Research Proposal

Arts and Administration Dpt.

Concentration Area: Community Cultural Management

Evaluating organizational democracy:
Empowerment in educational and managerial practices.

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Abstract

In this study I propose a framework to assess democratic practices in organizations. The purpose is to identify actions that strengthen empowerment, examine how they are applied in the managerial and educational practices, and determine the outcomes for participants and organizational stakeholders. I will develop an assessment protocol on organizational democracy principles through an examination of peer reviewed literature and field observations. I will apply the resulting evaluation framework in a case study of the *Juventud Faceta*, - a program at the Amigos Multicultural Services Center -, and World Blu organizations that have sought to incorporate democratic practices as a core value of their organizational mission. This study will be useful on two levels: 1) in testing a formulation of criteria to examine and develop democratic practices in organizations, and 2) the construction of a piloted evaluation protocol that can be used to assess organizational characteristics, structure, and actions that yield democratic empowerment outcomes among organization constituencies and staff dedicated to these principles in action.

Key Words: community cultural development, community-based arts organization, activism, democratic practices, cultural democracy, empowerment, dialogue, group management and moderation, audience identity, organizational democracy.

Problem Statement and Significance

In this study I propose a framework for assessing and designing of democratic empowerment practices in organizations in order to investigate questions such as: Why is it important to focus on empowerment? How to identify if a certain organization is really empowering their individuals to act on their communities through their cultural expressions and manifestations? The core question in this research is: How do organizations design evaluations able to measure empowerment outcomes and the internal management in order to improve democratic practices?

If democracy means equity, inclusion, access to culture, and the same rights and responsibilities for all citizens in the same country (Goldbard & Adams, 2001)What is organizational democracy and why does it matter? What do constitute democratic practices? How do we learn them? We learn democratic practices by practicing with other people who have experience with such practices. According to Dewey: "To formulate the significance of an experience a man must take into conscious account the experiences of others." (Dewey, 1916) Then, the individual's practice in relation to others' experiences turns into an educational experience itself. If positive experiences help to promote more positive practices, an organization that pledge in their mission for individual's empowerment in a democratic basis should allow the implementation of participatory methods for all constituents and decentralized organizational management. This means that the managerial practices of a certain organization would connect with the democratic practices in the education programs and services promoted. Such relation of reciprocity would be responsible to set the language of the organization as a whole. In other words, an organization that applies a centralized organizational model will reflect the same centralization in its educational programs and services.

Empowering is also connected with promoting value and inspiring. According to Freire, education for the enhancement of critical consciousness is one way to promote value through contextual knowledge (Freire & Freire, 1973). Dale explains the sociological context in which this consciousness' awake takes place: "through increased contextual awareness and understanding how that

context shapes identity, that liberation through praxis, or reflective action, can occur."(Dale & Margison, 2010)133). From contextual awareness I understand the individuals' capacity to interpreter its world considering place, historicity and cultural value.

From the managerial point of view, empowerment goals may be reflected in the relations among staff members that comply with the organization's educational plan. This means that - through an ongoing practice within staff and constituents - educational goals for leadership practices can be followed by managers in order to produce the expected results set as the core values and objectives that the organization wants to foster. By educational goals I mean the set of learning objectives that will prepare stakeholders to work collaboratively and practice democracy. According to Freire, there is a tendency of leadership models to be based on predominant social and political models of leadership creating a cultural cycle: "traditional leadership models reinforce social and political authority" (Dale & Margison, 2010)54). This cycle, if translated to the organization's sphere, could influence on its managerial model and practices.

Organizations that are managed according to a democratic basis and mobilize efforts to follow human rights and cultural democracy principles maybe their goals are to achieve the practice of equal rights for everybody. According to Goldbard & Adams (2002), cultural democracy "is the term for a philosophy or policy emphasizing pluralism, participation, and equity within and between cultures" (Goldbard & Adams, 2002:108).

In relation to the engagement of individuals "the more deeply they participate in society's ongoing dialogue among its many different members about beliefs, values, and actions, the more likely they are to experience a growing sense of community, and democracy itself grows" (Martin, 2002)ix). Martin (2002) also paraphrases Dewey to emphasize that the more intelligent the participation of all individuals of a certain community the more democratic this community will be. Then, when actions are dialogically guided to increase active participation and decision making in an administrative level of an arts organization, there are chances to increase the responsibility of its individuals in managing such group in a way that addresses the needs of the community.

