A COMMUNITY ORGANIZER TRAINING COURSE: TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR FAVELA LEADERS IN RIO DE JANEIRO

08

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**Abstract**

Community organizing has long been a useful tool in the United States for neighborhoods to come together and improve their circumstances. In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, this skill has fallen under the radar of community leaders in recent years after success in the 1970s and 80s. Now with a sense of liberty restored after UPP removal of drug gangs, favelas have begun organizing themselves to accomplish their goals. Catalytic Communities has worked alongside favela leaders for just over a decade, seeking to provide them with the tools and non-financial resources they need to accomplish their goals. This research, then, is a look into training community leaders in the foundations and skills of community organizing. This includes topics like building relationships, creating community identity, casting a vision, organizing people and projects, administration, fundraising, government interaction, and asset based community development. These topics were chosen after a survey of favela leaders, interviews with NGO leaders who have a good reputation among favela leaders, and a review of community organizer training courses.

There is also a chapter on the theological framework that makes community organizing important to the Christian church. This section looks at how community organizing is a part of seeing God’s “Kingdom come…on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10, NIV). This looks like the church working with the community in solidarity, to gain a collective power that works in achieving their goals and allows real community to be created.

**Keywords**: Community organizing, theology, Rio de Janeiro, Catalytic Communities, favelas

**Chapter 1**

# Introduction

A esperança é a última que morre.

Hope is the last to die.

For centuries, the majority opinion in Rio de Janeiro has been that the government’s role is to fix all of society’s problems, from the price of bread to a housing shortage. However, as Theresa Williamson, founder of Catalytic Communities stated, “The government is finally showing up and the people are not happy with the outcome.”

This is nowhere more true than in the favelas, where the most common government stance has been one of apathy and a hands off approach. In the 1960s and 70s there was a government push to remove the favelas. During that period, communities gathered together to save their homes. Unfortunately, that community organizing didn’t continue after the threat of removal was overcome. History would suggest that the military dictatorship, which began in 1964, suppressed community organizing, as it saw it as a threat to power.

In 2008 the city government of Rio de Janeiro began several programs aimed at upgrading and integrating the favelas into the formal city. Some suggest that these programs were inspired by the winning of the Olympic bid by the city in 2006 and the World Cup bid by the nation in 2007. There were housing programs like *Minha Casa Minha Vida*, aimed at providing housing to the homeless. There was Favela-Bairro, which sought to transform favelas that were riddled with stigma and problems, into *bairros*, or neighborhoods, like the rest of the city. This is just to name a few programs.

Unfortunately, most favela residents have been left disillusioned at the actual results of these programs. They were promised certain outcomes and six years later have yet to see the real problems of their communities addressed, like regular trash collection and proper water and sanitation systems that serve all families, even those at the very tops of the hills, which are notoriously more poor and disregarded in the treatment of favelas.

Finally, the city finds itself in a peculiar time, right as the World Cup begins and the world’s attention is here. For many across the world, this will be the first time they hear about favelas. Favela leaders, and many others, are looking to capitalize on the attention in hopes that media attention will put presser on their government to be more responsible and act in ways that benefit all citizens, including those of favelas.

## Relevancy

It is in this setting that community organizing is finding new traction. The laws and programs for addressing poverty and marginalization in Rio are internationally recognized as some of the most progressive. Unfortunately, residents rarely see the effects of that. They have given up waiting because, while they wait, they watch their communities and children get left behind.

Catalytic Communities (CatComm), an organization with the goal of empowering favela residents and amplifying their voice both in Rio and abroad, knows the amazing things that favelas and their leaders have already accomplished. They are seeking to provide tools and resources to residents so they can be more effective in reaching their goals. Having already offered short training courses in Social Media and Gentrification, they are hoping to offer a course in Community Organizing to community leaders in the favelas.

My research question is “What would be the ideal course content and structure for a training course on Community Organizing put on by Catalytic Communities?” The course would be offered to people who are already leaders in their respective communities and are seeking to improve their leadership and the way their community works together. Thus, the answer to this question is based on research of current community organizing training courses for grassroots leaders, current and historical community organizing practices in Rio de Janeiro, current needs of community leaders in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, and resources available within Rio for community organizers.

## Community Context

Overall, Brazil has a population of about 200 million people, with the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area having 11.8 million people, and 6.3 million in the formal city of Rio de Janeiro (CIA, 2013; IGBE, 2013). There are 197 formally recognized favelas (UPP Social, n.d.). However, the number of favela residents has consistently been debated. Resident distrust of city organizations blocks the government from properly conducting a census. Various residents’ associations have conducted censuses in their favelas, but those numbers are not recognized by the city as legitimate and thus not gathered in any single location for research purposes.

Understanding favelas in Rio requires at least basic knowledge of the Pacifying Police Units (UPP). As a new military police unit created in 2008, their commission was to bring peace to favelas long run by drug gangs (UPP, n.d.). Where drug traffickers used to walk around favelas with large guns, now police officers do. Having lived in a favela myself for the last 18 months, I can say that most residents agree that overall quality of life goes up in the favelas with the arrival of the UPP, but they also create a different set of problems. Understanding the UPPs is not the objective of this paper, but it is important to recognize the effect they have on community organizing in the 38 favelas where they are currently installed. This topic will be discussed in more detail at the end of the chapter about the history of community organizing in Brazil.

### Context Variations

One aspect of this study is the way the government approaches favelas. At this point the approach has been very paternalistic, not including community members in the planning process of any projects, let alone giving them final say on what happens in their communities. Instead, there is an increased police presence through the UPP and other police units, essentially criminalizing all who live in favelas.

Further, the type and location of the favelas vary. There are several zones within the city of Rio de Janeiro, and favelas are as distinctive as the zones they are in. A favela in the South Zone is very different from a favela in the North or West Zone. They will encounter different problems, different levels of community involvement. There is also the question of whether a favela is controlled by a drug gang, the (UPP), a local militia, or none of these. Again, the assets and needs of a community will depend on which of these categories they fall into. It will also affect the risk leaders assume when undertaking certain actions.

Finally, how the community has or has not organized itself in the past will also play a part in assessing their needs. Many communities have vibrant residents’ associations and community organizations that work to better their community. However, others do not for various reasons. Perhaps they once had a well organized and involved community, but over time people lost interest. Or maybe there was a residents’ association in place, but for years it was under the thumb of the drug gang that was in charge of the favela. And now, free of the drug gang, the residents aren’t sure where to start in organizing their community. The needed tools and resources will be different depending on these factors.

## Variables

Even though favelas vary significantly, there are some common variables that allowed CatComm and I to move forward in creating the course. The first of these variables is a lack of knowledge. Most favela leaders are residents who love their community and want to help make it better. They usually portray typical leadership qualities such as decisiveness and authority, which draw respect from those living in the favelas. However, few leaders, if any, have ever studied community organizing history or principles. While the leaders have very creative ideas, a course with foundational principles and techniques would give them a basis for action that they can combine with what they are already doing.

Another variable to address is the often-haphazard path the leaders travel in their organizing. They display a lack of vision and strategy, with actions primarily as reactions to expressed problems. While being flexible and responsive to community problems is good, they should also be proactive in creating unity and trust among residents and between the community and the organization.

However, their motivation is incredible. After so many years of oppressive state action and manipulation by drug gangs, they have not given up. They are striving for the best for their communities. This is their greatest asset. It is this passion that will gather residents to support them, if they can learn to channel and communicate that vision more effectively.

The work of this study is to gather and examine the felt needs of community leaders, so as to create a course that addresses these needs and provides them with new resources with which to develop their communities. By the end of the study, their experience learning within a small group of like-minded leaders will provide them with practical tools and local resources to achieve the goals and future they envision for their communities.

**Chapter 2**

# Methods & Validity

O pior cego é aquele que não quer ver.   
The worst blind person is the one who doesn't want to see.

The aim of this research is to identify which of the numerous topics within Community Organizing would be best suited for a training course that is targeted specifically to training community leaders from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. With this in mind, there are two main topics that must be examined before the final course topics can be decided upon: the variety of topics that are considered part of community organizing and the needs and current actions of local community organizers in the city. Final decisions on the topic must also include the needs of Catalytic Communities.

## Methodology

In order to develop a broad understanding of community organizing norms, various literature and courses will be examined, as the literature review demonstrates in chapter 4. This research clarifies topics that are normally taught in Community Organizing courses.

### Quantitative Methods

Discovering the needs and current practices of community organizing in Rio de Janeiro will require a more participatory approach. Using the wide network of Catalytic Communities with community leaders across the city, a quantitative survey will be conducted online. Because community organizers are extremely busy, working both to earn a living and to improve their communities,they have little free time. I sought to discover the current meaning of the term “Community Organizing” to leaders and what the needs of their communities are . Theresa Williamson, CatComm’s director, did not foresee any significant problems getting people to take the survey. The leaders they work with trust the organization and understand the benefits they often yield from working with them.

Another reason I utilized a survey is because the city’s size and number of favelas would have prevented me from meeting a majority of the leaders in the city. The amount of time required to accomplish this would not be worth the information gathered. However, via the Internet, this survey can reach a large number of leaders in a short amount of time.

The survey questions (found in the Appendix) primarily aimed to gather the needs of leaders, so as to ultimately select topics that will be most useful. Together with Catalytic Communities, I decided that the questions on this survey were better left open ended, as people often use different terms to describe the same type of activities within their community. After the results are collected, ideas and terms will need to be coded and compared with the topics discussed in the literature.

