A place for organizational critical consciousness: Comparing two case studies of Freirean nonprofits

Abstract: One of the primary goals of Freirean theory is the achievement of a higher level of political and social consciousness amongst participants in educational programming. Freire himself only loosely defined this sense of consciousness, and interpretations of how this abstract concept might look vary widely. In some organizations, the politically radical goals of Freirean facilitators do not match the desired outcomes of participants. Other organizations may use Freirean methods to pursue their programming, but without subscribing to Freire's revolutionary educational project. This article provides case study examples of both extremes in Brazil and Mozambique, concluding with the argument that applying Freire's notion of critical consciousness organizationally can help to make sense of the diversity of interpretation among Freirean nonprofits.

Key Words: Paulo Freire, international nonprofits, praxis, critical consciousness

Paulo Freire continues to be one of the most influential educational thinkers of the late twentieth century. Individual teachers, scholars and community organizers, as well as organizations and social movements with national, regional and global influence continue to draw inspiration and guidance from his writings and his greater professional legacy. The influence of Freirean pedagogy and methods has extended well beyond its origins in small farming communities in the Brazilian *Nordeste* to classrooms, government planning offices, grassroots social movements and nonprofit board rooms throughout the world. The continued influence of Freire's philosophical ideas and pedagogical models powerfully demonstrates the rich vision inherent in Freire's writings. At the same time, any philosophical system that spreads as widely as Freire's will undergo inevitable permutations in interpretation and implementation.

This variation in interpretation applies to even the most central pillars of Freire's educational philosophy, such as his discussion of *critical consciousness* (Freire 1970a, 1970b, 1973). One of the primary goals of Freirean theory, as applied practically in community education, is the achievement of critical consciousness, or a higher level of political and social understanding of one's reality. To Freire

(1970a, 1970b, 1973), this consciousness comes through participation in an iterative process of reflecting upon one's social reality and taking action to improve it. However, Freire himself only loosely defined this sense of consciousness and the process of reflection and action that leads to it, and interpretations of this construct vary widely among those educators that describe their pedagogical and theoretical orientation as Freirean. Many educators and organizations also utilize Freirean pedagogical principles independently of Freire's educational philosophy and its accompanying focus on critical consciousness, further displaying the variation in interpretation of Freire in educational circles.

After a conceptual introduction to Freirean pedagogy and thought, this article will analyze two case studies of organizations on opposite poles of the continuum of Freire's legacy. First, an urban women-led neighborhood association from northeastern Brazil, wherein the politically radical goals of its Freirean-trained leaders often do not match the benefits which community participants desire or seek through their participation. Second—on the other end of the spectrum—is the case of an INGO working in central Mozambique that has adapted many of Freire's pedagogical methods for the pursuit of organizational goals much less radical than Freire's.

Through ethnographic description of each of these organizations and their varying utilization of Freirean pedagogy and theory, the purpose of this article is to present a new theoretical paradigm through which such diversity can be more meaningfully understood: namely, the notion of *organizational critical consciousness*, or the continual process of reflection and action which educational organizations undergo as they seek to define and achieve their mission. Rather than adopt a purist approach to Freirean philosophy, I argue that recognition of the praxis undergone by organizations provides a productive way to make meaning of educational organizations' varying interpretations of Freirean methods and thought.

Conceptual framework

Principles of Freirean pedagogy

Paulo Freire (1970a, 1970b, 1973, 1985) theorizes and structures an empowerment-based model of education that forces participants to undergo a personal and communal process of wrestling with recognition of social structural inequality of any and all kinds in their daily lives. This difficult process leads participants in situations of oppression to question their conditions, with the eventual goal of reaching "critical consciousness," or *conscientização.*

Freire (1985, 253) defines critical consciousness as such: "a deepened consciousness of their situation [that] leads people to apprehend their situation as a historical reality susceptible of transformation." That is, the search for critical consciousness is an explicitly political pursuit, meant to bring marginalized people to a recognition of their oppressive situation and the dynamics therein, thereby enabling them to challenge that structure.

The first step on this path toward critical consciousness is one that is highly personal: one must learn to "name the world" (Freire 1970a, 88), or be able to identify the elements of structural oppression in one's personal and professional experience. It is from that crucial point of naming that one then moves forward in the pursuit of social change. As bell hooks (1994, 74), states, before we can address the cause of our pain we first must become able to "[name] our pain." This process of learning to identify, or name, one's daily reality with oppression and pain is an essential first step towards changing that daily reality for the better—indeed, "to speak a true word is to transform the world" (Freire 1970a, 87).

