

# Forming insights: assessment of the occupational therapy practice in a cultural context from experience with indigenous people

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**Abstract:** This article is the result of a reflection process on the issue of *occupational therapy and culture* through analysis of practical experiences of an extension project. It aimed to increase knowledge and reflections of occupational therapy and its technical actions in cultural contexts from the perspective of ethnicity issues. It is a documental, and qualitative research was aiming to report the experience of students and an occupational therapist, obtained through their written reports between 2012 and 2014. Data were analyzed using the categorizations proposed by Bardin. The categories of analysis found are related to technical activities in occupational therapy, namely: cultural and ethnic action. The results showed that, in the experiences of the Guarani community, there are already significant and consolidated actions of occupational therapy in cultural contexts. The technical actions already performed confirm the relevance of the occupational therapist role in the cultural context and the ethnicity context. These practices are, in turn, relevant for the production of knowledge, the theoretical and methodological scope and professional training in social and cultural contexts of occupational therapy. It is emphasized that technical procedures coherent with the ethnicity issues in a mutual relationship, articulated by cultural mediation, can strengthen human doings and identity claims.

**Keywords:** *Occupational Therapy, Professional Practice, Culture, Ethnic Groups, Indigenous Population.*

## Olhares em formação: refletindo a prática da terapia ocupacional em um contexto cultural a partir de experiências com povos indígenas

**Resumo:** O presente artigo resulta de um processo de reflexão acerca da temática *terapia ocupacional e cultura*, através da análise das experiências práticas de um projeto de extensão. Objetivou-se aprofundar os conhecimentos da terapia ocupacional em contextos culturais e as ações técnicas do terapeuta ocupacional neste âmbito, à luz das questões de etnicidade. Trata-se de uma pesquisa documental e qualitativa. O objeto de análise foram os relatos de experiência dos extensionistas e da técnica de terapia ocupacional, coletados por meio dos seus relatórios escritos entre 2012 e 2014. Para análise dos dados, utilizaram-se as categorizações propostas por Bardin. As categorias de análise encontradas dizem respeito às ações técnicas em terapia ocupacional, intituladas *ação cultural* e *ação étnica*. Os resultados demonstraram que, nas experiências realizadas junto à comunidade Guarani, existem ações relevantes e consolidadas da terapia ocupacional neste contexto. As ações técnicas exercidas ratificam a relevância do papel do terapeuta ocupacional nos contextos culturais e na esfera da etnicidade. Essas práticas, por conseguinte, são pertinentes para a produção de conhecimento e para a formação teórico-metodológica e profissional em terapia ocupacional social e contextos culturais. Destaca-se que procedimentos técnicos coerentes com as questões de etnicidade, numa relação conjunta e transversal, articulados pela mediação cultural, podem fortalecer os fazeres humanos e as afirmações identitárias.

**Palavras-chave:** *Terapia Ocupacional, Prática Profissional, Cultura, Grupos Étnicos, População Indígena.*

## 1 Introduction

This article is the result of a reflection process that UFES Core Metuia<sup>1</sup> project has been carrying on the *occupational therapy and culture* theme. This Core, created in 2014 through the articulation of three main Extension<sup>2</sup> projects coordinated by professors of the social area of the occupational therapy course has contributed to the theoretical, methodological and social, vocational training in occupational therapy.

The project “Occupational Therapy and Guarani youth people of Espírito Santo: dialogues and cultural workshops” aims to create interventions against an intercultural conflicts environment, from the inclusion of occupational therapy students in the Guarani village Três Palmeiras in the city of Aracruz, located in Espírito Santo coast, 83 km far from the capital, Vitória.

This project was a pioneer in the extension of social, occupational therapy at the Federal University of Espírito Santo - UFES and began in 2011, from studies about the needs of young people in Guarani villages. Their actions include a significant number of students who circulate in the project, with a differential cultural approach.

In this scenario, the debates around the cultural contexts and occupational therapy were becoming frequent in the group of professors and extension workers on the project and other universities professors. In 2013, the Federal University of Espírito Santo, in partnership with the Technical Camera in Social Contexts of Crefito<sup>2</sup> promoted the *First Meeting of Occupational Therapy and cultural diversity* in the Aracruz Guarani village -ES.

In 2014, from the proposition of “work plan post-doctoral internship” of the occupational therapist Patricia Dorneles, the project participated in one of conversation rounds<sup>3</sup> in occupational therapy and culture in the Brazilian academic and professional setting. This meeting aimed at exchanging experiences, dissemination and mapping “[...] of actions and occupational therapists interfaces working in dialogue with actions and policies of cultural diversity [...]” (DORNELES, 2014).

From this perspective, the objective of this study is to articulate and deepen - through reports of extension students and a design technique in the village - the theoretical and methodological knowledge of occupational therapy in cultural contexts. It is sought to uncover the ethnicity and culture issues, and its relationship with the technical

actions of the occupational therapist, performed by the Guarani people.

It was decided to make a brief history of social, occupational therapy and its relationship to the cultural contexts, as well as the extension project and the Guarani people to support data analysis and discussion.