### Qualitative Methods

The original research plan included seven qualitative interviews with community leaders who Catalytic Communities knows are effective community organizers. My goal was to have a variety of people among the types of leaders I would interview: men, women, young, old, from different parts of the city, and in different positions and roles within the community. These interviews would be aimed at understanding effective community organizing practices in a uniquely Brazilian context. For example, two of the courses examined discussed the importance of getting commitment and explained how that should be done. However, this is likely to be very different in a Brazilian context, as Brazil has a distinctly different understanding of commitment than do people in the USA.

Unfortunately, this part of the research process was rather difficult to accomplish. Things move at much slower pace in Brazil than I am used to as an American. Even after living here for a year and a half, several weeks passed before I was unable to get contact information for the leaders. Consequently, this meant I was trying to schedule interviews during the first few weeks of the World Cup, which was being held in Brazil. Because soccer is vitally important to the Brazilian identity, people simply were not available or willing to do interviews. Many of those contacted responded with some variation of, “Your project sounds interesting and I would love to be a part of it. However, I am only available after the World Cup.” Sadly, the timeline for my research did not allow for that, and I had to make adjustments.

An adjustment I am making is to interview not only community leaders but also two NGO leaders who work closely with favela leaders across the city. They are contacts of CatComm’s, who have a reputation for listening to favela communities and working alongside them. I looked to them for what research method literature calls “expert interviews”. These gave me another perspective to draw from.

### Research Process

I originally intended to start by interviewing the community leaders, in hopes of gaining insight into what they feel is most needed in the favelas, and what the leaders want to learn more about. Once these were known, the study would have turned to the current community organizing literature, to compare common practices, with what is taught in other courses.

However, with the difficulties in obtaining interviews, I had to change the order of my research process. Instead I moved forward with the literature research before the interviews and created a basic course structure. With the course structure in hand I conducted the interviews, getting the community leaders’ and NGO leaders’ perspectives on the usefulness and applicability of the basic contents.

## Validity

Having lived in a favela for the last eighteen months, I have gained an insiders perspective on life in the favelas. The MATUL program has also allowed me the opportunity to work with leaders all over the city in various areas of life, from health, economics, education, and advocacy.

However, this perspective has caused me to work under a few assumptions, one of which I hold in common with CatComm. Primarily, we assume that community leaders would want this kind of course. If they do not, all of this work is rendered useless. However, Theresa, CatComm’s founder, is very confident that when they offer this course they will have to turn people away in order to keep the class size reasonable

The other assumption is that this knowledge and these kinds of practices are not known among favela leaders. My time living in a favela myself and CatComm’s 14 years working to empower community leaders has allowed us to recognize a large need among leaders for this, information, which is considered basic knowledge in the field of community organizing in the US. However, this field has yet to make it to Rio de Janeiro and those who need it most.

### Ethics

The ethical validity of this study is straightforward. The topic is not controversial nor does it deal directly with topics that would put participants at risk in any way. They were, of course, be made aware that their responses will be used in this paper and potentially be quoted in the course, if we feel like it is appropriate. They had the opportunity to decline inclusion in one or both of these if they so choose, or choose to remain anonymous within these areas.

Given that the topic being studied does not look into government programs or require the involvement of any government body or ministry, the legal requirements for researching are minimal and have already been met. The research is taking place within a legally sanctioned non-governmental organization to advance the purposes of their work, and the visa that allowed me entry to the country is given to both volunteers and researchers.

While the research itself does not present any ethical dilemmas, it is important to note that leaders in communities run by drug traffickers or militias will likely face a large risk taking this class and implementing the strategies presented. This course will not take into account the specific circumstances in each community that require different consideration.

## Outcomes

At the end of this research project, there will be a completed project report detailing the process and analysis that led to the specific choices for the Community Organizing course content and teaching style. This was presented at my final staff meeting with Catalytic Communities on August 11, 2014. Along the way there were various other contributions made to Catalytic Communities reporting website, RioOnWatch.com.

Action will not stop at the implementation of the Community Organizing course. The course structure will include students working on an organizing project in their community. Thus continued action will happen in communities. With the tools and skills learned in the course, the students will be more equipped to take further action in their communities as well. This will invariably benefit the communities of those taking the course. Those who take the survey will be given first priority in signing up for the course, though theymay not choose to participate.

**Chapter 3**

# Theological Framework

Deus escreve certo por linhas tortas.   
God writes straight by crooked lines.

The book of Mark records Jesus’ first words of his ministry as declaring the arrival of the Kingdom of God. He believed it would motivate people to “repent and believe the good news” (Mark 1:15, New International Version). Most evangelical Christians in Brazil would define the good news as Jesus’ death and resurrection, which saved us from out sins. The Kingdom of God and Jesus’ work on the cross are intricately related. Jesus’ sacrifice restores our relationship with God, thus allowing us to take part in the Kingdom. However, it is not our place in the kingdom that is lauded as good news but the Kingdom itself.

The Kingdom of God, then, requires our attention. An earthly kingdom is defined by the extent of a king’s power over the area where he reigns. The same can be said of the Kingdom of God; it is wherever God is declared King, primarily in the hearts of his people. When someone begins to follow God they are transformed, repenting of their old ways. This personal transformation is commonly understood in evangelical circles.

Unfortunately, transformation often stops at the personal level, where people are content to focus on their own lives. But the Kingdom of God does not stop there. When a person is transformed, they are filled with the Holy Spirit, allowing them to become more and more like Christ. They are filled with compassion for others, a concern for justice & righteousness within society, and an unending love for the Father, among other characteristics. The flourishing of these traits will motivate a person “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly” with God (Micah 6:8, NIV). These traits manifest themselves by seeking to transform an unjust society, in whatever form that may take. A Christian justice blogger puts it this way:

“In the early days of his ministry, Jesus told his followers to repent in light of ***the present kingdom***. And then he went about exercising the rule of this kingdom – healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons and proclaiming the forgiveness of sins. He begins to right the wrongs of the world, ultimately challenging the stronghold that sin has had upon all of creation. But then he asks for his disciples, and us, to pray for His kingdom of come. He is signifying that the fullness of God’s kingdom has not yet been realized. Jesus inaugurates the kingdom of God in His first coming, He will complete it in His Second. In between these two realities, Jesus invites us to be a part of the larger work of God in bringing it to pass” (Adedayo, 2014, par. 3).

Christians are called to be a part of bringing the Kingdom of God to pass, to work toward the righting of wrongs in society. There are many ways of working toward this end, but one of the most effective is community organizing. Below is an exploration of how a few key concepts of community organizing interact with theology and scripture.

## The Community and the Church

One of the biggest difficulties to overcome in the church is the idea that salvation and our relationship with God are purely individual experiences. While there are individual aspects to them, faith and the Christian experience do not happen outside of community. Any theology for community organizing needs its foundation in a communal faith.

This then, begs the question, “How does the church see itself in relation to the city or community it is in?” Robert Linthicum (1991) says there are three postures a church can take. The first is the church *in* the city, which we have already concluded is inadequate for the people of God (1991, pp. 21-2). There is little to no attachment to the location of the church meeting. It simply happens to meet in that place. No shared identity or commonality is derived. The second posture is the church *to* the city (1991, pp. 22-3). This typically looks like the church trying to address all the social ills of the community on its own, without input from the community itself. The church sees itself, not Jesus, as the savior of that community and usually ends up burning out on the work. The third posture is the church *with* the city (1991, pp. 23-4). This is the best posture to take, as it aligns the church and the community in a shared identity. They are each a part of the other, supporting one another. In this position, the church does not try to solve all the problems of the community, but the church and community work together to come up with solutions that the community can implement. This third option is community organizing at its finest, and the one that Linthicum suggests as best for churches.

## The People of God

First, let us look at the story of the people of God throughout the Bible. The exodus story of the Hebrew people leaving Egypt, is the story that all the rest point back to. It is a story of God saving his people from oppression. Again, we see a similar story when they are in exile in Babylon, being called to seek the city’s peace and prosperity (Jeremiah 29:7, NIV). However, they are too live in a strikingly different way than the Babylonians, with the most famous example of that being Daniel. Dennis Jacobsen, a pastor and community organizer in Milwaukee, WI, sees faithful Christianity as always resisting the Babylon of that day. “To come out of Babylon is to live in a constant state of resistance to classism, racism, and militarism” (Jacobsen, 2001, p. 5). It is not merely to follow a list of prescribed and prohibited personal actions, but to resist the pieces of society that oppress and to pursue the *shalom* of the city.

Many Christians, though, have created a faith for themselves that does not fit within community organizing. They focus on the self-denial aspects of their faith, and back it up with countless examples of how power corrupts an honest faith. In Luke 4:18 Jesus declares his mission as anointed “to bring good news to the poor…to let the oppressed go free.” Jacobsen asserts that any Christian seeking to follow Christ needs to also be seeking freedom for the oppressed and good news for the poor (2001, p.14). But this is the not just a spiritual freedom and good news, but radical acts that demonstrate our departure from Babylon, from the dominant societal culture. Jacobsen quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer as saying “the church is the church only when it exists for others” (2001, p. 15).

### Power

Many Christians think power will inevitably corrupt the one who holds it, and use the description of Jesus giving up his power in Philippians 2 as an example for Christians to follow. However, power, as most people understand it today, is not the true definition of power. In Portuguese, power is translated as *poder*, which is also translated as ability (Jacobsen, 2001, p. 38). For many Christians in the US and in Brazil, they are able to do what they need to live without even thinking about it. But for many others, they simply are not granted the power within society to do so. They need power to flourish in the city.