Although I have seen democratic initiatives in management structures like in the World Blu organization, for example. The majority of the organizations are still impregnated by a top-down managerial model (Fenton, 2006). The lack of concrete experiences in real life situations and the excessive lecture-based education model deprives individuals from meaningful experiences (Finkel, 2000). In many cases the decisions of a minority group still prevails over the 'silence' of a larger group of people. According to Goodman, Dewey's ideas are still a challenge because they remain more in theoretical than in practical applications in an everyday basis in educational systems (Goodman, 1963).

Conceptual Framework

The paradigm of democratic practices

In this research I will focus on education theorists who analyzed democracy as a group of practices to promote social welfare as means to engage individuals and promote change in societies. Many different practitioners and researchers have recognized and practiced democracy in their lives (Dewey et al., 1904; Finkel & Arney, 1995; Freire, 1967). They developed the basis for rethinking community development, educational reform and critical thinking. They inspire movements throughout different knowledge fields and research based on their documented practices and contributions in the educational and philosophical fields. The literature about Dewey and Freire is vast. I will cite some of the original and peer-reviewed sources about their thoughts to illustrate the main focus of this investigation, as a way to understand their practices and thoughts as references to the arts administration field. According to Glass, their examples might be used as evaluation tools for arts organizations, in order to analyze their effectiveness on cultivating critical individuals who will be able to change their social environment (Glass, 2001). Dewey emphasizes the need of implementing democratic practices in contraposition of just speaking about them (Dewey et al., 1904).

I will also investigate theorists of the management field interested in organizational democracy as a solution for a successful management. Analyzing aspects of participatory management "that is based

on the ability of people to manage themselves". (Forcadell, 2005) I will be looking for case studies that have implemented "high-involvement work teams at different levels, flattened hierarchies, introduced participatory total quality and customer satisfaction initiatives". (Forcadell, 2005) (p.256).

The purpose of this research is to develop evaluation tools that might be used by arts managers to assess practices of empowerment in their organizations as well as to identify the outcomes and reflections in their communities.

The art of empowering in managerial and educational practices

Human relations and actions are permeated by political forces reflected on communication levels, opinions and even in the lack of any action. If individuals neglect their social engagement they are neglecting their own right to participate actively, to interfere and to build their reality based on their beliefs.

No matter if empowerment strategies are developed through managerial practices in a certain organization or within members of a certain community, they will always be a matter of education, of challenging practices followed by trials and errors. In Dale's words (Dale & Margison, 2010) '"humans can, through human agency, act in ways that challenge the socially constructed reality that delimits their existential possibilities." (p. 63). Art education programs with empowering goals may use the same principle to foster critical inquire about the world based on a creative problem-solving approach. When we create aesthetic solutions for created or existing problems in collaboration with our peers we are developing solutions or processes directly related to the art making creative process. As an example, art educators may be "artisteachers" when they turn educational practices into a creative endeavor itself. Then, each connection, class and works turns into performances, art works, artistic manifestations, and creative processes. I combined the term artisteacher together in contrast to artist-teacher in order to reinforce the idea of concepts unity. Daichendt researched the origin of term "artist-teacher" as been quoted in the 50's and he defends the term as an educational philosophy where the artist-teacher will

have more chances to understand the creative processes involved in creating and consequently will have more chances to understand the learning processes involved as well as how to talk about them to their students. In other words, turning the teaching experience a creative reflexive action to foster education. (Daichendt, 2010). Education for creative development has been considered in the American educational agenda to foster creative citizens as the future protagonists of the 21st-Century Education Program (Kerry & Sthur, 2004). This initiative is aligned to the idea of the creative economy as a potential source for economic development in the future. According to UN report on Creative Economy (2008) the cultural sector has been growing in recognition in the global economy and is already responsible for generating income, jobs and social wealth for many communities.

For Goldbard, "The arts allow us to imagine how the world could be different. …Quality involves the project leader's willingness to take risks and create partnerships that don't result in easy dialogues, real border-crossing. And they give a lot of credibility to the ideas participants are bringing into the project and provide a lot of tools to participants, so at the end they can make a space for themselves". (Goldbard & Adams, 2001) (p.54). In relation to the managerial sector this means that arts managers also need to work together strategically in order to develop creative and inspiring managerial practices.

Freire defends the interventionist nature of human beings and attributes this capacity to the human need to promote change and search for better life conditions (Freire, 1967). According to him when individuals are deprived of their freedom of choice and action they tend to adapt and accommodate, nonetheless sacrificing their creative capacity. Then, the endeavor for humanization is frightened by oppressive forces in the name of a false freedom.