### 1.1 The constitution of the social field of occupational therapy and the way in the cultural contexts

In the constitution of occupational therapy, according to Morrison, Olivares and Vidal (2011), the epistemological beginning of the profession occurred in the late nineteenth century and was based on theoretical foundations of right treatment, pragmatic philosophy and movement arts and crafts, consolidating in a model called Pre-paradigm of the Occupation. In the following years, occupational therapists used the occupation as promotion, treatment and restoration agents. However, based on the logical new positivism, the concept of science reduced to variables and dichotomies, the profession sought its legitimacy in the biomedical sciences, under the Mechanistic Paradigm, based on the health-disease dichotomy.

In the period between modernity and postmodernity, the authors point that consolidation of the Occupation Paradigm occurred. At this time, the initial foundations of the profession were returned, focused on the occupation principle, and began strengthening the Occupation Science, although still be characterized as a phenomenon of individual and subjective approach. Today, the so-called Social Occupation Paradigm already considers the occupation as a systemic, complex economic, political, health, cultural, social and consistent phenomenon with justice and well-being of communities, and inserted into something bigger, that would be the Complexity Paradigm, based on theories of Edgar Morin (MORIN, 1998). In this scenario, the Social Occupational Therapy is understood while an acting field because:

Community TO or Social TO, are examples of this paradigm, differentiating them (qualitative) of these previous practices of the profession and appear in the scientific community as recognized and as necessary for the current society. Something similar occurs with the “political” TO, assuming the role y professional practice leading to policies decisions inherent to the occupational therapists, as well as interventions developing

citizenship aspects centered on human rights [...] (MORRISON; OLIVARES; VIDAL, 2011, p. 113).

In Brazil, the Social Occupational Therapy is constituted as a field, in the midst of social changes due to the democratization process, which began in late 1970. Some occupational therapists, aware of the social movements and immersed in a process of reflection about social reality and their professional practice, noted that their actions had a political and social commitment, searching to “[...] participate in social action projects and so far distant institutions of their interests [...]” (BARROS; GHIRARDI; LOPES, 2002, p. 97).

Occupational therapists began to discuss not only the possibility to inhabit different institutions, such as the logic of these spaces<sup>4</sup>. They began to question the fields, the object and methods of operation, leading to the greater relevance of discussion related to the profession core. It is requested that the technical action would exceed the tight spaces and seek to weave actions that consider the individual and collective identities, and contemplating the complexity of life in the community.

Thus, the social field is established with specific demands and populations with whom the occupational therapy was able to collaborate and contribute to the framework of knowledge that held about the mediation of human doing and know-how (BARROS, 2004). The intervention of the occupational therapist started to be as

[...] Social spaces of cultural and relational negotiation, of production or facilitation of the person's participation in the collective life, in the development of life projects and the sense of belonging and cannot be understood through separations and disjunctions [...] (BARROS, 2004, p. 92)

To that end, new theoretical frameworks were sought, “[...] to review the concepts of employment, work, and activity [...]” (BARROS; GHIRARDI; LOPES, 2002, p. 100), and to think about development methodologies approaches that allow to monitor individuals and collectives in their historicity and their contexts as well as to understand their socio-cultural relationships.

From this perspective, the socio-anthropological knowledge became embedded by occupational therapists, and the concept of citizenship has become the guiding principle of the practice of these professionals. On the professional actions, there was no denying the coexistence of multiple diversities

in the Brazilian territory, demanding ways to work multiculturalism and differences.

From this context, social, occupational therapy began to interact and enjoy two concepts valued by anthropology: the notions of culture and otherness, taking them with the concept of citizenship as potentiating instruments and articulators of their interventions (BARROS, 2004; BARROS; LOPES; GALHEIGO, 2007a).

At first, occupational therapists used the concept of culture<sup>5</sup> to interpret more clearly “the meanings attributed to things and relationships” that made up the daily lives of individuals and groups who accompanied them (BARROS; LOPES; GALHEIGO, 2007a, p. 352). The intent was that not only the differences were understood, but also, a means of dialogue could be built, so that the knowledge becomes shared and users of services, in otherness relationships with the professional experience so more democratic intervention, with horizontal, dialogic and citizenship relationships.

In Brazil, according to Fernandes (2010, p. 38), the culture appears in the constitutional papers primarily by reference, from 1934, as the “[...] protection of the sciences, the arts, and culture in general [...].” In 1988, “[...] the Constitution speaks for the first time on cultural rights, in Article 215, which establishes cultural rights in the category of fundamental human rights [...]”, and rules that the State would ensure full enjoyment of these rights. Gonh clarifies that the field of cultural rights is responsible for:

[...] Themes, issues, and problems related to the multiple dimensions of the human being such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age groups, nationalities. It also covers the product and the work produced by these human beings in their social relationships [...]; artistic expression, local cultural and folklore, regional and national; teaching and learning practices; sports and leisure. The field of cultural rights also enters the mode and daily lifestyle [...] (GONH, 2008 apud FERNANDES, 2010, p. 38).

