

Northwest University

Guided Thesis

Brazilian Community Services: the importance of a strategic plan and analysis of a new non-profit organization focused on the Brazilian Community in Seattle.

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## **ESSAY 1: CONTEXTUALIZATION**

### Overview

The Brazilian Church in the Seattle area — Videira Church — has noticed the need to strengthen ties and reinforce the sense of community in their fellow people. Within a Christian environment, Brazilian Community Services was born as a new non-profit dedicated to meeting the needs of the Brazilian community and promoting different types of events and meetings using resources that often are the right of immigrants but are not known to everyone. The most common problems observed by Videira Church that the Brazilian community faces in Seattle are housing, health insurance and access to medical care, immigration and legal doubts, poor mental health, and a sense of community. Faced with these challenges, the church understood that there was a need for a more organized approach to meeting these community needs, and that is how BCS started.

The immigration of Brazilians to the USA in general has always been common. However, for a few years now, the number of immigrants has been growing exponentially at the same time that the United States has been tightening its laws on who can access the American dream. For Brazilians, the "American dream" is a tale about arriving in America and, through hard work and sacrifices, achieving the dreams of having economic stability, a better life for their families, buying a house, and saving money. However, for some time now, this story has no longer made much sense due to the economic reality of the U.S.

The American Dream has always been about the prospect of success, but 10 decades ago, the phrase meant the opposite of what it does now. In its original form, the American Dream was a dream of equality, justice, and democracy for the nation. But now, the

American dream has been constrained by income and wealth inequality, hence creating class warfare. (Olusegun)

In other words, this dream that was sold to Latinos no longer makes much sense today, for reasons mentioned above. Especially in a post-pandemic world where the global economy was affected, leading to thousands of lost jobs and closed businesses. Mishra comments on how COVID-19 impacted the entire global economy. Due to the lack of much information about the virus, the best way we had at the time of trying to prevent the spread of the disease was to adhere to the controversial lockdown, a technique that, while effective in helping combat the virus, severely affected the economy leading many countries to an economic crisis (12). The global COVID-19 pandemic has violently affected the economy in Brazil, and consequently, the lives of the Brazilian population. Sott explains that as Brazil also adopted social isolation as a means of preventing the coronavirus, activities considered non-essential stopped, causing a huge closure of economic activities in the country. It is important to remember that BRAZIL is a country that has historically suffered from social inequality (12). According to the Cadastro Único (CadÚnico), in the first quarter of 2020, there were 13.5 million people in extreme poverty (with a monthly income per person of up to R\$89, or approximately US\$16) (National Survey of the Basic Food Basket March 2021 DIEESE). A year later, in March 2021, this number rose by 5.8%, or 784,000 people. In 2019, the country already had alarming numbers; between 2019 and 2021, there was an increase of 9% of people in extreme poverty, which was aggravated by the effects of the pandemic: food insecurity and COVID-19 in Brazil (Rede Penssan website). That is, both the U.S. and Brazil felt great economic impacts as a society, leading to social inequalities becoming even more evident and to the U.S. receiving more Brazilian immigrants.

## Nonprofits & 501c3 Process

Working on behalf of my community has always been my main goal, and as a Brazilian immigrant in the United States, I was lucky enough to find a group of people with the same goal. This group was born at Videira Church, a Brazilian Christian church located in Woodinville, which, noticing the needs and challenges that Brazilian immigrants encounter when they arrive in the United States, realized the importance of having a more structured organization that could provide necessary services to the community.

Since September 2022, I have been participating in meetings and volunteering at events to understand more about how the process of becoming a 501c3 non-profit works and to get closer and donate my time to my community. Philips explained in detail that it is the most common type of non-profit organization in the United States. When an organization receives 501(c)(3) status, they benefit from tax-exempt fees and certain employer fees, and they are eligible to receive tax-deductible charitable contributions. Organizations must meet the eligibility criteria and the filing requirements involved in the formation process. Some of the guidelines and requirements are, for example, to operate for certain purposes: charitable, educational, religious, scientific, literary, fostering national or international sports competitions, preventing cruelty to children or animals, and testing for public safety. Nonprofit organizations are permitted to engage in market-based activities. These activities may or may not be taxed, depending on the extent to which they are related to the mission, are regularly carried out, and are conducted by volunteers or paid staff (IRS, 2018). If an exempt organization has \$1,000 or more of gross income from an unrelated trade or business during the year, it must file a 990-T form (Philips et al). Social entrepreneurship is a business like any other. It requires organization, discipline, planning, and people who understand how to undertake and move forward with plans.

The 501(c)(3) process can be complex, and meeting the requirements can be a complicated process. Completing forms can become even more complicated if the organization is new and has limited resources, which is the case with BCS. The requirements also expect the organization to meet eligibility requirements, such as being charitable, religious, or educational; it is mainly at this point that having a well-defined organizational mission and values makes a difference.

The strategic plan section and how it applies its bureaucracies, and its purpose and importance are discussed further in this paper (Appendix A-Project Proposal).

### Scenario

Brazilians have always admired American culture, whether through Hollywood, music, or Disney. A combination of factors motivates this behavior: American imperialism, an employment crisis, financial instability, and a political crisis in Brazil. After 2020 with the global COVID-19 pandemic, the situation in Brazil became even more complicated and food insecurity increased tragically, driving even more Brazilians to the U.S. This, compounded with the steep appreciation of the U.S. dollar against the Brazilian real and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic that have left a growing share of Brazilians food insecure, has made the United States an increasingly attractive destination. The Brazilian immigrant population in the United States rose nearly 50 percent between 2010 and 2019, growing from 340,000 to 502,000 (Batalov).

This study is based on the Brazilian community that resides in Washington State, which despite not adding as many Brazilians as Florida or Massachusetts, for example, has a considerable number. Total immigration population from Brazil in the United States are 514,500 and in Washington State the number is 8,200 (“U.S. Immigrant Population by State and

County”) This number surprised me because, based on my experience as a Brazilian, many people in Brazil do not know or have never heard of Seattle.

I have two different experiences in the United States: one when I lived in Chicago on a cultural exchange to learn English, and the second, when I moved to Seattle to be part of the MAICD program. In both places, the community has similar behaviors. First, we join online groups to form our community, usually on Facebook or WhatsApp. -Brasileiros em Seattle- for example, is the name of the group I belong to on WhatsApp. What usually happens is, when we move, we introduce ourselves to the group and we usually look for other Brazilians around us to form a community, we share what our interests are, whether they are making friends, like going to bars, hiking, bookstores, church, coffee shops, gym or sports. The variety is huge and we usually find someone willing to develop a friendship and with similar interests. The groups also serve to share job opportunities such as civil construction, babysitting, nannyng, cleaning, waitressing, and others, and it is normally within these groups that BCS events are publicized to the community. So far, we have noticed great community participation in public health events, which will be detailed later in qualitative research.

A big misunderstanding which I believe makes it difficult for the community to join BCS events is that this is a Christian organization. Many people mistakenly believe that it is necessary to attend Videira Church to be entitled to what BCS offers; many people also think that it is necessary to be a Christian, which is another misconception. Any individual of any religion (creed), race, color, gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status will not be prevented from participating and receiving any kind of support from BCS. Brazilian Community Service is also an equal opportunity employer:



We shall not discriminate and will not discriminate in employment, recruitment, Board membership, advertisements for employment, compensation, termination, upgrading, promotions, and other conditions of employment against any employee or job applicant based on race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, or for any other discriminatory reason. (Brazilian Community Services Discrimination Policies)

As a Brazilian immigrant who has lived in the US for about 4 years now, I believe that in addition to having a bit of property and a place to speak on the subject, I also share the cultural shocks and some of the struggles mentioned. Brazilian culture and American culture are somewhat similar in some ways and very different in others, starting with individuality and collectivism. Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede investigated cultural characteristics and difficulties in different countries and created a framework to examine how cultural values affect the behavior of individuals and can give clues about how people from a given culture might act, they are “power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence”(1) below we can see in graph format the difference between Brazil and the United States in the main topics (see Fig 1).

