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# Transformative learning through music: Case studies from Brazil

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# Transformative Learning through Music: Case Studies from Brazil

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*In this study we consider meaningful, emancipatory, and affirming music-making in Brazil through the lens of five case studies.　Each illustrates aspects of transformative theory through music-making in music education as advanced by Mezirow, Freire, and contemporary Brazilian music educators.*

Keywords: *transformative learning, Brazil, emancipatory music-making, marginalized individuals*

L earning becomes transformative when the learner not only acquires a skill or knowledge, but also experiences a profound effect on his/her notion of self and relationship with society.[1]　Mezirow (2003) defines transformative learning as "learning that transforms problematic frames of reference – sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets) – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (59).　In this paradigm, people use what Mezirow (1991) terms "frames of reference" to make sense of the world, whereas a "disorienting dilemma" may challenge these frames of reference, transforming them to be more useful, positive, and comprehensive.

Frames of reference (also known as meaning perspectives) are constituted of meaning schemes and habits of mind (Mezirow 1985).　Meaning schemes (also known as points of view) are specific beliefs or concepts that shape one's interpretation of a particular event, whereas habits of mind are broader assumptions that affect all of our interactions with the world.　Meaning perspectives are thus overarching assumptions through which people interpret new events, according to what they have learned from past experiences.

These assumptions often require change for individual growth to occur. However, questioning assumptions can be painful and threatening to one's sense of self, undermining a person's psychological foundation (Mezirow 1978). After encountering a disorienting dilemma, individuals might temporarily remain in a liminal zone, but without a supportive environment, transformation is unlikely, and they may return to familiar "cocoons of meaning" (Green 2011).

The challenges to a successful transformative learning experience are greatest for people in the margins, since societal forces often create barriers for these learners (Nestor 2014). At the same time, because of the intensity of these limitations, and considering that such self-limiting beliefs can be overcome by a disorienting dilemma, marginalized people may have the most to gain from transformative learning experiences (Freire 1970).

While the transformation of one's consciousness *may* lead to behavioral transformation, which also *may* lead to social transformation, this metamorphosis depends upon a supportive environment. The ultimate goal of transformative learning is to teach individuals to question authority, develop critical thinking skills, and engage in collective action (Schugurensky 2002).

Although originally applied to adult education, the concept of transformative learning finds resonance in other aspects of education, including music teaching and learning (Olson 2005; Qi 2009; O'Neill 2012; Juntunen et al 2014). Transformative music learning, as used in this research, is based on three premises: 1) that music can act as a tool for social justice, 2) that music can empower learners to become active agents in their lives, and 3) that music can be an important lifelong activity. This concept should be understood as a process in which the learner better recognizes and understands his or her own world – with its own limitedness and the learner's alienation – and acknowledges that this understanding has resulted from the learning experience.

This study explores transformative music learning through five Brazilian case studies of marginalized groups (Kleber 2006; Negrisolo 2009; Joly and Joly 2011; Qi and Presgrave 2014; Qi and Hansheng 2014) that illustrate emancipatory music making.[2] Music learning has been used as a transformational tool in these diverse contexts, empowering individuals to better understand their own world and relate this understanding to their own experiences.

**Case Study One: Community Music School**

Social projects have great significance in Brazil, a country marked by deep inequality and pockets of poverty, especially in the North and Northeast regions.  One of the biggest challenges facing modern Brazil is social inequality, which is exacerbated by limited access to education, cultural participation, and opportunities for economic advancement.[3]  While the affluent usually attend private schools, most Brazilian children attend public schools, which often experience limited enrichment opportunities due to funding restrictions.  Social projects attempt to compensate for shortcomings in music education in Brazil's public schools.

Located in an underprivileged town in northeastern Brazil, the community music school Escola de Música de Macaíba (EMMa) was inaugurated in 2006 by the municipal government to offer music lessons for local children and teenagers.  The mayor initiated the project in partnership with a successful NGO, which was later replaced by the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN).

An after-school program[4], EMMa offers a safe environment in a dangerous locale. Macaíba's Human Development Index, which was 0.640 in 2010, puts it in the 3291st position among a total of 5,565 Brazilian municipalities.[5]  Until 2011, there was an average of 15–20 homicides in Macaíba per year; in 2012, this number rose to 50 homicides, while in 2013, it more than doubled.[6]  Many young people see this violence as a natural part of life: Pedro[7], a former cello student at EMMa, talks matter-of-factly about occasions in which he saw corpses lying in the street while going to his cello lessons.  Another student tries to be home by 8pm at the latest on most days, and "locks her door very well."  José, a violin student, says that he does "not believe these problems can be solved, no matter who the mayor is or what he intends to do."

This passive acceptance of the limitations of their environment seemed to be deeply rooted in their meaning schemes.  The students commented how this also used to affect their own personal perspectives, since most of them did not believe they could achieve ambitious life goals, which seemed out of their reach, as expressed here by Fred, a former student who is now enrolled in a university:

> I really didn't think much about my future before.  If somebody asked me, I guess I would have said that I'd try to get some kind of job, maybe working in the supermarket that is close to my home, or maybe I could become a bricklayer like my uncle.  My parents hoped I would finish high school, but many kids I know

haven't, also from my family, so I think this would have been normal for me to do as well. But I really didn't think much about it. I always thought that going to university was something that middle-class kids could think of, not me.

