareness and adaptability are required on the part of the educator for an individualized intervention. The educators’ practice also involves understanding the different personalities and the dynamics that take place on the street: “We have to learn who we can talk to and judge the timing for interventions, for example, in cases when the youths are “working” or when police, drug traffickers or the street father/mother are present.” This awareness is crucial, notably to not place themselves or the youths in situations of risk.

Furthermore, I inquired into the theoretical framework(s) which the pedagogical practice is based on. The general consensus among the educators was that their diverse life experiences as well as professional backgrounds enrich the overall practice. The multidisciplinary of the group offers different theoretical frameworks to work from and shape their practice, allowing them to evolve and improve their practice. Also, “[t]he street is a space where we expect the unexpected,

so we improvise and have to be creative” acknowledges one educator. Their pedagogy is delivered through play and the educational activities are not predetermined: “we invent games and make toys with the youths using a variety of materials that we keep in our knapsacks” explains an educator. The recreation that takes place is essentially based on the youths’ interests and aims at strengthening the bond with the children and adolescents, creating a space for dialogue and for the youths to express themselves, according to the educators.

During a collective discussion, the group of educators informed me, as well, that they appropriate certain activities based on their skills, talents and abilities. The activities, such as drawing, composing raps, writing stories and making origami with the youths, are pedagogical instruments for the educators to engage the youths and connect with them. One educator explicates that “these activities are a means for the educator to discover the subjectivity of the youths, their story, their roots and the reasons for being on the street.” Another adds that,

The use of play is a pedagogical tool allowing the children and adolescents to re-connect with their forgotten inner child as well as to regain consciousness of their desires, dreams, hopes. From here, our role is to provoke the youths to concretize what remains in their subconscious, to then create their life project and actualize it.

As the educators have witnessed, the transformative process - or what I would refer as the *empowerment* process of the youths - already begins in the street. One educator clarifies that

the initial stage is one involving a psychological empowerment where we help the youths recognize that they are worthy of living a life with dignity and that their desires have value.

The educators, however, admit that they must remain conscious that the children and adolescents have lived much pain, suffering and traumas, notably because of adults and, thus, there can be a strong resistance on their part, to “let the [educator] in.” The general coordinator has also explained that

Offering a space to play provides a safe place, in the immediate, where the youths can let down their guards, remove their defensive masks and show their authentic colors. It is in this moment that exists the possibility for the educators to develop trust with them.

Therefore, because playing is a language both children and adolescents can relate to, it allows them to play out their desires, dreams and hopes and, moreover, construct the possibilities to make these tangible. In a comparative manner, I will turn now to *Fundação Projeto Travessia*’s conceptualization of street youth and their pedagogical practice.

Fundação Projeto Travessia

Fundação Projeto Travessia promotes... “From the street to citizenship” (slogan). Travessia means a passage, so for Fundação Projeto Travessia, the children and adolescents’ presence on the street is a temporary passage on their trajectory to citizenship.

Conceptualization of Street Youth: “The Protagonist of Rights”

“We perceive the youths as potential protagonists, having the right to evolve, to have a healthy development...”

From my interviews with the educators, manager and program coordinator of *Fundação Projeto Travessia*, I have come to understand that street children and adolescents are protagonists of their life story and citizens with rights, but are overshadowed by conditions that make them subjects of exclusion, disenfranchisement and stigmatization. *Fundação Projeto Travessia* conceives the street youths as agents of change and subjects of rights, instead of mere objects of institutional action. In this way, the manager has argued that

[The street youths] do not require a savior, but rather an opportunity to transform their situation and empower themselves. It is not possible for the youths to exercise their citizenship while living, surviving, on the street and being exposed to high-risk situations. As *Fundação Projeto Travessia* has depicted, in their latest publication,² “[s]urviving in the streets, these children and adolescents must coexist with constant sieges, seductions, begging and committing crimes.” In these adventures on the streets, the youths “suffer violence, humiliation and constraints in situations which constitute grave threats to the youths’ development and provoke further physical and psychological suffering.”³

Furthermore, the educators have underscored that society’s negative perception of these children and adolescents essentially contribute to their mistreatment, and rather than considering these young people as a social responsibility, “society holds them culpable for the situation they have placed themselves in.” In this light, a paradigm shift is required to influence public attitudes but also to help the young citizens emancipate themselves from the dominant ideology. Human

² Fundação Projeto Travessia. (2009). *Educação na Rua: Reflexões Sobre a Prática*. Sao Paulo, p. 25.

³ Ibid.

rights are not a prerogative; children and adolescents on the street have rights, yet their condition is a direct consequence of ECA (Statute of the Child and Adolescent) violations.

Fundação Projeto Travessia has long been an advocate for street youths' rights and their objective, as expressed by the program coordinator, is "to advance [their] work in ways that these youths can exercise their citizenship and participate actively in their communities." This philosophy constitutes the bedrock of their pedagogical practice.

Pedagogical Practice

"The educational process consists of bridging the desires to the path of actualization, together we construct that path. Through play we try to provoke the youths to reflect on the possibilities..."

In discussing with the group of educators and inquiring on the theories and philosophies that guide their work, responses commonly showed that their practice is not based on one or a predominant school of thought. One of the educators states:

Because of our own professional backgrounds, our theoretical foundations are diverse.

Our practice is always in search of new camps of knowledge and, in this way, we are not necessarily conscious of this, but we tend to be influenced by other disciplines that are not necessarily related to education.

One educator admits that "80% of our educators are psychologists, Travessia's approach is pedagogical and I am a sociologist, so I was a bit unsure on how I could contribute." Another educator, however, explains "we try to take courses to improve our pedagogy, to expand our repertoire of activities in the aim to facilitate our work with the youths and strengthen our ties with them." Thus, the educators' body of knowledge is not limited to the realm of education,

they rather embrace new perspectives, from different disciplines, which enriches their pedagogical practice.

A distinct feature of *Fundação Projeto Travessia*'s approach is the use of a tarpaulin where the educational activities take place on. The idea behind the tarpaulin is to create a safe environment and a parameter for the youths on the street. One of the educators explains that as there are various entities which attend children and adolescents, on the downtown streets of Sao Paulo, the tarpaulin serves as an identifying characteristic to which the youths can distinguish the *Fundação Projeto Travessia* educators from the others. Also, since the street milieu is chaotic and filled with various actors (e.g. police, business people, homeless adults, passers-by), the tarpaulin is a delineated space, in the midst of the urban commotion, providing security and inclusiveness for these youths. "It's a safe place for them to be and do activities" states an educator. This setting can allow for the initial stage of the pedagogical process to begin, "where we can establish a relationship with the youths and enter their world" affirms another educator.

Furthermore, the diverse pedagogical materials that educators keep in their knapsacks allow them to select activities that are pedagogically sound and effective for their intervention with a specific youth or group of youths. For example, one of the educator expressed that "a particular activity can be a means to present a theme related to the ECA (Statute of the Child and Adolescent)." This same educator further explains that the aim is to raise the youths' awareness, for them to critically question their conditions and to understand their rights, notably those that have been violated.

Fundação Projeto Travessia's pedagogy involves guiding the children and adolescents on the path of actualization. "The educational process consists of the youths discovering, or even

re-discovering, their desires and then constructing ways to actualize these” purports the manager. To do so, the educators explain that they must incite the youths to reflect on those desires and aid them in amplifying the possibilities. As much as the educators have hopes and desires for the young people they work incessantly with and care about, one educator underscores that, it is “the youths themselves who must find and define their trajectory.” In this regard, another educator adds “we believe that the youths know what led them to the streets and, for this reason, they will be the best judge to identify what is required to change in order for them to return to their home, their communities.” The manager, however, explains that one of the challenges is that “[these children and adolescents] fear confronting these issues as it involves reliving the pain and suffering.” To overcome these fears, he argues “we have to work with their emotions and bring them back to their desires”. During my fieldwork with *Fundação Projeto Travessia*’s educators, I have understood that these educators recognize the potency of play. As I have witnessed, in creating a space where the youths can play, it allows each of them to express through a story, drawing, theatre (or sociodrama) as well as rap their feelings, to confront their angst but also to identify their desires, hopes and dreams.

The educators respect the youths and equally important, they remain honest with them. One educator affirms “we don’t lie or mislead the youths, as if the process [of reintegration] will run smoothly and life will be new and great.” The manager also contends “we do not gloss over the integration process, with the youths; we discuss the possible challenges they may have to face and the difficulties the transition may bring.” In referring to their practice, he explains that “non-formal education imported to the streets consists of posing the problem and problem-solving through critical praxis.” Inspired by Freirean principles, he adds that “like Freire’s

pedagogy was based on the peasants' reality, the street youths' own knowledge, their life story, cultural references and desires serve as our starting point for transformative education." More specifically, he contends that this education implies education of rights, of citizenship and education for knowledge ("educação para o saber"). He explains the former, as knowledge that can be learnt outside the formal system and that can foster empowerment. From his numerous years of experience in working with street youths, the manager believes that although they are out of school, children and adolescents on the street have the desire to learn. Moreover, he asserts that "they have the right to acquire fundamental knowledge which can transform them and their life situation."

The educators have also explained that their practice entails working with the youths' strengths and potentialities in order to bring them to the realization that they are subjects of rights and protagonists of their story. As one educator elucidates:

We perceive the youths as potential protagonists, having the right to evolve, to have a healthy development; it's not just a right, within a legal perspective, but also as a human being evolving through the different stages of human development. So, we are part of this larger struggle for all human beings to obtain their rights, to live, to be human beings.

Another educator adds that

We create a directional dialogue with youths in aims to show that there are possibilities for them to return to their communities and obtain their rights; we, however, take in consideration the particularities of each youth, at which phase they are in, their context, and which path we will take [with them] to obtain those rights.

Thus, for the learning process to occur, it is crucial for the pedagogy to be adapted to the youths' reality and their way of learning. In stressing the importance, the manager offers an example:

If a youth learns sitting down and you make him stand up, you can promote the discourse of rights all you want, but he will sit there and remain on the street sniffing glue; his situation will not change. They liberated themselves from this process⁴, as they have left school and the institutions that exclude them and disregard their way of learning. If we are to reach street youths and have a meaningful impact, we have to understand them.

This understanding he speaks of stems from a human connection with the children and adolescents.

I have come to understand in observing the educators on the street, that 'understanding' means engaging in a dialogical and reciprocal manner with the youths where the educators put themselves in the youths' place. In this light, the manager has profoundly expressed that although the educators may not have lived a similar story to the youths', they are human and, thus, have experienced sadness, anger, humiliation, alienation, fear and all other emotions felt by the young beings who escape to the streets. He further explains that "the educators are authentically present; sharing their feelings and life experiences, they convey to the youths that the weight that they feel is not just theirs, that they understand and that there is hope to overcome this moment". Thus, through the educators' humanness, they bring youths hope. They guide these young protagonists to the next chapter in their life story, namely, by helping them envision and create a new life project.

⁴ Educator is referring to the process of banking education and how school imposes a certain way of learning.

Similar Practices, Different Routes: *Projeto Quixote* vs. *Fundação Projeto Travessia*

From observing and discussing with the various stakeholders from *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*, I have identified differences and similarities between these NGOs' conceptualization of the street youths as well as their pedagogical practice. In terms of the differences, I have noted that *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* were created at approximately the same time (i.e. 1996 and 1995) and since their inceptions, their orientation remains clearly distinct, from one another, and historically embedded in their work. I would say that from an institutional standpoint, the conceptualization of the street youths stems from a psychiatric/psychological framework for *Projeto Quixote* and a legal one for *Fundação Projeto Travessia*, which has been conveyed in the description above. Also, although artistic and cultural activities are the pedagogical instruments for both NGOs, they each slightly differ in their approach. *Projeto Quixote*'s educators have a packsack filled with activities as well as materials to construct games and toys. The activities, which take place on the streets wherever the youths are present, are random and not predetermined; they are mainly based on the youths' interests or disposition on given day. As for *Fundação Projeto Travessia*, the educators bring a tarpaulin to the street and group the youths on this space. Also, activities and/or materials kept in the educators' knapsacks are generally decided beforehand and selected for a specific purpose on each day. These can be aimed for working with a specific youth or group of youths, as well as to present the ECA (Statute of the Child and Adolescent) or a theme related to the youths' reality.