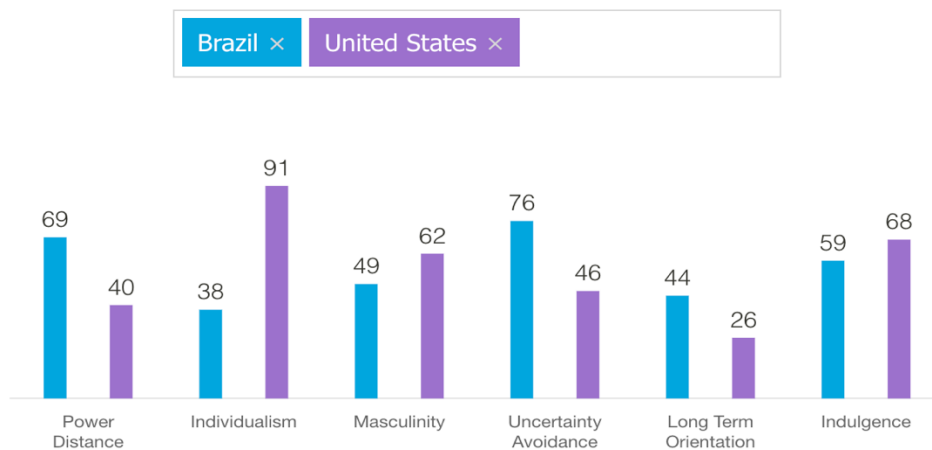


Figure 1 Hofstede, Geert. Country Comparison. 2022, Hofstede Insights. <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/brazil,the-usa/>.

On his website, Hofstede dedicates an area where we can analyze what the rates are for each country and make comparisons and we can see some numbers between Brazil and the US. First, they define the concept of individualism and collectivism.

The fundamental issue addressed by this dimension is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. It has to do with whether people's self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "We". In Individualist societies people are only supposed to look after themselves and their direct family. In Collectivist societies people belong to "in groups" that take care of themselves in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. (Hofstede Insights)

Brazil comes from a culture where we undoubtedly use (WE) more than I and where our people are always together and we are always willing to help our fellow people.

Brazil has a score of 38 which means that in this country people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive groups (especially represented by the extended family; including uncles, aunts, grandparents, and cousins) which continue to protect its members in exchange for loyalty. This is an important aspect in the working environment too, where for instance an older and powerful member of a family is expected to "help" a younger nephew to be hired for a job in his own company (Hofstede Insights).

Moving to the U.S. without my family, to a culture so different from mine, was an immense barrier, but also enriching. Developing my more individualistic side has given me more independence and proactivity in solving problems and conflicts, but the cultural shock was difficult to deal with in the first moments.

Within American organizations, hierarchy is established for convenience, superiors are accessible and managers rely on individual employees and teams for their expertise. Both

managers and employees expect to be consulted and information is shared frequently. At the same time, communication is informal, direct, and participatory to a degree. The society is loosely knit in which the expectation is that people look after themselves and their immediate families only and should not rely (too much) on authorities for support. There is also a high degree of geographical mobility in the United States. Americans are the best joiners in the world; however, it is often difficult, especially among men, to develop deep friendships. Americans are accustomed to doing business or interacting with people they don't know well. Consequently, Americans are not shy about approaching their prospective counterparts in order to obtain or seek information" (Hofstede Insights).

In addition to all the problems that any immigrant faces in the U.S., such as racism, culture shock, and lack of a work permit to supplement income, Brazilian immigrants specifically still experience difficulty in defining themselves on government forms and while seeking social aid. It is very common that, when we need to identify ourselves, the options are limited. Usually, on American forms we can identify ourselves as Hispanic Latinos, which assumes that all Latinos are descended from Spaniards, which is erroneous. Margolis says that The term Hispanic (Hispano) does not even exist in Brazil, where Spanish is used exclusively to refer to people from Spain (3), and citizens of Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America are named according to their nationalities. "The term Latino also has a foreign connotation, suggestive of Caribbean countries and/or foreign rhythms and Brazilians have also been considered as part of "Raza" groups, a concept completely foreign to Brazilians" (Hayes-Bautista; Zubaran 593).

There is also a strong difference between the definitions of race and skin color between Brazil and the U.S., and this difference for me was one of the biggest cultural shocks I experienced and I am still trying to learn it. According to the first census of 1872, individuals

categorized as “Black” or “mixed race” made up the majority of the total Brazilian population (Schwarcz; Telles, 2003). Censuses were conducted decennially, with the exception of 1910 and 1930. The color question was omitted in 1900, 1920, and 1970 (Nobles, 2000a; Zubaran 595). As a white-skinned Brazilian, I can say that I grew up with the privileges that many white people have.

Brazil has a huge Black population, according to the Minority Right Groups website, the predominance of Afro-Brazilians is concentrated in the northeastern states, as this is an area with warmer temperatures, plantations, agriculture, and slave ports were located in this area. The site also says that the 2010 census was in fact when the Afro-Brazilian population ceased to be a minority: for the first time the number of people identifying themselves as Black or Brown was higher than the number of white people (2). Just like in the U.S., in Brazil, life is much more complicated for someone with dark skin. When I moved to the U.S., I was having a conversation with an American who found it strange that I said I was white and asked me about my ancestors and where they were from. I said that I was not sure, but that Brazil was colonized by Portugal and has native indigenous and African influences, due to slavery, and that I probably had all these influences in my family since we are all very different: my father with white skin, my mother with brown skin, my grandfather with black skin, my other grandfather with white skin and blue eyes, and some say that my great-great-grandmother was a native person who grew up in an indigenous village. This American person then told me that I was not considered white in the U.S. because I was Brazilian and mixed, and my answer was that we were talking about skin color and not nationality. It was a long conversation and I confess that we did not reach a conclusion. For me, nationality and skin color/ethnicity are two completely different things.

To summarize, even though I have all the privileges of a white person in Brazil, here in the U.S. I no longer have these privileges, firstly because I am Brazilian, and secondly because I have a strong accent. Although some people here in the U.S. do not understand that the color of my skin is a privilege and that it frees me from certain hardships, unfortunately, a person of color is still subject to face those hardships. “Antimiscegenation laws, and immigration laws – all of these laws draw on some collective and/or legal understanding of what race is despite the reality that these definitions are created by people, that they change over time or across different contexts, and that power is often connected to them” (Hagerman 15) Laws and definitions that were created by people who are in power, and benefit from these definitions, and not casually most of them are white.

#### Mental Health

Mental health is a subject that has recently come to be much talked about. A few years ago, it was a huge taboo to talk about this topic without people getting offended, but it is that this subject is discussed because most psychological struggles can be solved or avoided with conversation and adequate professional help. This is just as important, if not even more important, when we are working with the immigrant community. In addition to the aforementioned difficulties, undocumented immigrants (UI) often experience chronic and severe distress associated with the immigration experience and their undocumented legal status. Preimmigration stressors that are often faced by UIs include financial hardship, trauma, and changes in social support networks, which are often followed by difficulties with adjustment/adaptation following migration (Chung, Bernak, Ortiz, & Sandoval-Perez). Thus, depressive and anxiety disorders, as well as dysfunctional behaviors affecting mental health (e.g., domestic violence, substance use) are common among this immigrant population (Ornelas &

Perreira, 2011). UIs often face multiple dangers while crossing borders to immigrate to the United States, which increase the risk for trauma, severe distress, and even death. They are likely to face isolation, exploitation, victimization, and stigmatization while in the United States, given their limited legal rights and fear of deportation. Moreover, many UIs move to the United States not only for economic gain but to escape organized crime and community/family violence in their countries of origin (Garcini et al.). Unfortunately, when we are working with an older immigrant population, it is very difficult to engage them in mental events. The topic becomes easier when the work focuses on younger groups, who are more open to seeking help.

I had the opportunity to interview Lidiane DaCosta, who is the executive director of BRACE, a Brazilian American Center located in the state of Massachusetts. Our interview addressed many different topics; on the topic of mental health, it was important to understand how Lidiane provides support and resources in the Brazilian community in Massachusetts. The rates of people experiencing mental health difficulties in the area are very high and that something needed to be done urgently to help the community. BRACE received funding from an institution to develop a mental health and counseling program for the community. She explained to me that the community became resistant when the subject of mental health was proposed and that many times they even felt offended when something on the subject was offered. Although BRACE was offering psychological assistance via counselors and psychologists, the community participation rate was very low. It was then that she had the idea to still provide the resources but omit the idea that the purpose was to help with mental health. She created groups for youth, young adults, and parents, where they could gather with their peers to talk and share their struggles while group dynamics would happen with the guidance of a counselor. Community participation in these group meetings was much greater than when it was presented as a mental

health event. The quality of group development was also much higher when it was done that way, which made me think about how important it is for a community developer to know how to deal with the individuality of each group and to be flexible and strategic in decision-making.