Jacobsen suggests that Christians need to see power as coming from the all-powerful God they worship, and thus power is, in its purest form, good and always a gift from God (2001, p. 44). This is an important perspective to have on power, because then it will allow a Christian with clear conscious to work towards gaining power for the systemically disadvantaged. Plus, it means the Christians will also understand that it is a gift from God that must be stewarded well, like any other gift He gives. Further, when God takes on human form in the person Jesus, He does so for the purpose of distributing power among his believers through the Holy Spirit (Jacobsen, 2001, p. 46). “Spirit power is characterized by healing (Luke 5:17; 8:46), humility (John 13:3-7; Matt 18:4), shared wealth (John 6:1-14; Luke 19: 8-9; Acts 2:46), and nonviolence (Matt 5:21-22, 38-40, 43-44)” (Jacobsen, 2001, p. 47).

### Self-Interest

The concept of self-denial needs to be re-defined. Many Christians tend to glorify suffering and denial of self-interests by pointing to Jesus’ admonishment for his followers to “deny themselves” as seen in Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, and Luke 9:23. However, this is not a call to universal suffering, but a participation in the cross of Christ with the same purposes as His work, reconciliation and the Kingdom of God (Jacobsen, 2001, pp. 52-3). So, it is a call to deny the desires that are selfish of an individualistic and privatized nature in order to pursue the desires that are for the community, that align with God’s desires for the world.

### Community

The word community has taken on new meanings in different contexts. In Rio de Janeiro, the word *comunidade* was and is sometimes still used to refer to favelas. During the height of the violence associated with drug gangs, the word favela took on a very negative stigma. Thus, many residents and outsiders began calling them comunidadesin an effort to disassociate favelas from the stigma they had acquired. While a shift back to using the proper name favela has begun, the word comunidade is still synonymous with favelas. In Rio de Janeiro, the word has lost its other meaning. While the elements of community are present in favelas and other parts of *carioca* (the adjective used to describe people and things from Rio de Janeiro) culture, the development of community within society is not pursued.

In the US, community within the church has come to mean something else. Jacobsen paints a brash picture of it:

“What is trumpeted as community is in actuality a series of bland and banal potluck dinners, or pseudo-psychological small groups, or introspective and innocuous Bible studies. The so-called community of the American church is most often a social setting for reinforcing the false values of a privileged society. Hugs, handshakes, and hallelujahs may be emotionally invigorating but they are hardly a substitute for the community that invites the Word of God to divide soul and spirit, bone and marrow, exposing our complicities and compromises.” (2001, p. 88).

What then is true biblical community that both Carioca and American Christians can pursue? Jacobsen defines true Christian community as being “holy, catholic, apostolic, and confessional” (2001, p. 89). **Holy** in the way that it is set apart for the glory and purposes of God, which takes place in the work of reconciliation and engaging the public arena (Jacobsen, 2001, p. 90). The community of God is **catholic**, not in the denominational sense of the word, but in defying human division. Community organizing that comprises different churches can accomplish what is often difficult in regular gatherings for worship (2001, pp. 91-2). An **apostolic** church is one that is sent to declare the good news of Christ through their personal experience with him. This good news is proclaiming life in the face of death, and not just spiritual death, but the “death by street violence. Death by drugs… The death of uneducated minds. The death of decaying neighborhoods. The death of decimated families” (Jacobsen, 2001, p. 93). Christian community declares the life of Jesus by demonstrating with their life together, an alternative to the life that leads to death. And finally, Christian community is **confessional** in the way it acts toward the world around it, including the systems and institutions that seek something entirely contrary to the life of Christ (Jacobsen, 2001, pp. 94-5).

**Chapter 4**

# History of Community Organizing in Rio de Janeiro

A ocasião faz o ladrão.

The opportunity makes the thief.

While the current situation reflects a lack of some community organizing strategies, this is not because the concept is foreign one Brazilians. In fact, Rio de Janeiro saw highly effective organizing in the late 1970s and early 1980s, winning momentous victories in the struggle against removal. Bryan McCann, in his new book *Hard Times in the Marvelous City: From Dictatorship to Democracy in the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro* details the various stages that Rio’s favelas went through in terms of community organizing, and what caused the ups and downs. Here I will summarize his findings, at times referencing other texts that provide more detail to things like the Catholic church’s Pastorals and Ecclesial Base Communities, as well as in more recent examples of community organizing.

## Victories against Forced Eviction

Government efforts to remove favelas were largely successful for most of the 20th century after the first one was established in Rio de Janeiro in 1897 (Osborne, 2012). In the 1940s, the Catholic Church began its involvement in assisting favela residents with their fight for rights and access to resources. In 1960 Rio’s state government created a program that required participation from residents in planning social projects for favelas. However, in 1968, a few years after Brazil’s government became a military dictatorship, a federal program was established with contradictory purposes to the programs of the state, resulting in more than 100,000 people loosing their homes (Osborne, 2012).

1n 1978, however, the trends changed when Vidigal, a favela in Rio’s South Zone, successfully resisted eviction (McCann, 2014, Intro, par. 4-6). Their successful resistance depended on the unity the community created and the organized way they acted. The city dispatched its *garis,* or garbage men, to Vidigal to take care of removing the community in January 1978. However, the people of Vidigal knew that these garis were people just like them, who potentially lived in a different favela. Showing up in Vidigal that morning was just them doing their job. So Vidigal residents served them breakfast and chatted with them over coffee, winning them over and taking away the government arm for enforcing their policy of favela removals (McCann, 2014, Intro, par. 12). As McCann so succinctly summarizes, “Vidigal's successful resistance marked a success for favela autonomy and a blow against the dictatorship” (2014, Intro, par. 8).

## Pastoral strengthening of Resident Associations

Much of this early success, though, owes a large debt to a program of the Catholic Church called the *Pastoral das Favelas*. This program aimed to support and guide the favelas through the unique struggles they faced. The Archdiocese in Rio de Janeiro, motivated by liberation theology, established the Pastoral as a way of supporting the poor in Rio. They quickly established a legal office that worked to obtain legal injunctions against removals. The Vidigal victory relied on one such injunction, where a judge ruled that “if Vidigal was at risk of landslide, so was every hillside favela in the city, and therefore risk of landslide could not itself justify removal of an urban community” (McCann, 2014, Intro, par. 5).

Because of the influence of the Pastoral in Vidigal and a few other key favelas in Rio in the early 1970s, it saw many more favelas seeking to be involved with them (McCann, 2014, Ch. 2, par. 26). Their first order of business in every favela was to have it create a residents’ association with popularly elected leaders (McCann, 2014, par. 27). Residents’ associations within favelas quickly gained notoriety across the city, and politicians tried to gain their support in various ways. Leonel Brizola, who would go on to win the 1982 gubernatorial elections in Rio, brought favela leaders into party leadership of the Democratic Labor Party (PDT) (McCann, 2014, Intro, par. 9).

## The Brizola Era

The Brizola era in Rio de Janeiro’s political history is a contentious one. He was favorable towards the favelas and wanted to change the city’s policies toward them in order to make them full sections of the city. Unfortunately, his plans didn’t go as he expected.

During his campaign, his platform for winning votes from favela residents was his promise to legalize land occupancy of the favelas. Because of this promise, though, between his election and being sworn into office, favelas in the north zone of the city expanded exponentially, as more people looked to take advantage of the favor of the governor’s office (McCann, 2014, Ch. 3, par. 1).

By appointing favela leaders to government office, the grassroots movement of favela mobilization had ended (McCann, 2014, Ch. 2, par. 96). In order to implement the various security and educational reforms, as well as favela upgrading projects, the residents’ associations became “conduits of funding and employment” for favela residents (McCann, 2014, par. 11). They were now the keepers of the status quo, instead of the mobilizers of the community. Unfortunately, instead of causing favelas to integrate into the formal city as Brizola had hoped, this new set of state agencies and rules for working in favelas served to further establish the difference between the *morro* (literal: hill, figurative: favela) and the *asfalto* (literal: asphalt, figurative: formal city) (McCann, 2014, par. 33).

This inclusion of residents’ associations and favela leaders in popular government was also the end of Pastoral involvement in favelas. The Archdioces no long saw the need to struggle for land right, as they were already secured, and the Vatican turned to a focus on spiritual matters that influenced the Catholic Church in Brazil (McCann, 2014, Ch. 4, par. 86)

Finally, one of Brizolas policies that had the most unforeseen consequences was that of community policing. Until Brizola had taken office, the police had always seen themselves as protecting the asfatlo from the morro. Police officers would freely walk into private homes without question or warrant. Brizola’s, along with the new chief of the military police, Colonel Magno Nazareth Cerquiera, created a policy of community policing (McCann, 2014, Ch. 1, par. 58). They sought to overlook low-level crime in favor of seeking the real causes of crime like unemployment (McCann, 2014, Ch. 3, par. 78-9). However, because the police officers did not support this new policy, they simply stayed away from favelas altogether, leaving them without any state security forces (McCann, 2014, Ch.1, par. 59).

## Rise of the Drug Gangs

This all combined for an environment ripe to be taken over by the drug gangs. The residents’ associations no longer united and mobilized the people. The Pastoral, which had spurred resident associations to this in the past, had withdrawn from favelas. And the police force, which was never for favela residents, but would have been active in rooting out drug gangs, avoided the favelas in an effort to respect their privacy like any other citizen of the city.