Since its inauguration, this school has undergone four distinct incarnations, even closing twice due to financial and political issues.[8] EMMa currently enrolls approximately 200 students, who have instrumental or voice lessons, theory classes, and participate in the school's orchestra, chorus, or popular music ensembles.

EMMa has changed the lives of several students, many of whom would never have studied music otherwise. The school offers a three-year course, which serves as an entry to the university for some students.[9] Clara, an 18-year-old violinist currently enrolled at the university, reminisces that EMMa was a second home to her, and values how the social relations she built there became an essential part of her identity:

> I would arrive at EMMa everyday at 1pm and stay there until evening, when the school would close. All my friends were there, we would play games together, talk, go 'bother' our teachers. The bond that we've made, not only the students, but also the teachers (who were only a few years older than us) became very strong, it remains to this day.

The opportunities offered by EMMa – to learn an instrument, to socialize with others through music, to perform in many venues in front of large audiences – presented potential disorienting dilemmas to the students, as they were pushed out of their comfort zones. They needed to change the way they used to think about themselves, about their capabilities, as a response to these dilemmas. And, regardless of whether the students choose to continue their music activities, they learned transferable life skills: Carlos, a former cello student, discovered that "life cannot only be about having fun, we should work hard towards a goal. Without EMMa, many of my friends and colleagues might have ended up with a very troubled life," similar to other acquaintances he knew who became involved with the criminal world.

The school has faced its share of difficulties, and, at one time, it risked permanent closure, but one of its former administrators is optimistic about its future: "The longer something exists, the more difficult it is to make it go away. It becomes ingrained in people's minds; it grows roots. Nowadays, the school already

belongs to all the people of Macaíba, it cannot stop existing anymore, they wouldn't allow it."

The premises mentioned earlier were demonstrated by EMMa's example, as the students were certainly empowered to actively take control of their lives, which is an important tool for social justice among such a disadvantaged community. They also affirmed that music had become an essential activity to them, something that they could not stop doing, even as they pursue other paths in their lives. These premises will continue to be perceived in the following case studies.

**Case Study Two: Becoming Brazilian Through Song**

Few experiences in life offer as much potential for transformation as entering a new culture. Through the catalyzing jolt of immigration, an individual may be compelled to form dual identities: a reactive immigrant identity overlaid on the original homeland identity. As Fursova (2013) notes, the "disorienting dilemma may manifest itself as a general culture shock, the intensity of which depends on the breadth and depth of differences between the domestic culture and the host country" (7).

This case study explores an immigrant and his transformative musical journey into a new hyphenated identity. Hansheng Yan is a 68 year-old Chinese immigrant who settled in Brazil thirty years ago, seeking a better life.[10] Previously a salesman in a Taiwanese import/export business, then a sailor operating telegraph missions, Yan was also musically inclined in his earlier life:

> I always liked to sing Taiwanese music, especially while drinking some beer, [laughter]. I used to sing in karaoke bars in Taiwan, and was already getting quite a reputation already.

Upon his arrival in Brazil, Yan worked in restaurants, enduring financial difficulties. He fell in love and married a Japanese Brazilian woman who had a degree in mathematics but later became a nurse, and they began a family. Later, he opened his own restaurant in Natal.

Yan mastered singing 'música sertaneja' (a Brazilian country music style), in part as a means to gain acceptance by his new compatriots. When he starts singing 'música sertaneja', he truly becomes Brazilian. He has become so skillful in performing his adopted country's music that he was once invited to perform on one

of Brazil's most popular TV shows.

Being accepted in Brazil has been difficult, not in the least because Yan entered the country illegally. After being denied citizenship several times, Yan decided to take a stand:

> I was feeling so free, I had my own restaurant here in Natal, I was singing a lot. I would go singing in bars, sometimes in front of hundreds of people, which gave me so much confidence. I felt confident. I felt I was like China . . . you know, in the past, nobody cared about China, it was a backward country, bullied by everybody, but now it is a strong country, it can fight for its rights. In the past, I applied for citizenship from a weak position, but now I was ready to stand up proudly, I was ready to fight for it.

However, after three months, the immigration files were again denied. Undaunted, Yan went to the capital to see an official at the Ministry of Justice:

> [The official] said "let´s talk about your case." I said "No, let's not talk, let's compete. Let's make a singing test. If I know more Brazilian songs than you, I win and you give me an answer within 24 hours." Then, she asked me what kind of music I sang. "Música sertaneja, fifty songs by heart." I started to tell her names of singers, then I sang parts of several songs. After this, she told me that I would get an answer in a few days. In a few days, I received my package with my citizenship certificate.