Thus, the debate on culture was also registered in the democratization process in Brazil and contributed to social changes. Concerning the occupational therapy and its approach to cultural contexts, Dorneles points out on the site ‘Occupational Therapy and Culture’, that:

The cross-sectoral experience lived in the building process of occupational therapy in the social field in the 1990s enhanced the approach

to a professional practice area next to cultural activities. These actions usually associated with art workshops projects were found initially in programs contexts located in welfare policies, where art and culture were placed in the perspective of social development. Although still fragile, there is an approach of some initiatives of occupational therapy in the field of art and culture identified on the list of cultural policies. It is worth mentioning here that in the same period in which it questioned the entire institutions, public policies on culture also went through an art process of deinstitutionalization, the artist and their cultural institutions (DORNELES, 2014).

Some occupational therapists have shown the importance of cultural issue for occupational therapy, as Brunello (1991), Barros, Ghirardi and Lopes (1999), Barbosa (2010), Dorneles (2011), Barros (2004), Barros, Almeida and Vecchia (2007), Barros, Lopes and Galheigo (2007b), Galvani and Barros (2010), Silva and Carraro (2014), and many other studies as well as those who believe in their professional practices. Besides that:

It has become imperative for the occupational therapist to develop culturally relevant activities to understand how the most valued activities are perceived in the community and how they are articulated in key symbols that form identities. It is required, then, to the occupational therapist the ability to make interventions consistent with specific local cultures, a fact that determines a break with standard actions by pre-established technical procedures. The other is the relational notion (otherness), built on dialogue (BARROS; ALMEIDA; VECCHIA, 2007, p. 132).

However, there are occupational therapists already active in several articulated contexts also the different cultural groups and communities. Being that:

The occupational therapist in various contexts (MACEDO, 2010; COSTA, 2008; COSTA; FAGUNDES, 2010; REDE MOCAMBOS, 2008; PONTES, 2011; COSTA; ALVARENGA; ALVARENGA, 2007; FUNDAÇÃO..., 2004), has been an important contributor to the discussion and articulation of proposals produced within these communities, constituting occupation of augmentation strategies (in both directions already shown) as a social right [...] (COSTA, 2012, p. 52).

It is noted the importance of the foundations of social, occupational therapy for the construction of

actions and content in cultural contexts, given the understanding that, in the Brazilian scenario there are

[...] Identities of various matrices (European, Indian, African, Asian) with the intensifying issue of differences (cultural, class, gender, age, and race) and inequalities that require new ways of working [...] (BARROS; ALMEIDA; VECCHIA, 2007, p. 129).

However, it is necessary to advance the debate and the buildings on the role of the occupational therapist in cultural contexts, so that professional practices are consistent and relevant to the people demanding.

Therefore, this study proposes to include the dynamics of ethnicity in theoretical and methodological contributions of cultural contexts in occupational therapy, realizing that, when referring to questions of ethnicity, the existence of intrinsic and specific issues that make up this sphere, in which emerge factors inherent in the social organization of difference<sup>6</sup>. It is suggested that ethnicity

[...] refers to aspects of relationships between groups who consider themselves as distinct. From the interaction, the ethnic identification process is constructed in a contrastive way, that is, the "affirmation of us before others" (CARDOSO DE OLIVEIRA, 1976, p. 5). So from Barth (1969), cultural differences acquire an ethnic element not as a unique way of life and typically characteristic of a group, but when cultural differences are perceived as important and socially relevant to the social actors [...] (O'DWYER, 2005, p. 95).

## 1.2 Contextualizing the field of study: a brief history<sup>7</sup> of the Guarani people and the extension project in cultural contexts

Guarani people are one of the largest indigenous populations found in Brazil. According to IBGE census (INSTITUTO..., 2010), they self-reported more than 67,000 Guarani in Brazil. They are divided into subgroups: the Guarani-Ñandeva, the Guarani-Kayowá, and the Guarani-Mbyá, who have linguistic differences in the ritual practices, customs and political and religious organization (INSTITUTO..., 2015).

Thinking about the history of the Guarani in Espírito Santo, we can report that, according to Ciccarone (2001), the Guarani-Mbyá arrived at Espírito Santo in mid-1960. Currently, they are in Caieiras Velhas, Aracruz region. However, their

long career was motivated by several causes such as religious revelation, land conflicts, internal conflicts in the villages, forced labor on farms, the death of relatives and exploitation for tourism.

According to Pellon (2008), the Mbyá of Aracruz lived for the last four decades under strong territorial confinement in a region where there are more four Tupiniquim villages, three urban districts, three state highways and the old multinational Aracruz Celulose - currently named FIBRIA. This is the largest producer of bleached pulp in the world and includes extensive areas of eucalyptus monoculture to a manufacturing facility, and a seaport dedicated to export their products. In 2007, according to the author, a land dispute finished that has gained international visibility by widely publicized in the media that the Indians were an obstacle to regional economic development.