While oppression continues (Freire, 1967). ..tanto mais se sente forçado a conformar sua conduta à expectativa alheia . Apesar de seu disfarce de iniciativa e otimismo, o homem moderno está

esmagado por um profundo sentimento de impotência... (p.44)...acomodado às prescrições alheias que ainda acredita serem opções suas.[1]

At the organization, the development of education for democratic practices might be a routine among the group's leaders/staff and reflect on the community they serve. The reflections may represent the way the organization relates with community members by allowing a broader participation for feedback, dialogue and partnerships as well as through offered programming and services.

The role of arts administrators

The role of arts administrators in advocating for social inclusion and capacity building is very important in managing arts organizations. Arts managers may promote inclusion or exclusion of constituencies according to the way they understand the importance of their social political whole in society (Newman, McLean, & Urquhart, 2005).

While evaluating arts organizations arts managers need to formulate tools to measure outcomes and report data qualitatively and quantitatively (Daponte, 2008). They need to verify if their empowerment goals have been effective through analyzing the actions of their constituents within their communities, as well as their level of motivation, engagement, initiative and pro activity.

The role of arts organizations

Many organizations are created to attend the needs or demands of a certain community. Among nonprofit or charitable organizations these needs lacks clarity sometimes.

Charitable organizations might have among their main stated goal to improve the life quality of their constituencies. Therefore arts organizations might have a charitable purpose to achieve the same goal through education. Often times, mismanagement leads these organizations toward an

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[1] [...the more the individual will feel compelled to adjust his/her conduct to other's expectation. Despite the optimistic disguise translated by an apparent motivation the modern man is crunched by its feeling of disempowerment... adjusted to other's prescriptions that he/she still believes are his/her choices].(Freire, 1967).(p.45).

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"assistencialista" type of service. An "assistencialista" type of organization means that the organization is embedded with an aid-charity type of management that influences their internal managerial practices. As Freire observed, there is a tendency that the actions performed by these type of organizations, especially in the Brazilian context, adopt an anti-dialogical type of relation with their audiences (Freire, 1967). Many charity-based organizations still generate more dependency then sustainable capacity by underestimating individuals' capacities to have active voice or power to create their own possibilities of change. The dependency relation can be easily identified when individuals' voices are not reflected and represented by an organization. These environments are characterized by an imposed silence and passivity and, by the lack of conditions to develop the critical consciousness that is necessary to implement democracy. Consequently, these types of organization perpetuate a paternalistic model instead of empowering individuals to search for their economic self-sufficiency, power of mobilization and autonomy.

At this point when we are talking about managerial and democratic practices within a certain organization we need also to inquire about the goal of the art organization that we are investigating. By understanding the goal of the organization we will understand the importance or weight it attributes to empowerment. Many charitable or political organizations use culture and education to practice charity or politics most of the time focused on political and social outcomes rather than on aesthetic concerns.

On the other hand [in contrast], many arts organizations use art education to engage the communities in creative actions that might help or not to improve social life. When managing an organization the creative and artistic component may be present in order to produce social change or to innovate. As an example of this type of perspective is the American initiative 21st Century Education Program (Kerry & Sthur, 2004). The initiative proposes a review in the education system in order to prepare the students to the competitive global market based on the development of skills such as: collaborative work, critical thinking and creativity. Another project that is engaging art education projects and communities in the US, is the "Animating democracy" program from Americans for the Arts organization (Bacon, 2010). The outcomes from such initiatives might contribute to cultivate

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diverse groups to live and work in a global community through the development of an engaging political art and civic practices.

A local example that will be the subject of this study is the *Juventud Faceta* (JF) group. I am looking for cultural organizations which main mission is based on democratic practices for individual empowerment and I got to know the JF coordinator who manages this youth group here in Eugene. Their focus is on identity empowerment and leadership training. I want to observe and document how they lead with democratic practices while working as a team and when making decisions.

The *Juventud Faceta* 's mission emphasizes that their main goals are to ensure a safe place for self development of personal abilities through educating and empowering youth to participate actively in the communities in order to preserve and to strength the Latino cultural diverse heritage. In Spanish, they state their mission: "Juventud Faceta se ha comprometido a proporcionar a los jóvenes alternativas de crecimiento, un lugar seguro donde puedan desarrollar los valores sociales, culturales y familirares en un ambiente de solidaridad."(Cortez, 2010)

Through their mission I want to understand what are the goals related to the terms: "alternativas de crecimiento" as, alternatives for growth and "desarollar los valores sociales, culturales y familiars" as, to develop social, cultural and family values. I want to understand in details their plan to achieve these goals, how they implement plans and what cultural and social values they aim to develop.