Attaining citizenship was meaningful for Yan, who experienced transformation in both positive and darker aspects. Although Yan encountered stereotypes and prejudice in coming to Brazil, these things pushed him to awareness, competence, and greater confidence. However, the darker side must be acknowledged. As Morrice (2013) writes, the immigrant experience is "not always a straightforward process of building on previous learning" as it may involve an act of "unlearning" which often amounts to "identity deconstruction" in which the immigrant has to "let go of much of who and what they were" (266–7).

Even as he embraces Brazilian culture, Yan talks of his affinity towards his homeland, as revealed tellingly in his quotation about feeling proud like present-day China. Many immigrants share this pull of internal compasses, feeling like foreigners anywhere they are: in Yan's case, like a 'Chinese' in Brazil, and like a 'Brazilian' when visiting China.

Nonetheless, attaining citizenship through a show of cultural prowess was an important feat for Yan:

> It was symbolic for me, but also gave a feeling of stability, acceptance, of finally belonging to the place where I chose to live.  I think, in a way, a person who *chooses* to be Brazilian should be more Brazilian than someone who just happens to be born here!  I felt that, through my singing, I could win anything in Brazil.  My music empowered me.

## Case Study Three: Music with Disadvantaged Youth

Meninos do Morumbi, or "The Children of Morumbi," is a Brazilian nonprofit organization based in São Paulo that serves more than 4,000 children and teenagers.  In 1996, founder Flávio Pimenta began offering free drum lessons in his home to three boys from the slums, but the project soon evolved into an organization that, in addition to drumming, teaches dance, singing, English, Capoeira, and computer skills, and provides meals to the students.[11]

Despite all these activities, for Pimenta, public performance remains at the heart of the project, a focus that has proven to be transformative for all involved.  Ensembles from this organization have performed more than 700 shows since 1996 all over the world.  Their repertoire integrates Brazilian and African traditional music and popular genres, in addition to students' own compositions.[12]

Moreno (2013) defines Meninos do Morumbi as an "organization with focused leaders and a clear-cut agenda which is — to foster positive relationships between the association and favela communities, encourage school attendance, provide academic and artistic activities, and strengthen the family network."  The project requires that the participants are enrolled in school, but Pimenta demonstrates a pragmatic flexibility: "if [the child] is not [enrolled in school], we accept him in the project and make sure he starts going to school; then, we insist that he can only stay here if he does not drop off" (Kleber 2006, 191).

Researching this project led Kleber (2006) to find that performing music becomes "an alternative to violence, to criminality, and to the use of drugs, as an important element in the formation of youth identity, and as a way for youngsters to search for alternatives that take them away" (103).  Students in the program revealed that their peers were heavily involved in criminal activities, and that they themselves had had fantasies of gaining status through crime, but music learning helped them liberate themselves from these negative influences (Kleber 2006).

"To bring a boy or girl from the street back to a decent life is considered the greatest conquest and goal" (Kleber 2006, 279); the inner transformation that the students experienced is thus intrinsically connected to an outer transformation in their life conditions.  However, both students and organizers recognize that, although the project transforms many lives, some are lost.  One student lamented the fate of friends who left the project, observing that their future was likely either: "jail or the São Luiz Cemetery."  Lígia Pimenta, one of the project's coordinators, noted:

> [Y]ou cannot transform another person only based on your will; you cannot transform the other simply because of the affection you develop for him.  He has to share that goal of changing, of transforming.  We lost many youngsters to crime, or young girls who got pregnant and left the project.  (Kleber 2006, 277)

Social projects do provide a supporting environment and point out a possible life path for participants to follow, but, ultimately, each individual needs to take personal responsibility in the transformative learning process.  For those who do take this responsibility, as noted by one of Meninos do Morumbi's dance teachers, individual transformations are reflected in the collectivity, and translate into students becoming "more flexible in life, learning to overcome problems with greater ease" (Kleber 2006, 273).

Students in this project often develop a strong desire to become teachers and to participate in other projects and schools in order to contribute to their communities.  To accommodate this, Meninos do Morumbi created a system of "multiplying monitors," where participants are trained as teachers to work in other institutions, projects, communities, spreading out its reach (Kleber 2006, 251).

**Case Study Four: Experimental Community Orchestra**

It could be argued that transformative learning through music may take place at all levels of society.  While social programs typically target vulnerable and impoverished populations, such projects may also nourish the well-being of all.  Brazil is a country of contrasts, of both wealth and poverty. According to the latest *United Nation Human Development Report*, published in 2014, Brazil placed 79th among 187 countries with a Human Development Index value of 0.74.[13]  This reflects a dynamic and purposeful rise in HDI value from 0.54 in 1980.

This case study of an experimental community orchestra illustrates a social project that is intended to reach a wider social audience.  It is based in São Carlos, in

the state of São Paulo[14], located in the highlands of south-eastern Brazil.  Home to two major and several minor universities, São Carlos enjoys a rich cultural life with a young audience that appreciates musical concerts and promotes Brazilian contemporary and alternative artists.