The extension project "Occupational Therapy and the Guarani young people of the Espírito Santo: dialogues and cultural workshops", initiated in 2011, is located in the context presented, and it is closely linked to the needs of young people and strengthened by an ethnic cutout of Guarani-Mbyá subgroup. The proposal aims at the questioning of identity, socialization and interaction issues among Guarani young people, Tupinikim village of Aracruz and other Guarani communities. To do so, it is based on the performance of procedures, as groups and activities workshops, community activities and individual follow-ups with the children and young people.

As for the instruments and resources, theater, dance, design, games, community meetings, task forces for the physical organization of territorial space were highlighted, and multimedia resources and materials produced by the Indians, such as documentaries, texts, and blogs. Thus, thematic discussions spaces of youth people with ethnic and cut on emancipation processes, citizenship, and cultural appreciation have been provided.

The aim of working on multimedia resources in the workshops is justified by the ability to maintain access to information and exchange of experiences with many different ethnic groups, and they can produce their criticism and analysis of their contexts. The constant contact in the city with various influences and different intercultural dialogue has not been conducive to dynamic young ethnic or echo and voice to deepen their roots and identity claims.

It is worth noting that although the project is aimed at first to Guarani youth people, there was a significant approach to children to activities in 2013 and 2014. Thus, demands for the public and

actions aimed at them through the workshops of fun and games, which, as resources, aimed to work the need for children of identity experimentation and cultural expression of the community in everyday life, through self-expression.

Cultural workshops were established by research conducted among young people in 2011. The main objective of the first meeting was to meet young people from the village and the activities they would like to accomplish, and personal and community motivations. Then, there were numerous meetings, allowing greater interaction between community and university. In addition, the project has become a reference to young people when they needed individual follow-ups in personal matters, such as enrolling to take college entrance, choice of university courses, flows in the labor market and collective demands, such as making joint efforts, events and community inclusion in ProJovem Project of the Ministry of Labor and Employment<sup>8</sup>.

## 2 Methodology

This is a documentary research to deepen the knowledge of occupational therapy in cultural contexts. According to Silva et al. (2009), this research methodology allows investigating a given social reality from documents produced by humanity, which, in the perspective of Bravo, they are productions documents in which man shows

[...] Evidence of their action that may reveal their ideas, opinions and ways of acting and living. In this conception, it is possible to identify various types of documents: written; numerical or statistical data; sound and image reproduction; and [...] object documents (BRAVO, 1991 apud SILVA et al., 2009, p. 4556).

Therefore, data approach was qualitatively characterized by the understanding of the word that expresses the speech, letting the researcher explore and reflect the participants are talking to bring out their meaning (LANDIM et al., 2006).

To this end, it was started with the understanding that the extension activity, from the perspective of Paulo Freire, can - and should - sign beyond the welfare character, playing a key role in communication between the University and society (RODRIGUES, 1999). Thus, the extension projects are likely to unfold in the search field, developing studies involving both the community to which the offer extension activities such as professors, students, and technician participating in the process of practice.

From this perspective, the participation of students in the project concerns both the programming and execution of extension activities as the registration of experiences and actions taken in the Guarani village, through written reports, photographs, videos, media dissemination, among others, contributing therefore, to build its own database of Metuia core and then the production of field research and extension practices.

The group of extension students always varied in number and time of training. Initially, there were three students from the fifth period, but with the project dissemination strategies, it began to have involvement in the project eight to 20 students, especially those who were in the fourth period, when they performed social, occupational therapy subject. Also, there were students from other courses participation, such as social science, biology, communication, law, and history. However, for this study, the analysis will be carried out only with reports of students and technique of occupational therapy.

Thus, this study used written reports of project participants as raw data to get the account of the experiences of analysis. It is noteworthy that, although the extension project of the experiments is taking place since 2011, the reports used are between 2012 and 2014. Therefore, for this study, we considered some experience reports that stood out the relevance to the discussion of the role of occupational therapy in cultural contexts with the indigenous peoples.

As for the processing and analysis of qualitative data, they occurred through the content analysis proposed by Bardin (2011), since it allows the researcher to discover the way of communication since the presence or frequency of these unveils relevant meanings to achieve objective proposed by the research. The raw data were treated in an attempt to be validated so that researchers perform inferences and interpretations based on theories initially elected and could conclude.

The analysis categories found are related to technical action in occupational therapy and entitled: Cultural action and ethnic action.

### **3 Extension project in cultural contexts: reflections on the technical action of the occupational therapist with indigenous peoples**

In this scenario of legitimizing labor fields of Occupational Therapy, as a result of the active and reflexive movement of occupational therapists in the

social area to secure it as a certain area of operation, Resolution 383 of 22 December 2010 was approved, by the Federal Council of Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy (COFFITO, 2010).

To define the “competence of occupational therapists in Social Contexts” and offer “other measures”, Resolution 383, in two of its paragraphs points occupational therapist assignments to Sociocultural Context:

[...] Art. 5 The occupational therapist as part of his activities, accompanied the individual and his family to the knowledge of their occupational and participatory history in the community to develop socio-cultural and economic membership strategies, environmental and urban planning adaptations, mobility, accessibility and other supporting technologies for socio-communitarian inclusion.