As for the similarities between *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*, I have found that the majority of the educators in each NGO are qualified psychologists, yet they have correspondingly explained that the theoretical foundations guiding their work are diverse. Their

practices are always in search of new theories and realms of knowledge, thus these are not limited to their professional background. Also, both NGOs do not provide formal training as such, but educators are encouraged and offered to take courses and attend seminars, workshops and conferences to supplement the “learning through practice”. In this way, the overall impression expressed by the educators from *Projeto Quixote* as well as *Fundação Projeto Travessia* was that because their practices are essentially empirical and based on the street youths’ reality, these are adapted accordingly. However, the institutional goals, as well as the pedagogical practice, namely the use of arts and culture, are shared by all the educators within the team. Thus, the significant parallel between these two NGO’s non-formal education is the ongoing weaving of theory and practice.

Furthermore, I have realized that elements such as the human dimension of the practice, the Pedagogy of Desire and the notion of street youths as protagonists have all seeped into the *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* educators’ discourse. I believe this understanding of what constitutes non-formal education, and more specifically street social education, underlying the practice of both these NGOs can contribute to the street children and adolescents’ empowerment process. I will further discuss the strengths, limitations and possibilities of these NGOs’ NFE programs on street youth empowerment, as well as present the empowerment typology in the following section.

II. Empowerment Typology

From my ethnographic experience, I have understood that children and adolescents who turn to the streets live in a mode of survival, as they generally face greater risks and danger to

those which they have been exposed to at home and in their community. Furthermore, as these youths become immersed in the street subculture, they gradually become unrooted from their native land, weakening their emotional and cultural ties with their family and community. This form of acculturation, where children and adolescents appropriate attitudes, behaviors, values, beliefs and practices of the street subculture, can offer youths alternatively a sense of belonging and collective identity, which for many they have lost or never known. However, in living on the streets, these young citizens have much more to lose, as they are more gravely deprived of rights, opportunities and a healthy future. As the educators have explained to me, the youth's *empowerment* process can indeed begin on the street through transformative education, but to what extent can these young people empower themselves socially, culturally, economically and politically? And, can this process be emancipatory?

In this light, I have identified three types of empowerment which have recurrently emerged from the data. Because the social/cultural, economic and political dimensions of the *street youths'* reality shape their conditions, it was thus crucial to examine what, if any, and how *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia's* pedagogical approaches and non-formal education (NFE) programs facilitate the street youths' social/cultural, economic and political empowerment. Having said this, my underlying assumption is based on the notion that if these NGOs can contribute to the overall empowerment process of the street youths, then these young people can transform the conditions in which they live.

In the following three sections, where I discuss the street youths' social/cultural, economic and political empowerment, I will also shed light on the conditions that have led to their disempowerment. Furthermore, I will draw out the ways *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação*

Projeto Travessia, through NFE, namely street social education, have contributed to the street youths' empowerment. I will also highlight on the limitations as well as the possibilities of these NGOs for the purpose of understanding how they can enhance opportunities for the street youths and, moreover, improve the means to better help these young people empower themselves.

It is important to note, that in the next three sections, the voices of the stakeholders will be presented in a way in which they will not be identified to the NGO which they work for. As the focus in the following sections is on the general perceptions of the individuals who participated in the study (i.e. street educators and program administrators) regarding street youths' empowerment, no comparison between the two selected NGOs will be made.

Social and Cultural Empowerment

The Streets

"The fear that people have of them is greater than the risk they pose... [i]t is more the state and society who mistreat them."

The city centre of Sao Paulo is a vast space where numerous children and adolescents are found working, playing, sleeping and/or living on the street. From my ethnographic observations and interviews, it is clear that these youths in the downtown core are mainly concentrated in four central regions:

- Praça da Sé (Square of the Cathedral)
- Praça da Republica (Square of the Republic)
- Vale do Anhangabaú (Valley of the Anhangabaú)
- Cracolândia na região da Luz (Crack Land in the Light region)

Space, as de Certeau (2005) and Soja (2005) have shown, impacts people's bodily and psychic experiences. This is certainly the case in these four regions. They are regions that are occupied by different populations, performing different cultural norms. In the Praça da Sé, we find mostly adults and some adolescents and the use of marijuana is more common in this region. However, the largest population of the street children and adolescents are found in the Praça da Republica and the Vale do Anhangabaú. In these two regions, there is much activity, as we find the youths playing and in conflict, at times, with one another. They are also working, that is stealing or panhandling and often inhaling glue. Cracolândia, on the other hand, is a region where we find a street population in dire straits. Adults, but also children and adolescents are seen on the sidewalks and in alleys wrapped in blankets and smoking crack. Once obtaining their instant fix, they seem glassy-eyed and motionless, as if they have left their bodies and entered another reality.

I vividly recall noticing a street boy passed out in the middle of a sidewalk in a busy business sector downtown. He seemed invisible, as passers-by would show little attention to this vulnerable body lying there, and would simply walk over or around him. I felt perturbed to say the least. Seeing my reaction, one of the educators whom I accompanied to the streets explained that this youth probably experienced days without eating and sleeping due to his crack use, as these are a common side effects, and reached a point where he just "collapsed anywhere." I asked this same educator why they did not move him away from the commotion and she replied "that can pose a risk to us, as we do not know what state he is in and how he will react if he wakes up." She added, that although it is sad to see people indifferent towards these youths, she felt that perhaps the youths choose to place themselves or rather pass out in a such a location in

order to be seen and to provoke a reaction, as it could be their way of manifesting themselves and their conditions to society. Another of the educators expressed that:

In the beginning, we would reflect on what we were to offer them and we thought just our presence on the street would give a visibility to the youths. The fact that we are talking and interacting with them, people will notice them. If we were not there, people would not even see them or care to look. So, part of our role is to make them visible and sensitize society, the state and the institutions. Working at building a bond and strengthening it is a crucial part of our work; we must build trust with the youths. The fact that there are preconceptions about the street youths, as being dangerous, seeing us talk and play with them demystifies. The fear that people have of them is greater than the risk they pose. In the one year working with the youths, I have never witnessed any violence on their part, I however have seen police aggression and brutality, state operations targeting the youths and street population. So, it's more the state and society who mistreat them.

This educator's comments seem to be in line with *Projeto Quixote's* latest publication (2007), where it is argued, "Being the children who live and work on the streets, [they are] more physically visible and, paradoxically, [they are] more invisible, therefore, [they are] more difficult to provide services to, like education and health, and to protect."⁵ Thus, the street children and adolescents' symbolic invisibility translates into the violation of their human rights,

⁵ From Projeto Quixote's latest publication. Guimarães, G. (2007). Moinho da Luz - Uma Experiência de Atenção a Crianças e Adolescentes em Situação de Rua. In *Textos de Apoio - Setor Ensino Projeto Quixote*. São Paulo, p.13.

namely their rights to protection, education, health, adequate housing, recreational and cultural activities – all the same basic rights that the “visible” are given.

In an informal discussion with a senior educator, he explains to me that the children and adolescents on the streets are escaping the suffering at home and in their communities. He clarifies, however, that these young people do not wake up one morning and choose to live in the streets. They have taken this decision, he contends, after much reflection and after no longer bearing the pain (be it psychological, emotional, physical and/or social, notably exclusion). When on the urban streets, he adds, the youths “find means to meet their basic needs which they could not at home, as they find food, affection, social inclusion.” He also argues that, these youths receive forms of assistantialism⁶ from various entities and organizations that provide remedial services (i.e. food, clothing, shelter) but, he emphasizes, they do not respect these youth “citizens”. That is to say, despite their best intentions, these organizations do not acknowledge these young people’s human and citizenship rights. He further explains that this is not a dignified way of approaching the problem of children and adolescents on the street. In fact, he believes, these forms of assistantialism are contributing to the problem, as these interventions do not bring long-term solutions; they are rather band-aids and do not facilitate ways for these youths to access the rights which they are entitled to.

In this regard, I ask the educator if he felt it was the right approach to take in terms of not providing food, for example, to the street youths, as they were hungry and far away from their

⁶ From my understanding, the notion of assistantialism (*assistencialismo*) is considered by the educators as a charity model reinforcing the street youths’ oppression and their state of dependency. Also, this approach focuses on the symptoms rather than on critically understanding the root causes of the street youths’, their families’ and communities’ problems.

homes. His reply is: the issue is not about food, but the message expressed through these forms of interventions; the ideology driving these actions which for him reinforce the status quo and these youths' oppression. He further expresses that what these youths need is to be made conscious that they are worthy of better conditions and lives, and that they are dignified beings with rights. More specifically, he continues:

They will starve at home or on the streets; the suffering will exist either way, but it is easier to work with them from home. When kids enter the streets, the problem is amplified;...and the longer they stay there, the harder it is to work on their life project. If they were to go hungry, they would eventually return home and we can begin a more concrete plan with them then.

Another educator has also underscored a similar philosophical contention where the youths' autonomy and choice are made more central:

The value of our work is contrary to the existing public policies that disregard the autonomy of the youths, as they rather grab them from the streets and put them in shelters, then in their homes; or take them from their home put them in shelters. [Here they blame] the mother who cannot take care of her children. In our case, when the child is on the street, we begin with the premise that, having judged for herself the street experience, that child, we believe, not only has the experiential knowledge, but has developed already a sense of autonomy, strength and power through those experiences.

Thus, the educators work in a way to give the children and adolescents on the street a visibility and, moreover, a voice to express these experiences. In this light, I have witnessed on several occasions the street youths asking the educators for money or food. Although, these educators

admit finding it difficult to turn away the youths, they always explain to them the reason they refuse and how they can be there for them and help them. What I consider the educators' 'tough love' for the youths is indicative of their ability to critically question how they can contribute to the empowerment or disempowerment of the street children and adolescents through their practices. Their understanding transcends the assistentialist stance typically adopted by the government and religious entities who also work with the youths in the streets of downtown Sao Paulo.

The *Subculture*

"The glue is their oxygen."

"Being part of this culture, the youths adopt different values."

The children and adolescents on the street gradually immerse into the street subculture. One of the educators explains that the youths develop significant relationships among them as well as with the general street population (i.e. adults); they are linked by similar stories, circumstances, needs and desires. This educator contends that, as a result, they create a collective identity based on survival, respect and affection. However, he also underscores that the youths "construct a reality, one that is different and distant from the outside world and abstract to their own imaginary." Absorbed in this other universe, the children and adolescents lose sight of their empowerment, that is, their capacity to transform their conditions and have healthier lives. Framed around empowerment and consciousness, one educator argues

We have to impart in the youths this notion of empowerment. These young people may feel free and that they have power because they make money on the street, they can buy glue to get high. But we want them to reflect on what freedom is and what power is.

In this line of thinking, another educator explicates the effectiveness of their practice:

That's why we use toys and games, to create a space where it's possible for them to return to being children and connect with that 'child'. The young person forgets that when s/he is on the street, s/he plays, has another role, absorbed in the street culture. Being part of this culture, the youths adopt different values. They seem to have the perception that they are adults; free to do to want they want, free to smoke, to sniff glue, to be a rogue, to have sex.

From this, I ask this last educator if he found it was fair to take this freedom away and place the youths back into an environment which may not be healthier or that will possibly not improve.

His response was:

I do not know if it is fair, but in my opinion, consciously or unconsciously, you miss your family, home, your motherland because that is where his things are: his memories, identity and story. We want to offer a way for that young person to connect with what s/he abandoned. On the street, nothing is really theirs, it is public. They live as a group; they develop a strong collective dynamic, they divide food, drugs, money, their mattresses. They build solidarity, they cry together and share personal stories. There are some youths who have been there a few months and some arrived with their families to live on the streets. Some have even been born on these streets. In some cases, generations have continued on the streets, that is sustaining the street culture. A big challenge is how

do you work with the pedagogy of desire when the youths tell you they do not want to leave the street, they like it here. Offering possibilities, alternatives, is not effective in that moment. You have to remain present, you try to make them question but respect their pace and where they are at; because at some point, they do reach a moment where they are tired of the street and that is when you begin reflecting on changing their situation and constructing a life project. It demands much reflection on our part too; we have to examine our desire to accelerate the process. We have to be self-reflective on our way of being, doing, on how we are feeling and how to improve our practice.

Although they have entered another reality, the children and adolescents on the street have dreams and desires, like the rest of society. They, however, may not be aware of these dreams and desires, nor in a conscious state to reach their actualization. The educators keep this in mind when they must overcome the barrier placed by the youths that they work with. To this effect, one educator elucidates that:

They want the same things that we want; they want to learn, to study, be with their families. I do not want to make my family sad [by being on the street], I want to get a job when I am older to help my mom. It is true that when they are on the street, they are not conscious of their desires, dreams and hopes. They are there because they have lost all hope and perspective. Unfortunately, they are bearing so much weight, that they cannot see and verbalize their desires. Our work is to remove that weight and help them get in contact with those desires, which are asleep but intact. So, we have to awaken and actualize them.

The street children and adolescents' dormant state is complex; they use substances (i.e. glue, marijuana and crack) in an attempt to forget their pain and suffering and, consequently in the process, they also repress their dreams, hopes and desires.