The *Orquestra Experimental da UFSCar* (Experimental Orchestra of the Federal University of São Carlos) is an intergenerational community orchestra sponsored by the Federal University of São Carlos.  As the name indicates, this community orchestra has an experimental formation, featuring a variety of instruments, such as the recorder, xylophone, electric bass, drum kit, and electric keyboards, besides traditional orchestra instruments.  Composed of ninety-five musicians, mostly amateurs, its players range in age from ten years of age to sixty.  The ensemble performs an average of thirty concerts a year in halls, theatres, schools, and public places, giving the wider public access to this music.  This broad access is one of the orchestra's goals.

Another goal is to "create human development through interaction among people from different social, cultural, and economic classes, [so] the attention to the musical development of the group has a larger meaning than simply developing their techniques" (Joly and Joly 2011, 82).  The group routinely offers trips, parties, social activities, and concert situations that encourage dialogue and shared learning among its members.  The group endeavors to develop a repertoire that is relevant to the participants with personalized arrangements and compositions that integrate and explore each of the musicians' abilities, character, and potential.

In their year-long ethnography of the ensemble, Joly and Joly (2011) found that the structure of the orchestra reorganizes the social order by putting together people from diverse economic classes, young people and adults, experienced and non-experienced musicians, in the same space, which is sometimes reconciling, sometimes conflicting, but ultimately keeping them together in the search for the pleasure of making music (83).  The act of musicking together is definitely a potential source for disorienting dilemmas among the participants; their narratives corroborate how their meaning schemes were changed through participation and collaboration.  One of the orchestra members, for instance, said that she

> mostly learn[ed] how to make mistakes, you know?  Learning not to be
> embarrassed of making mistakes, and this can be transferred to our lives as well.

> I think that, to be able to play an instrument, not be ashamed of doing it, even when you are wrong, this can make you able to talk about anything with anyone, without the fear of being wrong . . . , able to have no shame about expressing yourself, in any environment, with other people, whom you might not even know.  (Joly 2007, 138)

The researchers detailed how participation in *Orquestra Experimental da UFSCar* created a community among the musicians, which allowed them to learn, improvise and experiment. Joly and Joly (2011) note that "music learned and experienced in the orchestra makes participants transform themselves . . . transform their world or part of their world . . . while they share their musical product with other people" (90).

## Case Study Five: Projeto Guri

Projeto Guri is the largest socio-cultural program in Brazil. Created in 1995 by Secretary of Culture of State of São Paulo, the Projeto Guri has been managed by an NGO — *Amigos do Guri* ("Friends of Guri") — since 2004.  In addition to the Government of São Paulo, "Friends of Guri" is sponsored by social organizations, companies, and individuals.  The *Amigos do Guri* website[15] states that over 49 million children and adolescents have been beneficiaries of this program.

This music education program supports at-risk children and teenagers through collective music learning and performance.  Music-making is the vehicle through which Projeto Guri advances social aims, such as inclusion, positive integration into society, cultural diversity, and citizenship.  Access to the Guri Project is universal and free; however, the aim of the program is to attract and retain economically and socially vulnerable students.  The project targets children aged six to 18, serving up to 35,000 students per year.

Project Guri bases its pedagogical model on the work of English music educator Keith Swanick, who advocates the integration of technical skills, music notation, perception, and expression (Swanwick 1988).  The Project offers three courses, music initiation,[16] choral singing and instrument lessons, incorporating Swanick's three aspects of musicking: 1) composition, improvisation, and arranging; 2) performance, and 3) assessment through active listening.

As it was also seen in the study about EMMa, Negrisolo (2009) portrays how the act of learning and performing music together can provide important disorienting

dilemmas to the students, who change their meaning schemes about themselves and about life in general as a result of this experience.  Although she does not use Mezirow's theory, the experiences in her work are clearly transformative.  One of the factors that she investigates is the importance of parental bonds as a factor of children's transformative learning in Guri.  Her research found that parents reported a positive correlation between strong parent/child bonds and the child's perception of "better defined objectives about (the) future, better social interactions, and increased self-esteem, autonomy, and relational bonds" (6).  Negrisolo also notes that, as children participating in Guri begin to self-identify as musicians and performers, they undergo transformation:

> [D]iscovering that they are capable [of achieving something], they begin to have more well-defined goals about the future, they start to think of a profession, to amplify their vision of the world, different from the world inhabited by their parents, new expectations appear, as well as other life options.  With their new life style, their performances, their trips, they start to be seen under a different light and, this way, break people's prejudices about them.  With the development of their autonomy and strengthening of relational bonds, they are capable to ensure their social inclusion.  (110)

The author affirms that, in communities that face serious social problems, participation in a social project makes youngsters feel a sense of self-importance; being admired for their skills substitutes trying to get admiration from their peers by getting involved in illegal activities.  She says, "parents see "Guri" as an opportunity to protect the children from the eminent dangers from the street" (Negrisolo 2009, 108).