[...] Art. 10 The occupational therapist as part of its activities, working social field with people, families and groups in immigration status, displacement, asylum or refuge through activities such as social and occupational mediation technology to strengthen and/or to develop support networks and emotional exchanges, economic and information, developing strategies of socio-cultural and economic membership, environmental adaptations, organization of everyday life, the construction of life projects, accessibility and other supporting technologies for socio-communitarian inclusion and favoring intercultural dialogue (CONSELHO..., 2010).

Before these articles, it is noted that the legitimacy of an acting field permeates many spheres which concern not only to instruments<sup>9</sup> and resources used in professional practices but also to the *fundamentals of technical interventions, the articulating principles of interventions and technical procedures* performed by occupational therapists. All these epistemological domains form the basis for occupational therapists to develop their interventions more closely to the realities and accompanied contexts.

It is noteworthy that the epistemological field does not occur disconnected because, otherwise, their areas are in constant dialogue and interdependent. Thus, this study presents the reflections made on the grounds of technical interventions in cultural contexts, that is, technical actions, understood as a set of propositions that guide practices for materialization of the intervention. These foundations offer in the

reality, here as cultural, elements to create policy alternatives.

From the results, there will be also mentioned briefly, but not least, some organizers principles, procedures and intervention instruments that stood out and permeated the technical activities, also contributing to their formulations.

Thus, the two categories given below, based on cultural and ethnic actions, discuss the technical actions under which the cultural intervention can be based while approaching occupational therapist.

### 3.1 Technical Action of the occupational therapist in cultural contexts: cultural action

According to Geertz (1989), culture can be understood as a web of meanings that human groups establish among themselves and with nature, about the ways of life, about customs, beliefs and identities. Accordingly, Sahlins (1997) presents the culture as the unique ability of the human species of both ordering and disordering the world, in symbolic terms, to name and distinguish the organization of “human experience” and “human action” through its values and meanings. Barth (2005) confirms such understandings pointing that culture refers, therefore, to man’s learning forms through their human experiences and productions that learning generates.

From this perspective, cultural action in occupational therapy is understood as relevant actions to the cultural contexts of individuals, seeking to understand the forms of symbolic organization of experiences and human actions, and forms of learning groups as well as the construction of differences between groups concerning their ways of life and their relationships. Thus, the cultural action is also related to the needs of cultural groups in artistic expression, language, gender issues, age issues and economic issues.

The cultural action demands the occupational therapist his availability for the encounter with the other, for in uniqueness and belonging, being possible to identify identities and their meanings. However, in extension practice, while the students were placed in the process of meeting with indigenous children and youth people also performed discoveries about themselves, their limits and strangeness. Every technical action and encounter, new situations had surprised the students how to read symbols of another ethnic groups, understand their cosmologies, or even the new meanings.

*Another very cool exchange that took place that day was to be able to meet the great artist Guarani, and the various stories and meanings of its life, its people its works in 3D, and the beautiful meaning of its tattoo made with natural and thorn colors. The symbol of the Guarani, the tips and their representations (shaman, shaman’s wife), the warriors, the forest and in the center the meaning of its name, given to it in a ritual [...] (Extensionist G).*

At this juncture, the *otherness* - unique ability to recognize the human condition on the other, considering their own and distinctions characteristics - played the role of articulating principle, providing dialogue that would identify individual and collective needs and the strangeness.

Thus, from the relationships of otherness, it is possible to establish an intercultural dialogue, and especially the *cultural negotiation* strategies essential to the practice of cultural action. For the extensionist ‘D’, the cultural negotiation is procedural and, through it, it succeeded in establishing knowledge exchange. According to the student, “although resistant at first, then young people interacted and participated, suggesting new ideas, which gave us know their likes and thought of meaningful activities for them.”

With living in Guarani every day and from the cultural activities undertaken by the project, it was possible to identify the adaptations, transformations, and reinterpretation of doings. In a report, the student ‘E1 said, “[...] *my first shock occurred when confronted me with the use of technology (DVD, video game, mobile phone, the internet) in a community which I imagined to be traditional [...].*”

However, it is observed in the student’s words, some estrangement from reality due to the stereotype of traditional and cultural immutability that makes up the popular imagination about traditional people. Of this stereotypical view, Costa (2012) emphasizes the need to have clarity that traditions are changing and that the possibility of change and development are a right because culture is a process and not a static condition in time and space. Without this understanding, certain cultures, especially of indigenous people and traditional communities, sometimes are transformed into the cultural heritage of humanity. This causes alienation and maintenance of inequality, masked under the heading of multiculturalism, on the grounds of preserving a tradition, which is not a right guaranteed to be different, but a process of exclusion.