### Housing and Food Insecurity

Housing and Food Insecurity is a sensitive topic for the U.S. but like any other community issue, the severity is considerably increased when it is applied to a minority group such as immigrants (Chilton et al., 2009; Van Hook & Balistreri, 2006). Immigrants' higher likelihood of food insecurity may exacerbate their housing precarity given the increased financial constraints and lack of institutional support available for them (Pendall, Theodos, & Franks, 2012). Even if public assistance is available, eligible immigrants are less likely to interact with local government agencies out of fear of stigmatization and discrimination (Derose, Escarce, & Lurie, 2007), further impeding their ability to bounce back from distress (Huang and King). That is, fear and lack of information are still major factors that help in this topic. Sometimes, the immigrants, whether they are documented or not, experience harassment in the places they frequent, which prevents them from living in peace. The situation gets worse if they are undocumented, as there is a feeling of fear that they will be arrested or deported. All these factors are relevant to understand the low adherence to family programs. Sometimes they participate actively, but given all that has been mentioned, they often do not feel comfortable attending the programs. BCS also deals with a lack of trust from the community and the main reason is most of these immigrants are undocumented and have been in constant danger of arrest and deportation, so it is understandable why they do not quickly give their trust to everyone who offers help.

Individual barriers included fear of deportation, communication ability, financial resources, shame/stigma, and knowledge about the health care system. Fear of deportation, whether real or imagined, was identified as a barrier in 65% of articles.

Undocumented immigrants reported avoiding health care and waiting until health issues were critical to seek services because of their concerns of being reported to authorities.

(Hacker et al.)

Undocumented people do not feel comfortable sharing their struggles because they know that if the person they are speaking with has bad intentions, the undocumented person's life could be turned upside down. It is hard work to earn the trust of this community, but we at BCS are willing to do it.

This is one of the topics that BCS is willing to address. They are aware that it is difficult to help someone with housing problems, but at least with the connections they are making on this path of managing the new non-profit, they believe that they can direct people to a specific place where resources are more prepared and appropriate for the problem. Currently, they already have connections with food banks and are able to offer basic food boxes to the community when necessary or when an event takes place.

During my interview with Lidiane, as was mentioned earlier, we also addressed the topic of housing. I asked her about the biggest challenges she thought BRACE was facing right now, and Lidiane pointed out that it was undoubtedly housing. She continued with a very common example: many people need to "sub-rent" rooms or areas in their homes. For example, when someone rents a house, they say that only two people will live there, but it turns out that these two people rent the second bedroom of the house to a whole family, so instead of two people living in the house, there are five or six, but these extra people were not in the contract. Often the



landlord finds out about this situation and gives an ultimatum that either the extra people leave the house or everyone has to leave, which is when families run to BRACE without having anywhere to live. Lidiane confirmed that it is very difficult to help people in this situation because she really has nothing to offer. She also said that when, for example, the case is of domestic violence, BRACE can refer to partner associations that manage a shelter for victims, so it is not a problem. When a whole family has nowhere to live, Lidiane has no associations or partnerships with shelters that could shelter these families, and it ends up being a problem for the community.

### Healthcare and Health Insurance

What is already a huge problem for U.S. citizens is an even bigger problem for the immigrant population. Many changes to health insurance policies for immigrants are made each year. Beck explains that the United States has a private healthcare system and some low-cost options, and many US cities with large immigrant populations are looking to address the healthcare system by providing access to primary care. For example, New York City has the nation's largest public health system, composed of the Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) and Community Health Care Association of New York State, whose members include FQHCs and migrant health programs. These organizations provide much of the health care for uninsured and undocumented patients. Both systems rely on Medicaid (and, to a lesser extent, Medicare) reimbursements. They also depend on federal Disproportionate Share Hospital funding and other sources of state Indigent Care Pool funding (25). Some options are also found in the State of Washington, and one of the events that the BCS held focused on bringing this information to the community and trying to get as many people as possible into the program. I did not know immigrants were entitled to health insurance. "Washington Healthplanfinder offers health

insurance with prices that are based on income. A special enrollment period is a period outside the normal open enrollment period when you can enroll in a new health insurance plan or change your current plan. There are several circumstances where you may qualify for a special enrollment period” (King County).

All events held by BCS to date are described in detail later, in qualitative research.

## Conclusion

The context of a community, its principles and customs, must be taken into account when developing projects aimed at this community. It is important to know the main characteristics that guide this community, the majoritarian situation in the United States and the main reasons that led them to immigrate, and the current situation of their country of origin. It is important that a community development professional deals with the context of the community but also knows how to understand and dialogue with the individual needs of each person. The context of a community is important, but the personal context of each person who needs that support is just as important.

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## ESSAY 2: QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

### Qualitative Methods

The Journey of the ICD Program was important for me to conduct a safe qualitative research process in a way that I believe will bring positive results and good feedback both for this master's thesis and for Brazilian Community Services. To conduct the interviews for this thesis, it was essential for me to learn the concepts of an ethical interview in an objective way that brings efficient information using the concepts of Merriam and Tisdell in the book *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. When I had the opportunity to take the Research for Social Change course, I conducted my first interview in a different context and topic, but one that definitely prepared me for what I brought to this role. In most forms of qualitative research, some and occasionally all of the data are collected through interviews. A research interview is defined as:

A process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study” (p. 55). The most common form of interview is the person-to-person encounter, in which one person elicits information from another. Group or collective formats can also be used to obtain data. Both person-to-person and group interviews can be defined as a conversation—but a “conversation with a purpose”.

(Merriam and Tisdell 136)

The act of interviewing someone is a skill to be developed. I have experienced some interview attempts that went very well and others that were a little frustrating, and this is part of developing a skill. At this point in my journey in the MAICD program, I am now asking more coherent questions with more objectivity, which will bring me more qualitative information toward the final objective.

As Merriam explained, these observations will be necessary to conduct all the interviews. "Another reason for conducting observations is to provide some knowledge of the context or to provide specific incidents, behaviors, and so on that can be used as reference points for subsequent interviews" (Merriam and Tisdell 138). One way to collect data for the Thesis Project was through observations. My experience as a volunteer in the events that have taken place so far has brought me interesting analyses that I will explain a little later.

Despite being a Brazilian immigrant, listening to other people's stories was not only enriching for my thesis but was also extremely useful for my personal growth. It forced me to pierce my social bubble and seek out other perspectives and life stories. Janus talks about the storytelling technique, where it is recommended that when conducting an interview or to cause identification, a story of vulnerability is told. "Being vulnerable and telling our story, and importantly, why we became devoted to the cause, creates a personal connection with our audience" (Janus 360). For me, it was difficult to put this into practice, but it was possible to see how the outcome of the interviews changes when I also share a little of my story with people.

First, I had the opportunity to practice what it would be like to collect data and carry out analyses in a social field when, in the summer of 2022, the Fieldwork subject was offered. Personally, my journey in fieldwork was complicated, because at first I had a different proposal onto which I was putting all my expectations. This initial proposal did not turn out the way I had anticipated, which left me quite frustrated. Coming up with a secondary plan was also frustrating because I was not finding answers. What worked in the end was studying at Family Nest Pregnancy and Parenting Support, which is one of the segments of Catholic Community Services and develops support for Hispanic/Latino families concerning parenting, donations to the family nucleus and support for pregnant women. I consider fieldwork to be preparation for my BCS

experience, as I had the opportunity to practice observation, writing, and interviewing skills. In the book, *Fieldworking: Reading and Writing Research*, a number of ways to conduct research and interviews are offered. While I was putting these techniques into practice for my fieldwork, I was also learning for when that thesis moment arrived. There were many valuable suggestions such as, "Scholars study writers' notebooks because they often reveal the personal sources of writer's ideas. When we return to our recorded notebook scratchings, we also return to those unrecorded circumstances that surrounded the written notes"(Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater). The notes that I took both for the fieldwork and the thesis are fundamental and were often not taken in a notebook but rather were audio recordings and an iPhone notepad. When I went to revisit the notes or the audio, it was as if I had gone back to that exact moment. I was particularly adept at the practice of freewriting which is mentioned in the book as well. It is a good way to exercise creativity when you force yourself to write and write without thinking too much about the subject, as the book suggest:

To do a freewriting exercise, simply force yourself to write without stopping for ten minutes. Sometimes you will produce good writing, but that is not the goal. Sometimes you will produce garbage, but that is not the goal either. You may stay on the topic, you may flip repeatedly, from one to another: it doesn't matter. (Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater)

I have always practiced what I call "sitting down and writing"; sometimes some cool things come out of it and other times not so much. I also need to talk about the tricky part of using this technique. I wrote a lot of good things, but after writing I went to reread the thesis and fieldwork guidelines, and a lot of what I had written did not fit. I tried to make it fit as much as possible but, unfortunately, I had to let some things that were already written go. I found it was painful to discard some topics that I had invested my time in writing.