## Discussion

This study has considered transformational music learning through five Brazilian case studies.  Chosen to illustrate aspects of emancipatory and meaningful music making, these accounts are neither geographically representative nor are they a comprehensive survey as that is far beyond the scope of any one paper.[17]  Furthermore, it is important to note that, although informal music education is of course present in the participants' lives as well, and although these experiences can certainly provide transformative learning, the studies described above chose to focus on those specific contexts, and their effect on the participants' lives.  While there is an undeniable richness in informal music culture, the insertion of people in musical

contexts that are different from their usual ones has the potential of creating many important disorienting dilemmas.

Themes emerging through these case studies include:

• transformative learning for social uplift

• social capital

• personal music making altering one's sense of identity

• lifelong learning

• the emphasis on performance

• the centrality of personal agency

• community, and a sense of belonging

• improvised, created, and experimental music

• changes in psychological attributes

• transformative learning for the common good

The theme of transformative learning for social uplift is evident in several of these studies. EMMa, Meninos do Morumbi, and Projeto Guri serve as a haven and provide alternatives for children and adolescents after school.  As one EMMa student, now enrolled in university,[18] stated:

> Studying music has changed the lives of so many young people in Macaíba.  Yes, some of us have continued to study music in the university, but I think those who didn't also learned a lot.  They learned that they should dedicate a lot of effort to become good at something in life, if they want to improve their life conditions. Without the music school, I think many of my friends and colleagues might have ended up with a lot of troubles in life.  Many of the acquaintances I knew from my street, people I knew before I was ten years old, when I joined the music school, they are dead nowadays, after getting involved with drugs and gangs.

In a discussion about students' motivation to study music in the Brazilian context, specifically focusing on social projects that are not connected to regular schools, Hentschke (2010) writes that "[T]he role of these projects is to minimize social exclusion and offer students an opportunity to access a professional activity, and attain social recognition," with music being perceived "as an opportunity for upward social mobility, where people from poor backgrounds can improve their economic and social status" (143–4).

Even when this does not happen directly, music education has the potential of creating a strong passion in this disadvantaged youth, who have none of the other

entertainment or educational possibilities enjoyed by the upper classes, thus helping them to stay away from problems that often plague their social milieu. This evidently has consequences not only for the individuals who are affected, but also for the common good.

The case study about the Chinese immigrant stresses themes such as social capital, identity, and an emphasis on musical performance. Yan's story also provides a valuable lesson in lifelong music learning, which can be used by educators who wish to inspire the same kind of attitude in their students. Indeed, Yan's love for music and his constant music-making make him a model for music learners in a variety of contexts. As well, there is the theme of rupture and possible transformation through act of uprooting oneself and moving to a different country, with different language and culture.

Through Yan's music making activities, he offers a window into some of his most intimate feelings, into intuitive and non-rational parts of his being that cannot be easily captured in words (Taylor et al. 2012). There is a noncognitive element in his performances that evades capture, a sense of sadness combined with satisfaction that can only be fully experienced and transmitted through music. These emotions may transcend distance between people, and his personal transformation positively affecting people with whom he interacts, both immigrants and non-immigrants.

Immigrants feel a dual force, even if unconsciously, in their daily lives, one side pulling towards their origins, their traditions and customs, and the other side pulling towards the idea of adaptation, of becoming a full-fledged member of their new environment. Music may play a significant role in both sides of this complex feeling; it may keep alive the connection to the immigrants' ancestral home and past memories, but may also be a fundamental tool in their adaptation to their new country and its new culture, so that it can become their new culture as well (Qi 2009).

The transformative potential behind musical performance, perceived in Yan's story, is also quite present in the studies about Meninos do Morumbi and Orquestra Experimental da UFSCar. Flávio Pimenta, founder of Meninos, decided to make public performances the driving force behind his project. The excitement of the performance and the interaction with the audience create a synergy, allowing for increased self-esteem. It is their music and their community. As well, members of

the ensemble take on ownership and an increased sense of responsibility to the group.  They belong.  Thus, the focus on performance catalyzes a cycle for change.

Complementarily, Kleber emphasizes that music within social projects "is not FOR the stage, it GOES to the stage" (personal communication).  In other words, the main goal should be much greater than the performance aspect of it, which is the means through which the main objectives are accomplished.  Kleber points out that transformation is about changing "how one sees oneself in the world" (personal communication).  Participation in a social project has the capacity to transform a young person's identity, allowing him/her to develop higher self-esteem, which translates into greater acceptance of oneself and one's community, and a greater belief in one's role and value in society:

> A sense of humiliation is very widespread in the urban periphery, because they don't have access to cultural goods, they don't have references.  Music has the potential to transform that, allowing self-expression, and making people bond with their communities.  It's as though you give new reasons for that group to exist, a new identity, beyond their miserable conditions (personal communication).

The theme of personal responsibility for transformative learning is also evident in the study about Meninos.  While social projects can provide a supportive environment and point to a positive path for young people to follow, ultimately each individual must decide how to respond to the opportunity that s/he has been given.

Lígia Pimenta comments that, although Meninos' significant growth over the years made it possible to reach a much wider population, she misses the project's early stage, when it was possible to have a more individualized connection with each student, and perhaps reach them in a more profound manner.  This points out to the urgent need in Brazil for more projects of this kind, present in each community, in order to offer this personal attention to each youngster who might need it.