Paulo Freire's pedagogical model, used first to teach literacy, was built to facilitate this process of "[naming] the world." In this model, traditional lessons in which teachers pass on information to students who are not allowed to question the information or engage with it for themselves (what Freire [1970a] refers to as "banking education") are replaced with dialogues in which instructors function as discussion facilitators who purposefully prompt participants to engage actively with the subject at hand. Such discussions typically begin with the sharing of a thematic code, or a word, picture, skit, or other

medium meant to stimulate conversation on a given topic. The purpose of the facilitator is to help guide the conversation in the direction of community action, with the intent of changing and improving the social reality of participants.

As individuals, through participation in this type of Freirean dialogue, progress from the point of "[naming] the world" to a mindset in which it is possible to recognize all of the ways in which their lived experience is framed by inequality and oppression, participants begins to experience what Freire calls "critical consciousness," a mental state in which social change seems not only possible, but plausible. As Freire (1970a, 124) states, "people come to feel like masters of their thinking by discussing the thinking and views of the world explicitly or implicitly manifest in their own suggestions and those of their comrades." Critical consciousness is not a plateau one reaches and stays upon, but rather a state that requires continual work to maintain. This work process that brings about and maintains critical consciousness is what Freire calls *praxis*.

Praxis can be interpreted as reflection combined with action, with a conscious aim to do so for the purpose of social transformation (Freire 1970a, 1970b). In a Freirean educational model, praxis is the educational process, or what teachers facilitate in classrooms and experience alongside their students. It is this process of praxis which helps both teachers and students to reach their full measure of humanity. That is, true praxis is the opposite of the rote "banking" educational processes which reinforce memorization of information divorced from its meaning. Rather, praxis consists of looking at knowledge as it applies to one's social context, focusing upon that knowledge which has the potential to transform reality and liberate participants from oppressive situations. As one reflects upon such knowledge and considers how to apply it personally, participants come to new conclusions that lead to meaningful social action.

History of Freirean pedagogy at the organizational level

While Freire outlined this process of praxis in theoretical terms in his writings (1970a, 1970b, 1985),

the principles of this process were developed through Freire's personal application of them in his own

work as an educator within various different organizational settings throughout his lifelong career.

Freire started his career teaching adult literacy to rural, poor peasants in northeastern Brazil. The

Movement for Popular Culture, ostensibly connected with local government but taking the form of a

grassroots social movement, was started in the northeast by Freire to help Brazil's poor "shake free of

shackles of the past through transformative educational praxis" (O'Cadiz et al. 1998, 21). This model

of praxis was purposefully political, created to "give [participants] the tools to change their reality"

(O'Cadiz et al. 1998, 21).

In these initial formal positions and roles, Freire was primarily a proponent of literacy

education, with critical consciousness being seen as a hopeful product of such work. Literacy

instruction in Freire's model was built on a student-generated system, in which students chose what

words or groups of words they would learn, thus giving the written word a stronger sense of relevance

and reality in their daily lives (Spener 1993). These words or groups of words were what Freire (1970a)

called "generative themes."

After using his adult literacy framework in governmentally-sponsored and independently

organized nonformal settings throughout the rural Brazilian northeast and internationally in Chile, the

United States and elsewhere, Freire later showed through his own experience how such a framework

can be used in formal classroom settings, particularly during his tenure as the secretary of education for

the municipality of São Paulo, Brazil in the early 1990s (O'Cadiz et al. 1998). During his time in

office, Freire incorporated his own pedagogical techniques into the formal municipal education system

and schools became much more focused on local community empowerment.

Formal schools incorporated Freire's critical pedagogical framework in their teaching of

school-age children, and an additional government program was created to provide adult literacy

courses. The purpose of this revised system was to help students—both children and adults—become

"protagonists of their own history" (O'Cadiz et al. 1998, 22). This system achieved systemic change, as student retention rates rose throughout the municipality and the best teachers were effectively recruited into the hardest schools (O'Cadiz et al. 1998, 234-235). Freire's tenure proved that the innovation typically associated with NGOs and civil society can effectively be incorporated into public policy. In all of the organizational settings in which he worked, formal and nonformal, Freire's goal throughout his career was to help his students and co-workers develop critical consciousness.

Freirean theory as a global educational project

Over the course of the second half of the 20th century, the spread of Freirean pedagogy and theory throughout Brazil, Latin America and the world is perhaps best described through the use of Lesley Bartlett's (2003; 2010) notion of the *educational project*. Bartlett (2010) has defined an educational project as, among other things, a collection of "social actors, ideologies, discourses, pedagogies, and theories of knowledge and learning that shape the way people think about schooling and its purpose" (52). In the case of Freirean pedagogy, Freire himself began to spread his ideas nationally throughout Brazil while working with then-Brazilian president João Goulart in the 1960s (Fernandes and Terra 1994). When a military coup sent Freire into exile, he then stayed for short periods and applied his ideas in Chile, the US, and other countries around the globe (Kirkendall 2010).