## Events

Qualitative research observation methods were essential for generating efficient content to guide the creation of BCS. On December 3, 2022, the BCS organization held a free immigration event for the community at the Videira Church building in Woodinville. Two sessions were made available to the community and it was recommended that people schedule an appointment ahead of time, but walk-ins were also welcome. Immigration attorney Seth Lupton held an informational session at the beginning where he shared some key information, then took some time to address doubts and provide individual advice. The recommendation was that people bring their immigration documents, and cases of deportation were prioritized. Gift cards were also given to the first 30 people who attended each session. The event was publicized on Instagram and in groups of Brazilians on social networks such as WhatsApp and Facebook. Fortunately for BCS and the Brazilian community, the events were sold out and well-appreciated by the public.

I had the opportunity to meet a person from the Brazilian community who made the crossing with coyotes across the US-Mexico border. Unfortunately, and for reasons that I fully understand, I could not get a formal interview with someone in this situation for this research, but I can say from our informal conversation these are unimaginable situations that most people will never know or experience, especially when you do this with your family. The story this person told me, who has a child with disability, is beyond anything I have ever experienced. The crossing takes place in a deserted area, which depending on the time of year can be very hot or very cold at night; this is one of the first risks to be taken. In addition, a financial investment is necessary: the coyotes as they are known, the people who "help" in the crossing, charge an expensive amount for this, and there may even be a chance that it does not work because

obviously, it is a situation outside of the law or "illegal". The chances of deportation or jail are still high. Most of those people who opt for this type of crossing do not speak English, which makes each case even more delicate:

This is where we will stay until our coyote arrives. The damp concrete floor is covered in several places by swaths of old, grimy carpet, presumably for sleeping. The bathroom has no water service and reeks of old garbage and urine. The shower behind the apartment is made of a hose connected to an iron rod with wet sheets for minimal privacy and a mud floor. The shower is shared by several apartments with back doors to the same yard. We eat our food in the backyard on the cement that has stains and pieces of rotten food.

(Holmes 14)

This is only one of the many awful descriptions of crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. In the book *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies*, the author Holmes went to the border for his fieldwork, to make observations and maybe in the future help people in this situation. This implies that Holmes was there in a privileged position; the crossing for him was not something crucial that his life depended on. It is important to emphasize that there is a huge difference between, on the one hand, being in such an experience while doing research, and on the other hand, surviving with your family.

On January 28, 2023, BCS held another charity event for the community. Seattle and King County Public Health offered free oral services to those who attended, and I had the opportunity to volunteer at the front desk and as a translator at this event. Oral health is usually one of the first basic needs that are put aside when you have tight finances and a lack of medical insurance. More campaigns in favor of oral health should be done in general for all people as it is a way of preventing countless other diseases. Poor oral health has a negative effect on the quality

of life and can increase the risk for chronic diseases through the common risk factors mechanism (Linden). For example, protracted pain from a diseased tooth can restrict food intake and thus compromise nutrition; bacteria from periodontal disease are associated with diabetes and cardiovascular disease (Cronin 22) (Carramolino-Cuellar). The impact of poor oral health on quality of life is of urgent importance for these populations who are outside their usual healthcare system, have limited financial resources, are living with reduced access to nutritious food and clean water, and have lost their social support network (Redwood-Campbell 322)(Singh 2181) (Keboa et al.). Obviously, as in other points, language is also a barrier for the immigrant community to seek professional help for oral health.

At this event, most of the employees spoke English and Spanish, which is somewhat similar to Portuguese and on some occasions Portuguese and Spanish speakers can understand each other. Beyond that, one of the employees of the Seattle and King County Public Health was Brazilian, and there were church volunteers to facilitate communication. It is also necessary to talk about the sense of community that these events generate. For me, it was very important to participate in this event as a volunteer, as I had the opportunity to meet many people, increase my social circle and learn new things. For the people who were there to enjoy the service, I could observe them exchanging numbers, getting to know each other, and receiving information that is very important and that until then was unknown, such as the right to health insurance that immigrants have, which was mentioned previously in the topic Healthcare and Health Insurance

The last event held by BCS was one that will hopefully continue to have positive impacts in the years to come. On the 3rd of March, this event was held at the Videira church building; it focused on inspiring young Brazilian immigrants to pursue fulfilling professional lives. At the event, young people were taught about their options after high school, heard inspiring stories,

and got to connect with other young Brazilian high school students at different schools. At this event, dinner was provided by BCS. When I interviewed Reginaldo (board member and treasurer), he told me about BCS's intentions for the future and where they intend to focus now, which is guidance for young immigrants. He explained that many of these young people arrive with their families but most of the time it is against their wishes. All these young folks knew before was the reality in Brazil, so there is a strong tendency for young people to follow the path of isolation and refuse to create connections at school with peers or even see possibilities in the future, which makes these young people possible candidates for depression. It is this perspective that BCS is trying to change. BCS intends to show these young people that there are greater possibilities for the future than they know, thereby empowering the children. Empowerment agents are not just concerned with getting students better networked or more information; they empower students by building critical consciousness that transforms the student, and this transformation can also occur in communities and society (Hallett). We posit that counselors act as relationship brokers for unauthorized students, mediating exchanges of and access to information, advocating for their relationships with personnel, and potentially changing students' life trajectories. They can move beyond a role as institutional agents to act as empowerment agents (Crawford and Valley).

Using my personal life story as an example, I would not have gotten to this point — doing a master's degree outside my country in another language — if it were not for the connections I have had throughout my life and the encouragement of teachers, counselors, friends, and family. Inside my heart, there is this huge spark of being a transforming agent of knowledge and empowerment for children and young people who want to follow a path similar to mine. I believe that sometimes all it takes is a bit of information, a bit of knowledge, and

encouragement for the whole story and destiny of someone to change, especially if it is through education. I believe in my heart that education is indeed the most powerful weapon and for me, there is no greater pleasure than being that agent for people who came from the same from which I came. Unfortunately, on the day of this event, I was on a short vacation with my family in Brazil and I could not participate, but I will be at future events to talk about my experience studying environmental and sanitary engineering at a college in Brazil and graduating in International Community Development at Northwest University, which are two different and complementary experiences. It is a dream come true to be able to have an international degree on the topic of social causes and to have the opportunity to encourage and motivate other young people to achieve their dreams, as I am. It is one of the highlights of this journey.

#### Conclusion

For a community developer, qualitative research allows data to be collected and can possibly result in benefits for the community. It is an important technique for studying communities in depth, including learning about their needs, understanding the gifts that the communities themselves offer, and using this in their favor. Using the community's own resources is a way to allow the community to become sustainable, in addition to promoting empowerment and strengthening the community. Observing my own community has allowed me to learn more about my culture and myself, as well as bringing me enormous joy to be involved in something I believe in. Through observations, interviews, and volunteer participation, BCS can develop and execute a strategic plan for organizing its goals, values, and objectives, thereby better serving the community.

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### **ESSAY 3: ICD VALUES**

#### Introduction

My journey in the MAICD program has brought me countless experiences, such as discoveries, patience, choices, friendships, knowledge, charity, faith, and a sense of community. This program showed me the importance of surveying the context of each situation, in addition to analyzing each person individually. I also learned to appreciate the humanity of the people involved in each case and operate from a Christian base, which I already had in my family, but I believe that this program strengthened it even more. I am fulfilling a dream by completing a major degree in a different language that I still feel I am learning, but at the same time, it was very challenging.