Thus, armed drug gangs came in and demonstrated their power, with which there was nothing to counter. The favelas were increasingly less free to speak against the drug gangs, and soon it became the *lei do morro*, law of the favela (McCann, 2014, Ch. 4, par. 57). However, neither did any politician want to discuss this, as their lack of action or possible solutions reflected badly on them (McCann, 2014, Ch. 4, par. 67).

During the reign of the drug gangs, many NGOs began working in the favelas. McCann describes them as “more disciplined and focused offspring of the grassroots movements of the late 1970s, but [lacking] their transformative agenda and ability to inspire broad participation” (2014, Ch. 5, par. 21). Just as residents’ associations were allowed to continue working as long as they did not speak against the traffickers, so were NGOs.

## Pacification and Renewed Involvement in Civil Society

For almost a decade, this was the reality that favela residents’ lived under, constant threat and intimidation from drug traffickers. It is important to note that not all favelas were run by drug gangs, some were run by militias of off-duty police officers, who extorted money from favela residents and business owners in exchange for supposed protection. Within this atmosphere, many favelas lost their sense of unity, as some parts were more affected by trafficking activity or city upgrades, creating class distinctions within favelas.

In 2008, though, the state finally put forth a strategy to take the favelas back from the drug gangs and offer them hope to become full citizens of the city. This was through the Pacifying Police Units, or UPPs, as mentioned in chapter one. They have created a new sense of openness in the favelas, allowing the residents to speak freely (McCann, 2014, Epilogue, par. 22). However, the UPP’s consistent presence in favelas has not been without incident, as the high profile involvement of police in the disappearance of Amarildo in 2013 demonstrates (Bottari, 2013).

The community’s response to Amarildo’s disappearance, though, is a wonderful example of the new surge of community organizing across the city. Residents of Rocinha, the favela in the South Zone where Amarildo lived, organized three protests in response to police misconduct and negligence in the case (Bottari, 2013). Vila Autodromo, a small falvela in the West Zone, has organized against the threat forced removal since 2009 (RioOnWatch Writers, 2013). While most residents have been resettled in a public housing complex 1 km away, most have also received extremely fair compensation for their homes (Steiker-Ginsberg, 2014). These victories, though not the ideal outcome, were only possibly through the community’s organized nature.

And the examples continue with more recent efforts at organizing. Earlier this year the Residents’ Association in Vidigal, a South Zone favela with some of the best views in the city, organized a series of community meetings called *Fala Vidigal*, Vidigal Talk. It was a four part series over four months, looking at the various topics that surrounded gentrification and real estate speculation (RioOnWatch Writers, Vidigal, 2014). Recently in Complexo do Alemão, a North Zone favela complex where I have lived the last 18 months, the residents organized protests and twitter campaigns to highlight the police violence that escalated following the World Cup (RioOnWatch Writers, Alemão, 2014).

This recent string of community action in favelas across the city demonstrates that the time is ripe to return to the community organizing that occurred in the 70s and 80s. There is recognition among the people that improvements in the communities can only be achieved through their own efforts. The state, while not entirely without contribution, has not measured up to the expectations of the people.

However, to truly transform favelas, each community needs to take steps to own the reality within. They must come together and create their own social capital. This is the objective of this course: to give leaders a few basic tools to bring communities together in their struggles to create a better tomorrow, for themselves and for future generations.

**Chapter 5**

# Literature Review

É melhor prevenir do que remediar.   
Better preventing than fixing.

Creating a training course can be a tricky project, especially when it centers on community organizing. There are numerous theories about what makes a good community organizer, but not as many about how those people learn those skills. The goal of this project is to create a proposed curriculum and course structure for a grassroots training course in community organizing, aimed at helping Rio de Janeiro’s favela leaders be more effective at taking the control of their communities into their own hands.

In order to do that, a large amount of scholarly research has been done. What is the current understanding of community organizing in Brazilian literature? How is community organizing taught? What qualities make a good community organizer? What are signs that a community is well organized? What steps can a poorly organized community make to improve? These questions were addressed through both academic research and discovering similar types of courses in other countries.

Based on the research, this literature review will be broken up into two sections: course content and teaching styles. These emerged as the two most important themes in the literature and both need to be discussed in terms of creating a training course.

## Course Content

The reviewed literature took various approaches to the way community organizing was discussed. Brazilian literature described situations of successful community organizing, but it was uncommon that the authors would comment on the specific skills or actions that lead to the success discussed. Analyzing these articles, then, took a little more “reading between the lines”, if you will, to discover what aspects made that groups successful in the end.

Other literature was a bit more direct. There were several articles that discussed the structure and implementation of a community organizing course as part of a university degree in social work. Further, they discussed community organizing theory that delved into the different styles of community practice and how they relate to the goals a community is trying to accomplish.

The exhaustive list of topics discussed that could be included as course content were: Organizing, Leadership/Coaching, Relationships, Storytelling/Narrative, Values, Motivations, Resources, Strategy, Power, Action, Team Building, Commitment/Trust, Planning/Visioning, Globalization, Media Relations/Social Media, Technology, Asset Mapping, Conflict Management, Marketing, Private Investment, Non-Profits, Tourism, Economic Development, Community Development, Participatory Budgeting, Regionalism, and Education. As a rather long list, it is not feasible to cover every single topic in this paper or the course. But the majority of them will be weaved together in the following discussion of both foundational concepts, taking on a more theoretical framework, and action based skills, which are the more practical aspects of community organizing.

### Foundational Concepts

There was a difference between the courses and the literature reviewed as to the starting place in the training process. Courses began by defining community organizing, while most literature assumed the reader already had a basic understanding of the topic. This makes sense, considering the two mediums. In a training course, it is best to define terms and layout the trajectory of the course. From that foundation, students learn the aspects that make that final goal achievable. In that sense, the Harvard University Course best articulates what makes organizing so powerful at the beginning of their course by answering the question ‘What is Organizing?’. Distinguishing it from government and business ventures, this section focuses on defining community organizing as motivating and engaging people groups to move toward their collective goals (Ganz, n.d., Topic 1). This section challenges community leaders to think about the roots of their motivations and desires. Community Organizing is more than just a collection of projects aimed at growth, but as Dowbor (2010) puts it, “(Community organizing) is a cultural and political dynamic that transforms social life” (p. 102).

The courses then progress to discussing leadership styles and what some call coaching. In a somewhat untraditional sense, leadership in community organizing is not about one person holding a majority of the power, but about the community as a whole having power over changes that happen among them. The texts seem to agree that the role of the leader is empowering people to act on their own behalf (Gray, Wolfer, & Mass, 2006, p. 100). One text suggests that within the course the teacher should act as the example of a community organizer, moving the community of her students to the realization of a shared goal, even if that goal is passing a university course (Grodofsky & Bakun-Mazor, 2012, p. XX). The New Organizing Institute uses the word coaching instead of leading. They equate the skills to that of a coach, who helps his players make decisions on the field (Organizing and Leadership, 2011, Coaching 101). Being the organizer is about enabling and empowering others. In some ways, creating a team of leaders around the community organizer.

In any team dynamic, though, it is important to have relationships that are built on trust (Shrestha, 2013, p. 155). Shrestha concludes that this was an integral part in establishing a community controlled irrigation system in Nepal (p. 156). This includes the ability to solve conflict, as different goals and perspectives often challenge trust. A well established trust between community members points to good relationships, which are key at all levels in community organizing: between the community members, between the community and the organizer, between the organizer and his team (Ganz, n.d., Topic 3). These relationships form the “glue” of teams and organizations. And building teams is vital, as a single community organizer cannot accomplish anything alone. The organizer needs to know how to build teams of committed people (Organizing and Leadership, 2011, Building Teams).

The consensus on how to build that commitment and trust vary. Many authors agree that it revolves around shared values. The Ecclesial Base Communities that were strong in Brazil in the 1970s and 1980s are a good example of this, as Coutinho (2009) discusses in his paper “*Comunidades Eclesiais de Base: Presente, Passado, e Futuro*” as well as in Pinheiro’s paper “*As Comunidades Eclesiais de Base e a conscientização política de mulheres: notas iniciais de pesquisa*”. Both authors note how the members were committed to the same values for their individual lives as well as for the future of their communities (Pinheiro, 2007, p. 458; Coutinho, 2009, p. 178). These shared values motivate people to work together, but only if communicated effectively. Ganz (n.d.) proposes that our actions are far more influenced by our emotions than our knowledge, thus there is a need for community organizers to know how to appeal to the emotions of their fellow residents. The literature points to storytelling as the most effective way to do this (Organizing and Leadership, 2011, The Story of Us).

#### Developing the Foundation

Before moving onto the secondary, action based skills of community organizing, it is important to take a look at how to develop the foundation of a community. Both Dennis Jacobsen and Robert Linthicum have similar ideas about how to build trust and community based on relationships, not just on location.

First, there is what Linthicum (1991, p.25) calls networking and Jacobsen (2001, Ch. 7) calls one-on-ones. In either case it is an intentional and strategic practice of relationship building in which the organizer goes door-to-door in the community for the purpose of meeting community. Jacobsen is quick to caution against doing this in a way that feigns interest in the actual person and only sees them as another tool in the organizing machine (2001, p. 61). Instead, the interest must be in actually knowing the person and building a true relationship with that person. Jacobsen adds that a true relationship is one where the organizer “agitates” individuals and the community as a whole to reach their fullest potential (2001, Ch. 8). This can sometimes be uncomfortable for all involved, but it is only by challenging someone that the best in them can come forth (p. 66).