However, whether domestically in Brazil, as in the case of the neighborhood association that will be discussed hereafter, or internationally through the work of governments or nonprofits like the forthcoming example of an INGO operating in Mozambique, one key element of educational projects like Freire's is that they are contested (Bartlett 2003). That is, proponents of such projects compete for resources and ideological dominance with other projects, and even within the Freirean educational project proponents can disagree regarding how Freire should be interpreted and applied. Several elements of that contestation will be clearly visible in the two case studies that follow.

Settings and methodology

As this article draws upon fieldnotes and data from two different ethnographic studies conducted in two different locations for somewhat different purposes, the setting and methodology for each study will discussed in turn. All names given for organizations, places and individuals in this article are pseudonyms, used to protect the anonymity of the participants. For the purposes of citation, when referring to a fieldnote or interview, I will include the pseudonym given to the interviewee and the date in parentheses, specifically the month and day of the month. For example, an interview with Edite on March 12th would have the following citation: (Edite 3/12).

Associação Sete de Setembro in Brazil

In northeastern Brazil, I conducted an organizational ethnography of *Associação Sete de Setembro* (hereafter referred to as ASDS), an urban neighborhood association based in *São José*, a *favela* (or informal urban shantytown) located in the heart of a large city in the Brazilian *Nordeste*. ASDS led a number of local community programs during the period of data collection, including adult literacy classes and workforce initiatives targeting São José youth. This article draws on three months of ethnographic data, a time frame in which I lived with Edite Soares, the president of ASDS, and engaged in participant observation in all of the activities held in the ASDS community center. This includes observational fieldnotes of 12 adult literacy classes, 10 traditional African dance classes, 15 *capoeira* (a traditional Brazilian martial art with strong dance influences) classes, and five community events (including celebrations of national holidays, local parties and so forth). I also draw on 14 ethnographic interviews with Edite, the instructors and participants of ASDS classes, and members of the community ASDS serves.

All of my classroom observations (conducted after the manner outlined by Spradley [1980]) were documented through my hand-written fieldnotes (written in Portuguese). The interviews I conducted were semi-structured interviews done after the manner outlined by Spradley (1979) and Rubin and Rubin (1995). These interviews were conducted in Portuguese and audio recorded. Halfway

through this three-month study, I transcribed and translated the interviews and fieldnotes written to that point into English and coded them according to common themes that were becoming noticeable in my data collection. I repeated this same transcription, translation and coding process at the end of the three-month research period.

Comunidades de Poder in Mozambique

Shortly after my experience with ASDS in northeastern Brazil, I was hired as an ethnographic researcher for a nonprofit called *Comunidades de Poder* (hereafter referred to as CDP), with offices in the United States and ground operations in central Mozambique. CDP engaged in a number of different types of development programs, including public health and sanitation initiatives, workforce development projects, and adult education. It was in this last area of adult education that I was asked to use ethnography to evaluate the reception of CDP's programming and curriculum from the point of view of participants, while also soliciting local knowledge so that CDP's learning goals could be more fully contextualized to the living situations and lifestyles of rural Mozambican CDP students. Over a 12-month period, I conducted participant observation in CDP's adult education program in each of the organization's three then-participating communities, Oshossi, Mutango and Inyaya. This included a weekly lesson from CDP's primary adult education curriculum, which included lessons on sanitation, health, home maintenance, community participation, psycho-social well-being and the importance of education. It also included weekly visits from trained CDP staff to all participating families, in which each family made goals based in the principles they were taught in classes, and then were held accountable for those goals over a six-month period. If after six months of visits a family completed all their goals, they were given a material incentive by CDP, typically including some raw materials for home improvement (e.g. bags of cement, aluminum siding, and so forth).

For this article, I specifically draw on observations of 12 general adult education classes and 14 weekly family visits, as well as on 18 interviews with participants in the adult education program. The

methodological basis for these observations and interviews were the same as in the previous Brazilian study. My classroom observations and family visits were similarly documented through Portuguese-language hand-written fieldnotes. In this study, five of the 12 observed classes I draw on here were also audio recorded. These recordings I later transcribed. I also translated my hand-written notes and transcriptions into English, typically one to two weeks after each class or visit. The 18 interviews used here were also audio recorded and then transcribed and translated into English, typically within several weeks of being conducted. Every month during this 12-month study, I coded my most recent interviews and observations according to dominant themes that were arising within the data. Twice during the 12-month period of data collection, I re-coded all observations and transcriptions, to allow for the emergence of new trends and new codes within the larger set of fieldnotes.