#### Personal Transformation

Being able to do this program was an alignment of my dreams and my vocation. It was listening to my intuition and not listening to what others had to say. Despite support from family members to move to a different country to pursue my dreams, they knew it would not be easy and they tried to warn me. Deep down I knew what I wanted, and after my experience working with the most peripheral and most needy community in my city, I knew that I wanted to address social issues.

I am a little different from my peers in that I have a bachelor's degree in a different area than what we cover in this program. At a very young age, I found myself pressured to make a choice about which profession I would follow, and for personal reasons I chose to do environmental and health engineering, which brought me many wonderful opportunities, but deep down I knew that it was not exactly where my heart was. Still, through engineering school, I went to work as an intern in the public urban cleaning agency of my city in Brazil, where I



worked in the community education sector. Working there, I had the opportunity to get closer to community services and understand the root problems of the community. Being close to the community made me understand where I really wanted to be, observing the problems closely and realizing that many of them happened due to the lack of sensitivity in the context of public services. This gave me the impulse to look for something aimed at the community and people, especially those in vulnerable situations, which was the case in this work.

My job consisted of visiting the places where there were reports of open-air garbage points and talking to the population. Through lectures, in schools, in workshops for toys made from recycled materials, and in meetings with community leaders, we came up with plans to implement for that location. I enjoyed being among the community and working with them, but I did not feel comfortable with the work I was doing. When I arrived at communities to work, I realized that they had much more pressing problems than where they should throw trash or how to recycle material. Often, these places did not have piped and potable water for the population to drink, causing families to have to travel to fetch daily water in other places. At other times, housing conditions were so precarious that the floor was made of clay, there was no floor in the house and when it rained, it got wet inside the house too.

These are just some of the many situations these people lived in and I had to go visit them and talk about garbage collection. It did not make sense for me, in the face of their precarious situation, to talk about such a "superficial" problem with them. Those people had bigger concerns like whether their children would get a meal the next day. After I really started to understand what the real needs of that community were, and where those people's main problems lay, my work lost more and more of its meaning for me. Another factor that caught my attention was that most of the people I met and talked to in these communities were Black. For a deeper

context, Salvador, the city I come from, is one of the places with the most Black people outside of Africa: "Bahia's capital city on the coast has the largest population of Afro Brazilians, where more than 80 percent of its population reportedly identifies as Black. In addition to being the cradle of Afro-Brazilian Heritage, Salvador is known as the "Black Mecca of Brazil" and so much more" (Diakite). With a lot of privilege for having white skin and at the age of 20, I began to understand structural racism, and I think it is important for me to make it clear that this knowledge came through observations because unfortunately, Black people know about structural racism from an early age. Lawrence defines structural racism as the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional, and interpersonal – that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. It is a system of hierarchy and inequity, primarily characterized by white supremacy – the preferential treatment, privilege, and power for white people at the expense of Black, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, Arab, and other racially oppressed people (1). That was what was happening in my work: while I and some other interns were white, we were talking about environmental and community education in poor and Black communities.

In the book *White Kids*, Hagerman has strong opinions about white children volunteering in places where most people are Black. Although my case was not volunteering, I believe we can relate to the situation: "While volunteering may be altruistic and done with the best of intentions, the messages that privileged kids interpret from interaction in these spaces may reinforce ideas about race that run counter to larger antiracist projects" (132). When some practices are delivered with good intentions, they can indeed make a difference in society, even if small. Some others, unfortunately, are more focused on the activist's own ego than on charity itself. I believe that it is not enough to understand that racism is wrong, it is also necessary to be anti-racist.

Unfortunately, at the time I was an intern there, I still did not have the knowledge of one of the values that I consider most important in MAICD, which is contextualization. I knew something was wrong, but I did not know how I could help, or how to focus on the root of the problem. Still, I believe this experience was important to bring me to where I am today, as it was my first contact with the community and where I became sure I wanted to be involved as a developer for the rest of my life. Today I believe that with the experience that MAICD has given me, I can do more integrative, more humane work and listen to the community a little more.

### Patience and Journey

My first reading for this program was *"Let Your Life Speak"* by Parker J. Palmer. Many passages in that book described my journey to get here. For a long time I was completely disconnected from my intuition and my purpose, studying and working with something I did not believe in and away from the things that really gave me pleasure and made my heart flutter. When I read Palmer I was able to reflect on gifts and how I disconnected from mine. "We are disabused of original giftedness in the first half of our lives. Then - if we are awake, aware, and able to admit our loss - we spend the second half trying to recover and reclaim the gift we once possessed" (12). Reconnecting with my memories and using them to know more about myself was an interesting activity. As a child, I was very connected with my creative side, drawing, painting, inventing games, composing songs and inventing stories for my dolls. I was also moved by music, I took piano lessons which I loved and sang in the choir from the church that I loved too. But with all the demands that growing up requires, I left behind my hobbies and things that made me happy.

I went into an "automatic pilot" pattern for a long time, and I had no answers as to why I was doing what I was doing. The only thing I knew was that I was pleasing many people around

me, except myself. Living disconnected from myself and my choices was a feeling that, while it kept me in my comfort zone, left me unhappy with my choices, yet somehow, I did not know that right away. First, it was necessary to connect with my inner self, to seek my roots. I found that I always knew that I had to change, that despite all the family support I had, I needed to go far away to experience independence that I would not be able to get back home. Incredible as it may seem, even when I was just in the process of writing the letters and applying for the U.S. visa, I felt that sparkle return and I started to feel alive again.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, at first, like the whole world, I did not quite understand the seriousness of the situation. Then the cases started to spread very quickly, and Brazil and the US decided to adopt the measures of lockdown and social distancing. Along with all the documents I was collecting to be an international student, letters from professors, and scheduling a visa interview, there was also concern for my family and my health. Little was known about COVID-19, but it was being said that it was a more harmful virus for the elderly and those who already had health problems. My grandparents had health problems, as well as my parents, yet the population still did not quite understand what the consequences of COVID-19 were. It was terrifying when the first death happened and the cases were spreading so quickly. It did not take long for Brazil to be one of the countries with the most deaths from COVID-19 in the world, ironically second only to the U.S.: "United States - Confirmed Cases 103,802,702 Deaths 1,123,836 // Brazil Confirmed Cases 37,076,053 Deaths 699,276" (Hopkins). During this period, in addition to seeing my dream of studying what I really loved sinking, the consulate where I would do my interview for an American student visa closed in addition to the US closing its borders to anyone coming from Brazil. I was still following the lockdown indoors with my family while my sister was working on the front line of COVID-19. We could not visit my

grandparents, my friends or do anything to improve the situation, and I saw my mental health deteriorating more and more.

During the horror movie that we experienced in 2020, seeing the record of deaths reach 1,000 people a day in Brazil, it was a privilege not to lose any family members. Unfortunately, a friend from work had her life interrupted. Time was passing while I was trying to determine what my next plans would be in Brazil since the borders remained closed for a long time. I got a job in technology, but I still could not connect with that job and felt like I needed more. To be honest, there were no predictions of when the borders would reopen and with everything that was going on I was numb; I did not believe it would be possible to come and experience the MAICD program anytime soon.

But things happen on their time, and I believe that God has a plan for everything. Time passed and the vaccine became a reality and this allowed businesses to gradually reopen, people to meet again. Almost eight months after the date I was supposed to have started my program in 2020, I received another email from Northwest University to reapply for the 2021 class. I went to research the American consulate in Brazil and the news was that it would reopen soon, as well as the U.S. borders. When the consulate finally started scheduling visa interviews again, the demand was so high that the site often went down, and getting an appointment was very difficult, but I never gave up. One day I woke up at dawn, around 3 am and I decided in a moment of insomnia to check my cellphone, and I saw a message within a group I had of people who were in the same situation as me, Brazilians who were trying to get their student visa but because of the lockdown and the pandemic were not able to go. The message I saw in the group said that some new appointments were opened at the consulate in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, and to my

surprise there was an appointment in two weeks, in another state, where I would have to go by plane, but I did not think twice and scheduled that one visa interview.

My visa was approved and a short time later I was flying to the U.S. as a student. I cannot explain the emotion of waiting more than a year to follow my dream, after the intense feelings of having gone through a pandemic. Kuenkel states in her book, "We are here to support one another to grow, to develop, to thrive - or something simple to survive" (114). I would not have made it if it were not for the mutual support among colleagues who were in the same situation. Even before starting the MAICD program, these values began to develop in me and they certainly became stronger during my journey.