I remember observing the street youths one day as they were playing with the educators on the tarpaulin. The situation became a bit intense as some of the street boys kept sniffing glue from their plastic bottles. The educators reminded these youths that no sniffing was permitted on this space, although they were allowed to place the glue in their pants (usually placing it on the waistline). I noticed that as much as the youths were enjoying themselves with the activities, they could not seem to refrain themselves from the constant glue-sniffing. At the end of the day, I raised this issue with an educator and he explicitly replied, "The glue is their oxygen." One of the coordinators also explained to me that the problem is not just one of addiction and the solution is not simply detoxification. "Rather than institutionalize the youths for drug treatment, I will work on rooting them back to their motherland, to become protagonists and help them knit back their ties with their family and community." This coordinator speaks from years of experience, as he clearly remembers when the government agencies in the early 1990s would promote the institutionalization of drug users on the streets in downtown Sao Paulo. He explains that these policies were ineffective, as the underlying problem leading to the addiction, notably with the street youths, would not be resolved. As a result, many youths would return to the streets.

The educators who participated in this study all seem to have understood the importance of humanizing the children and adolescents who have immersed in this culture of survival,

namely the street subculture. They consider these youths, agents of change who require resources to empower themselves. As one educator explains:

I do not think there exists the street dweller, the poor, the crazy, but what exists is people who experience street situations, situations of poverty and of insanity, and each individual manages to deal with these situations the only way they know how to, with whatever resources they have. It can be social, cultural or financial resources as a possible answer, to solve what is making that person suffer. And, I think our work consists of building those possibilities with the youths; making them understand that there can be resources for them, to reduce or end the suffering, that they do not have to live this way.

Clearly, for this educator, the youths are a product of what they experience. Therefore, the educator's role is to foster critical thinking in a way that allows the street youths to not only envision the possibilities but also question which ones will bring them to achieve their dreams, desires and hopes. Another educator argues that:

Conscientizing [*conscientizar*] the youths, requires us to not refute their dreams [unrealistic, dangerous, unhealthy] as they are, we must accept that it is their dream and rather work around that and, at that time, attempt to provide them with facts, the possible outcomes, consequences that may emerge with this dream. We must illuminate their options, we must educate them.

The educators attempt to be a light on the street youths' path towards empowering themselves, while also understanding these children and adolescents' essence. The educator must always be in search of a balance between educating the youths on their rights and providing them with

resources but also learning from the youths, that is, who they are as well as their desires, dreams and hopes.

Furthermore, as we find the use of drugs part of the street subculture, the children and adolescents on the street also adopt other strategies for survival. One educator contends that the negative image attributed to the youths by society sometimes benefits them. She explains it thus:

They get money, food from people; they use the image that society has of them, to present themselves as part of the group. This tough appearance is also to be identified with the group. They try to intimidate, but they also play as victims, even with us.

Another educator adds that, “one of the youth told me that he uses charm⁷ to get money and food.” Thus, within the ethos of the street subculture, the street youths learn to manipulate, intimidate, charm and play victim in order to satisfy their basic needs, to conform to the group and, sadly, often to feed their addictions. Observing this reality, I can understand the great challenge for the educators to guide these youths back to their homes and communities - it is a long and rocky road.

The Family

“[The youths’] understanding, this construction of knowledge, also contaminates the family, where they become protagonists in the struggle as active citizens.”

Once the children and adolescents on the street begin awakening and identifying their desires, dreams and hopes, the work involves actualizing these hopes and dreams. It is at this

⁷ This educator used the expression “olho do gatinho” which translates as ‘eye of the kitten’; it refers to someone putting on the charm in order to influence someone or to obtain something.

point that the educators hope to establish a contact with the youth's family, but doing so with the youth's consent. As one educator contends "you can also begin working with the family, with the youth's permission, even with them on the street." Another educator relates that

One youth did not want to return home because he knew his mom would be upset with him and yell at him, but I reminded him of one of his desires, which was that he wanted to hug his younger brother, he missed him. I asked him if he would allow me to go to his home and bring him back some photos of his brother. I also asked him what was I to tell his mother? The youth must also be involved in every step, and you and him are always negotiating.

One of the many challenges for the educators, in the youth's reintegration process, is that they must attend to many needs and demands, since it is no longer just about the youth's, but also of each member of her/his family. In many cases, the educators are working with large families. As one coordinator informs me "for every youth, you are attending to between 5 to 10 people because you also care for the family."

The educators assess the needs of the youth and those of the family members in order to bridge both and strengthen the family unit, which is critical in the reintegration process and for the permanence of the youth in the home. Also, for an adequate reintegration of the youth into the family, the home environment and dynamics must be modified in a way to benefit all family members and to achieve a healthier outcome. However, the difficulty expressed by most of the educators is the lack of resources to help the families deal with the reintegration process. An educator explains to me that this type of situation is an extreme source of frustration, for both the educators as well as the youths' families they attend; especially, when the youths and their

families are cooperating and have a great willingness. Many, if not most, of the street youths' families live in the peripheries where they often face no services available to them or long waiting lists to receive these. One of the coordinators takes this issue in consideration but explains that:

Our focus is to help provide and find resources for the youths and their families in their community of origin, not those in the center, even though the majority of services are in the center. Otherwise, we are contributing to the youths staying on the street.

An educator argues that another challenge is that,

We also have to be conscious to not fall into assistentialism, in cases where we are working with the families we want to help them to access resources but we must help them to be autonomous; giving them the tools, the information so that they can have better lives.

In this line of thinking, an educator adds:

When we visit the families, their discourse is that it is our obligation to help them, but it [the help they define] is not the kind of help that will make them autonomous. Rather than helping them to help themselves, they want you to do it for them. So, we have to help them understand that this will not empower them.

The educators understand the importance of helping these disenfranchised families to be resourceful and autonomous rather than dependent and oppressed. The educators aim for sustainable solutions and believe that the knowledge they provide the families can aid them in empowering themselves. Thus, rather than giving these families a fish where they are fed for a day, the educators teach them how to fish where they can then feed themselves for life.

Ironic as it may sound, but essentially family empowerment begins with the youth on the street. Through the practice of *street social education*, the educators help the youths gradually regain their self-worth and dignity. In referring to this process, one educator recalls how she witnessed the evolution of one of the street youths she had been working with for some time:

Before returning home, to visit his mother, he wanted to wash his face, and was so proud to show his metro [subway] ticket, as he would usually find a way to sneak in. He looked at the metro agent with a look that said “I paid to get in” and on the way, he threw his garbage in the garbage can, meaning “I have the right to be here and to use this service.” This event was significant for the street youth as it embodied being a “visible” citizen. Moreover, this moment of consciousness for this youth consisted of taking his power back.

Furthermore, the educators promote the discourse of rights as a means for consciousness-raising. In doing so, it creates a multiplying effect. As one educator illustrates:

I have witnessed through our work some kind of chain reaction because in working with the youths, helping them become critically conscious and aware that they have rights, their understanding, this construction of knowledge, also contaminates⁸ the family, where they become protagonists in the struggle as active citizens.

The educators’ intend is for this ‘contamination’ or contagious practice of conscientization to permeate the street youths’ families but also into their communities, as the larger struggle for social justice and change also involves the community members.

⁸ The term contaminate is used by the educator with a positive connotation. In this context, it refers to the youth’s family who is influenced by the youth’s critical awareness and, as a result, becomes proactive.

The Community

“It is important to realize that if we are to mobilize, it has to be in the [street] youths’ community because they are not from the center [of Sao Paulo], their homes are not on the street; the struggle is not in the center, it is in the peripheries, although we see the repercussions here.”

In describing the challenges the educators regularly face when working to reintegrate the street youths back to their home and community, an educator explains that

The challenge is no longer to remove them from the street, now is where to place them, as there are few resources available to them. School, health, resources for the family are poor quality and scarce, which sometimes pushes them back to the center [of Sao Paulo].

Another educator echoes this and adds that

By the time services are made available, the youth has already turned to the street; the educator ends up having to start all over.

According to the educators in this study, on their first return⁹ home or being placed for the first time in a shelter/group home, many street youths end up back on the street. These occurrences have been the experience for most of the children and adolescents these educators have worked with. For the educators, their return to the streets is the result of the youths’ difficulty to adapt to the home environment or shelter/group home. These places, for the youths, may be distant and even become unfamiliar due to living in the universe of the streets. The educators also underscore that the youths’ reactions are understandable, especially in cases where the family situation does not change or when the staff of the shelter/group home make little effort to

⁹ Return or *retorno*, as used in Portuguese by the educators, can signify the youths’ first reunion with their family where they meet for the first time since the youths have been on the streets. It can also refer to the first time the youths decide to return to live with their families and leave the streets.

facilitate the youths' reintegration. Keeping this in mind, the educators must then revive the youths' hope and desires and, moreover, help them regain the strength to face these challenges. As one of the educators argues, "[when] the youths get discouraged and lose motivation during the [reintegration] process, you work through their frustration, anxiety and emotions and you bring them back to their desires."

The educators' work here consists of constructing the street children and adolescents' life project, one building block at a time: the educators consider this process a "trabalho de formiga"¹⁰. As one educator explains,

The reintegration of the youths is a long process; it can start with the educators accompanying them to medical appointments, to obtain documentation (e.g. birth certificates) to eventually help them return to their family, re-enter school, find cultural and recreational activities which they can participate in their communities.

Therefore, the educators help the street youths realize they are citizens with rights and, moreover, once reintegrated in their communities, they assist them in obtaining their rights. To this effect, an educator contends that

I think that is how our work differs from others. We respect the youth's autonomy and together with them, we are with them in their struggle, but we always have the perspective that they eventually will be provoked, through our work with them, and allow us to help them; that they will empower themselves and be on the quest for their rights.

Another educator illustrates that

¹⁰ Trabalho de formiga translated is ant work where emphasis is put on the small steps to actualize the street youths' life projects.

For example, if a youth goes to the hospital or clinic and is not attended to, then we return together and he gets attention, then the next time he goes alone, he knows that he has the right to be attended to, to have access to these health services, just like anyone else because he is a citizen. So, after [experiencing] such a situation where he is denied a right, he knows that he can find us and we will help him, and he knows that he has the right to speak up and demand the service, as it is otherwise a violation of his right.

A coordinator also argues

Nobody is born a citizen, it is given by government, yet they are all born with rights. The youths may be born with no identity, poverty may be a factor; no documentation infringes on their capacity to be a citizen. These communities [where the street youths are from] must take responsibility for their youths.

This last coordinator works with the communities in two large favelas (slums) where some of the street youths are from. He believes in the importance of working as well with the community members for them to assert their rights (i.e. access to basic services). For him, these efforts, to better the conditions in the peripheries, is a form of preventative measure to reduce the risk of future youths on the street. Engaging the community is also part of the youth's empowerment process. As one educator explains

It is important to realize that if we are to mobilize, it has to be in the [street] youths' community because they are not from the center, their home is not on the street; the struggle is not in the center, it is in the peripheries, although we see the repercussions here. We need to facilitate the empowerment of these communities, seek the root of the problems...Because the youths' violation of rights began and are mainly happening in

their communities, that is what we have to consider. We have to contextualize the struggle based on the youths' reality.

Thus, the educators work on a larger scale, to some extent, as they often must identify the needs of the youths, their families as well as the communities, the violations occurring in their specific region and the actions required, in order to improve the overall situation of the youths.

Society

“...some people have everything and others have nothing.”

As I have understood in discussing with the educators and through my observations, the destitute conditions of the street youths, their families and their communities are culturally embedded. As previously indicated, throughout the history of Brazil as well as in today's society, we find the color of poverty. In this light, one of the coordinators argues that the culture of oppression has perpetuated the ongoing oppression and exploitation of Afro-Brazilians. He provides the example of assistentialism and explains that this form of oppression is considered by politicians, the Church and the wealthy in Brazil as an action of good deed or charity. He adds that the discourse of the dominant class is seeped into the idea of the poor, dominantly of color, accepting handouts and help, and be grateful. As one educator expounds,

The dominant discourse uses the discourse of rights. For example, if you take the case of Brazil which has a cruel income distribution, people have adopted the discourse of rights, but ask them to give up a little of their rights in order to contribute to the rights of others, nobody wants to make a sacrifice. So some people have everything and others have

nothing. The problem with the discrimination against street youths is that it is culturally engrained. For example, even populations in favelas will label these youths, perceiving them as vagabonds. Thus, the [dominant] discourse is not only used by the dominant class but also by the people in the favelas. They [these people] do not examine the situation critically, that their own right is being violated, but also that so is the other's; their values are defined by the dominant discourse.