Findings

Using these fieldnotes and interviews from studies of ASDS and CDP, I will now analyze both as case studies of varying organizational interpretations of the Freirean educational project.

Case Study: Associação Sete de Setembro

São José is a working-class neighborhood in the heart of a northeastern Brazilian metropolis. Though similar to many other neighborhoods of the same income level within the city, São José distinguished itself by its extensive history and by not being located on the city's periphery, as are most *favelas*.

Around fifteen or sixteen years before I conducted this study, an open field used for the occasional soccer game grew into a new neighborhood within São José, known as *Sete de Setembro*. A group of five women living in over-priced rented housing in other areas of São José and lacking the resources to buy land claimed the public soccer field by building simple shacks on it made out of wood and mud. Edite Soares was one of these five women, and from the beginning was the clear leader and organizer. During the period of data collection, the land claimed by this group had already been extensively developed, with the installation of running water, electricity, and the building of solid

cement homes. Edite estimated that 250 families lived at the time of this study in the area known as *Sete de Setembro* (Edite 6/10), or "September 7th," named as such because that was the day the land was first occupied and claimed by Edite and her compatriots (interestingly, this is also Brazil's nationally celebrated Independence Day).

Though at the time of this study it was a strongly established community, the residents of *Sete de Setembro* had gone through much difficulty to maintain their seized land and remain in their newly established homes (Edite 6/18; Charlene 6/17). The city government and police had repeatedly knocked down these residents' houses and performed raids in the area, pressuring them to abandon their illegally obtained property (Charlene 6/17). In response to this pressure, the residents organized *Associação Sete de Setembro*, or the *Sete de Setembro* neighborhood association, as a means of representing the community and defending its residents' right to property. In an open election, Edite was chosen as president, and a committee of other officers was formed from members of the community (Edite 6/18). With donated materials, the residents built a community center in which the neighborhood association could be based.

As mentioned above, the original intention of this group was to defend the community's right to the land on which it was built. In the early days of their land occupation, Edite and a few select others were trained in Freirean pedagogical techniques as a means of community organizing by the urban arm of the Brazilian landless peoples' movement, called *Movimento Sem Teto* (or "Movement of Those Without a Roof"). As a result, the association talked with local residents and used Freirean code-based discussions to solicit input, which led them to identify the immediate goals of community members: issues such as the installation of water pipes, sewer systems, and electricity (Edite 6/18; Afonso 6/25). To quote Charlene (6/17), the ASDS Vice President, "The purpose of the association was to help our neighborhood develop—in terms of sewage systems, electricity, running water, good living conditions, these were where the association came in." Organizing themselves through Freirean community

dialogues, community members wrote petitions and organized demonstrations against their city government asking for these services. Over the years, these needs were met: sewage and electrical systems were installed and the *Sete de Setembro* area became a permanently established housing area (Edite 6/18).

Nongovernmental institutions and programs have a long history of utilizing Freirean pedagogy and theory in Brazil. Since Freire first introduced his educational project in the early 1960s, despite his absence during the decades of Brazil's military dictatorship, his methods were utilized by labor unions, leftist factions of the Catholic Church and local government officials to teach and politically mobilize illiterate Brazilian peasants (Lemos 1996). Due to the repressive military government, most of this activity was carried out by small third party groups and organizations, as larger mobilizations led to violent crackdowns (Bartlett 2003). After the military government slowly ceded power in the 1980s, while there were isolated incidents of formal governmental use of Freirean methods (as was seen during Freire's tenure as Secretary of Education in São Paulo [O'Cadiz et al. 1998]), much of the Brazilian Freirean tradition continues to be upheld by nonprofit and other civil society actors, like the *Movimento Sem Teto*, which trained Edite and other São José community leaders, and its rural sister organization, the *Movimento Sem Terra* (Issa 2007; Martins 2006).

As the São José community grew and the neighborhood association's original purposes were completed, there was little more for the organization to do relative to its original mission (Edite 6/10), and so the association underwent a strong structural change. Instead of serving primarily as an advocacy group for residents' rights, the neighborhood association began to focus more on education, emphasizing activities for teenagers and small children from a Freirean perspective (Analisa 8/5). These included traditionally Freirean adult literacy classes, alongside trainings in community organizing and other grassroots efforts (Edite 6/18).