Thus, in cultural action, it is aimed not to reduce cultural differences in fixed, important traits of human nature. However, understanding the actions of the subject turns to his form of sign in the spaces and relationships, as noted in the report of the student 'G':

*It was assigned to me, along with other students, going to the kitchen and help the village women to cook. [...] That was when I began my process of putting the lens/glasses of the other. Indigenous women, at least, the village of Três Palmeiras, unlike not indigenous women, speak little while cooking, just enough, even when there are many of them. The timing of the conversation happens outside the kitchen while smoking their pipes and leaving the preparations in the fire, appearing from time to time to see if everything is going well. When the food is ready, they are who prepare dishes from other people in the village, handing them so that no one other than her need to go into the kitchen, only children [...] (Extensionist G).*

Accordingly, Hannerz (1997) points out that polymorphous cultural flows have been increasingly experienced, in which it becomes difficult to identify a culture as belonging to a restricted location, because culture is not just an immutable inheritance, but a process suffering transformations from the experiences of the people, of which elements are subtracted and added prior to continuing being transmitted. Their histories, experiences, social networks and tastes shape people as cultural beings, there is not necessarily a totalitarian group identity but shared ideas and discontinuities.

*I discovered through dialogue with a young Guarani that hunting is used to obtain food. However, it is carried out in a balanced way, respecting the laws of nature and the opportune times for hunting each species. [...] The same young man led us to the residence of the Shaman, who built his house with harvested bamboo and cut by himself. Different from my culture, the work is valued and time is not an enemy. [...] It was explained to us that there are shamans responsible for the production of drugs, all natural, and others responsible for spirituality. Every night the Guarani gather in the prayer house for sacred rites. There, they receive guidance, healing and away evil spirits. The young man has a long history in sports, practicing soccer in the village every Saturday, [...] sometimes basketball and volleyball. In addition to these sports, it keeps indigenous tradition through weekly workshops of archery, blowgun, and spear. There are also singing workshops and dances promoted by the Guarani culture [...] (Extensionist E).*

This dialogue between the extensionist and the young people exemplifies to be Guarani is not necessarily possessing an isolated culture. At times, there are some stemmed symbols grown up of this ethnic identity, giving cultural continuity of its tradition, but these symbols do not exhaust the ideas and skills that one acquires in their life histories (BARTH, 2005).

From this perspective, the cultural action becomes relevant in cultural contexts, since it aims to advance the understanding of the set of symbols and interactions, and the distribution of meanings and meaningful ways that provide distinctions between groups seeking the occupational therapist to recognize the other in their capacity as the other, deconstructing the stereotype that culture is static. Therefore, the focus of cultural action is the relationship of otherness, complemented by intercultural dialogue and cultural negotiation, helping to raise awareness of the look and practices of an occupational therapist to get him to think about the various spheres that make up the cultural contexts.

### 3.2 Technical action of the occupational therapist in cultural contexts: ethnic action

It starts with the conceptions of culture based on Geertz (1989), Sahlin (1997) and Barth (2005), for the apprehension of the concept of ethnicity (BARTH, 2005). Ethnicity is the way how ethnic groups are organized socially through their ethnic belonging, about how their relationships and forms of interactions are made, but not with the eyes on the fixed location of their culture, but their flow and counter-flow, their productions and reproductions.

Thus, it is considered that although the cultural actions can be performed with different groups by occupational therapy in cultural contexts, the dynamics of the social organization of ethnic groups is also proposed to ethnic action - specific actions related to ethnic groups and the dynamics of ethnicity -. Since, in the social organization and ethnic belonging process, problems may arise from various orders relating to power relationships between cultures, such as domination, prejudice, racism, hierarchy and learning experiences, the own spatial/territorial organization, the environmental aspects or even in the field of negotiations on more porous or fluid ethnic boundaries.

It is understood that an action does not exclude the other, but the distinction is necessary because the culture is done in the broader context of interactions



and ethnic issues in specific contexts and determined by their ethnic groups. From this perspective, ethnic actions are the actions conducted with ethnic groups - groups that have characteristics in their social organization, territorial, and language and from their ethnic identities, performing interactions, negotiations, self-differences - both for mediation of cultural conflicts and reframing their identity in ethnic boundaries.

The extension project live experiences observing the demands and needs arising in the process of organization and social differentiation of Guarani people. Among the experiences, there is an experience that occurred in 2014, when the project was involved in the mediation of intercultural dialogue for the implementation of ProJovem Worker Program - Ministry of Labor and Employment program developed in partnership with municipalities and state governments - which it aims to prepare young people for the labor market and as an alternative form of income. Young people between 18 and 29 years old could participate, who were unemployed and who were members of families with a minimum wage per capita income.

At first, it might be considered that the implementation of ProJovem in Guarani villages lived up to the National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities (PNPCT), established in 2007 by the Decree 6040 of the Federal Government, which provides to ensure the inclusion of people and traditional communities in the programs, services and equipment from other policies, considering local characteristics, respecting the culture and right to diversity (cultural, social, productive, environmental and relational). However, it was possible to realize the non-recognition of Brazil's cultural diversity, as the report of an extensionist:

*[...] There was the opportunity to participate in a meeting with representatives of the villages (Guarani and Tupinikim) for clarification of the purpose of ProJovem worker program. [...] Every village would have a different course as they reported difficulties of mobility among villages (since the program does not contemplate transportation vouchers) and the communication language was a complicating factor. [...] The course chosen by the chief Guarani to be offered was the wood and furniture, and, at least, it would take 20 people and a maximum of 30. During the course lasting six months, all applicants will receive a scholarship, snack, educational material, and a shirt. Moreover, for them to do the course, they should complete a registration form and attach the copy of the basic identification documents, and all this within a*