To use the language of Paulo Freire (1972), this is "false consciousness" where one does not realize one's own oppression, and the oppressed takes on the language of the oppressor. An organic part of false consciousness, Freire argues, is that the oppressed believe they get what they deserve; any notion of "rights", ironically even their own, is fought against. Thus, historically there has been a mechanism for paternalism to sustain this culture of oppression. Today, paternalism is under the guise of the discourse of rights; consequently, large segments of the population, namely Afro-Brazilians who are impoverished and disenfranchised continue to remain silenced. As an educator so candidly puts it:

You shut people up by giving them things in the form of social assistance, for example, to gain votes but you are not concerned about the best interest of these people. So here [in Brazil], you do not vote for ideology, you vote for who will "help" you. Today we do not have a political dictatorship but we have a dictatorship that is expressed in other forms, such as territorial segregation, poor quality and lack of public services, income inequality; it is a symbolic dictatorship. We can only dilute this dictatorship by educating critically. That is why politicians are only interested in education not knowledge.

As Freire critically exposed the case of Brazil's former education system, we unfortunately still find today education through the banking approach and as a means for sustaining the culture of silence and oppression. Liberating education, on the other hand, provides students (i.e., street youths, their family and community) knowledge which can allow them to empower themselves and transform their conditions.

One educator maintains hope and shares his personal story as an Afro-Brazilian from an impoverished community:

I come from a low-income community in the periphery of Sao Paulo. Being black, having a university degree, where less than 2% of blacks in society have a university degree, I am considered an elite. So maybe I can set an example and give hope to my community that there are opportunities and possibilities for them. This can change the people's perspectives, to consider their lives through another lens.

Therefore, as I have discussed in the social and cultural empowerment section, the educators actively promote liberatory pedagogy through street social education in order for street children and adolescents, their families as well as their communities to emancipate themselves and, moreover, to breed a new culture of freedom. Furthermore, the educators help the street youths face the social and cultural challenges while reintegrating them(selves) back in their home and community and together, work at overcome these.

The economic and political spheres are the other two challenges that the youths have to face and work through. In the following sections, I will discuss how the economic and political reality in Brazil has impacted the street youths as well as how *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação*

Projeto Travessia's practices have contributed to the street youths' economic and political empowerment.

Economic Empowerment

School

"Formal schooling does not understand the [street] youths; they can also teach us, they are not only there to learn."

Education is a means for economic empowerment for the street children and adolescents as it can increase employment opportunities in a growing knowledge-based economy. As one educator argues "youths need schooling; although the entering stage is very challenging, returning to school is crucial for increasing opportunities." Another educator adds that the key is "building strong partnerships with schools and to sensitize [them] to help youths succeed in school".

However, a great challenge remains the dearth of vacancies for students in public schools. As it was explained to me by one female educator, the Statute of Children and Adolescents (ECA), indicates that the municipal Guardianship Council (Conselho Tutelar) is the entity responsible for finding a place for the youths in a public school in their neighborhood; and if this is not possible, then the municipal government must cover the tuition fees in order for the youths to attend a private school. This last course of action, she explains, rarely occurs. Reiterating this contention, another educator contends that "it is a long process to find a space and place for these youths in a school; and some schools avoid having certain [type of] students." A third educator underscores this by arguing that, "it is a great challenge to work with all

stakeholders, as some are resistant, such as the school, and we have to push for public policy implementation and make reference to the ECA and build networks.”

Many of the educators I discussed with generally stated that the street youths’ integration or re-integration into school is difficult because their peers and teachers may stigmatize them. The educators also have witnessed resistance from the school administration and personnel in accepting the youths and/or facilitating these young people’s reintegration in the school. Furthermore, the issue of inclusive education and democratic approaches to teaching and learning is also problematic. To this effect, one educator contends that

Formal schooling does not understand the [street] youths; they can also teach us, they are not only there to learn. They can contribute to the production of knowledge yet, they have no voice in the classroom.

In considering the ongoing difficulties in accessing quality education shared by not only street children and adolescents but also numerous youths from impoverished communities from the peripheries of Sao Paulo, *Projeto Quixote* is planning to open an alternative school for this vulnerable population in 2010. More specifically, this pilot project is to target children from 0-4 years of age and hopes to eventually expand and offer schooling to older children. In a discussion with the coordinator of this new proposed school, I asked him if the intent was for non-formal education to pervade into formal education? He responded that

It should rather be seen as non-formal education infecting formal education; it is like a virus, more aggressive and emphatic. The school aims to provide basic education for 0-4 years and we hope to obtain funding through a government partnership. I have to create conditions for my practices to inspire more practices and consciences, of the population,

of schools, of governments. It is fundamental to always keep in mind that everything we do is part of a systemization, because our practice generates knowledge for scaling up and inspiring.

I realize that this initiative for an alternative school is a preventative means as it focuses on younger children who could potentially be at-risk youths. When I asked the coordinator whether a similar school might also be necessary for the older children, notably street youths, he concurred. However, he added funding is always an issue and, as a result, they must limit the number of students at this time and, thus, must select a specific age group. He admits that this required making a difficult decision and he philosophically contended: “I have to keep in mind that I want to help as many children as possible, but I cannot save the world, I am not a savior, otherwise, I would fall in a psychosis.”

Thus, in addition to fostering a critical awareness in the street youths and educating them on their rights, the educators also support and accompany these young people in their struggle to obtain an education. To do so, the educators advocate the youths’ rights in their community as well as build and strengthen networks at various levels (i.e. school, community and municipal government). The educators realize the constraints of the education system but recognize the importance for the street children and adolescents to further their education. Such education can increase these youths’ opportunities in the formal job market, break the generational cycle of poverty and, even enhance social mobility.

Economic Limitations and Possibilities

“...I want to go to university. I want to be somebody. I realize it will help me move forward...I want to return to school, but I have to work. We need money to live and to buy things, to pay bills and debts. If I go to school [now], school will not pay my debts.”

Within Brazil’s modern society, we find large pockets of poverty exemplifying an economically developing nation where only few prosper and many are sidelined. Street children and adolescents who have escaped the favelas, which they have known as homes, already understand at a young age the economic struggles their families and communities face. These young people observe and experience destitution where they come from. As one of the NGOs participating in this study underscores in their latest publication, in the case of many street youths’ families

At least one of the adults is unemployed. In the majority of families, the mother works outside the home and is away from home for long periods. It is common for adults to not be inserted in the formal job market and the low salaries generated from informal work do not guarantee the basic necessities of the family.¹¹

Furthermore, this same document explains, we find the street youths’ communities characterized by “little formal work...[and] disorderly occupation, where basic sanitation and urban infrastructure are lacking. [There are] few resources like public health facilities, education, sports, culture and areas of recreation, community centers...”.¹² Therefore, in the street children

¹¹ Fundação Projeto Travessia. (2009). *Educação na Rua: Reflexões Sobre a Prática*, São Paulo, p. 37.

¹² Ibid., p. 51.

and adolescents' communities there are few spaces for socialization and for the life of the community in general to take place.¹³

In what may seem insurmountable conditions in this reality, *Fundação Projeto Travessia* and *Projeto Quixote* have attempted to empower the street youths economically by the means of various programs throughout the years. More specifically, *Fundação Projeto Travessia* explains in one of their publications that with the *Bolsa Travessia* (Travessia Fund), they offered a stipend to the street youths aiming for them to remain off the streets and in their communities of origin, especially since many would obtain money on the streets.¹⁴ The objective of the *Bolsa* was also to encourage the youths to participate in *Fundação Projeto Travessia*'s educational programs such as *PEACEL* (Education, Art, Culture and Recreation Program). As described in their publication, *PEACEL* intend to facilitate street youths' reintegration in school as the educators helped the youths participating in different scholastic program such as reading, writing and mathematics.¹⁵ In addition, youths from 16 years of age are offered to participate in activities geared towards their insertion in the labor market.¹⁶ Unfortunately, *Fundação Projeto Travessia*'s coordinator informed me that, due to financial constraints, as experienced by many NGOs, these initiatives (i.e. *Bolsa Travessia* and *PEACEL*) no longer exist.

In the case of *Projeto Quixote*, they have created programs for at-risk youths and their families which have provided them with economic opportunities. In discussing with the educators, they have explained to me that the street youths who return to their home and

¹³ Ibid., p.51.

¹⁴ Calil, M.I. (2001). *Fundação Projeto Travessia: Da Rua Para a Cidadania*. São Paulo: Publisher Brasil, p. 51.

¹⁵ *Fundação Projeto Travessia* website, <http://www2.uol.com.br/aprendiz/designsocial/travessia/programas.htm>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

community can benefit from the programs, as these can facilitate their reintegration process. In visiting *Projeto Quixote*'s head office, I discovered that they offer adolescents, namely those who have completed or are in the process of completing high school, internships in administration positions in the private sector. They have also created *Agência Quixote Spray Arte* which has allowed youths to learn graffiti techniques and eventually obtain work through *Quixote*'s in-house graffiti services.¹⁷ Also, their workshops in multimedia (i.e. video production, photography and images) has given young participants the opportunity, thus far, to produce an institutional video and documentaries, of which one has been screened in Canada and Mexico.¹⁸

One youth participant shared with me his personal experience as he was involved in the production of and was filmed in the documentary "Exilados do Mundo" (Exiles of the World)¹⁹:

...[T]hat experience has changed me, I learned a lot, I do not do things that I did before. It woke me up, I woke up to the world. I realize I deserve to live, I deserve to conquer my goals. I no longer belong to Fundação Casa.²⁰ I now want to be an educator and get the training. When I was at Fundação Casa, where they [*Projeto Quixote* staff] asked me if I wanted to join the making of the documentary, they trusted me to work with them. We eventually went to the University of Ottawa to present the documentary and it was also diffused on national television programs [in Brazil]. I am now working in Quixote. I

¹⁷ *Projeto Quixote* website, <http://www.projetoquixote.org.br/atividades/atendimento.aspx?area=2&idContent=8>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ **Exilados do Mundo** is produced by a group of youth from São Paulo, Brazil who experienced incarceration in a juvenile detention centre in the infamous FEBEM system. Through voice and image, they convey their experiences of conflict with the law and their struggles in life. Film synopsis from University of Calgary, Latin American Research Centre. Retrieved June 15, 2009 from <http://larc.ucalgary.ca/past-events-2006>.

²⁰ Fundação Casa, formerly known as FEBEM, is a juvenile detention centre in São Paulo where this youth spent 1 year and 2 months.

work part-time with Quixote in film production and I would like to finish high school.

Making the film and being part of it gave me so many opportunities... I have learned that we can conquer our objectives in life without hurting or trampling on anyone; you do not have to do anything bad to gain something, to benefit you. Now I want to be like everybody else, want a job and get an education; I want to go to university. I want to be somebody. I realize it will help me move forward.

This youth, however, sheds light on the challenges to achieve his goals:

I want to return to school, but I have to work. We need money to live and to buy things, to pay bills and debts. If I go to school [now], school will not pay my debts. Therefore, I have to work first. Things will work out, I have faith in God. I do not know about tomorrow, I only know today; I just ask God to bless me and to reach tomorrow.

As this youth's testimony illustrates, all youths have dreams, hopes and desires regardless of their circumstances. Actualizing them however, at least, for some, requires being given an opportunity. In this line of thinking, a coordinator argues in *Projeto Quixote's* latest publication: "...the option between a can of spray and a weapon can be a question of opportunity."²¹

Furthermore, as one of the coordinators explained to me, *Projeto Quixote* also provides educational opportunities to the mothers of the youths who are attended to by the NGO. These mothers, who generally face socio-economic challenges, can participate in craft workshops and

²¹ Madalena, R.C. (2007). O Jovem e o Mundo do Trabalho. In *Textos de Apoio: Setor Ensino Projeto Quixote*. São Paulo, p. 118.

generate income through the sale of their products as these are sold through partnerships with shops, bazaars as well as via the Internet.²²

Thus, I contend that both *Fundação Projeto Travessia* and *Projeto Quixote* have shown to offer educational programs which can contribute, at least to some extent, to street youths' economic empowerment. These young people are given opportunities to learn new skills and enhance their employability. Also, mothers are offered possibilities to become autonomous and provide for their children. The investments that *Fundação Projeto Travessia* and *Projeto Quixote* have made over the last decade, in creating various programs, shows their continued hope for the youths they work with. In working with their potentialities, these NGOs aspire to equalize opportunities in a cruelly unjust society, so that street youths can have, like any other child or adolescent, a healthy and prosperous future.

In the next section, I will discuss the political obstacles faced by the educators from *Fundação Projeto Travessia* and *Projeto Quixote* as well as the constraints by the government which both impede on the street youths' empowerment. As I argue that the political dimension of street social education is crucial for engendering social transformation, I will also raise the possibilities for ways the selected NGOs can contribute to these youths' political empowerment.