While in São José I observed 12 adult literacy classes, which had maintained their

predominantly Freirean orientation. Each class opened with the presentation of a Freirean code related

to the lived experience of residents: for example, the word *favela* (6/17) printed on the blackboard

alongside an aerial picture of the *Sete de Setembro* neighborhood, or *fome*, the Portuguese word for

hunger (7/2), shown alongside a picture of a nearly empty bag of rice. The lesson would then involve

two sections (though the association's various literacy facilitators differed slightly in their teaching

styles and the length given to each of the two lesson parts): first, a discussion regarding what the word

meant to class participants, and their experiences with it. Second, a more writing-focused activity in

which the code would be broken down into syllabic parts, and the students would practice reading

aloud and writing each syllable as a means of reinforcing the association of particular letter

combinations with particular sounds.

While class participants openly stated their appreciation for these adult literacy offerings (Flávia

7/12; Gustavo 7/21), over time community members began to push for provision of other services that

began to differ from the explicitly Freirean programming that had historically been pushed by Edite

and other *Sete de Setembro* leaders (Edite 8/2; Analisa 8/5). Where Edite and other leaders wanted to

continue teaching Freirean literacy classes and youth activities focused on social justice and social

change, community members expressed strong preferences for more vocational courses or recreational

types of activities (Reginaldo 7/5; Flávia 7/12). At the time of this study the association continued to

offer regular vocational courses when available, in everything from computer training to silk-screening

to Afro-centric cosmetology courses (Edite 6/10; Marcos 7/2). While more practical in nature and

typically not taught with the same Freirean pedagogical orientation as previous offerings, these courses

were viewed very positively by members of the community. In the words of one neighbor, "the

association is a great benefit, as it offers courses that give our people a leg up in the labor force"

(Flávia 7/12). In the words of another resident, the vocational courses offered by ASDS made it "a

place for people to get ahead in life...where people can open their mind to new skills and get new

opportunities to make a little money" (Tatiana 7/18).

In addition to vocational courses, due to popular demand recreational classes were offered in numerous areas, including several forms of *capoeira* (a popular Brazilian martial art), Afro-Brazilian dance, and theater (Edite 6/18). These classes were perceived as providing a great service in promoting Afro-Brazilian pride among community youth, and due to the tendency towards crime in surrounding neighborhoods a common refrain in interviews with ASDS teachers and members was that the Association's activities served to keep youth occupied and "keep kids off the streets" (Charlene 6/17; Flávia 7/12; Analisa 8/5; Gustavo 7/21). In the words of one *capoeira* teacher, "here they are learning something positive, rather than throwing rocks at people's houses and having nothing to do" (Alexandre 7/15). In the words of the Association Vice President, being involved in sports, dance and theater "helps kids to see that there are other sides to life, even if they aren't going to do those things professionally" (Charlene 6/17).

I also observed 25 of these classes, specifically 10 traditional African dance classes and 15 *capoeira* classes. The instructors of these courses had no background in pedagogy; rather, they were committed community members with particular interests and backgrounds in African dance and *capoeira* who expressed a willingness to teach these skills to community youth. The dance classes tended to start with the teacher modeling a particular dance or move, followed by a period in which students would practice the same step and receive one-on-one instructor feedback, and ending with group practice. The *capoeira* classes were much more free-form: students would form a circle, with several students playing traditional *capoeira* instruments (primarily the *berimbau*, a metal-stringed instrument that uses a gourd for resonance, and a *pandeiro*, a type of Brazilian tambourine) while others took turns sparring in the middle.

This shift, from a Freirean ASDS agenda focused on community change to one focused on vocational and cultural programming, was reflected in the drastically different visions for ASDS

expressed by different community members. As stated above, the presidency and teachers of ASDS tended to have a very utopian and Freirean vision of the organization: Analisa (8/5), a dance teacher, stated that ASDS "is a culture with a bright new vision, one where you can come in knowing nothing about your place in society, and leave knowing a bit of almost everything." Several other instructors discussed how ASDS was meant to function in a very horizontally-organized fashion: according to Alexandre (7/15), the association "is a group of people with the same vision, all of us in the neighborhood being involved in various projects for the good of the community." Raquel (8/1), another dance teacher, similarly stated that "the Association is by everyone, and for everyone."