*short period. [...] Some questions arise, such as the snack being offered. It is an industrialized snack, which the chief did not like [...]. Another issue to be given is about the materials available that are not facing a demand and reality of that village, but that somehow it seemed quite flexible as the chances of some adjustments for that context, and finally the question of how they would fill that role so small square and make photocopies of documents from one day to the other practically? I felt deeply touched at that moment and realized clearly the problem of the representative of the village with that question faced. I realized that we could articulate and help resolve this problem. At that moment, I felt I could speak, although it is not as safe as the possibility of trying to articulate with the project this mediation, ventured to try and guess was accepted by all involved. So we made all the necessary contacts and agreed to return [...]* (Extensionist G).

It is observed that the ProJovem worker program did not consider local characteristics, as recommended by the PNPCT, for example, the youth aged by the Guarani people, their relationship with work and also family constitutions. Also, the subject of the course (wood and furniture) in preparation for the work that ProJovem offered and snack that provides to the participants did not fit with the cultural practices of Guarani people. Similarly, the Guarani expressed some difficulties in completing their registration, which required the manipulation and understanding of a language, and handling equipment to which they were unaccustomed. As claimed by Costa (2012), in practice there are social policies in a standardized Brazil considered uniform and that often disregards the cultural specificities.

In this sense, there is also the report of extensionist 'G', as proposition for intercultural conflict situations, the articulation of ethnic action to the dynamics of ethnicity to methodologically, based on Barth (2005), starting actions with the conflicting groups by points and common issues gradually expand them through the exploitation of shared issues and overcoming ethnic boundaries, with different landmarks, focusing on the continuity of cultural diversity.

Then, it was relevant the *cultural mediation* during the planning meeting, while ethnic action strategy of the occupational therapist, since it helped the agency of intercultural and interethnic dialogue to promote the exchange of information among those involved (the Guarani community, the Tupiniquim community, teachers and community agents of ProJovem program), so that the program could be implemented in the village.

Another important issue appears in the role of the Guarani, who carefully criticized the current format and with the support of occupational therapy also negotiated adjustments and restatements of the course structure. The Tupiniquim did not present demands, claiming that they could adapt to what was being asked. From this day, the link between the extensionist and the population of the villages was further narrowed by promoting dialogues that do express the expectations and perspectives that had regarding ProJovem worker program and allowing to help in this process.

*Our group of trainees and extensionist attended the enrollment of young people in Aracruz Guarani Communities in Projovem worker program. It was a rich time in that occupational therapy can mediate relationships and intercultural contracts so that the community could assume the leading role in the exercise of citizenship. Because of this process, we had the opportunity to experience the relationships, activities and everyday roles of a community day (considering that we usually participate in the activities that take place on Saturday - the day of the friendlier week on leisure activities). At the same time, in the Cultural Center computer lab in the village Três Palmeiras, we explained to the young Guarani how the form of Projovem needed to be filled. Together we copied documents, and we talked about the registration data, the Portuguese were translated to Guarani and Guarani gave access to project understanding. There was no overlap, but equality in difference! We felt the dynamics of the process of (re) building cultural lived by the Guarani people and some of its resonance. In the evening the young Guarani, beyond the filled forms, they assumed about their rights in an emancipatory action and they even were managing subscriptions. If we could summarize the day in words, there was: Respect, Gratitude, Community Action, Intercultural Dialogue, Solidarity, which together tell a little of that Otherness relationship we seek to build, there is not guided by the instantaneous, but rather a continuous and deep process of mutual affectation [...]* (Voluntary Technician).

It is noticed, in the reports of the 'voluntary technician,' that the intervention of occupational therapy by ethnic action provided the negotiation between those involved in ProJovem registration and young people, resulting in intercultural and interethnic dialogue, and for the settlement of differences. Thus, through the exchange of knowledge, it was possible that they build their roles, contributing to the process of social emancipation and cultural citizenship exercise.

In the social and cultural context, the action of the occupational therapist is taken as a conflict mediation strategy so that, through social, cultural and ethnic actions, they promote rearrangements and balances, since the

[...] conflict notion emerges from the interaction and raises disagreements, antagonisms both interest and perception. There are conflicts in relationships between individuals and groups, and conflicts inherent in social, political and economic organizations [...] (BARROS; LOPES; GALHEIGO, 2007a, p. 351.).

In community activities and the activities of the workshop, intercultural negotiations enabled to better understand the territory of the village and the daily life of the Guarani and Tupiniquim, their ethnic identities and possible demands for ethnic actions, such as creating a space for tourism and disclosure the local culture, and the questioning of drug use.

*We also propose to young people to show us the village, the places they liked to go, what they liked to do. We knew the theme village, place at the edge of Piraqueaçu river, which a short film about the Guarani culture was already recorded, it is very pleasant, from the perspective of becoming community a place for visits and traditional activities [...]* (Extensionist A).