Second, there is the process of coalition building (Linthicum, 1991, p. 26). This brings together all the people and groups within the community to address the issues chosen by the community. In the gathering of these individuals, Jacobsen suggests that the organizer is creating a shared power within the community (2001, Ch. 5). This power is not held by the organizer, but by the community in recognizing shared interests (Jacobsen, 2001, Ch. 6). It is interesting, at this point, to look at the Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs) mentioned earlier. Recognizing shared interests and building a coalition do not happen overnight, they are found through a process. Mariz, in describing the regular activities of CEBs, describes regular meetings of committed members, indicating that this structure would be helpful in creating a sense of group identity (1994, Ch. 2). Linthicum suggests that once those interests are found and acted upon, a cycle of action and reflection is needed to ensure continued unification of the group’s interests (1991, p. 26).

The third and final step in this process is that of developing and empowering other community leaders and distributing power/influence (Linthicum, 1991, p. 26; Jacobsen, 2001, p. 46). This concept runs throughout the works of both Linthicum and Jacobsen, marking it as vital to the entire process.

Jacobsen adds another step, which ultimately leads us past the development of an organizations foundation, but equally as important: metropolitan organizing (2001, Ch. 9). This, essentially, is connecting with organizers from around the city that have similar goals, in order to address issues that are more systemic in nature. Actually confronting those issues requires certain action based skills.

### Actions Based Skills

The literature then turns to the actions taken by community organizers to reach the goals that reflect the values and priorities of the community. Some courses and literature start their discussions at this point, neglecting to mention the foundational aspects previously discussed. The courses look at power dynamics, and how to leverage the resources of a community in order to take back control of the community (Ganz, n.d., Topic 5). It is important for any community organizer to know what resources are present in the community so they can better evaluate how to achieve their goals (Gray et al., 2006, p. 94). Knowing the goals of the community is potentially the most important aspect of community organizing. The community needs to be able to think through what they want for the future of the neighborhood. Without this, each project is just a singular occurrence (Ganz, n.d., Topic 5). With a clear vision of the future, projects find their place in a trajectory of fulfilling community dreams. Having clear goals in mind allow the organizers and their teams to create strategies to reach them, thinking critically about what actions will lead to their goals, and avoiding things that are potential distractions from their end goal. One important aspect of strategy is timing. This includes when a community might begin lobbying the government to act in certain aspects like infrastructure. It is important for the organizer to think about when their actions will make the most impact (Organization and Leadership, 2011, Tactics & Timing).

In the discussion of strategy it is important to note the three dominant theories of community practice: Traditional, Collaborative, and Radical. In most cases, the approach used will depend heavily on the desired outcomes. Traditional community organizing is generally the one used by government offices. It preserves social order, follows the facts it has gathered, and makes small improvements (Thomas, O’Connor, & Netting, 2011, pp. 339, 345). The Collaborative approach focuses more on the community understanding itself and the diversity that is within it. If residents can understand the differences in values and goals as well as abilities, they can work together in a more productive way, thus empowering the community (Thomas, et al., 2011, pp. 339, 343, 346). Finally, the Radical approach seeks to disrupt the social order, making large changes to the way society is structured. Marginalized communities often use conflict and resistance as a means of reclaiming the power they have been denied (Thomas, et al., 2011, pp. 339, 346-347).

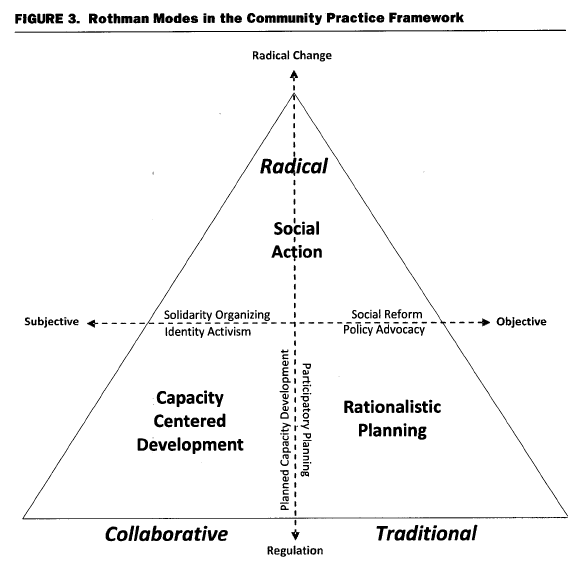


Figure - Rothman Modes in the Community Practice Framework (Thomas, O'Connr & Netting, 2011, p. 349)

Once the goals and strategy have been decided upon, there are a number of skill-related topics that the literature and courses address, the majority of which deal with community and economic development. The Midwest Community Development Institute has extensive resources in these two areas, addressing issues such as marketing, private investment, tourism, and globalization. This course will not spend much time discussing economic development, as resources on the topic are plentiful and widely available in Brazil through organizations like Sebrae. However, community development is a far less common idea in Brazil and will need to be addressed in this grassroots-training course.

There are various community development topics discussed in the literature. Paulo Freire, a Brazilian philosopher and teacher, has contributed immensely to the idea of education as a part of community development practice, as education teaches people to be active citizens, not just passive recipients (Neves, 2013, p. 902). De Freitas posits that when an illiterate adult learns to read, he is taking political action, no longer accepting the options previously allowed him by society (de Freitas, 2007, p. 55).

Another large part of community development is a focus on community assets. Much like the section earlier on resources, this focuses on what is already available within the community. When an organizer knows the assets his community has, he can utilize them within the community to meet the community’s needs, or he can leverage them outside of the community, creating a demand for those assets (ie. skilled labor work force, experienced preschool teachers, etc.) (Ganz, n.d., Topic 5).

## Teaching Styles

Another interesting topic that comes to light in the literature was the style in which community organizing is taught. Several articles expected that the professor model in the classroom the principles of community organizing: empowering students to make decisions, creating shared experiences, and using storytelling to engages people’s emotions.

### Decision Case Method

The decision case method is a variation on the more common case method. Gray, Wolfer & Mass (2006) focused extensively on the adjustments made to give the reader/student the ability to make their own decision. A standard case study is based on showing the reader what decision was made, focusing on the important details of the case. However, in a decision case method more details are given to the circumstance and potentially about the person who has to make the decision, while leaving out the final decision actually made (Gary et al., 2006, p. 93). This gives the reader all the necessary information so he can make an informed decision. Not only does it stimulate creative thinking in students, but it also empowers them to make decisions in what are potentially difficult situations (Gary et al., 2006, p. 100). Gray also suggests that the cases used in teaching be real situations that have been encountered by community organizers in their real life (p. 93).

### Four Eras Method

Grodofsky (2012) proposed the four eras method, as he examined a course on community organizing at Sapir College in Israel. He sees a commitment to community organizing arising from a journey through four eras. The first of these eras is referred to as the “era of entry” and occurs when a person feels that their personal integrity has been threatened, challenging them to examine the threats to life as they have always imagined it (Grodofsky & Bakun-Mazor, 2012, p. 184). The second era is called the “era of advancement,” usually involving a strong mentoring relationship and a supportive and organized peer group. This era is usually accompanied by an increased “understanding of social and political relations” (2012, p. 182). The third phase is called “era of incorporation,” where people develop their organization and leadership skills (2012, p. 186). Finally, the fourth level is called the “era of commitment,” when leaders remain committed to organizing even in the face of continued difficulties (2012, p. 187). The professor of this course encouraged students to engage the experiences of their own lives to better understand what era they were in.

## Other Concerns

The Harvard University course and the New Organizing Institute course do the best at integrating the theory and the practice of community organizing. As Grodofsky (2012) was quick to point out, teaching both the spirit and the skills of community organizing is difficult to do in one class (p. 178). There are several widely accepted theories of community organizing, and they tend to line up pretty accurately with the end goals hoped for as discussed above.

However, there are still gaps to be discussed. Few articles discussed teaching community organizing skills to current leaders of poor communities. Most were about how a well-trained academic could enter in and help organize a community.

All of these articles looked at either a single case study of community organizing or discussed primarily the theoretical/academic aspects of it. The articles that focused on community organizing courses specifically did not discuss the methodology behind the structure and content of their courses. Therefore, little can be gained in terms of their research methods, as they were researching a topic that is directly related to, but not exactly, the formation of grassroots training course on community organizing.

**Chapter 6**

# Data Description

Quem conta um conto, aumenta um ponto.   
He who tells a tale, tells his own version.

There are primarily two types of data that were collected: interview and survey. The initial plan of the study was to do only interviews with community leaders from across the city to hear their stories about what had proved most successful for them in their work and what additional skills or knowledge they felt they needed. In the process of trying to schedule interviews, though, it was discovered that many community leaders simply did not have the time to sit down to do interviews. Not only do they work full time at a job to pay the bills, they also have responsibilities in their communities. Being the president of the residents’ association is not a paid position, but a volunteer role. Further complicating the situation was the attempt to do these interviews during the World Cup 2014, as the city stops for each game.

So, in order to adjust to this reality, I, along with my supervisor at Catalytic Communities, decided that a survey, which could be filled out online by leaders at a time more convenient for them, would be a better way to hear their opinions. Additionally, we decided to interview leaders from organizations that work in favelas and have a reputation for listening to the residents, not just implementing the programs they think are necessary. Five in-depth interviews were conducted, one with a community leader and four more with organization leaders. Approximately 30 surveys were returned from the 776 people who were invited to participate.

## Interviews

Two types of interviews were conducted. In the first attempt at scheduling interviews, I was able to speak with one community leader, Carlos Alberto Costa Bezerra, from a community in the West Zone, Asa Branca. However, because of the difficultly in speaking with community leaders, four other interviews were done with leaders from non-profit social organizations that have good reputations among favela residents.