If by this Raquel meant that everyone was free to have a different view of ASDS, then she would be quite right. Several residents, including Edite's own son Marcos, felt that ASDS was "a space in which we can relax" (Marcos 7/2) and engage in light-hearted activities. One neighbor cited how much he enjoyed going to ASDS to play a game of dominoes after work (Reginaldo 7/5). Another resident stated that he was most proud of how ASDS' activities were "a means of supporting and providing an incentive for young people to stay connected to our [Afro-Brazilian] traditional culture," such as *capoeira*, traditional hairstyling and traditional dance (Gustavo 7/21). Other residents mentioned specific activities that had been held in the ASDS community center which they appreciated, including such diverse offerings as consultations with a *pro bono* lawyer (Flávia 7/12), evangelical religious services (Tatiana 7/18), public health discussions on AIDS transmission (Flávia 7/12), and discussions with policemen about police brutality (Gustavo 7/21). In the words of one resident, "If you have an activity worth doing and ask Edite for the key, she'll give it to you" (Flávia 7/12).

Interestingly, while ASDS leaders were quick to point out their pride of all of these activities, some expressed a sense of anxiety that they had strayed from their original, more revolutionary Freirean mission (Edite 8/2). As Edite (8/2) stated, "We're elated that we can be a part of helping keep kids off the street and helping people find jobs—but the way we were trained was to seek real

revolutionary change in which smaller social programs, like the ones we offer now, wouldn't be

necessary." This comment reflects a certain degree of mismatch in vision between community members

and leaders, with leaders desiring social change and community members desiring recreation to keep

their children busy and vocational skills to get their children jobs. This disconnect between

organizational and community desires in Freirean programs has been strongly documented in the

literature, particularly in the work of Lesley Bartlett. In her studies of various government and

nonprofit Brazilian adult literacy programs with Freirean aims and ideals, Bartlett found an interesting

variation of reasons why community members participated in such programs: for most, it was a desire

to gain "respectability" and cultural capital (Bartlett 2007a) or improved social networks (Bartlett

2007b) rather than to play a part in revolutionary social change.

Case Study: Comunidades de Poder

The second case study analyzed is that of an adult education program run by an American-led public

health nonprofit in central Mozambique, referred to here as *Comunidades de Poder* or CDP. The

communities served by the program in question were relatively rural, and instructors in the classes were

CDP staff referred to organizationally as facilitators. Other CDP employees, known in CDP as field

staff, carried out weekly family visits to participants. Both CDP facilitators and field staff were trained

by myself and other Freirean educators within CDP in a user-friendly model of Freirean pedagogy that

had been developed by a prominent American nonprofit working in international education. Upon my

arrival, this program was being piloted in the three communities mentioned above, Oshossi, Mutango

and Inyaya.

Nonformal adult education programs such as those provided by CDP were increasingly

common in Mozambique at the time of this study. While adult education had become a low political

priority for the Mozambican government in the 1990s (Mário 2002), in the early 21st century such

programs gained renewed interest and funding due to stagnantly high illiteracy rates (around 50%,

according to INE 2009) and a more targeted governmental focus on literacy (Mário and Nandja 2006).

Due to a lack of governmental resources to establish formal schools in rural areas, much government

funding has been dedicated to nonformal and nongovernmental programs like CDP that were able to

provide adult education services (Castiano 2005).

However, not many of these service-providing third sector programs in Mozambique made use

of Freirean pedagogy, and those (like CDP) that did so had adopted Freirean pedagogy somewhat

independently of Freire's more revolutionary educational project. Specifically, CDP staff had been

trained in a Freirean pedagogical framework called FAMA by the North American nonprofit

ProLiteracy, which had developed this model for use in adult education courses (Curtis 1990). In the

ProLiteracy framework being used in this program, classes were begun through the use of a Freirean

code that referred to or depicted the dominant theme to be discussed within a given class. This was

then followed by four distinct phases of questions, represented by the acronym FAMA (referring to

Fact, Association, Meaning, Action). The purpose of such a discussion was to lead class members to

decide upon a course of action to address the underlying social problem represented by the code. This

FAMA model embodied key Freirean principles: it was based in generative themes, dialogic instruction

and movement toward social action. However, as will be shown here through ethnographic data, this

model as used by CDP did diverge from Freire's original framework in several respects: most

particularly, the social action it promoted was incremental rather than revolutionary, and was based in

pre-planned curricular frameworks rather than community-generated.

More specifically, in each of the 12 observations of adult education classes I cite in this article

(8/1; 8/2; 8/3; 8/8; 8/9; 8/10; 8/15; 8/16; 8/17; 8/22; 8/23; 8/24), the generative themes used for

discussion were pre-chosen and lesson plans based on those topics were pre-written by CDP staff,

including myself. While I was charged with soliciting community input regarding how the content of

these classes could be made most relevant to local cultural norms, community members had no input

regarding the generative themes themselves, a practice that diverges from that advocated by Freire (1970a, 1970b, 1985). Also, as I've documented more in depth elsewhere (Author 2013), the actual pedagogical practices of CDP instructors were very teacher-centered, with instructors asking questions that framed themselves as sources of "correct" information and rejected or downplayed alternative suggestions made by participants.