Cultural Democracy

The ideal of democracy is in a common sense pledged as something already established and conquered by a "Democratic government". In the media, at schools and work we hear that we live in a democratic society. Although a democratic system seems to be more complex than that, it is built within a group of practices in everyday life between people and society and the relations established between them and the organizations they make part of.

Culture is built by human beings who have the right to live, create and share culture, and to transmit their knowledge to other generations. The exploitation of human beings is common in the

liberal economic practices. It is an oppressive practice and a contradiction that neglect the principle of cultural democracy.

Cultural democracy is a need of democratic systems. If community centers work to ensure political representation, a community cultural center would broaden the power of mobilization of the community centers and promote a series of benefits through cultural expression (Goldbard & Adams, 2001).

The following questions are not intended to take direct part on this research they are posed here just to illustrate and to be taken into account when analyzing the meaning of cultural democracy in what concerns the right to access culture and to create: By the constitution we have the right of working eight hours a day. However, the capitalist system makes this right looks ironic in our daily lives. How can we keep up with the competitive market demands if we work only for eight hours a day? In fact, most of us are working more than 10 hours. Which laws do protect us against work overload? What is the role of cultural leaders and individuals to ensure the right of culture and leisure in society? How do we create time to practice this right in a daily basis, participating actively in the decisions and aspirations planned within our community centers, schools, administration leaders and other organizations? Is the enhancement of life quality, through leisure activities, an outcome indicator for audiences and staff, served by an organization?

Preliminary Research Question

My aim is to explore and describe democratic practices in management and how they are essential to implement community participation and civic engagement. I want to identify the outcomes of an organization that recognizes the importance to address social issues and to encourage change through cultural manifestations and political engagement. I will look for evaluation criteria and principles to inform an evaluation design. This search translated as an inquiry would be: What are the criteria to evaluate democratic practices of empowerment and their outcomes in arts organizations in

their educational and managerial practices?

I want to contribute with the implementation of organizational democracy in order to improve the quality of community participation in organizations. The idea is to develop an evaluation tool to identify practices and how to use the tool to evaluate programs and enhance them to better serve the goals and mission of an organization in service of their community. The case study will create opportunities to observe existing practices and principles and understand their dynamics.

Other sub-questions are embedded in my investigation: What is the role of arts organizations in building their communities? Are they empowering individual's to promote change in society? Are they contributing to nurture critical thinkers or manipulative/ domesticated masses? How to identify and change anti-democratic practices that are repelling the ample community engagement? What characterizes an exceptional model organization that promotes democratic managerial practices?

In what depth are the groups *Juventud Faceta* and World Blu working to engage their audiences in important leadership positions within the organization, communities and in the decision making processes that go beyond the engagement in the organization's activities?

I will analyze outcomes, impacts, data, issues, solutions and practices that promote the social welfare. I will have to decide in which part of the managerial structure I would focus on, based on the ideas of this research.

Methodological Paradigm

The goal of this research is to document a case study supported by a theoretical framework and field work in a balance with practical applications of assessment in the field. The application of this study and the model presented as an evaluation tool might serve as a reference for arts managers who need to develop their own evaluation tools in order to better serve the needs of their organizations.

My research will be based on critical inquiry in relation to the subjectivity of different points of view and perceptions involved in the social research methods (Babbie, 2001; Neuman, 2006; Seagraves, 2009). The concepts involved in my research are issues of democratic practices that involve audience

identity, in this case the Amigos Multicultural audience, power relations, and the role of arts organizations in encouraging active citizenship, considering that Freire's active citizenship is directly related with the take of responsibilities, the recognition of political mechanisms and the claim for social justice and rights (Freire, 1998).

My role is to find relational possibilities of encouragement to go beyond social conveniences and to find alternatives to change the social scope of human relations on everyday life and organizations. I will be observing behaviors and collecting specially those that enhance positive responses toward the development of individuals who are open to accept different points-of-view and to take action toward building common goals for the benefit of all.

The social research paradigm uses socio-anthropological methods of analysis and will guide me to critically observe my study object as a participant observation. Much still needs to be done to change systemic structures of power and to implement dialogue. This topic is based on the gap between democratic ideas and democratic practices. By identifying this need and believing that change is possible I want to keep my actions and mind focused toward the implementation of democratic practices on every-day life.