### Carlos Alberto Costa Bezerra – Asa Branca

Asa Branca is a community in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro. It is the newest section of the city, both informally and formally. The community is part of the section considered Jacarepagua, a conglomeration of several different favelas, in order to create a stronger voice within public dialogue. Carlos Alberto Costa Bezerra has been the president of the resident’s association for 20 years, taking on the position when he was just 28 years old. At the time, he merely wanted to help out the president, but was so full of ideas and potential that the community elected him president even though he was young.

As Bezerra recounts his story to me, you can tell life has been hard on him. His family came to Rio de Janeiro after they were kicked out of another town because of his brother’s involvement in a drug gang. When a different gang took over that town, all those involved were expected to find new places to call home. With that in mind, Bezerra was keen to keep trafficking out of his new community, Asa Branca. Unfortunately that meant being run by a militia, comprised of off-duty cops who collect money from residents and business to ensure protection from drug gangs and official police interference. It was during this time period that Bezerra learned not only how to communicate well, but also what not to say to certain people, or the *jogo da cintura*.

Some of the projects that he looks back on with the most pride were the cultural ones. Early on, the community created a program called *Estrela da Manhã*, which hosted cultural events every weekend, from trips to the Christ the Redeemer statue to *capoeira*, a brazilian martial arts, festivals. He remembers how these events worked to unite the community in a way he is never seen anything else do. In speaking of cultural activities, he dreamed for the future of the community as well, saying “The only option young people have is culture, we have to give them the cultural option.” This was in reference to drugs and violence that pervade the city. He does not see it as realistic to ask kids not to be involved in drug gangs and violence if we aren’t providing them with other things to be involved in, the best of which he sees as cultural.

Figure 2 Carlos Alberto Costa Bezerra, 48 years old, Asa Branca, Rio de Janeiro

Another project that makes him very proud was the installation of the communities sewer system. Before government services were offered in favelas, Asa Branca pooled their own resources to meet a need they had in their community. Bezerra remembers, “I’m lucky to have a community that’s a little different.” At the time the community was home to several construction workers, who understood the necessary process and equipment to create the sewer system. When the government finally did arrive, they connected the already existing system to the city system, because it was so well built.

Finally, when asked about the future, he was hopeful, though the strain of 20 years of leadership was evident. He was tired from his work, though he repeatedly said, “Nothing compares to doing good to your neighbor.” This was the foundation that kept him working through hard times of militia oppression and personal struggles.

### Davy Alexandrisky – Campus Avançado

Campus Avançado is an organization that focuses on using artistic expression to create social transformation (Campus Avançado). It has been operating since 2000, and has gone through several unique experiences. Davy Alexandrisky helps lead the group in Niterói, the city across the Guanabara Bay from Rio, and part of the greater metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro.

The program in Niterói offers classes within communities to youth that will help them succeed in life. One of the stories he told me was about the decorative *pano de prato*, dish towel industry that existed in one community. In Rio de Janeiro women enjoy having dishtowels that are hand painted with a cute little scene or image. The culture around creating these paintings has valued the meticulous process that goes into creating them. However, compensation for such items has been notoriously low. Thus, when they encountered a woman in the favela who was willing and able to teach a class to others in the community in this art, Campus Avançado was excited about the opportunity. They gathered students and the teacher and classes started. The women were learning from one of their own.

Part of what Campus Avançado does is providing an “upgrade” to the skills being taught. In this case, they brought in a screen printer to teach women how to make a stencil and screen print onto the dishtowels, instead of doing each one by hand. At first they looked down on the method, knowing that the quality of the painting was lower, even though they were able to make significantly more towels in the same amount of time. However, when they took their panos de prato to a local market, they sold out of the screen printed towels.

The organization has been working in communities for several years now, and his experience with leadership in the favelas has been characterized by submission to drug gangs. For most of their history, favelas in Niterói have been calm and safe places. However, with the beginning of the pacification process of the favelas in Rio, many of the drug gangs found new residence in favelas of Niterói. Community leaders have had to learn a new way of existing, much like those in Rio had to do in the 80s. However, even within this social restriction, Davy sees residents having the information about their rights, and what bodies are responsible for which public services, as the biggest need in the favelas. For example, things like the provision of light and water provision and whether city, state, or federal government takes care of the school their children attend.

### Roseli Franco – Catalytic Communities

Catalytic Communities (CatComm) has gone through many different phases in their organization, as their goal is to be flexible to the needs of the favelas and their leaders. Thus, Roseli Franco, who goes by Rose, has held different roles in the 12 years she has been at CatComm. Her current official role is as Institutional Director. These days, this involves maintaining contact with the various favela networks around the city, and larger networks of favela leadership, and providing training opportunities for them.

Because of this role, she has many opportunities to hear from different favela leaders from across the city. When asked what, in her experience, leaders indicated that they needed, she was quick with two answers. First, the ability to mobilize people, both within the community and in groups of like-minded people from across the community, and to focus on their common needs in talks with the government.

Secondly, leaders are concerned with their financial sustainability. Rose was quick to note that most favela residents do not have financial resources to support community projects. Thus, communities are eager to fundraise and find money available to them from the outside. However, this is a world that they are unfamiliar with, and that often functions in a very different manner than the one they are used to. Rose sees both financial sustainability and mobilization being helped by addressing how a community presents itself to the general public.

Finally, she thought it was important to encourage greater resident participation in managing each community, but understood that this is hard when almost every moment is spent looking to provide the necessities of their families. The key, Rose said, was “where the abilities and the desires of the community meet.” This is when communities can accomplish amazing things, citing the example of Asa Branca creating their own sewer system. If a community can find that place, and has a leader that can dedicate their time to organizing projects, then it can do anything.

### Luiz Fernando Sarmento – Author and Thinker

Luiz Sarmento has spent his life working at various levels of social movements, with the main developments of his work happening while he worked at Business Social Services (SESC; a type of government mandate corporate social responsibility organization for local business) in various areas of the city. It was there that he implemented two different types of meeting structures that helped the process of community organization and social movements. Luiz worked at the SESC in Ramos, a neighborhood that encompasses part of Complexo do Alemão, from 2002 until 2011.

The first process is one that brings people together who have a mutual interest in seeing the community thrive; residents, NGOs, and any others who have the same goal. The meeting is split up into two main parts. Before the real meeting starts, ground rules must be agreed to. He was very insistent that rules not be mandated from the “leader” of the group, but that everyone agrees to them. During the first part of the meeting, each person has two minutes to share with the group why they came to the meeting, what they have to offer others at the meeting, and what they are looking for. The person beside them is in charge of keeping them within their time frame, with a stopwatch going around the circle as the speaker changes. The second half of the meeting is a time of networking, connecting with those people who may be able to help in your endeavors, and/or whom you may be able to help. From there, community projects can be developed within communities.

The second group-uniting process came as an offshoot of this meeting. Luiz realized that many of the connections made in these meetings were not lasting long term. One piece of work might get done, but nothing continued. He understood the breakdown to be a lack of true relationships between people. Thus, he and a clinical psychologist implemented a well-known technique called community therapy. People are gathered together to share their stories, to share who they are. The objective is to share your experience in any given situation. The example he gave was this, “Say your dad beats your mom. You do not talk about what a bad person your dad is, saying ‘That son of a b\*\*\*’, you talk about how you feel because of it. I’m sad. I’m angry.” He lauds this technique as unifying communities to achieve greater things. “People who’ve never met before the meeting, walk out with intense relationships.”

**George A. de Araújo – SESC Rio**

While there are several things that George does, one of them is to coordinate the SESC Rio office in Tijuca, much like Luiz did between 2002 and 2011. He is also a short film producer for educational and cultural documentary projects. This has put him in contact with various leaders across the city and he has given him a unique perspective on community organizing.

One interesting story he told was about a video production class he was teaching in an era when “social inclusion” was the mantra of NGOs all over the city. A priority of this movement was technology inclusion. Classes were happening in every favela, with all the latest equipment. People came to the classes, and learned how to make short videos. However, they could not do any of those things on their own because the equipment used in the courses was not accessible to them after the class ended. It was then that George and a friend of his decided to offer a class with all the cheapest equipment you could buy at Casa & Video, the large chain of technology stores in the city. That way, when the course was over, the students could buy the equipment they knew how to use, and make their own videos. This is just one example of how George thinks about development work.

When we turned to the needs of the communities themselves, he was also quick to mention communication and resources acquisition. Working in video production, he has worked more in the area of communication. However, he distinguished between having things like a website and social media presence, and the ability to use those tools to involve people, both from within and outside of the community, in the work you are doing. This is something that he saw was lacking.

The second need, resource acquisition and fundraising, was specifically about methods that were outside of government and trafficking sources. They are common and saturated, he said, filled with corruption and compromises for the leaders. However, fundraising in his view, requires written documents, that are often more technical than most favela residents have experience in. They need to create project descriptions that include methodology and philosophical justification for their choices. George said these are not things that favela leaders think about; they are far more practical. They see a problem and figure out how to solve it.

## Survey Responses

The survey yielded a total of 26 applicable responses, of the 776 people it was sent to. That is 3.35% response rate. While not statistically significant numerically, the information gathered can still give us an idea of what leaders within CatComm’s realm of influence are interested in learning about and how they see community leadership.

Figure 3 – Graph of the location of survey respondents, separate by zones within the city and all those who aren’t within the city limits.