In my observations of field staff's weekly visits to participating families, I similarly noted that the particular goals chosen by individual families were often influenced by staff suggestions. For instance, while visiting with a Dona Fernanda in the community of Oshossi (7/13), a field staff member named Silva was helping her choose her goals for one six-month goal period. When she had trouble coming up with ideas, Silva began to offer a number of suggestions by asking questions. For instance, seeing a toddler come out of her home, Silva asked Dona Fernanda if the young girl had been registered with the government and received a Mozambican ID card. When Dona Fernanda said no, Silva recommended that as a goal. Similarly, Silva asked Dona Fernanda how often she would eat per day, and the woman responded that she couldn't afford to eat more than once per day. Silva responded that he understood, but that even with only a little food, it is healthier to eat it in several servings rather than one—he then suggested Dona Fernanda make a goal to split up her daily meal into several smaller meals. While all of these are beneficial suggestions that could arguably improve Dona Fernanda's general well-being, they also were drawn from the pre-determined goals of GDP's adult education program rather than representing suggestions by Dona Fernanda herself.

Similarly, while accompanying another field staff member named Tavares on his weekly visits in Inyaya (9/7), I could see Tavares taking the leading role in determining several participants' program goals. When setting goals with one man, Tavares asked him how many times each family member eats per day. When the man sheepishly admitted to eating more regularly than his child, Tavares recommended he set a goal to feed each member of the family equally. On a visit with an older couple

in Inyaya that same day (9/7), Tavares frequently used phrases like "It would be a good idea to...." or "You know, you should really think about doing _____" while setting goals with them.

CDP field staff would often take the lead in giving suggestions regarding potential participant goals. In this sense, the community involvement and action advocated by Freire was present, but in a controlled sense—community action items in classes were pre-determined, and dialogic instruction was often used to suggest rather than solicit ideas for individual familial goals. In short, Freirean pedagogical techniques were used to promote acceptance of an already determined agenda, rather than facilitate and solicit community ideas.

That said, it is important to note that in my interviews with participating community members, the sense of pride and personal ownership of behavioral changes participants shared was remarkably strong. Three interviews with heads of households in Mutango make this point particularly clear: Enrique (7/3) stated that "It's wonderful, thanks to CDP I now know how to take care of my pregnant daughter and her unborn child, I know how much my infant granddaughter should weigh so I can know if I should be worried about her nutrition or not, I know what I should do if any of us ever get tuberculosis—this is powerful information I never had access to before." When I asked Daniel (7/8) how he felt his life had changed since beginning to work with CDP, his chest swelled as he said, "I feel proud, I feel good—I am a better and stronger man than I was just a year ago." Finally, when I asked Valdimar (7/4) how life in Mutango was different since CDP's arrival, he said "It's interesting, people talk more now—for example, my neighbor found a new way to fertilize his garden several months ago, and I remember him coming door to door telling us, his neighbors, about it. Nothing like that ever happened before we started working with CDP." These fieldnotes make clear that CDP's methods were perceived as promoting positive outcomes. However, CDP's use of Freirean pedagogical methods had been clearly modified from Freire's original educational project, both in terms of their use and their purpose.

When asked about this usage of Freirean pedagogical methods separate from their originally

intended purposes, CDP administrators were freely willing to admit that this action was purposeful. As

Peter (5/17) stated,

> As much as I admire Freire's idealism, and as much as we want to see our participants live
> happier and fuller lives, we're not interested in overthrowing governments or radically
> restructuring society. We're interested in social change, but concrete change now in the lives of
> people who are suffering the most, who don't have clean water, who don't know how to care for
> a relative with AIDS. Freire's teaching methods do a great job in teaching what we want to
> teach—and I don't think what we're doing is that different from what he would teach if he were
> here.

In this statement, Peter clearly separates CDP and its mission, as well as his own interpretation of

Freire and Freirean thought, from organizations like ASDS that define their vision of social change

much more radically.

Discussion and Conclusion

Both of these examples illustrate the different directions in which educational organizations can

interpret the educational project of Paulo Freire, and the different ways that local communities can

respond to those varying approaches. With ASDS, organizational leaders preferred an approach to

education that closely aligned with Freire's, both in terms of their use of code-based community

dialogues and the radical social change they hoped their programming would promote. However,

program participants' programming desires were often much more mundane. This case study, building

on the work of Bartlett (2010, 205), makes clear that Freirean educational programming does not

necessarily lead participants to critical consciousness in a predetermined, autonomous manner. Rather,

the Freirean educational project (Bartlett 2003) is much more internally contested than that.