### Social Justice

Social justice is a well-known tool for us community developers. In my view, being socially fair means considering all the consequences for everyone involved in a situation and seeking equity among people of all classes, genders, orientations, and the environment. A too little talked about topic of social justice in my opinion is the feelings that knowledge can generate. It is very shocking and even frightening when we learn the consequences of some of our small acts, which for years or a lifetime we believed were innocent acts. Clawson makes it very clear in this sentence: "Acting just every day means developing awareness about the problems in the world; it means changing how we shop, how we dress and how we drive; it means starting to see our each and every action as an ethical choice" (14). It is a full-time job to be fair in all our attitudes and actions, and many times this can leave us overwhelmed. In addition to that, Clawson also reminds us that "The pain and suffering in this world are immense, as are the many systemic injustices that perpetuate cultures of poverty and oppression". It is not possible to compare our feelings of guilt with the social injustice that others suffer, but it is also

not accurate to blame ourselves for all the injustices because we are individuals, and as was said, social injustice is a systemic problem. I had the opportunity to learn about social justice in many opportunities during this program, firstly taking the class "Culture Studies," because my final work was with the Haitian community in Seattle and I was able to understand the context and the problems they were facing at the time. I also have had the opportunity to apply these terms in another context, which is with my Brazilian community.

Social justice is often accompanied by the word reconciliation, which before this program I understood as something related to forgiveness - which is not wrong - but today I understand that it goes much deeper. Brenda Salter McNeil defines very well what understanding is like if we go deep into the word: "Reconciliation is about how to relate even after forgiveness and justice have occurred. It is about how to delve even deeper into a relationship with one another" (25). This reading invited me not to stay on the superficiality of reconciliation but to go deeper, where there really is a need for study and improvement within communities. Brenda also says, "Reconciliation is possible only if we approach it primarily as a spiritual process that requires a posture of hope in the reconciling work of Christ and a commitment from the church to both be and proclaim this type of reconciled community" (26). This shows us how none of this is new to us because what she is trying to tell us has already been said thousands of years ago in the bible.

Social justice is applied daily in my life, whether doing interviews with the Brazilian community or going to school to learn about new perspectives. What I consider most important about this topic is to preserve good intentions and be aware of our actions, in addition to remembering how the bible already brought us the words of Christ with all this reasoned context.

## Copowerment

Doctor Inslee describes "copowerment: a dynamic of mutual exchange by which both sides of a social equation are made stronger and more effective by the other" (1). In other words, a sustainable environment, where one side can be empowered by the other, and I can say with certainty that this was one of the values that I had the opportunity to observe and apply both in my journey in the program and in my thesis, and which I will take to my professional life.

All the classes were exceptional in content and I learned a lot from them, but the experience, the discussions with my colleagues, the field classes, the observations, the interviews, and the moments we shared are my greatest examples of copowerment. In my mind, my class was very blessed to have so many people with different backgrounds and life stories. This allowed us to have very interesting debates and learn lifelong lessons. Getting feedback from my friends and building a relationship with them inside and outside the classroom is a clear example of this dynamic. I learned a lot from them and from their different perceptions of life and experiences, and I believe that I could also contribute to their formation.

## Philosophy of Service

My philosophy of service I believe was changed and developed in some major ways that helped to transform me, and I will name some of the main ones. First, the importance of humanizing the people who are by our side. I know it sounds obvious when we talk about humanity in a community and social development course, but for me it came from a key turning point when, in the Community Development classes, Professor Kristy, for a few minutes before the class, was interested in knowing about our lives outside the university. In my second week of classes at Northwest, I had just moved from Brazil to Seattle, I still did not know anyone in my class, and my psychology was not very aligned with all the change, I missed my family and



friends. At the same time, my grandmother died in Brazil. It is very difficult to lose someone important in your life, but it gets even more complicated when you are not around. In that class, I remember Kristy asking us how we were feeling in person, one by one, and when it was my turn I broke down and shared what had happened through tears. I confess that when she asked the question, I got angry because I did not want to share something personal with people I did not know and I thought of saying that everything was fine with me just to change the subject. But when it was my turn to talk I did not think, I just said what I was feeling and I felt much better afterwards. That moment also gave me the opportunity to get closer to and get to know my colleagues.

Another point I would like to take to my professional life is to continue to improve my relationship with children. For some reason, everywhere I worked, I always ended up going into the sector related to children, and I believe that somehow my professional focus will also be in that area. The subject Children Poverty and Development made me develop new perspectives in relation to that issue. "Adversity, especially in early childhood, has a powerful effect on the development of the intricate stress-response network within each of us that links together the brain, the immune system, and the endocrine system" (Tough 14). It is not fair for a human being to have to heal in the future because of a phase of life that first, should be the most fun and best of your life and second, for reasons that were caused by other people, namely those who have the responsibility to care for and provide for them. Taking care of children is taking care of the future; it is developing human beings with emotional intelligence and discernment, and not human beings who need to heal wounds caused by others and, consequently, vent their frustration on the world.

## Conclusion

The MAICD program allowed me to learn, develop, apply, and rediscover values. This happened through books, experiences, classes, connections, and intuitive learning. Recognizing my privilege for having come this far, I am very grateful for having been able to expand my perception of the world; two years ago, I can say that my perception was much more limited.

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## APPENDIX A

### Project Proposal

The implementation of a strategic plan for a new nonprofit -Brazilian Community Services- in the Seattle area whose main objective is to facilitate the life of Brazilian immigrants in the region was what actually originated this thesis. In the next pages of this paper, we will analyze in detail the process of this journey and see the context in which Brazilians live in Seattle, the situation in which Brazil currently finds itself, the reasons that brought Brazilians here to Seattle, the biggest challenges they face and also the challenges for BCS. I will make clear why it was not actually possible to implement a strategic plan at the time this thesis was written, and why it is important to implement one for BCS in the future.

As soon as I got to know Videira Church and BCS, and started to consider it a possibility for my thesis, I met with my professor and thesis advisor Brian Humphreys for a conversation to brainstorm about the possible main points and topics that could become the thesis. We came to the conclusion that it would be ideal to compose a strategic plan together with the board members because this organization is in its infancy and has many dreams to achieve. Yes, in theory, it sounded much more practical and easy than we could imagine, but the reality was that many unforeseen events happened. All the people involved in this non-profit, as well as in the vast majority of other non-profits, are also busy with other businesses, problems, jobs, and personal lives, including myself. It became more and more difficult to synchronize our calendars for meetings, and the time to write the thesis was running out. That is when I realized that I really did not have time to develop a strategic plan with them. I had to meet once again with my Professor Brian to discuss the next step and a new plan. I realized that it would not work to actually create and execute a strategic plan and we came to the conclusion that the ideal thing

would be to talk about my experience as a volunteer, my observations, and the importance of a strategic plan for BCS.

Chairing, directing, working, and being part of the board of a nonprofit is a demanding job like any other. It requires time, study, planning, sacrifices, and entrepreneurship. In the case of nonprofits, social entrepreneurship. It is common for people to assume that non-profits do not need the level of organization that other companies need, but I would say that it is even more complicated because non-profits are places where people are usually putting their passions and hearts into the business, which makes it difficult to separate work from personal life. David Bornstein and Susan Davis define social entrepreneurship as "a process by which citizens build or transform institutions to advance solutions to social problems, such as poverty, illness, illiteracy, environmental destruction, human rights abuses, and corruption, in order to make life better for many" (12). These are very delicate points, which touch the wounds and vulnerabilities of many people, which makes the work of someone who deals with these problems every day even more complicated than, for example, dealing with numbers, codes, and graphics. Of course, it is work that will often be rewarding when you can see the fruits of it, but the challenges are also exhausting and discouraging, such as lack of resources, lack of collaborators and partners, difficulty in raising funds, and having more demand than your ability to serve the public offers.