Kleber (2006), who researched Meninos do Morumbi extensively, opines that transformation should be understood as a Gestalt in that it affects multiple dimensions of people's lives.  Moreover, "transformation can only be efficient if it interconnects these dimensions" (personal communication).  Therefore, she believes that music learning has a transformative potential that can have consequences in all aspects — social, economic, psychological — of one's existence.

A dance teacher from Meninos commented on how greater bodily flexibility translates in an ability to become more "flexible in life, learning to overcome problems with greater ease, . . . [besides] behavioral changes, group engagement, synchrony. . . . For them to dance, everything has to be well, physically and mentally" (Kleber 2006, 273).

This correlation between practical skills and life skills is similar to Negrisolo's (2009) notion of "resilience," namely, the ability to better adapt and react to challenges and difficulties, something that than can be transferred to other areas of their lives. Negrisolo's (2009) main focus is psychological, trying to understand how participation in this social project gives psychological skills that are useful in other aspects of the participants' lives. Most specifically, she argues that the "emergence of talents" in areas such as music contributes for the development of resilience.

Her notion of resilience is accompanied by three essential factors: some sort of adversity or trauma, positive adaptation by overcoming this adversity, and protecting factors. This has evident parallels with Mezirow's ideas: a disorienting dilemma presents an adversity by introducing an element that disturbs one's current frames of reference; this is overcome through transformative learning, which is a sort of 'positive adaptation', and there are factors — both external or internal — that must be present in order for the individual's transformation to occur.

The children and adolescents who participate in Project Guri are among the socially vulnerable with much to gain. Of them, Negrisolo (2009) writes: "[I]n contexts of high social vulnerability, we notice even more the need to develop [resilient] attitudes that permit people to face crisis" (211). She cites Abramovay's (2002, 30) definition of social vulnerability: "[a] group of characteristics, resources and skills of a certain social group that reveal themselves to be insufficient . . . to deal with the system of opportunities offered by society, in order to reach higher levels of well-being" (55). All the case studies described in this article present people in a context of social vulnerability who develop resilient attitudes through their music learning.

Negrisolo (2009) also notes a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the group, which is an essential factor for the development of self-esteem (58). She states, "each student knows to be an indispensable piece to the whole (the orchestra) and, at the same time, knows that s/he needs the group in order to interpret those

pieces of music" (58). While Negrisolo does not use the word "transformation", the changes she describes can only be described as transformative.

The theme of belonging, and its effects on people's identities, is present in all case studies. In Yan's case, the theme appears as a feeling related to his new environment; in the other studies, it reflects how belonging to a specific group changes one's perceptions notions about oneself and the wider community. As Kleber (2006) explains, "belonging presupposes the construction of symbolic values . . . and mobilizes everyone around socially constructed goals and values" (217). The process of belonging acts as a counterweight to the process of invisibility, as two sides of a coin in the life of a young person in the urban society, which is marked by appeals to consumerism. Belonging to a musical group marks a shift of identity to one that is based on "being" rather than "having" (219). Belonging gives an identity that translates into a wider recognition of the participants as citizens.

Kleber (2006) also mentions that the transformation of one's self-perception is especially significant as it relates to issues of race, generating greater acceptance of oneself despite racial biases common in society. This is certainly an important factor in all case studies, considering that Afro-Brazilians experience a disproportionate amount of the problems created by the country's inequality. One of Kleber's interviewees comments on how, through the act of going up on the stage and performing music well, he can reclaim his dignity, and fight back against racist stereotypes (132).

Transformation also depends on education widening the scope of people's knowledge and experiences. This is reflected in many of the cases, such as in the approach of the community orchestra studied by Joly and Joly (2011), which emphasizes experimental uses of different combinations of instruments, a diversity of repertoire from different origins, as well as compositions by its own participants that highlight their special qualities.

The broadening of one's experiences, from which the transformative music learning results, can benefit everyone, not only students from disadvantaged backgrounds:

> Diversity means diversity, not only in a one-sided way. I n social projects, sometimes we are only worried about disadvantaged people, and we forget about the rest of the population, who also needs music education. We cannot ignore the needs of "richer" people who might have the desire to study only European

music, and who really need to be stimulated in order to broaden their musical perspectives (Figueiredo, personal communication).

Accordingly, one of Orquestra Experimental da UFSCar's goals is to "create human development through interaction among people from different social, cultural, and economic classes (Joly and Joly 2011, 82). The authors believe that, "through this living together, the group builds itself and creates its identity" (82). They mention that even the act of tuning up the instruments can offer a moment for the group to have a moment a social and pedagogical practice, by getting to know the other, by paying attention to the group and to how each individual affects the group. This consciousness can then be transferred to other moments in which group members undertake activities together.

Mezirow (1997) emphasizes that transformative learning is rooted in the way human beings communicate, and does not link it *exclusively* with significant life events of the learner. Through this combination of reflection and discourse, the learner is able to shift to a more inclusive worldview. For Mezirow, one of the benefits of transformational learning is the development of greater autonomy as a person, a defining condition of adulthood.