Throughout the literature review process I will further the references in all identified topics, concepts and theories involving this research. With special attention to those related to the analysis and evaluation of empowering democratic practices.

I may present biases toward an institution that claims to be already reaching their goals. This bias is due to the fact that many organizations claim to be democratic when in reality, they are still crystallized in old relations of oppression, power centralization and *assistencialismo*[2].

As a Latin American working with the same ethnic group in the United States we will also deal with the issues related to the condition of been a minority group in a constant conflict for cross-cultural communication and integration.

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[2] Assistencialismo primarily charitable organizations

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Research Strategy & Conclusion

I want to practice democracy and to advocate for it (O`Leary, 2004) "The goal of research is to make a contribution to a field, a contribution that may influence policy and practice or will become the basis for other people's learning" (p. 12). I also want to work with an evaluation tool to assess arts organizations' empowering outcomes.

I want to align my personal learning style, as a visual and kinesthetic learner, with this project. According to O'Leary the visual learner "tend to gather data through 'sight' (O`Leary, 2004). They often think in pictures, learn best from visual displays, and take detailed notes in order to absorb information. In research visual learners often enjoy observation." (p.16) based on that, observation is my first choice as a method. As a kinesthetic learner "Tend to learn through moving, doing, and touching and enjoy a hands-on approach to exploring the world around them. Kinesthetic … often enjoy data collection and find satisfaction from engaging in action research" (O`Leary, 2004) (p. 16). My primary option is to be actively engaged with my object of research, although, due to time constraints I will have to first act as a participant observer and if the conditions allow I may further my participation level into action research.

I also identify myself as a diverger: divergers "(or reflectors) tend to use reflective observation and concrete experience and enjoy thinking about the topic. Divergers generally have excellent imaginations and are often interested in the lives and emotions of others. They often have broad cultural interests and tend to specialize in the arts" and with the "activist style tends to use concrete experience and active experimentation. Activists enjoy 'doing' and can adapt readily to new circumstances. They tend to solve problems intuitively and rely on others for information" (O`Leary, 2004).

I am also concerned about learning in real life situations to better envision the applicability of the research because of that I consider myself a "Deep learner: enjoy the search for meaning. They are often good at linking learning to experience and have an ability to integrate new knowledge with prior

studies. In research, they generally look at problem situations holistically and can be eclectic in their methodologies" (O`Leary, 2004)(p. 17).

I visited and contacted the organizations *Amigos Multicultural* and World Blu to decide if they would be feasible subjects to approach and work with. On the next step, I will analyze their practices and collect data through previously designed research instruments. I will use interview, survey, observation, photography, audio and video recording. Then, I will analyze the collected data and interpret the organization's outcomes, through pre designed indicators. The evaluation design will be based on the Outcome-based or logic model from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA, 2010), using participatory observation and action research to design the assessments criteria. Through engaging in fieldwork I will be able to adapt the evaluation approach that better suits the case study and achieve the goals of this research (Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 2004).

I will also study the paradigms of the cultural democracy to understand the meaning of democracy through the perspective of cultural workers and theorists.(Giroux, 1992) and organizational democracy to understand the implications of this model on the social behavior of the people involved in the organization (Weber, Unterrainer, & Schmid, 2009). My data collection will focus on elements such as: speeches translated through testimonials, interviews, ideas expressed through art works, events and meetings; observation of actions translated into political and civic engagement, "attempting to details such as finding resources, finding accountable sources and first of all using the topic or research question as main tool to start research" (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2008) and keep the focus. Also as methods I will keep reports, based on O'Leary 's orientation to report observations "A research journal is a tool to keep track of ideas, to manage the process, include observations and notes on a massive and theory, lists of relevant contacts, notes/reminders to yourself, concept maps and etc." (O`Leary, 2004).

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Timeline

Based on my academic plan I will finish my masters' degree program by the Fall term of 2011 or by Winter term on 2012.

tasks	Aug 2010	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2011	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Preliminary reading	X																
Literature review	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
Finalize research question		X															
Develop methodological plan (methodology and methods)		X	X	X													
Ethics proposal			X														
Data collection										X	X						
Data analysis										x	X	x					
Write Preliminary draft												X	X				
Write final draft													X	X	X		
Final reviews																X	X
Graduation formal procedures															X	X	X

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