Overall, the participants were scattered across the city, six respondents from the North Zone, seven each from the South Zone and the West Zone, and six from outside of the city of Rio. All respondents are involved in community leadership in some way, varying between residents’ associations, local NGOs, religious organizations, and local businesses.

On the following page is a graph of the various topics that were mentioned by respondents in their answers to the questions listed in the Appendix under Community Leader Survey Questions. As the graph demonstrates, community participation was the aspect most mentioned by community leaders as being important to their work. One leader, in discussing the biggest challenge he faces as a leader, said, “For the people to know the importance of their participation.” Many others also noted that community involvement was difficult to achieve. Another older leader mentioned that young people would not be involved in community projects unless they are paid.

The second most discussed topic was project preparation or formalization. I grouped this together with the idea of organization and administration, as the skill sets are similar. Many listed management of some kind as a skill they wanted to learn, whether it was management of funds, people, or how to better manage their organization. One person noted that many organizations she had worked with and seen in the community had a “beautiful and noble vision, but lacked in practical aspects.”

Finally, the third most noted topic was that of education. Education was often listed alongside other public services like health, sanitation, and security. However, it was also listed several times alongside cultural activities, as well as efforts to promote good citizenship and an understanding of culture. It was a topic with lots of variety, but there was agreement that it is important. One woman responded saying “I believe that through knowledge arises both options for the resolution of conflicts and for the empowerment of people living in communities.”

There were many other topics discussed as well, as the chart shows. Because of the volume of responses, they cannot be addressed individually in the description section of the data. In the next chapter, more attention will be given to how certain topics affect others, along with an integration of the interviews with the survey data.

Figure – This is a list of all the topics mentioned by community leaders in responding to the survey about what leadership is and what possible topics would be helpful for them to learn about.

Some of the other questions asked in the survey revolved around the other courses offered by CatComm and whether or not respondents would be interested in taking one or more of these courses, and what location and format would be most convenient for the courses. Below are the various graphs of that data.

Respondents were asked to choose as many courses as interested them, from the various courses that CatComm currently offers or is thinking of developing in the near future. Community Mobilization and Participatory Community Planning tied as the most requested classes.

Figure 5 – This chart depicts which courses offered by CatComm respondents would be interested in taking at some point.

If respondents had to choose which course they would take if they could only take one, the most requested course was Community Mobilization, with almost half the votes, and Taking Advantage of Visitors receiving none.

Figure 6 – This chart asked specifically which course respondents would prefer to take, if they could only choose one course.

The following questions were more logistics based, but very necessary questions to the ultimate goal of creating a course curriculum. The first question asks what format the class should be held in. The largest request format was Short, Focused workshops held during the day for three hours, with 36% of respondents requesting it. The second most was Weekend Workshops, with two 7-hour days of training. Again, it is important to note that respondents were allowed to choose more than one format.

Figure 6 – This graph explains which format would be most convenient for leaders.

The final graph depicts where the courses should be held. People were given the option of downtown, in their region, or in their community. Most respondents preferred for the classes to be held in their community, though a large number were also willing to go downtown to take classes.

Figure 7 - This graph depicts where respondents wanted classes to be held.

**Chapter 7**

# Data Analysis

Quem cala, consente.   
He who keeps quiet, agrees.

The data presented an interesting mix of responses. The interviews touched on a variety of topics like fundraising and community therapy. The surveys were a little more focused, but still ranged from public space, to community involvement, to education. Further complicating the data is the information from the literature review, and how it interacts with the data presented. This section looks to make sense of the information collected and group it into the main categories.

## Defining Community Organizing

Based on the information gathered, it was clear that both the interview and survey data, as well as the literature, pointed to two different categories of community organizing: foundational, theoretical concepts and practical skills. There are many different definitions that can be looked to in a formal way, but for the remainder of this study we will think about it with those two categories in mind.

The rest of this chapter will focus on expanding those two ideas. First, foundational and theoretical concepts that help bring a community together, turning a group of individuals into a collective unit. Second, the practical skills that the collective needs to move forward.

## Becoming a Community

The first part of community organizing is making sure that the gathering of people in a specific place becomes a single unit. The most cited need in the survey of community leaders was getting residents to participate in activities. This indicates not only that they are aware of the importance of participation, but also feel the struggle of motivating residents to this involvement. However, the question of how to create more involvement does not have a simple answer. There are many factors that go into creating a participative environment.

### Building Relationships

The most important aspect of becoming a united community is a foundation of relationships based on trust. In Rio de Janeiro, a city where jobs are easy to find but low paying, and traffic creates two hour commute times, many people do not have much time to spend in their neighborhoods. This can lead to people not knowing their neighbors or having few relationships with those who live near them. To create relationships where none or few previously existed, a possible technique would be that of Community Therapy discussed by Luiz Fernando Sarmento.

The idea of building relationships is also included in the Harvard University course and the one offered by New Organizing Institute. Both of these go into great detail about how relationships are built, how to create an environment to build them, and how to leverage them once they exist. The New Organzinig Institute suggests the use of intentional storytelling as a way to communicate who we are in a way other people can identify with (Organizing and Leadership, 2011). In telling our stories, we come to understand who people are and better perceive their values and what is already drawing us together.

### Identity

Primary to creating a sense of unity within a community is deciding upon a shared identity. This includes a detailing of values that are held by the community as a whole, what makes the community unique and valuable, and a commitment to preserve those things. This can be a difficult task to undertake, as many members of the community have different experiences within the community, and see different values therein. Further, a competition between individual values and interests, and those of the community, are sure to come up in this discussion. This is why relationships based of trust and mutuality need to be established first, before a community identity can be formed. The residents need to understand what makes each individual unique, respecting the perspective of the others. Only when differences are understood can similarities be drawn out and emphasized.

Creating a community identity, though, can also be difficult because of the variety and size of the community. At this point, it would be wise to assess all the assets within the community, including churches, social projects, resident skills, banks, stores, etc. A list and/or map of these things can help to develop the identity of a community because it can show them what they value.

The New Organizing Institute, again, focuses on storytelling as the means to create a group identity. They suggest that the community write what they call “The Story of Us” (Organizing and Leadership, 2011). Having this story will allow them to draw more people from the community to participate, because they will identify with the story being told. The Story of Us also goes one step further, in defining what the community is called to do.

### Creating A Vision

After relationships based on trust are formed, and a collective identity created, the community is ready to cast a vision for itself in the future. This tied as the fifth most-mentioned topic by favela leaders. Now that the community has agreed on who it is as a unit, they can begin to set goals for themselves. Who do they want the community to be in twenty years? What aspects of the community are vital to its identity and need to be retained? What goals can they work toward? Once a vision and goals are created for the community, they can move toward achieving them. This will look different for each favela, as each is different.

### Concerns

It is important to remember that no residents’ association or community organization ever gets the participation of 100% of the residents in the community. This is practically unheard of in the organizing world, and new organizers should take heed to remember this, so as not to be discouraged by it. In no way does this lessen the validity of the identity and vision created by the group that is present.

## Community Projects

Once the community creates its goals, it is ready to move forward in achieving them. At this point it is good for the community to recognize which actions they can do entirely themselves, which they would need outside help to achieve, and which they need to lobby the government for. Categorizing goals into the Rothman’s Modes of Community Action (Figure 1 on page 16) will help the community know how to move forward on a project. Is it looking to improve things within the current system? Is it looking to create a better understanding of the community and establish more unity? Is it looking to change the system in place? The answers to all these questions are important in figuring out how the community will move forward in achieving their goals.

One of the most-mentioned topics was project planning and administration. These very practical skills are necessary for the completion of a project of any size, especially if fundraising or government lobbying is needed to accomplish it. This, along with marketing, would be the skill that would form the base of fundraising and government interaction.

### Asset-Based Community Development

While community leaders did not request this topic, it is such a creative and useful tool in the community organizing world that we could not leave it out. Asset based community development focuses on the resources that are already in the community that can be used in new ways to improve the community.

Residents in favelas of Rio de Janeiro have assumed the mantle of being poor, accepting this not only as their economic status, but also as their role within society. Many leaders and residents assume that they do not have the resources needed to accomplish tasks. While this may be true of some communities and for some projects, there are still plenty of resources within favelas. Teaching them to see the community differently may help them complete certain projects in ways they had not thought of before.

### Fundraising

This topic was among the most mentioned by community leaders. This is common among any non-profit body, though. Interestingly enough, the government gives out a large amount of money to non-profit organizations doing charitable and development work. How to present a potential project to funders is an incredibly valuable skill. However, it is also good to recognize the other ways they can raise funds, like creating a small business that is owned by the residents’ association, crowd funding, or other creative methods.

### Government Interaction

Like fundraising, this was a commonly mentioned theme in the surveys. This is likely because there are many projects and goals that require government involvement. Things like upgrading the sewer systems that serve the community or increasing the number of times trash is picked up.

One of the most common areas government involvement is requested within favelas, though, is in education. Education was a frequently mentioned topic in the survey and in the interviews. However, the government strictly controls this area. Thus, in order to change this, interacting with government will be necessary.

Further, there are systems within government, specifically the police force, that routinely treat favela residents as second-class citizens. The only way to change these systems is to involve government. Thus this is an important topic for favela leaders to learn about.

**Chapter 8**

# Course Structure and Next Steps

A necessidade faz o sapo pular.

Necessity makes the frog jump.

On Monday, August 11, 2014, this research was presented to the staff of Catalytic Communities at the weekly staff meeting. Theresa Williamson, the founder and executive director of the organization, was very receptive to the information. She had several ideas about the structure the course could take and how this research could be turned into practical courses for training favela leaders.