*As our time is different from their time, we did not have to challenge or propose changes in that routine. However, we glimpse the opportunity to talk to a tupiniquim Indian, who was present that day for a meeting, and then the demands have emerged, for example, the issue of mediation of conflicts between the indigenous culture of tupiniquins and drugs [...]* (Extensionist G).

Through the experiences of the students, it was observed that they had critical views of the action in this field and provided relevant considerations for technical activities, for training, combining theoretical and methodological frameworks relevant to the cultural contexts of occupational therapy with the indigenous peoples.

Even like this, it is seen that the performance in cultural contexts demand even new theoretical and methodological contributions that need further development and analysis, although there are actions already happening and they demonstrate the essential role of the occupational therapist in these contexts.

## 4 Final considerations

The historical course of occupational therapy in the social and cultural context urges us to think about the debate about the epistemological field of the profession and to propose contributions in this area, which is under constant construction and reformulation.

In the cultural context presented, it is observed that interventions happened from the experience of the ways of being and doing the other, the everyday sharing and the relationships with the other.

Among the procedures performed, the activity workshop, community activities and follow-ups have developed as a space of creation and construction, in which students exercised relationships of otherness, understanding of technical action in cultural contexts and activities as cultural mediation to the achievement of objectives, such as identity affirmation.

The development of new methodologies for occupational therapy practices continue to search for consistent readings with the socio-cultural realities are feasible, with individuals and groups following, confirming their ethical commitment and their cultural and ethnic action.

Thus, it is evident that the technical actions and procedures carried out by an occupational therapist in cultural contexts, when consistent with the questions of ethnicity, in a joint and cross-relationship, and articulated by the cultural mediation, can strengthen human doings.

Therefore, we believe that the professional practice of occupational therapist should qualitatively and with ethical, political and technical commitment respond to the demands of indigenous people and jointly develop strategies and effective actions in this context. For this, it is understood that further studies and theoretical and practical interrelations should happen during the first years of training of occupational therapist, stimulating learning from new perspectives.

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## Author's Contributions

Maria Daniela Macedo and Amabile Neves were responsible for data collection, reflection, analysis and writing ideas. Giovanna Bardi and Gustavo Monzeli were responsible for ideas review and Vinícius Mota collaborated with data collection for the article. All the authors approved the final version of the text.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Metuia Project is constituted in 1998 in three São Paulo universities (USP, UFSCar, and PUC-São Paulo) as an interagency group with teaching, research and extension actions in defense of citizenship of populations in rupture processes of social support networks (BARROS; LOPES; GALHEIGO, 2007b). Currently, four cores are active: the core of the University of São Paulo (USP), the core of the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar), the core of the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP) and, more recently, the core of the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES).
- <sup>2</sup> Metuia Outreach Program - USP, has the following projects: “Occupational Therapy and Guarani youth people of Espírito Santo: dialogues and cultural workshops”, “Social occupational therapy, youth people and urban and cultural

interventions” and “Study Group on Social occupational therapy: knowledge production and training” under the coordination of Maria Daniela Corrêa de Macedo, Giovanna Bardi and Gustavo Arthur Monzeli.

- <sup>3</sup> Conversation round activity - Occupational Therapy and Culture: Contexts and Possibilities are part of the research proposal entitled “*Towards an occupational therapy in the management and cultural policy actions*”, which includes the post-doctoral internship work plan of Patricia Dorneles, held by the Research Line “Support and vulnerability networks” of the Graduate Program in Occupational Therapy, Federal University of São Carlos (PPMT/UFSCar), under the supervision of Roseli Esquerdo Lopes e Denise Dias Barros.
- <sup>4</sup> These reflections were influenced by theorists like Goffman (1974), who talk about the institutions designed to subject marginalized as total institutions, and Basaglia and Basaglia (1977, 1979), who considered violence institutions (BARROS; GHIRARDI; LOPES, 2002).
- <sup>5</sup> The culture can be understood as a set of symbols that interact with each other and interlaced they construct meanings (GEERTZ, 1989).
- <sup>6</sup> These factors are related to the distinctions between the various ethnic groups, showing differences in their ways of life, language, worldviews, ways of coping and interactions, and use of these ethnic identities to the negotiation and claim the tensions and conflicts, such as territorial case.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ethical Care*: The project has the approval of the leaders of the Guarani villages, orally and in written, for completion of the extension project with young people and children in the community, as related studies. The coordinator believes that the route built by carrying out other projects in Guarani villages, both Aracruz as Ubatuba, favored its authorization because the mutual relationship of respect has been established with the Guarani community.
- <sup>8</sup> ProJovem worker is a Ministry of Labour and Employment program, whose main objective is “to prepare young people for the labor market and income-generating alternative occupations.” According to the program legislation in the program can participate “[...] the unemployed young people between 18 and 29 years old and members of families with an income up to half minimum wage per capita” (BRASIL, 2014).
- <sup>9</sup> It is understood that for the Occupational Therapist in the social field, activities can be the instruments of intervention. They are considered as the medium that enables the contact, the technical actions and professional procedures in the fields and performance contexts.