²²Also consulted for additional information *Projeto Quixote* website, <http://www.projetoquixote.org.br/atividades/atendimento.aspx?area=2&idContent=8>.

Political Empowerment

Political (dis)Empowerment and the Educators' Roadblocks

“So how are we to convince an educator that they are to mobilize in the center when our financiers, those that we depend on for our existence, are the same ones who create the conditions that youths find themselves in?”

The origins of street social education in Brazil, notably in Sao Paulo, emerged from a political movement where advocates for street youths' rights recognized the importance for a social pedagogy with a political nature. As described in the literature review, this movement for social change politicized and mobilized street youths. In having the distinct honor to discuss with the current general director of the *Street Boys and Girls Project – PMMR*, who is also a former street youth himself, I was able to understand more clearly the historical role of the *National Movement for Street Boys and Girls – MNMMR* in Brazil. He explained to me that in 1989, he amongst approximately 1000 street youths and children's rights advocates from across the country, as well as an international delegation participated in a protest. More specifically, this protest involved the street youths marching into the National Congress in Brasilia, sitting in the congressmen's seats and claiming their rights as citizens in a speech addressed to the house. This strong mobilization resulted in the enactment of children and adolescents' rights within the Brazilian Constitution. Although, this was an epic achievement in children and adolescents' rights, notably those of street youths, today, however, the struggle continues for the implementation of these young people's rights.

In discussing with the various stakeholders within *Fundação Projeto Travessia* and *Projeto Quixote*, I have come to the realization that these NGOs' efforts to help the street children and adolescents empower themselves are fragmented. That is to say, while I have found

that practicing street social education can serve as a means to empower the youths, political action remains distant from the institutional discourse. For some educators, being engagé to street youths' rights while working in an institution, such as an NGO like *Fundação Projeto Travessia* and *Projeto Quixote* is itself a paradox. For me, this double consciousness of being aware of the institutional constraints while advocating children's rights shows that these educators are aware of the political challenges that accompany their work. They underscore that internal factors within the NGO limit their *marge de manoeuvre*, that is, they interfere and undermine their political position. One of the educators argues that

Because we choose to do this, a possibility is to move to a higher position where we have more decision-making power and influence to change our current position and practices.

The problem here [within the NGO] is one of institutional structures and of ideology.

Also, another educator contends that

We have one person telling us how to do our work and we have to do it; they define our position. The problem is that it seems that the institution adopts just one vision; we need to expand that vision and build bridges to facilitate this. Also, we lost many great educators because of the controlling hierarchal structures of the institution, who were not open to include other visions. We sometimes feel like we are treated as amateurs and having little voice.

In the same vein, a third educator adds

Because of the hierarchy and the power concentrated in the hands of the people above us, it is up to them whether we will be allowed to implement our ideas or not. So, it is one thing to discuss these ideas and issues, it is another to act on them.

Clearly what these educators put forth suggests that any decision or action to be implemented within the NGOs involves many interests, which may not be in line with those of the educators'. In the end, those in a position of institutional power can sideline and disregard the educators, thus limiting their political capacity.

In a discussion with the educators on the limitations of the NGOs they work for, one educator highlights the vicious cycle of both his work and youths' lives: street-NGO work/shelter/street again:

I was truly disappointed when I saw the same adolescent that I worked with as a child still on the street, that nothing has changed. Having seen this, I came to understand that each youth [on the street], is a dollar gained for the NGO attending to them. Governments spend money on different organizations replicating the same work, serving the same youths, yet they [the youths] end up returning to the street. It creates jobs, but our perspective should be that we should no longer need street educators to exist.

In the same line of thinking, another educator sheds light on the dynamics between the NGO he works for and their funder from the private sector, which is no different than the public sector:

We [the NGO] were born from a private sector initiative. The idea here was that, if street youths were well attended to, then this would minimize their interference with the business in the center [of Sao Paulo]. So, how are we to convince an educator that they are to mobilize in the center when our financiers, those that we depend on for our existence, are the same ones who create the conditions that youths find themselves in? If you consider all the organizations in the center [who attend to these street youths], very few have a political perspective because they lack a political influence in regards to their

professionalization, that is to say, to exercise political action. Mobilization involves real blood and sweat, experiences of being beaten, physically attacked; you cannot simply adopt a discourse. We have had one of our financiers calling us, asking us to remove a street youths who was in front of his building. In this situation, how are we to mobilize the educator with these contradictions?

From this, I cannot help but question if efforts are being invested in finding viable sustainable solutions or rather in creating employment within the newest sector of the economy. NGOs find themselves competing for meager resources and, in the midst, educators must have to compromise their development ideals and objectives in order to serve those of their financiers. As one educator elucidates “We have to question the values of our society more profoundly, to then question the legitimacy of our service.” Another educator argues that

Our work should not be based on numbers, on how many youths I have cared for because, at the end of the month, we have to provide a report to our financiers. The quality of an educator, his ability to establish meaningful ties with the youths is disregarded; our work is solely quantified.

These educators’ discontent with their working conditions, ironically, parallels the oppressive state of the street youths they work with. That is, similarly to the youths, I consider the educators’ conditions as contributing to their own disempowerment. For instance, one educator expresses how the professional community devalues the educators:

I believe it is necessary, the importance of having a training specific to street social education; a social pedagogy as a discipline. We unfortunately no longer here [in Brazil] value or talk much about Paulo Freire. We have difficulty legitimizing as a profession the

street educator. We give more value to psychologists, social workers and other professionals and also because our work is not regulated. We do not have an association, a council, an organization to represent ourselves. This type of representation could give us support and give us legitimacy and give value to our work; our voice would then be heard and our demands and concerns would be considered. Consequently, all policies related to the area of social education are formulated or assumed by other professionals from all those other “recognized” disciplines. Therefore, in the end, anybody can be an educator. We are fighting in this country for street youths’ rights yet our work is not even legitimized.

One of the coordinators also adds that

It is necessary to regulate capitation, to improve and standardize salaries. For example, to have some kind of union for educators, as opposed to what we have now, which is a very generic union for all third sector employees, encompassing different professionals.

Should anyone contest the educators, their meager salaries can serve to show their devalued position on the professional ladder. One educator explained to me that to be hired by the NGO, the educators are required to possess an undergraduate university degree, yet their salaries are substantially low and do not reflect those of professionals with the same level of education.

Furthermore, I have found that like many NGOs, financial resources are scarce for the NGOs under investigation here; this ends up impacting the educators’ effectiveness in their work. One educator raises the issue of the difficult task of managing their limited time to ensure both the home visits to the street youths’ families as well as the street work. She argues that “...because it seems that as we dig a hole, we discover another one.” Thus, the work multiplies

but not the number of educators. On a larger scale, I have noted from my observations that with the persisting street youth phenomenon in downtown Sao Paulo, the problem consists of an overall lack of services, or rather investments in these services. The demand is significantly high with the educators finding themselves with numerous cases to work on, yet the financial support is to a bare minimum. It is not surprising then, as one educator put it, “we also have few resources for materializing our methodology or for our pedagogical materials.”

In considering the ongoing struggle the educators face, I ask them how they manage and move forward in their work with the street children and adolescents, notably to facilitate these youths’ political empowerment. One educator reflectively answers, with an interrogation:

The question is, how do we balance at the same time our material necessities with our ideological necessities, and there is an existing ideological necessity to be here.

Otherwise, we would be working elsewhere where we could benefit from a much higher salary, namely a job with a better salary and with benefits.

Another educator who has been working within one of the NGOs for numerous years contends that: “if an educator does not engage in political action, his work is not effective. NGOs have that limitation but the educational process does not have these limitations.” In other words, educators can be engaged politically through the means of education, as it creates an opening for the political mobilization, regardless of institutional constraints. This same educator also adds:

We can support them [the street youths] and help them realize the importance of confronting the situation [injustices, violations and violence] they face. Our methodology has a political angle but not explicitly. We help youths in their reintegration process but within our interventions, we maintain a political perspective. Our work is not limited to

technical and therapeutic assistance; we have to challenge “interests”. We have to fight interests, as we have to confront many actors throughout the youths’ reintegration process in order for them to obtain their rights.

I believe that what lies within the educators is their critical capacity to question the system and push the envelope in hopes to overcome, through small steps, the barriers that are placed in their way. Thus, this can potentially be a symbiotic effort, as their struggle ties into that of the street youths, their families and communities the educators work with.

As I have raised the internal difficulties within the selected NGOs, I will now turn to what I have found to be the government’s constraints on the selected NGOs. I will discuss further how these affect the *Fundação Projeto Travessia* and *Projeto Quixote* educators’ capacity to facilitate the street youths’ political empowerment.

The State Apparatus

“Although we are politicized and we feel the youths suffering, the government is the one who has the power.”

I have noted that police operations have often impeded on educators’ work, as street youths may relocate to another region in fear of the police. To this effect, the educators have explained that particularly during election campaign periods the aggressive cleaning operations are intensified, as was the case in October 2008. The educators elucidate that politicians vow to “clean up” the streets and, as a result, legal, and in many cases illegal measures are taken to fulfill political promises.

When illegal measures are used, interestingly enough, educators may pose a threat to the police, as they can serve as witnesses and also because they regularly hear the youths' testimonies of being assaulted by the police. This however can place the educators in danger. For example, one educator shared with me his personal experience where he was pepper-sprayed by the police while on duty. He argues "the police as an institution who represent the law and who have the responsibility to ensure that we abide by the law, do not always respect our right to work." Another adds

Not only do these constraints affect our rights to work but also our rights as citizens, as we have a responsibility as members of society to protect youths and denounce any violations committed against them.

One of the educators also underscores that

It is very difficult to face these situations as we do not have an effective political position. The police who work for the defence of rights and should be our partner in this endeavour resort to these interventions on other institutions, notably partner institutions. And, when they are requested to convoke in order to deal with the situation, they withdraw.

Here, educators explained that working for an NGO contracted by the municipal government poses a greater challenge to maintain their political stance. As one educator elucidates, "the challenge for educators is to deconstruct all this, but if we become too political, the government will cut our projects." Another educator compellingly contends,

We live a contradiction, [in the sense] that street social educators have become a form of creating employment. We face challenges, like our precarious work, our meagre salaries, our mental health that is at risk, witnessing the youths' and their families' profound

misery. The problem is we never want to discuss the State and the government and who represents these. Although we are politicized and we feel the youths suffering, the government is the one who has the power. Considering the living conditions and degrading situations the youths must endure, I too would turn to the streets; I too would not be able to endure it. All we do is reinvent the wheel, where the political game remains the same. We need to improve policies on health, education, housing, employment. Rather than creating employment, we create social assistance. The government spends millions on external debts, yet takes a minute fraction to invest in education; it is an issue of interest. There is a history in Brazil of street youths, and NGOs serve the interests of governments and the private sector. So it is complicated. For an educator to question too much, we run the risk of losing our job and I need my job or we end up in the same situation as the youths. We, however, have the will to help the youths.

The nature of the educators' role is very intricate, notably as the educators are thrust into a dynamic of many interests, namely their own, the institutions they work for, the government and the business sector. Nevertheless, the educators clearly demonstrate their commitment to the street youths and their perseverance to surmount the obstacles which impede their work. As the educators foster in the youths a critical awareness on their conditions, the educators also reflect critically on their own reality and realize the importance of their struggle, as they envision the larger political project. As one educator puts it: "What is a greater challenge: fighting the struggle from within the NGO or fighting the struggle outside of it? On the inside, we deal with internal politics but fighting from the outside, we have no salary and even less support."

While I have raised the constraints and limitations faced by the selected NGOs in facilitating the street youths' social, cultural, economic and, more significantly, their political empowerment, I also wish to shed light on the possibilities which have been discussed with the various stakeholders from *Fundação Projeto Travessia* and *Projeto Quixote*. These possibilities can serve as a stepping-stone for overcoming the existing challenges and, moreover, for evolving the current best practices of street social education.

Creating Alternatives Spaces for Politicization: Where the Hope Lies

“...by having solidarity amongst all the educators working with the street youths, this could facilitate pressuring governments to implement policies and respect our pedagogical practices. We should reactivate the educators' forum that we had and create more informal movements; we have to create alternative spaces where we can have more influence.”