With CDP, Freirean pedagogical methods were utilized to promote behavioral changes that

improved participants' well-being, but which were similarly much more modest than the political goals

espoused by Freire himself. In the eyes of some Freirean educators, organizations like CDP represent a

"co-option" of Freirean methods that support the status quo by placing the causes of inequality on

negative behaviors of the poor rather than structural inequalities, thus placing the blame for poverty on the poor rather than the systems in which the poor are forced to survive (Kidd and Kumar 1981).

I argue that placing such value judgments on organizations' adherence to a purist interpretation of Freirean pedagogy and philosophy does little to make meaning of the reality that Freireans vary widely in their interpretations of Freire's own thought, and often push back against Freire's own claims, a challenge which Freire himself invited repeatedly (see hooks 1994). Rather, within Freirean theory the construct of critical consciousness provides a way whereby the variety of interpretation illustrated in these two case studies can be meaningfully understood.

As mentioned earlier, the key purpose of education to Freire (1970a, 1970b, 1973) is the pursuit of critical consciousness, a journey which does not necessarily have an end, but instead functions as a constant form of reflection and action—a praxis wherein people, communities and organizations can continually refine their sense of social justice and awareness of structural inequality. According to Freire (1970a), this process is the way to "become more fully human."

My professional experience in the examples cited in this work has led me to my own praxis, or my own process of reflection and action, of which this article is a part. While there is no clear "right answer" for a student of Freire that encounters difficulty in promoting social change, whether faced with students with contrasting goals or an organizational leadership that does not prioritize revolutionary goals, the purpose of Freirean praxis is to make meaning and find fuller humanity through the exploration of those experiences.

On the basis of the two case studies cited herein, I argue that this pursuit of critical consciousness can be productively theorized and utilized at the organizational—not just the individual—level. That is, just as individual Freirean educators engage in a process of reflection and action with their students that ideally leads them to identify and challenge elements of their lived reality that they would like to see change, the literature on organizational change (Langley et al. 2009;

Rosenberg 1998) makes clear that organizations commonly go through similar regular processes of reflection and strategic restructuring that help them refine their mission and determine how effectively they are pursuing their organizational goals. While their goals might differ widely, both ASDS and CDP could be seen as engaging in such a process of reflection and action, pursuing their separate visions of organizational critical consciousness. Theorizing critical consciousness at the organizational level in this manner removes unhelpful value judgments of the degree to which an organization is truly "Freirean" and instead provides a productive theoretical construct which can be used to analyze the organizational change process as it is perceived and pursued by administrators in Freirean organizations. Further research into both ASDS and CDP that utilizes this framework could provide significant insight into how their approaches to Freirean pedagogy and theory have developed over time to produce the actions documented in this article.

I also argue that applying Freire's (1970a, 1970b, 1973) construct of critical consciousness organizationally can provide social justice-oriented nonprofits with a practical means of assessing their own progress towards their organizational mission. As such organizations regularly assess their activities and their mission and find themselves asking questions such as "What do we want participants to take away from our programming?", I argue that such questions could act as organizational "generative themes." Such a process of continual re-assessment of organizational performance is just as much a form of praxis as is the process such Freirean organizations promote in their classrooms, and the desired end result is the same for both: critical consciousness, or "a deepened consciousness of their situation [that] leads [individuals as well as organizations] to apprehend their situation as a historical reality susceptible of transformation" (Freire 1985, 253). Just as individual members of the oppressed are subjected to social inequalities that are created and reproduced by their social context, so are organizations, and in order to be effective in pursuing a Freirean agenda such organizations must prioritize their own critical consciousness and humanization as well as that of their

participants. Just as the pursuit of critical consciousness is meant to bring oppressed peoples to a knowledge of their oppressive situation and the dynamics therein, giving them the tools to challenge oppressive structures, so can the pursuit of critical consciousness grant Freirean organizations the tools to better challenge hegemony and create a just and equal world.

The works of both nonprofit examples cited herein—in Brazil and Mozambique—can be understood as being in the midst of such organizational praxis, as are thousands of other organizations that use Freirean philosophy or pedagogy. By consciously promoting reflection on the part of their staff, at both an individual and organizational level, Freirean organizations could become more cognizant of their own missteps and more forward more consciously. By so doing, Freirean organizations could become more self-aware in pursuit of their own critical consciousness, and thus understand more fully how to lead their students through the same process.

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