These qualities are reflected in the five case studies presented in this article, both in the dialogical processes between each project's participants, teachers, community members (as well as between Yan and people with whom he interacts), and also in the greater autonomy they developed to determine their own future by overcoming limiting assumptions. Furthermore, the case studies demonstrate how individual and social transformations, in any context, are inextricably linked (Taylor 2009). Indeed, one fundamental point about transformation is how, after it begins within one's consciousness, it *may* translate into a change of individual behaviour, which *may*, on its turn, incite social transformation. However, one cannot expect a causal relationship between the steps of this progression, because they will depend on contextual factors (Schugurensky 2002).

The diagram below presents the characteristics of transformative learning that were present in each case study: changes to assumptions, attitudes, psychological attributes (all of which belong to one's consciousness), and behaviours. As shown by the dotted arrows, transformations in one aspect *may* influence the others, but this is not necessarily a foregone conclusion.
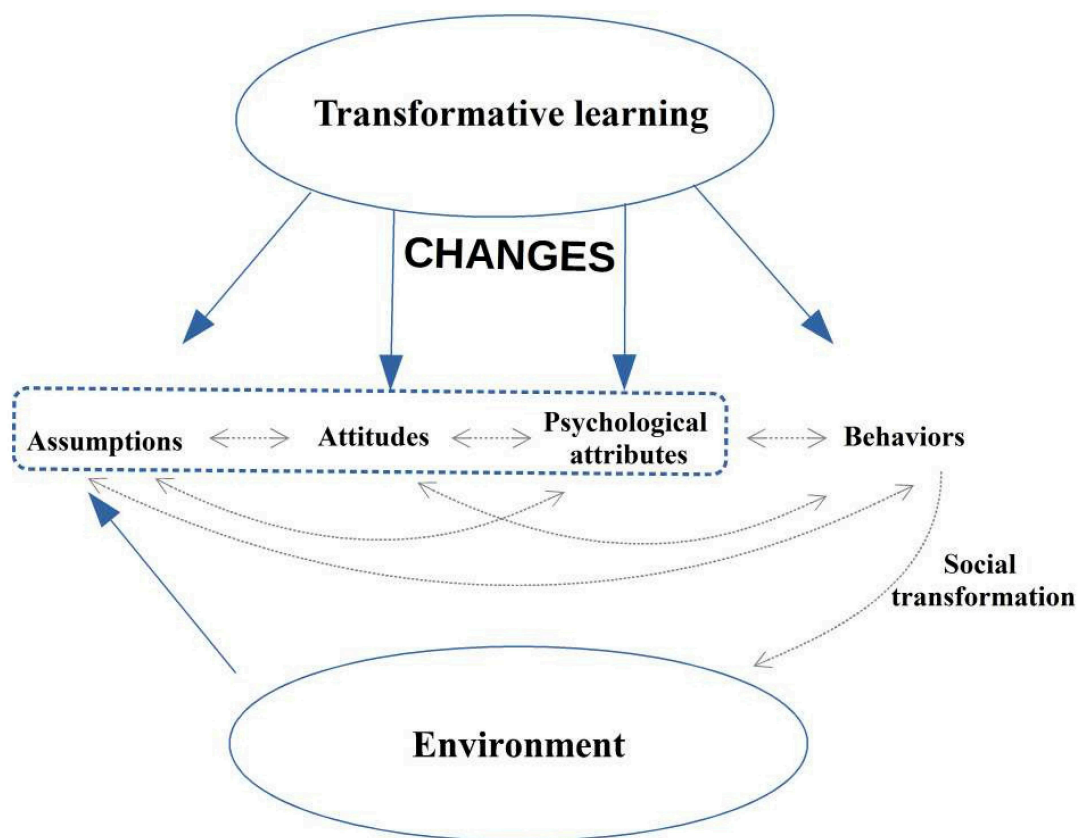
In each of the case studies presented in this article, there are clear descriptions of individuals who, because of their music learning experiences, have transformed their frames of references, habits of mind and meaning schemes.  These transformations affect the way in which they perceive themselves and how they interact with society, also having an overall positive effect on their communities.

**Conclusion**

Sociologist Jack Mezirow honed his notions of transformative learning over several decades until his death in 2014.  His later works expand the scope of his initial theories to consider the power of the arts.  In 2000, Mezirow wrote of the significance of music, art, dance, intuition, imagination, dreams, inspiration, empathy, and transcendence, to catalyze self-reflection, thus influencing perceptions of life (6).  In 2006, he wrote: "Most of the process of learning occurs outside of awareness and may include emotional, intuitive, symbolic, imaginistic, and/or contemplative modes of learning" (124).

Similarly, Taylor et al. (2012) cite how, when studying transformative learning, an "arts-based approach" in research can be useful in two manners: both to elicit transformative learning *and* to understand people's transformative experiences" (64). In other words, artistic exploration may foster transformation, working as a window into people's experiences "beyond the limited cognitive perspective"(64).