Non-profit organizations have a tendency, especially when they are starting, to try to embrace too many topics and thereby lose focus. Spreading resources and knowledge in many areas is a characteristic that will make it difficult to develop skills in a specific area, weakening performance and positive results. All these factors together make it a challenge to attract donors, who are often looking for a specific cause to support. The lack of focus still makes it increasingly challenging to create a good relationship with employees and volunteers, who will feel

overwhelmed or neglected, as they do not have specific jobs and positions and assigned tasks. It is of vital importance that regardless of the size of the organization, a strategic and business plan is made so that the direction and focus are not forgotten. Harley emphasizes the importance of a strategic plan and explains that it is a vision for the future, usually for the next three years, which consists of several analysis factors. He highlights some such as observing other agencies that offer competing services. He also commented on four main reasons for nonprofits to include a strategic plan: 1. To coordinate their activities; 2. To ensure that the future is taken into account; 3. To be rational, and 4. To control (Harley). Particularly, I think it is important to also add the following points: delegation of tasks and priorities. So, just to review and clarify, this thesis started with a proposal to develop a strategic plan for the BCS, but with the setbacks, deadline, and lack of quality time to actually develop the strategic plan, it was observed that the best thing at the moment would be an analysis of BCS with observations, as well as pointing out the importance of developing a strategic plan, which may happen in the future.

The literature offers some different analyses of strategic plans and their approaches. For example, to develop a strong and reliable strategic plan, you first need to do a few points analysis. Now the rubber hits the road. You have clarified your mission and values and have drafted a vision of success. [...] This step can be as simple as evaluating the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats involved with all programs (SWOT analysis) and making adjustments (Allison and Kaye). Although another author uses one of the words differently, the meaning for this first phase of strategic plan development remains the same. The internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization are identified, along with the organization's external opportunities and challenges (or threats). The analysis of these four elements, known by the acronym SWOC/T, is very useful in clarifying the conditions or situations within which the

organization operates (D. Masilamony). In summary, the literature believes that, at first, it is important that a thorough analysis be made of these points and from there, one can start with the steps of building effective strategic planning.

If the organization is ready for the strategic planning process, the next step in the process is to revisit the organization's mission and vision statements. In order to conduct an effective organizational analysis, organizations should have a clear mission, vision, and value statements (Allison). Organizations that do not have a mission must create one. And organizations that have a mission must clarify it, and, if necessary, make changes to existing plans in order to respond to the changes in the environment (Masilamony). As we can see referring to the literature, the definition of a mission is essential for the process to occur more clearly. In my meetings with the board members and in my interview with Reginaldo DeJesus (board member and treasurer), I had the opportunity to clarify what was the mission of BCS so that in the future, when we can finally elaborate our strategic plan, it can be as direct and clear as possible. Reginaldo DeJesus said "Brazilian Community Services exist to be a Facilitator for the Brazilian immigrant community in the PNW to integrate them into American society. Our goal is to be a cultural navigator, advocate, and to inspire with love and compassion for our people to build a better tomorrow." Having a well-defined mission, we can now go back to analyzing the literature on the step-by-step implementation of the strategic plan and better guide this thesis.

The literature brings up important points on how the implementation actually connects what was planned with the action. Implementation is the process of ensuring that strategy is embodied in all that an organization does. The objective of implementation is to create connections between strategic objectives and the organization's daily activities (Hamermesh). Let's agree that putting together a strategic plan for a company, even more so when we are

talking about nonprofits. is not an easy task, and putting it into practice also poses difficulties. It is very important that the entire team is in tune and understands the importance of the organization's mission and objectives.

I also had the opportunity to interview Lidiane DaCosta, who is the executive director of Brace, a Brazilian American Center located in the state of Massachusetts. I thought it would be interesting to talk to someone who already has years of experience in the field of assisting Brazilian immigrants. Lidiane told me about the importance of building good partnerships, which Reginaldo also mentioned. Reginaldo told me that BCS started in the environment of the Videira Church because at the beginning of the pandemic when many people were experiencing many difficulties, Brazilian immigrants started looking for the pastor of the church to ask for help. Without yet having resources and without understanding how to help, the pastor got in touch with Reginaldo who had influence in the region. Reginaldo started to participate in online webinars about non-profit organizations to better understand how the process worked, and that is when that he learned about organizations that donated food, known as the foodbank, organizations that helped pregnant women, organizations that helped with health insurance, organizations that gave financial help, and so on. I particularly find it interesting to intertwine these two interviews because in some topics, the same message was said by these two different people on opposite sides of the US, just in different words. Another point that I found interesting and even funny about what they said was about the need to adapt the foods that the food banks sent for distribution. The food banks sent a lot of canned food, which is not common in the Brazilian diet. When the Brazilian immigrant picked up his basket of food that came from the foodbank, he did not know what to do with peanut butter, canned beans, and jelly. "The "Traditional meal" pattern carried more rice, beans, meat, roots and tubers, pasta, vegetables, and



eggs. The “typical Brazilian breakfast/tea” pattern carried more fresh bread, margarine, milk, cheese and butter” (Andrade et al.). Both Reginaldo and Lidiane expressed how important it was to talk to the food bank suppliers so that a change could be made when delivering food to the Brazilian community to meet the requirements of immigrants. It is clear to me how cooking and feeding people is also a political act, as I learned from reading "Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation: International Case Studies and Practice" where Banks quotes "how powerful food could be as a tool to unify people. Why would you think food has this influence?" (Banks 20). Food and meals are very important in Brazilian culture. Food is a basic human need, but cooking for someone is seen as an act of affection and care by Brazilians. Coming from a collectivist culture, I personally know how meaningful mealtimes are and the impact of food on affective memories when you live outside your place of birth. That is why it is important for food banks to learn to adapt when dealing with foreign communities. In this case, both Reginaldo and Liliane had no problems in communicating this need for different foods to the food banks, as they themselves listened to the appeals very carefully and made an effort to modify the items that were sent.

During our program, Professor Kristy Humphreys presented us with the content of the Theory of Change and Logic Model, and at some point in my interview with Lidiane Costa, she made it clear to me how important it is for the organization to always have clear objectives, as well as to know why we are doing what we do, and this part of the interview made me remember that class. A Theory of Change (ToC) comprises a sequence of causal steps that describe how an intervention is expected to produce certain outputs and outcomes. These steps often include what inputs will be used, which activities will be conducted, what outputs will be produced, and, finally, what outcomes are expected to be achieved through this process, i.e., what "change" is

expected to happen. According to the Aspen Institute, the Theory of Change (ToC) can be understood as a tool to facilitate the development of solutions to complex social problems. A ToC is generally presented in graphic form, as a diagram, showing the connections between interventions and outcomes (causal pathways) while explicitly stating assumptions and related evidence (Romão) So, with the help of the practice we had to do in the Mid-Term project on choosing a social problem and a project that would be the solution to this problem, I put together what would be a theory of change for the execution of a strategic plan for BCS (see Fig. 2).