In discussing with the coordinators and educators from *Fundação Projeto Travessia* and *Projeto Quixote*, I found the majority in both NGOs concurred that strengthening their networks with other entities, which attend the street youths in downtown Sao Paulo, was essential for enhancing the effectiveness of their work. One coordinator suggests that “...network-building at different levels is important, through forums, and discussing cases with other educators who also work with the same youths.” Another educator also contends thus

The challenge that many NGOs face is the lack of networking; this [networking] could contribute immensely for effectively attending to the youths. Working together, collaborating, could mean that the consequences of one's actions could benefit another's and for facilitating the youths' reintegration process, rather than working in isolation and re-doing the work that has already been done.

The educators have also raised the possibilities for strengthening their political stance and for mobilizing. In this regard, one educator posits:

I think it is crucial to have an organization of educators, independent of the institutions they represent and the government or companies that finance them, in order to discuss our practices, to have a space where we can voice our concerns. Organizing educators in this way could facilitate the political mobilization and the creation of a political entity represented by a collectivity of educators, and also to provide educators an education that is missing, that they feel is required in order to face the challenges that limit their work: an education that includes our contribution, our baggage, [our] life experiences, our knowledge that is not necessarily offered via the institutions we work for. This type of organization could provide us [the educators] with the support network, as we fundamentally require support and for the purpose of re-education, construction of new knowledge, because at this time we are service providers which translates into implementing current government policies, serving the interests of politicians. We have to revindicate, to have a support base, so our work influences and is reflected in social policies and that we have secure financing for our projects in order to have continuity in our work.

Another educator argues that:

We lack political power and mobilization, we cannot expect changes, for the government to change their posture if we do not all work together and take on the struggle together. We have to be committed to this struggle together; it has to come from the bottom-up,

this power. We have to fight against these injustices, youths dying and living in misery and our own working conditions and keep believing in our work.

To this effect, one educator adds

... so we should all work together and be concerned to find a solution collectively. This does not mean that we have to homogenize our distinct methodologies, but rather to improve policies related to child and adolescent assistance, to make our work effective, as we all have to deal with the same challenges daily.

I discussed with a senior educator who explained to me that, in 2007, there existed a forum of educators from different NGOs, including *Fundação Projeto Travessia* and *Projeto Quixote*, who would meet regularly. He mentioned that

...[T]hey [the educators] would discuss different issues and challenges they faced, such as the police, violations of rights of street youths and how to overcome them. It was thematic discussions. We, however, did not reach the point of putting the strategies into practice because of the dissolution. With the change of government, some NGOs lost their contract, their staff was reduced and they were not able to attend, as they had to do their work.

Moreover, this last educator underscored the importance of this type of forum. He puts it thus:

[B]y having solidarity amongst all the educators working with the street youths, this could facilitate pressuring governments to implement policies and respect our pedagogical practices. We should reactivate the educators' forum that we had and create more informal movements; we have to create alternative spaces where we can have more influence.

Based on this response, I asked him why the NGO he worked for was not involved as a member in the municipal government's *Children and Adolescents' Rights Municipal Council* (CMDCA)²³, similar for example to the *Street Boys and Girls Project* (PMMR)? He replied that

In the past, we have participated in these discussions with the CMDCA and we stood alone in the debates, while the other NGOs withdrew themselves because they knew they were at risk of being penalized in terms of their contracts. We have to change the perspective, NGOs feel that they are serving the government; on the contrary, they must be there to defend [street youths'] rights. So we have to strengthen our position as civil society to influence these implementations [of rights]. When we had a seat at the CMDCA, we were not seen in a positive light; because of the fact that we were "free", [in the sense that] we had no contract with the government, we were perceived as making noise. We confronted many issues when we were there, but had no backing from the other NGOs on these crucial issues. Their neutrality is not ill-intended, but it should not just be us; it has to be a collective effort to have an impact. The fact that these NGOs rely on government funding, makes our job and the whole situation complex; that is why I believe in creating forums.

In my discussion with the educators, furthermore, I have also understood the importance of not only the educators' mobilization but also that of the street youths' communities. One educator argues that educators can contribute in ways for these communities to mobilize.

²³ The *Children and Adolescents' Rights Municipal Council* (CMDCA) in each municipality is made up of both government officials and NGO representatives. In theory, this council is responsible for managing funds as well as ensuring policy and program implementation. However, the educator elucidates that effective implementation of the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) remains an issue.

However, for this to happen, it must be done with caution. He elucidates that, and he is worth noting at length:

The people have to emancipate themselves, we cannot do it for them, but we can facilitate the process by conscientizing them. Political mobilization is a revolution without guns and aggression, but must be born in the communities; by the people for the people. Through our work, we are trying to awaken the consciousness of the youths, their families and communities, but it is a complex and long process, as we have to do it by respecting their pace of evolving, their reality and knowledge, their perspectives, but most importantly, we have to work together. We cannot ever impose, as it is their struggle which they must determine the terms. We can bring them hope to construct another reality. We have to listen and understand them, and help them appropriate the means and organize themselves to be liberated. We must involve the community, including the drug traffickers, as they can be part of the struggle; in fact, they can influence. NGOs can, if they truly have a political stance, contribute to people's sense of self and freedom by considering the people's knowledge, not their own. The problem in our society is that we value and give credit to the architect or engineer and not the builder who build the house; this logic transcends all relations. Thus, we have to value the knowledge of the youths, their families and communities, as that is the foundation for the mobilization. [NGOs] can also take an active role in mediating in the community and in systemizing, but not having a role of dependence. It is about helping people stand on their own, so the NGO's absence should not be felt at an eventual point.

Another important element which was raised by one of the educators is the essence of the authentic educator in the political struggle. By authenticity, he is speaking of the educator's *savoir-être* as being crucial for the mobilization. He explains that

Educators are trained to educate but they do not come out of university knowing how to be political, to be a militant, and making the link is a process; this is crucial, as one is not separated from the other. This [education and political mobilization in practice] is always a challenge because there are educators who were not born in the same reality as the [street] youths, so they need to understand this reality first; it is also a process of learning for the educator. And, for the educator to contribute to the youths' empowerment, they must have a political stance. They must possess the *savoir-être* which is not taught in our universities. It is maybe innate or acquired through experience, but in this case, the educator is appropriating the struggle as her own, she believes in it. Mobilization is neither a vocation nor a profession, it is in you and it is something you believe in.

As clearly inferred by the educators, political action is possible to be achieved through a united front. Thus, strengthening networks, establishing a forum of educators and mobilizing educators as well as the street youths, their families and communities are means in which *Fundação Projeto Travessia* and *Projeto Quixote* can potentially facilitate the street youths' political empowerment. Here, I believe that it is through this form of empowerment, through radical politicization and hope that the street youths can be agents of change and emancipate themselves; to be active citizens in their society. Because their social, cultural and economic empowerment can, essentially, be achieved by transforming the social structures, it therefore requires these youths' political empowerment.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The research adopted a qualitative design, namely *two ethnographic case studies*. The study aims to investigate two NGOs working with street children and adolescents as well as to understand street youths as a subculture. An ethnographic case study “is more than an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a social unit or phenomenon. It is a sociocultural analysis of the unit of study” (Merriam, 1988, p.23). Thus, for these two ethnographic case studies, I have used ethnographic methods (i.e., techniques such as participant observations, fieldwork and interviewing) to examine what, if any, and how the selected NGOs’ pedagogical approaches and non-formal education (NFE) programs facilitate street youths’ empowerment? These set of methods also afforded me the opportunities to understand street youths as a collective identity or culture-sharing group (Wolcott, 1994). Examining the NGOs’ pedagogical approaches and NFE programs targeted at street children and adolescents served as a point of entry to understand these urban youths in the centre of Sao Paulo, notably as a subculture (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Thus for this qualitative study, the ethnographic case study approach was best suited for this research and allowed me to meet the research goals (Wolcott, 1992).

Besides the analysis of documents pertaining to *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* and to street youths in Brazil, I made thorough observations of the two NGOs’ pedagogical approaches and NFE programs. These participant observations also included attending the NGOs general staff meetings, seminars and a forum pertaining to the issue of street youths in Sao Paulo. I also conducted interviews with the program administrators as well as the street educators from the two selected NGOs.

In examining the NGOs' pedagogical practices and NFE programs through fieldwork, I was able to engage and immerse myself, to a degree, in the street youth subculture in downtown Sao Paulo. More specifically, by observing the street youths in their day-to-day interactions, I sought to shed light on the lived experiences of the children and adolescents pertaining to life on the streets and to their participation within the NGOs' non-formal education programs, as well as to capture how these experiences have shaped their reality. Thus, the two ethnographic case studies allowed for discovering the street youth subculture and for generating a cultural portrait of this group.

In the findings, I have underscored *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia's* strengths, limitations and possibilities for facilitating street youths' empowerment. I have found that these NGOs have shown to help street children and adolescents empower themselves socially, culturally and economically which can be summarized as follows:

1) Social and Cultural Empowerment:

The educators actively promote liberatory pedagogy through street social education in order for street children and adolescents, their families as well as their communities to emancipate themselves and, moreover, to breed a new culture of freedom. Furthermore, the educators help the street youths face the social and cultural challenges while reintegrating them(selves) back in their home and community. Together, the youths and educators work to overcome these challenges by finding resources in the youths' communities and by building bridges with its members (i.e. neighbors, schools, community services, local organizations).

2) *Economic Empowerment:*

Considering Brazil's economic reality, *Fundação Projeto Travessia* and *Projeto Quixote* have shown to offer educational programs which can contribute, at least to some extent, to street youths' economic empowerment. These youths are given opportunities to learn new skills and enhance their employability. Thus, *Fundação Projeto Travessia* and *Projeto Quixote* have created, over the last decade, various programs to help these young people empower themselves. For *Fundação Projeto Travessia* has offered educational programs such as *PEACEL* (Education, Art, Culture and Recreation Program) to facilitate street youths' reintegration in school and youths from 16 years of age have been offered educational activities geared towards facilitating their insertion in the labor market. In the case of *Projeto Quixote*, they have created various programs for at-risk youths giving street youths who return to their home and community economic opportunities. For example *Agência Quixote Spray Arte* has allowed youths to learn graffiti techniques and eventually obtain work through *Quixote's* in-house graffiti services.

3) *Political Empowerment:*

Projeto Quixote and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*, however, currently face challenges which impede on the street youths' political empowerment. For example, lack of networking amongst educators from other governmental and non-governmental organizations; financial dependency on government or private sector; and ineffective government policies interfere and undermine the educators' political position. These challenges limit the NGOs' capacity for mobilization and politicization. The possibilities for the selected NGOs to contribute to street youths' political empowerment, I have shown, requires them to essentially create alternative

spaces to ferment street social education into a radical political pedagogy to politicize both street educators as well as the street youths. As seen in the golden era in the late 1980s (de Oliveira, 2000) of street social education in Brazil, a critical political pedagogy became a tool for street youths to empower themselves. As outlined in the thesis, it was instrumental in the strong mobilization and for pushing the legislation on children's rights within the Constitution. Thus, today street social education has the potential for bringing social change, namely, as a means for actualizing the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) in Brazil as effective policy implementation remains crucial.

Implications

Linking the Literature to the Findings of the Study

I. NGOs and Street Social Education

Numerous educational initiatives for street youths have been created by civil society in Brazil; notably, what is known as 'street social education' has been utilized by street educators to reach children and adolescents (de Oliveira, 2000). Street social education has evolved and has now taken new forms. Today, street social education refers to artistic and cultural means to foster street youths' social participation, to provide them with literacy and vocational training, as well as to preserve and promote Afro-Brazilian culture (de Oliveira, 2000).

The findings of the study show that in the case of *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia*, these non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have opted for promoting street social education through arts and culture, as it serves as a means to build ties with the street youths and also to facilitate these young people's empowerment process. Artistic and cultural activities such

as sports, theatre, painting, video production, rap, breakdance, *capoeira* and *maracatu*, as well as visits to local cultural centers, museums and art galleries have all allowed the street children and adolescents to find inspiration and creativity. Arts and culture have also been a means for these youths to reconnect with their dreams, hopes and desires as well as their cultural roots.

Furthermore, the potent effect of play has resulted in these youths rediscovering or reacquainting with their 'forgotten self.' This is an internal process that is (or should be) at the heart of the street youths' empowerment. From here, I am arguing, these youths can then begin to construct their life trajectory as protagonists of their own story and actualizing their dreams, hopes and desires.

II. De-Politicization of Street Social Education

The significant drawbacks of many non-formal education (NFE) programs in Brazil have been the participants' inaccessibility to the market economy and, moreover, to jobs with social protection; thus, limiting the youths' opportunity for upward mobility (see Almeida & de Carvalho, 2000; de Queiroz & Elliot, 2000). This great challenge reflects the underlying problem of most NGOs today. Furthermore, according to de Oliveira (2000), the political dimension of street social education in Brazil has been lost since its pioneering era in the late 1980s to early 1990s, as it has rather been reduced to individual empowerment of street youths.