The five case studies summarized in this article present a strong demonstration of the transformative potential of music learning in different contexts. Although Mezirow's concept is not specifically cited by three of the authors discussed here, it is evident that the experiences they describe have engendered a positive transformation in individuals' assumptions, attitudes, psychological attributes and behaviors. Future researchers who wish to study these and similar music learning contexts might benefit from Mezirow's framework, as well as his 11-stage model for transformation, to better understand the transformative nature of music learning in such circumstances.

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## Notes

[1] This idea has been proposed by many different authors (e.g., Freire 1973; Mezirow 1978; Boyd 1989; Daloz 1999; Kegan 2000; O'Sullivan 2002; Dirkx 2008; Taylor et al. 2012).  As well, many other theories resonate with Mezirow's Transformative Learning, i.e. Freud's idea of Catharsis, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, Piaget's Accomodative Learning, Rogers' Significant Learning, Erikson's Psychosocial Transitions, Bateson's Learning III, Engeström's Learning by Expanding, and Alheit's Biographical Learning (Illeris 2011).  A common criticism of Mezirow's theory is that it focuses too much on the cognitive and rational aspects, neglecting the emotional, social, and aesthetic side, as well as environmental influences (Cranton and Hoggan 2012; Gunnlaugson 2007; Schugurensky 2002; Taylor 1994).  A few authors also believe that learning experiences differ only by a matter of degree, that calling some experiences "transformative" is mostly a metaphor, and that transformative theory needs to be used alongside more traditional forms of teaching (Newman 2012; Howie and Bagnall 2013).  Mezirow himself proposed changes and additions to his theory in the decades after it first came out, partially as an answer to those criticisms; at the same time, the theory's usefulness, which has been demonstrated in many fields, stands as testimony of its importance (Fahrenwald *et al.* 2014).

[2] Two of these case studies, which explicitly used Mezirow's concepts to better understand the participants' experiences, were conducted by one of the authors of this article.  The other studies are secondary sources, and do not mention Transformative Learning Theory directly.  Nevertheless, this procedure was purposefully done, in order to investigate the usefulness of applying the theory's basic tenets in order to notice the occurrence of transformative learning in contexts that were originally described with other research purposes and methods in mind.

[3] Kleber opines that another indicator of the country's social inequality is the burgeoning dropout rate of students forced to leave school to earn money for their families' subsistence, a situation which is "scary, and perpetuates the inequality further" (personal communication).

[4] In Brazil, both elementary and secondary schools usually only offer up to six hours of classes per day, either in the morning or in the afternoon.

[5] Macaíba's HDI was 0.368 in 1990 and 0.508 in 2000.  The HDI ranking of Brazilian municipalities is published every ten years, therefore the 2010 HDI is the most recent one available.  For comparison, Canada's HDI in 2010 is 0.911; Albania's, 0.749; Brazil's, 0.730, China's, 0.699; Egypt, 0.662; and Nigeria, 0.471. http://www.pnud.org.br/atlas/ranking/Ranking-IDHM-Municipios-2010.aspx

[6] http://www.tribunadonorte.com.br/noticia/macaiba-pela-paz-contra-a-violencia/269827

[7] Students' names have been changed to protect their privacy.

[8] See Qi and Presgrave (2014) for a detailing of the complex political and pedagogical

evolution of this school.

9 UFRN's Faculty of Music has undergraduate and also "technical" degrees aimed at teenagers, and Macaíba students have often enrolled at both levels.

10 See Qi and Yan (2014) for an extended account of the Brazilian song genre *música sertaneja*, migration, music, identity, and power relationships.

11 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDx_WnnRUC4 for more information. The organization website is http://www.meninosdomorumbi.org.br/ingles/.   A short documentary may be found at http://musicishopefoundation.org/meninos-do-morumbi/#wp-video-lightbox/0/

12 Meninos has recorded four CDs, available for purchase on cdbaby.com.  The project employs over 70 people, and its building has an area of 4000 square meters. AMM has had several sponsors along the years, such as HP, Grupo Pão de Açúcar (a Brazilian supermarket chain), British Airways, and Nestlé.

13 "Human Development Index (HDI)".  United Nations Development Programme. http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi

14 With one of the world's fastest-growing metropolitan populations, São Paulo is the largest city of the Southern Hemisphere.  São Paulo is 166 miles southeast of Sao Carlos and easily accessible.

15 (http://www.projetoguri.org.br/faca-sua-doacao/pessoa-juridica/)

16 The musical initiation course is designed for young people to develop musicianship and love of music.  Body percussion, small percussion instruments, Orff instruments, and the recorder are joined with song and dance in the curriculum.

17 It is important to acknowledge the good work being done in music and education by Brazilian scholars and activists such as Barbosa, Figueiredo Souza, Müller, Hentschke, Schmidt, Ilari, Moura, Bourscheidt, Oliveira, Baccarelli, Junqueira, Mateiro, in addition to those cited thus far: Kleber, Joly and Joly, and Negrisolo.

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