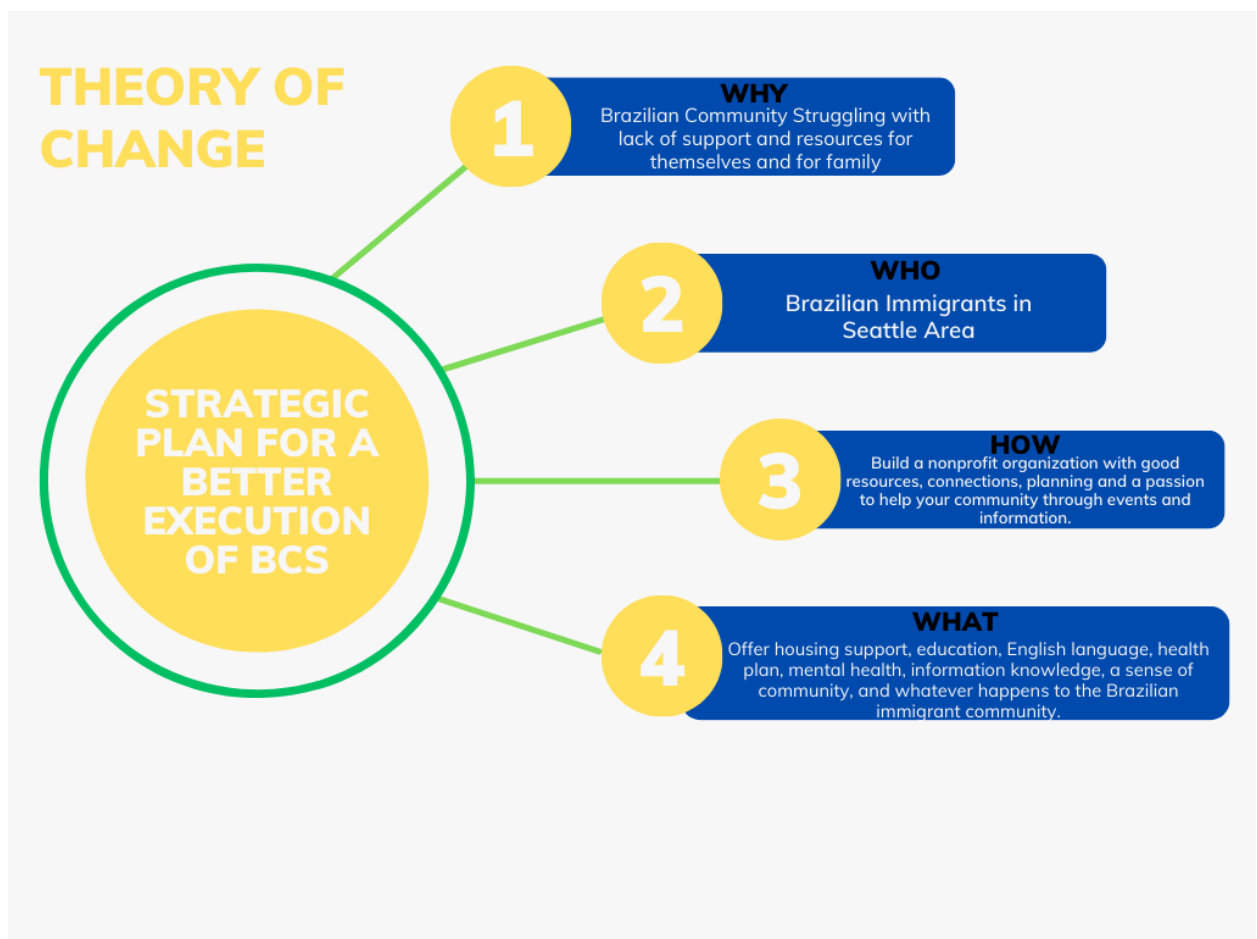


Figure 2 BCS Strategic Plan Theory of Change

Using the logic model taught in that same class, it is possible to have a clearer view of our problem and our solution. A logic model is a graphical representation of your program, from the resources (inputs) and activities that will take place, to the deliverables

(outputs) and goals (outcomes) that the program will produce (Jones). By identifying inputs and outputs and activities, the logic model provides a tool where problems and solutions can be easily identified through a well-structured framework and the construction of a graph for better visualization. Using this tool presented in class, I also created a simple model that can help BCS when the time comes to put the strategic plan into practice (see Fig 3.)

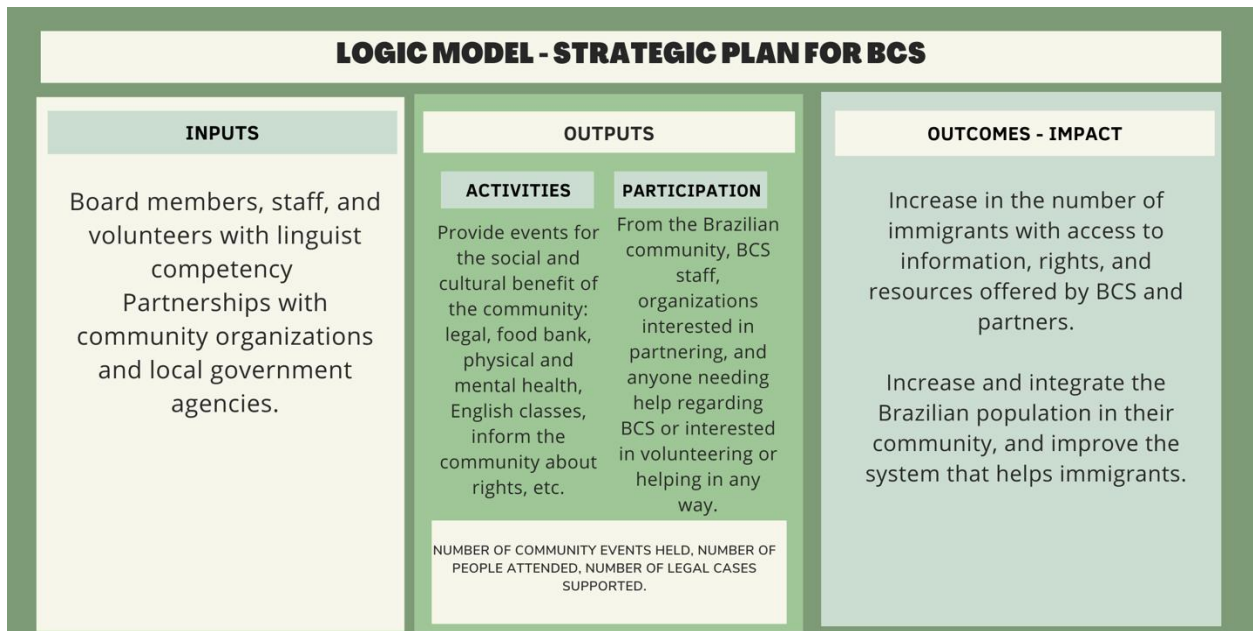


Figure 3 BCS Logic Model

### Conclusion

A well-assembled and detailed strategic plan, relying on a logic model and theory of change are tools that make the difference in building a nonprofit, thus increasing the chances of success and positive results. These tools provide a better view of where the company has come from and where the company wants to go, as well as provide better communication and interaction between board members, staff, volunteers, and donors.

## APPENDIX B

### Domestic Violence

As soon as I arrived in Seattle and found out that the place where I would live was not yet ready, I asked in the community of Brazilians if anyone had a room for rent. A girl, who I will give the fictitious name of Eduarda Dias, made her house available and we ended up becoming friends. She told me her life story and how it was arriving in the U.S. and learning to adapt. She also told me about an episode of domestic violence. Eduarda is not related to BCS an interview with her could yield good content, so I invited her to be interviewed. As Vogl says in the book *The Art of Community: Seven Principles for Belonging* about building connections from sharing vulnerabilities, "These stories build strong bonds. They may include accounts of failure, or the fears, feelings, and truths we don't want the whole world to know" (78). I agree that in addition to bringing people together, this technique allows for more honest conversations. It was in a casual conversation that I interviewed Eduarda, first telling her a little about my story and vulnerabilities so that we could connect. In addition to addressing the topic of domestic violence, this interview also serves as content for the topic of mental health. Although she had no problems adapting to American culture, Eduarda encountered some resistance in the Brazilian community when she arrived in the U.S, she told me that when she moved to the U.S., she only knew one person, a friend. This friend helped her to find her way around here, find a place to live, and find a job, but unfortunately, this person had mental health problems and had been dealing with depression for some time. This friend that helped her so much ended up committing suicide, and it was very difficult to deal with that here. She said that he was a very dear person in the Brazilian community. In addition to dealing with the loss of her only friend, she suffered repression from the community that said she was not a good friend for not helping him. With her

mental health shaken, she ended up getting into an abusive relationship. Obviously, at first, this relationship was a good one. It is a common pattern in abusive relationships: at first, they are very good, this person offered her a lot of support because she was going through a complicated situation, and it was very good for her to be able to count on someone. They got married, and their relationship was very intense and full of "Love Bombing", which years later she learned that this is an expression used to define the strategy that abusers have to bombard the victim with displays of affection and grand gestures right after showing the bad side, so she lived on an adrenaline rush that she never knew what that person's next reaction would be. Sometimes he showed a lot of affection and sometimes he was explosive and violent. At first, with words, using verbal violence, until the day the physical aggression happened. She had no doubts that she would denounce him after the assault. She went to the police station and registered the complaint and she described that she was apprehensive about going to a police station because she is an immigrant and at that moment she still did not have her documents in order but she got an excellent treatment from her first time there; they took care of her and within hours of that she found a judge in court. The police came to my house and arrested her then-husband. They put her on some tests and she hired a lawyer to help with all the paperwork. Furthermore, she still have a restraining order. She said that she struggled for two years with depression and had a hard time trusting people for a long time, but kept working every day, almost full time to keep busy. She also did therapy with a professional psychologist, and that also helped her a lot. Counseling services and medical attention were offered to her right after everything happened."

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