In this light, the findings of the study have shown that, currently, the viability of street social education to engender social transformation on a larger scale and structural changes, which are essentially needed to remediate the root causes of the street youth phenomenon, have been limited. Street youths are no longer politicized or mobilized for political action. Although

Projeto Quixote and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* promote empowerment of street youths through the means of social participation and street social education, the transformative capacity of the programs offered by these NGOs have focused solely on individual agency; a point worthy of further discussion.

III. Critique of NGOs

Historically, NGOs became increasingly present with the dissipation of social movements, notably once Brazil underwent a transition from a military dictatorship to a democratic regime (Forewaker, 2001). While aiming to exert influence on social policies, according to Foweraker (2001), social movement organizations (SMOs) experienced “inevitable institutionalism” which altered their radical nature as well as their transformative purposes (p. 6). These grassroots movements eventually demobilized and fragmented having lost their *raison d’être* and gave way to NGOs (Foweraker, 2001).

The rise of NGOs was instigated by strong financial support from international organizations in the United States and Europe, yet as a result of satisfying donors’ criteria for funding, NGOs had, and in many cases still have today, minimal leverage in terms of working towards their development ideals (i.e., their agendas and priorities) and of responding to the needs of those they intend to serve (Foweraker, 2001). As the findings have shown, *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* struggle for resources to ensure their existence, and must continuously persuade donors and financiers of the legitimacy and effectiveness of their work. Consequently, because of pressures by financiers, they must quantify their work, where

often the number of youths attended to or “taken off the street” takes precedence over the quality of the ties they have established with the youths.

Furthermore, with decreasing international assistance, NGOs now generally rely on state funding (Foweraker, 2001). As a result, they find themselves becoming politically neutral or, conversely, risk being co-opted or falling into clientelism as well as clientilization (providing social service delivery) (Foweraker, 2001). As was the case for international funding, NGOs are also forced to compete for meager resources from the state and, in order to gain their support, they must demonstrate that their activities are non-threatening and do not challenge the state apparatus (Epstein, 1996). Because of these constraints and conditions, for Foweraker (2001), many NGOs now serve to implement programs and policies that are watered down, thus limiting their influence on social policies. As a result, Foweraker continues, they end up reinforcing the current social structures and exacerbating inequalities which stem from these. As expressed by the various stakeholders participating in this study, NGOs are part of the newest sector of the economy, also known as the ‘third sector.’ Not only does this third sector expand employment opportunities in the formal market, but it also “lends a hand” to the government. In this way, government contract out service delivery to NGOs at a fraction of the cost. Hence, this offers a great advantage to the government, as they create employment, reduce expenditures and elude accountability for services.

Also as demonstrated in the findings in the study, further constraints of NGOs, which as a result undermine street youth empowerment, include the numerous pressures on NGOs. Institutional constraints, hierarchal structures and decision-making (over)power have caused, for many, an internal disorganization where the divergent interests and objectives between staff and

administration have created conflict. Also, the competitive nature amongst NGOs for resources from the government or private sector have weakened their ties and reduced their overall capacity to mobilize and coordinate their efforts. As numerous educators in the study have argued, they often find themselves working in isolation and believe that strengthening their networks with other entities is crucial for having a stronger political position and influencing social policies relating to street youths.

The case of *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* served to show that, like many in Brazil, these NGOs' autonomy has been diminished and, of those who envisioned political ambitions, their purpose has been compromised and even hindered. Furthermore, with persistent structural inequalities within the Brazilian society, these NGOs' capacity to facilitate the social, cultural, economic and, most notably, political empowerment of street youths remains a challenge.

Implications for Pedagogical Practices and Policy

From Up Against the Wall to Building Bridges: Path for Moving Forward

The various stakeholders from *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* have identified the significant constraints that limit the capacity of their work to facilitate the street youths' empowerment, notably the political dimension. Necessary means to overcome these constraints requires changes at both the pedagogical and policy level. More specifically, I have understood from the two ethnographic case studies that it is crucial:

- 1) To strengthen networks and partnerships between the various entities who work with the street youths in the downtown region of Sao Paulo. For the educators, these ties could

facilitate the work as they can exchange information pertaining to specific street youth cases and provide mutual support, especially when police operations take place.

- 2) To establish a movement of educators outside the institutions they work for. Such a political movement can offer a space where educators can freely voice their concerns, find ways of overcoming common challenges, discuss best practices for street social education, offer training to new educators and also where the exchange of experiential knowledge can occur. This movement can represent a united front and serve to create a larger network of social movements to influence social policies at the municipal, state and national level.
- 3) To create political mobilizations; this is key for empowering street youths. These young people must be made aware of their rights as citizens and how to claim them. A political education, one may conclude, can create a young community of leaders and activists. Thus, NGOs must find ways to support the youths in their struggle. More concretely, through street social education, they must lend moral and monetary support as the youths politicize and mobilize themselves because, since Brazil's history has shown, political pressure can influence politicians to act.
- 4) For the government to conform to the standards of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and commit to implementing policies according to the Brazilian Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA). Effective measures must be applied and increased social investments must be made in order to overcome youths' dire conditions (i.e.

poverty, violence, murder and exploitation of youths) as well as for improving the quality of health and education provision in this country for these young citizens. The ECA stipulates:

The responsibility of the family, society and the State to secure the fundamental rights of children and adolescents as an absolute priority, including the rights to life, health, alimentation, education, recreation, professional formation, culture, dignity, respect, liberty and the right to live with one's family and in one's own community. In addition, the law protects the youth from being put at risk of negligence, discrimination, exploitation, violence, cruelty and oppression. (Article 4, Statute of the Child and Adolescent which includes elements of Article 227 from the Federal Constitution of 1988).

Conversely to the ECA, the current state of children and adolescents remains deplorable in a country of tremendous resources and a growing economy. Thus, government at all levels should be held accountable for non-compliance, namely for child rights violations not only by Brazil's civil society, its citizens but also by the international community.

- 5) To reform policies relating to assistance of street children and adolescents are crucial to improve efficacy of social service delivery and, more specifically, to better meet the needs of the street youth population. A means is to strengthen partnerships with civil society. In the case of municipal governments contracting out to local NGOs for the delivery of social services, allocated funds must be substantially increased. This would imply valuing the work of NGOs who have been pioneers in the area of social service, rather than accepting the lowest bidder who may be less qualified. Governments must take into account that for NGOs

to ensure the quality of their work and successful outcomes, they require resources and qualified staff. Also, governments must contract for services for an extended period of time while effectively monitoring the quality of services provided by the NGO. The current short duration of contracts only hinders the continuity of the NGOs' work with the street youths. In considering improving services for a growing number of children and adolescents who find themselves on the street, additional educators are critically needed. While the number of educators must be increased to meet the demand, the number of service providers must be reduced. As raised by the educators in this study, fewer entities working with the street youths can reduce the risk of the work being duplicated. That is to say, where the same youth would not be attended to by two organizations offering the same service.

- 6) To improve working conditions of the street educators as well as recognizing and legitimizing their profession through the creation of a union for street social educators.
- 7) To offer an accredited program in social pedagogy, as previously existed in the 1990s at the Pontificia Catholic University of Sao Paulo (PUC-SP). Not only would such a program legitimize the profession of the street social educator, but it would also provide future educators the foundations of street social education, particularly since Brazil has an important legacy.

Limitations of the Study

- 1) Factors such as my previous experience in Brazil as well as developing close ties with the educators (i.e. participants in the study) were both an advantage and limiting feature in the study. My grassroots experience in Brazil dates back to 2004. As I have discussed in the introductory chapter, this experience allowed me to develop a deeper awareness on destitute youths' conditions as well as a cultural sensitivity to the Brazilian context. However, it also made me more susceptible to the street youths' reality. It is important to note that while on the street with the educators and the street youths, I was unable to record data in these periods. But also, in feeling overwhelmed at times by the street youths' reality, there were instances where I do not recall details of important moments and, consequently, I was unable to note the information once I had returned with the educators from the streets.

- 2) Also, as result of witnessing the educators' dedication and perseverance to beat the odds they face, it prompted me to have great compassion, respect and admiration for them. Though being immersed in the educators' universe day-in and day-out, I have also witnessed their moments of anguish, frustration, sadness and helplessness. My understanding evolved becoming much more profound, as I feel I have lived vicariously numerous experiences through the educators, and as they shared their testimonies/accounts in working with the street youths over the years (Stake, 1995). Conversely, this has at the same time had an impact on my 'outsider looking in' stance.

- 3) Due to time and budgetary constraints, I spent only two months with *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* (approximately one month in each NGO). Unfortunately, this resulted in being unable to interview the street youths (due to ethical concerns as explained in the methodology section). Also, the limited time in the field affected the amount of data collected.
- 4) The depiction of the street youths in this study is not representative of all street youths in Brazil. The research focus was specifically on street children and adolescents in an urban context, namely, in the large metropolitan city of Sao Paulo (situated in the southeastern part of the country). In the northeast of Brazil, for example, profile and conditions of street youths may differ (i.e. historical, social, cultural, economic and political factors). Having already been familiar with Sao Paulo, I selected NGOs to participate in the study from this region. Thus, the study focused on the pedagogical practices utilized by *Projeto Quixote* and *Fundação Projeto Travessia* with the street youths they work with, namely those in the downtown region of Sao Paulo.
- 5) Gender differences of street youths were not identified. Although the role of gender within the context of the street youth phenomenon is part of the dialectic of inequality and intersectionality, thus not separate from race and social class, the issue of gender was not the focal point of this study. In examining the two ethnographic case studies, I intended to understand the street youth subculture from a cultural perspective, that is, to understand further the values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and practices of this collective

identity. By discovering socio-cultural patterns, I attempted to develop a holistic description and interpretation of the subculture of street youths working and /or living in the centre of Sao Paulo in Brazil. Thus, examining the NGOs' pedagogical approaches and NFE programs targeted to street children and adolescents served as a point of entry to understand these urban youths in the centre of Sao Paulo, notably as a subculture.

Future Research

As raised in the limitations, gender differences were not taken into account. A gender perspective to understand the notion of street youth empowerment could have, however, provided a more critical perspective. In this light, future research could consider intersectionality as an underlying theoretical framework to identify the issue of gender on street youths within the interplay between race and social class. In reframing this study with such a framework, we could advance and broaden the research scope, as there is currently a lack of research on street girls in Brazil and, moreover, on gender differences of Brazilian street youths. Thus, the focus could be placed on:

- 1) Who are the street girls?
- 2) What are their reasons for being on the street?
- 3) How do these girls behave and dress on the street?
- 4) How do they interact with the various actors on the street?
- 5) Are the street girls' values, beliefs and attitudes different from those of the street boys?

- 6) In considering that findings from research on Brazilian street children and adolescents have found that the demography of street youths consists predominantly of, but not limited to, boys from African descent and low-income families, are street girls, although fewer in number, also mostly from African descent and low-income families?
- 7) Are the NGOs' pedagogical practices different for the girls and the boys? If so, how? If not, why?
- 8) If and how have the NGOs facilitated the empowerment of street girls?
- 9) If so, has the empowerment process differed between the street boys and street girls? And more specifically, how does gender play a role in the empowerment process?

Furthermore, for research involving street youths in the Brazilian context or others, important methodological implications are to be considered. Aptekar and Heinonen (2003) argue that extended periods in the field can allow for establishing trust with the street children and adolescents, as well as for obtaining larger amounts of data which can "reduce the distortion of facts about [the youths'] lives and social world" (p. 13). Also, although in this study interviews were not conducted with the street children and adolescents, projective techniques can serve as effective data collection methods to ensure validity and reliability of the data when interviewing young participants. Projective techniques such as games, drawings, completion of incomplete sentences and sociograms are ways for youths to feel comfortable sharing information and depicting their lives (Aptekar & Heinonen, 2003). Finally, researchers who involve children and adolescents as study participants must recognize the vulnerable position these young people are placed in. Also, while attempting to further research on children and adolescent issues, youths

must be seen as valuable resources. In this way, democratic participation must be given crucial consideration on the part of researchers. Youths' involvement implies being given the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns, but also being understood, notably since research on youths should also be informed by them.