## Course Structure

Based on the two formats most requested by favela leaders in the survey, short focused workshops and an intensive weekend course, she thought of creating two parts to the course. First would be an intensive weekend, using the format common for spiritual retreats. This would start by bringing together about 20 leaders to a site outside of the city, and taking them through the material listed here. As the research on courses suggests, it is a common practice for a course on community organizing to act as an example of community organizing for the participants. Thus, on the first day, the leaders would partake in exercises of community therapy, creating a common identity, and casting a vision for their time together.

The second day would involve more practical skills training. Depending on funding and availability of potential teachers, the day could offer several different areas of interest that could be attended in breakout sessions, with participants choosing the sections most applicable to them, or having larger general training sessions in asset mapping, community marketing, administration, etc.

Ideally, a pilot course would be offered during the first half of 2015. After this first weekend intensive, leaders who participated would be able to invite CatComm to do shorter training courses in their communities (as this was the most requested location in the survey). They could choose which module of the weekend was most applicable or needed in their community. This requires that each section of the training section be developed in a way that allows it to be taught both independently and in conjunction with the other course material.

## Further Research

There was some concern within the staff about the small number of survey responses. Theresa was very keen to continue asking their network of leaders to partake in the survey, with a goal of at least 100 responses from community leaders. This further research would serve two functions.

First, it would allow CatComm to be confident that the material they are presenting is of value and desirable to those it is meant to serve. If a wider group confirms trends observed in the initial survey, moving forward with the content outlined in the previous section would instill resident confidence in CatComm as an organization that listens and responds according to the voices of favelas. Second, a larger sample would enable CatComm to create a project proposal that they could present to potential funders.

## Next Steps

Based on what was discussed above, there are a few very clear next steps that need to be taken to ensure that this project continues to move forward.

1. A wider survey needs to be conducted and the results analyzed.
2. A formal project proposal based on this research and the new survey data needs to be created.
3. The cost of retreat sites and transportation to those facilities needs to be researched.

**Chapter 9**

# Conclusion

Rio de Janeiro is a city in transition. After a time of exquisite community organizing in the 1970s and 80s that saw successful resistance to removal, upgrades of state infrastructure in favelas, and thriving residents’ associations, violence and drug trafficking undermined the success, forcing favela residents to live in half-freedom under their rule.

After several decades of state absence in addressing this and other problems in the favelas, they started to work toward pacification, a process of removing drug trafficking from the favelas. Ideally, the removal of rule by drug gangs was supposed to be accompanied by social and infrastructural improvements. Unfortunately, these projects have been undertaken with little to no community involvement and have resulted in what many call prestige projects (things that look nice for cameras and the media, but are not actually needed by the community).

Thus, community leaders are returning to the tradition of organizing established 35 years ago. There have been some incredible examples of communities organizing themselves just in this last year. Vidigal aimed to inform residents of the changes happening in their community during their community meetings . Vila Autodromo battled against forced removal that, while not allowing residents to stay in their homes, won them market rate compensation for their homes and new apartments within 1 km of their former residence. In Complexo do Alemão, residents organized peaceful protests through the community, speaking out against police violence within their community, using a Twitter campaign to extend their reach.

From the perspective of the church, this topic is not only relevant, but a critical part of following Jesus among the marginalized. As Jacobsen so clearly describes in his book *Doing Justice,* community organizing is an essential part of the churches role, and part of the true work of justice in the cities they find themselves in. They must seek to work with the community in attaining their goals. They must resist the temptation to see power as evil, recognizing that power’s truest expression is in God. Finally, the church needs to separate selfishness from self-interest, understanding that self-denial is a denial of individualism and isolation, as the cross of Christ was to bring us together in reconciliation.

Favelas, their leaders, and the body of Christ within them are ready to take their future into their own hands. This research aims to make sure they have all the tools they need to do so. After a literature review in the scholarly knowledge of community organizing, and a survey of local knowledge, both of experts and community leaders, all of the pieces are in place to make the future a reality. There are several steps that need to be taken between now and the first day of a course, but this research is a solid foundation for those steps.

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# Appendix: Research Tools

## Community Leader Interview Questions

HISTÓRIA

1. Onde você nasceu? Qual foi o evento mais memorável da sua infância?
2. Quais são suas primeiras memórias da comunidade? Como era a sua vida? Como era a comunidade? [pedir histórias]
3. Você mora há quantos anos na comunidade?
4. Quais são as maiores mudanças que a comunidade passou de lá para cá?

TRABALHO

1. Como e quando o/a senhor/a se envolveu com o trabalho comunitário?
2. Por favor, conte sobre a sua história em relação à sua trajetória como gestor/a social. O que te levou a se engajar com a ORGANIZAÇÃO? Teve um evento ou acontecimento específico que te levou ao engajamento? Como foi essa história?
3. Quais projetos a ORGANIZAÇÃO realiza e já realizou? Qual foi o mais bem sucedido? Por quê? Como realizou este projeto? Qual foi o processo?
4. De que maneira você lidera de forma diferente de outros?
5. Qual tem sido a maior realização no âmbito social, até hoje?
6. Qual tem sido o maior desafio que você tem vivido como gestor/a social?
7. O que te mantém dedicado/a à este trabalho depois de tanto tempo e depois destes desafios?
8. Quais são algumas lições que você aprendeu durante esse tempo de trabalho comunitário?

FUTURO

1. Quais trabalhos você vê pela frente?
2. Qual é o seu ideal para a comunidade?
3. Quais são seus desejos para sua comunidade nos próximos 5, 10, ou 15 anos?
4. Você vê a possibilidade destes desejos se tornarem realidade?
5. Qual é o seu ideal para a nossa sociedade?
6. Quais são as qualidades e habilidades mais importantes para um líder comunitário?
7. Você tem esperança para o futuro?

CONSELHO

1. Quais tipos de ferramentas seriam úteis para o seu trabalho social?
2. Finalmente, o que você passaria como o recado mais importante para um jovem frustrado com o estado das coisas em sua comunidade ou interessado em se engajar com questões sociais?

DADOS

1. Qual é o seu nome completo?
2. Quantos anos você tem?
3. Gostaria de dizer algo mais?

MUITO OBRIGADA!

## Organizational Leader Interview Questions

1. Por favor, descrever seu trabalho atual que se associar com os líderes das comunidades? Quanto tempo você já fez isso?
2. Na questão de mobilização/liderança das comunidades, quais são as coisas que as líderes indicaram são necessários? Habilidades? Entendimento? Ferramentas?
3. E, em sua opinião quais são as coisas mais necessários nessa respectiva?
4. Quais são seus desejos para as comunidade nos próximos 5, 10, ou 15 anos?
   1. Como você vê eles se tornam a realidade?

## Community Leader Survey Questions

1. Nome
2. Sobrenome
3. Email
4. Telefone
5. Comunidade
6. CEP do local ou próximo
7. Você participa de qual das seguintes? (Escolhe uma)
   1. Associação (Moradores, Mulheres, etc.)
   2. ONG comunitária
   3. Instituição religiosa
   4. Negócio dentro da comunidade
   5. Coletivo
   6. Projeto social
   7. Iniciativa pessoal em prol da comunidade
   8. Outra
8. Qual o nome da organização?
9. Quantos anos você tem trabalhado em benefício da comunidade?
10. Qual é o tema da sua ação? (e.g. saúde, educação, comunicação, meio ambiente, esporte, habitação, etc.)
11. O que te levou à se engajar com as questões da comunidade? (Conte sua história como gestor/a social...)
12. O que, para você, é um "mobilizador", "gestor" ou "líder" comunitário? (Qual ou quais termos você usa para descrever o seu trabalho social?)
13. Quais são os maiores desafios que têm encontrado como liderança ou gestor social dentro da comunidade? (Por favor, faça uma lista e entre em detalhe quando necessário...)
14. O que te fez continuar dedicado/a à este trabalho apesar destes desafios?
15. Quais conhecimentos ou técnicas você gostaria de aprender ou dominar para poder gerar ainda mais impacto e cumprir melhor ainda a sua missão?
16. Quais cursos te interessariam? (Aqui seguem algumas possibilidades. Fique à vontade para sugerir outras idéias.)
    1. Mobilização Comunitária (como engajar moradores e colaboradores em função de um objetivo comum)
    2. Uso Estratégico das Redes Sociais (como utilizar Facebook, Twitter e outros de forma estratégica que gere atenção produtiva)
    3. Planejamento Comunitário Participativo (ferramentas para que moradores possam pensar e elaborar um futuro próprio)
    4. Lidando com a Imprensa (como garantir cobertura produtiva da imprensa para os desafios da comunidade)
    5. Aproveitando Visitas (fazer com que visitas à comunidade fortalecem as qualidades do local e ajudem a lidar com os desafios)
17. Se tivesse que escolher um, qual seria?
18. Você teria interesse em um curso de mobilização comunitária?
19. Caso venhamos a oferecer tal curso, você se inscreveria?
    1. Sim
    2. Não
    3. Talvez
20. Qual seria a forma preferida?
    1. Curso de um mês com aulas noturnas (3 horas por semana)
    2. Workshop de um final de semana (dois dias de 7 horas)
    3. Oficinas curtas focadas de dia (3 horas cada)
    4. Oficinas curtas focadas à noite (3 horas cada)
21. Onde?
    1. Centro da Cidade, para conhecer mobilizadores de toda a cidade
    2. Na minha região da cidade, conhecendo mobilizadores da região
    3. Dentro da minha comunidade, junto com outros mobilizadores locais