The Urban Refugee & the Protagonist of Rights: The Parallax View of the Street Youth*

As de Certeau (2005) has argued, the line between reality and fiction is thin. In the universal imagination, the street youth is a Quixotinha who dreams of another story. Exiled in the city centre and derooted from her family and community, she becomes an urban refugee. Sniffing glue and smoking crack co-occur with the playful adventures on the street. This mode of survival in the refugee camp blinds her from what is now the outside world. The urban refugee sees no exit from this deteriorated and lifeless place. She eventually meets an ET, an extraterrestrial from a world that is no longer familiar to her. This ET offers the urban refugee an organic substance known as unconditional hospitality to help her. Determining the moment and the dosage, the refugee eventually accepts the offering. In bringing the refugee into a critically conscious state, the ET points out to the bridge in front of them. The ET reminds the refugee that the path to reach this bridge is long and winding, but reassures her that once they cross the *travessia*, she will (re-)discover another land. Together, the ET and urban refugee spend time mapping out the trajectory. And although uncertain and fearful, the urban refugee decides to embark on the journey. Along the way, they face numerous obstacles but eventually overcome them. The urban refugee also deviates, at some point, from the path and gets lost. Consequently, she decides to head back towards the refugee camp. While walking, she notices a beacon of light and decides to then follow it, leading her to the ET. "You came to find me?", asks the urban refugee to the ET. The ET simply smiles and hugs her. Comforted, the urban refugee regains hope and finally reaches the end of the bridge. Here, the ET informs the urban refugee that through this journey, she has been transformed and will be entering another world where she will be a protagonist of rights. The ET, once again, reminds her: "Accept the challenges that arise and remember that I am here with you!"

* This vignette is a fictional work serving to tease out the NGOs' metaphoric notions of the urban refugee and the protagonist of rights. Also, the ET concept is a central metaphor for *Projeto Quixote*. The feminine form is used purposefully for the street youth but refers to both genders.



Hope-full Note

I believe the breadth of the street youth phenomenon deserves an increased attention with the growing number of children and adolescents who find themselves working and/or living on the streets. With the rise in poverty, in this era of the economic crisis, more youths will be dramatically impacted and leaving many more to turn to the streets as a means for survival. That said, for me, the present study offers an element of transferability allowing researchers to compare other cases pertaining to street youth populations. Although culturally/case-specific, this study addresses possible means for NGOs who work with street children and adolescents to facilitate the social, cultural, economic and political empowerment of these youths that have been deprived of their rights. Providing street youths with a potent tool for empowerment, known as street social education, offers them an opportunity to become agents of change, to find hope and transform their lives. And hope, is at the essence of their struggle. So when they fall and feel no strength to stand again, may they remember that:

Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope, as an ontological need, dissipates, loses its bearings, and turns into hopelessness. And hopelessness can become tragic. Hence the need for a kind of education in hope. Hope, as it happens, is so important for our existence, individual and social, that we must take every care not to experience it in a mistaken form, and thereby allow it to slip toward hopelessness and despair (Freire, 1994, p. 9).

I end with hope in the pedagogy of hope...

While I certainly cannot ignore hopelessness as a concrete entity, nor turn a blind eye to the historical, economic, and social reasons that explain that hopelessness—I do not

understand human existence, and the struggle needed to improve it, apart from hope and dream (Freire, 1994, p. 8).

My hope is that the street youths I came to care so much for in downtown Sao Paulo will locate themselves socially, culturally, economically and politically and at the same time question the adequacy of that location. Only then, can they name themselves (differently), only then can they envision their own future and transform their life stories.

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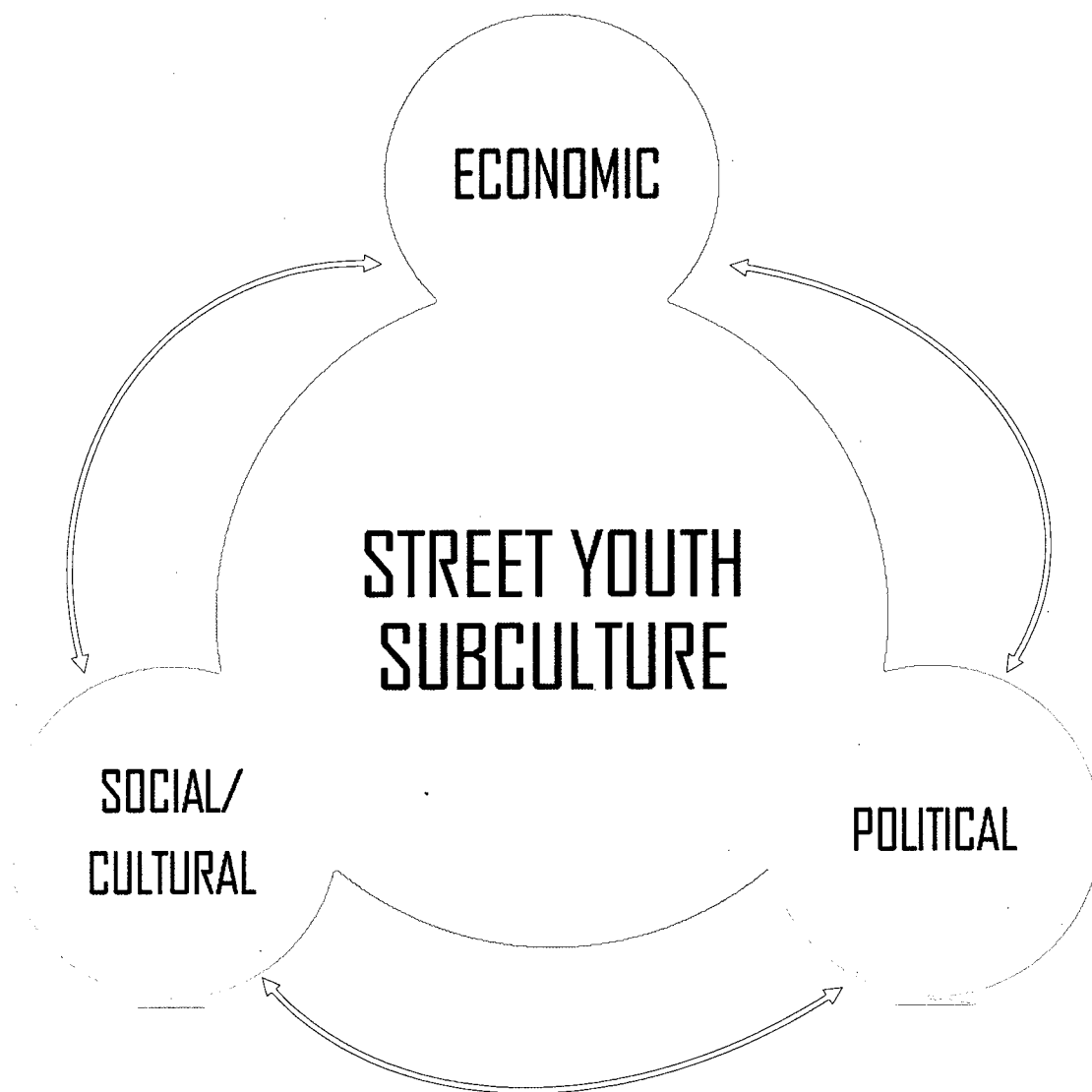
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Appendix 2

Observation Protocol

For observations of non-formal education programs within the two selected non-governmental organizations (i.e., Fundação Projeto Travessia and Projeto Quixote)

1. Program characteristics:

Number of female participants:

Number of male participants:

Type of non-formal education programs:

Type of activities offered within each program:

Number of female educators:

Number of male educators:

2. Pedagogy and Practice:

What pedagogical approaches do the educators adhere to?

What type of relationship exists between educator and learners?

3. Organizational Relations:

What is the relationship between the educators and program coordinator(s)?

What is the relationship amongst the educators?

What is the relationship between the educators and the children/youth participants?

What is the relationship among the young participants?

4. Empowerment:

How is empowerment perceived and defined by program coordinators and educators?

What roles play the program coordinators and educators in the participants' empowerment process?

How has critical pedagogy guided the organization's work with the participants?

What degree of consultation or participation exists between the organization and the children and youths who participate in the programs?

How are the pedagogical approaches facilitating the participants' empowerment process?

How are the pedagogical programs contributing to the participants' empowerment process?

Appendix 3

Interview Guide

For interviews with educators and program administrators participating in the study
“Non-Formal Education and Street Youth Empowerment:
Pedagogy and Practice of Two Brazilian Non-Governmental Organizations”

1. Organizational information:

- a) When was this non-governmental organization formed?
- b) What is your mandate?
- c) Who do you represent? How do you represent their views and priorities/interests?
- d) How do you generate financial resources? What are your sources of funding?
- e) What are the organizational structures within the organization (e.g. level of management, decision-making, etc)?
- f) Do you collaborate with state agencies?
- g) Do you collaborate with other non-governmental organizations, notably in the realm of non-formal education for children and youths living and/or working in the street?

2. Organizational activities:

- a) What specific non-formal education activities does your organization undertake?
- b) Have these activities changed over time? If so, how and why?
- c) What ideological and educational frameworks are your program activities based on?
- d) What pedagogical approaches do you adhere to?
- e) Have these approaches changed over time? If so, how and why?
- f) What opportunities and barriers do these ideas and perspectives present (in terms of program implementation and outcome issues)?
- g) What are your short and long term goals for the participants?
- h) What are your short and long term goals for the participants?
- i) What have been the benefits, to date, of these programs for the participants?

- j) What have been the limitations and challenges, to date, of these programs for the participants?
- k) How could the pedagogical approaches and programs be improved?

3. Organizational relations: between the staff and the children/youth participants:

- a) How would you describe the relationship between the educators and program coordinator(s)?
- b) How would you describe the relationship amongst educators?
- c) How would you describe the relationship between the educators and the children/youth participants?
- d) How would you describe the relationship among the young participants?
- e) What has been the overall response of the young people to your work (e.g. their responses before, during and after participating in the programs)?
- f) What are the successes, challenges and lessons learned regarding this relationship?
- g) How can this relationship be improved?

4. Can you provide or suggest any relevant documentation for me to read?

Appendix 4

Table 1: Interviews

NGO	Informants	Type	Location	Duration
<i>Projeto Quixote</i>	General coordinator	Individual	Head office in Sao Paulo	3 hours
<i>Projeto Quixote</i>	Partnerships coordinator	Individual	Head office in Sao Paulo	1 hour
<i>Projeto Quixote</i>	Program coordinator	Individual	Head office in Sao Paulo	1 hour
<i>Projeto Quixote</i>	Program coordinator	Individual	Downtown office where the Urban Refugee Program is located	1 hour
<i>Projeto Quixote</i>	Street educators	Focus group #1 (8 educators)	Downtown office where the Urban Refugee Program is located	1 hour
<i>Projeto Quixote</i>	Street educators	Focus group #2 (5 educators)	Downtown office where the Urban Refugee Program is located	1 hour
<i>Projeto Quixote</i>	Social worker	Individual	Downtown office where the Urban Refugee Program is located	1 hour
<i>Projeto Quixote</i>	Former youth participant/presently employee for <i>Projeto Quixote</i> 's video	Individual	Head office in Sao Paulo	2 hours

	production & workshops			
Total hours of interviews with <i>Projeto Quixote</i> staff				11 hours
Total number of interviews with <i>Projeto Quixote</i> staff				8
NGO	Informants	Type	Location	Duration
<i>Fundação Projeto Travessia</i>	Program coordinator	Individual	Head office where the Street Education Program is located (downtown Sao Paulo)	2 hours
<i>Fundação Projeto Travessia</i>	Educator team manager	Individual	Head office where the Street Education Program is located (downtown Sao Paulo)	4 hours
<i>Fundação Projeto Travessia</i>	Street educators	Focus group (6 educators)	Head office where the Street Education Program is located (downtown Sao Paulo)	2 hours
<i>Fundação Projeto Travessia</i>	Program coordinator	Individual	Office in Penha region (periphery in the city of Sao Paulo)	1 hour
<i>Fundação Projeto Travessia</i>	Street educator	Individual	Office in Penha region (periphery in the city of Sao Paulo)	1 hour
*Formal interview was conducted (after working hours) with some educators from both NGOs and also	Street educators	Focus group (6 educators)	Ação Educativa (this NGO's office was used as meeting space)	2 hours

including a former educator from one of the NGOs				
Total hours of interviewing with <i>Fundação Projeto Travessia</i> staff				12 hours
Total number of interviews with <i>Fundação Projeto Travessia</i> staff				6
Total hours of interviews with both NGOs				23 hours
Total number of interviews with both NGOs				14

Other entities	Informants	Type	Location	Duration
Street Boys and Girls Project (PMMR)	General director	Individual	PMMR office in Diadema region (periphery in the city of Sao Paulo)	4 hours
Street Boys and Girls Project (PMMR)	Program supervisor	Individual	PMMR office in Sao Bernardo do Campo region (periphery in the city of Sao Paulo)	1 hour
Paulo Freire Institute	Lutegardes Costa Freire	Individual	Sao Paulo	2 hours
Total hours of interviews with both entities				7 hours
Total number of interviews with both entities				3