

Original Article

# “The capitão do mato does not tell the history how it was” – reflections about occupational therapy and culture from the trajectory of Ternos de Congada<sup>1</sup>

*“O capitão do mato não conta a história como ela foi” – reflexões sobre terapia ocupacional e cultura a partir da trajetória dos Ternos de Congada*

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Occupational Therapy discusses its actions through a critical decolonial perspective based on the grounds of social justice and human rights in order to promote access to cultural production thus valuing the knowledge and practices of historically social minorities. This study proposes a follow-up to Congada which is an Afro-Brazilian artistic-cultural community. **Objective:** This study aims to understand the performance of Occupational Therapy in the culture field from the description of the trajectory of Congada as well as its political and social demands. **Method:** A qualitative study in which personal experiences were collected. The research was developed taking into consideration the data collection and was subdivided into two sets which consisted of three individual interviews recorded in audio and also in the direct event observation of Ternos de congada. **Results:** The data analysis process has generated two categories: “Ternos de Congada Daily Life, from the past to the present: Memories and its Trajectory” that describes Congada timeline through its participant’s recollections; and “Institutionalities and coloniality in the marginalization of popular culture: achievements and demands of congada groups”. **Conclusion:** The ethical-political practice of the career, when embracing artistic and cultural productions that are

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forged amid colonialism, should adopt a new epistemic posture that places marginalized groups in the central narratives. This perspective encompasses the understanding that the cultural praxis of marginalized cultural groups and communities gains political and identity features and historical memory that should be contemplated in the production of knowledge and practices in Occupational Therapy.

**Keywords:** Culture, Occupational Therapy, Social Justice.

### Resumo

**Introdução:** A terapia ocupacional, sob uma perspectiva crítica decolonial, problematiza suas ações na articulação entre justiça social e direitos humanos visando à democratização do acesso à produção cultural e valorização dos saberes, conhecimentos e práticas de grupos sociais historicamente excluídos. Propôs-se acompanhar a congada, uma manifestação artístico-cultural afro-brasileira presente na região Sudeste. **Objetivo:** Refletir sobre a atuação da terapia ocupacional no campo da cultura com base na descrição da trajetória e nas demandas políticas e sociais dos Ternos de Congada. **Método:** Estudo de abordagem qualitativa, com a utilização do método de histórias de vida. A coleta de dados consistiu na realização de entrevistas individuais registradas em áudio e observação direta dos eventos comemorativos. **Resultados:** A análise de dados gerou duas categorias: 1- “Cotidiano dos Ternos de Congada ontem e hoje: memórias e trajetórias”, que descreve o cotidiano e a trajetória dos Ternos de Congada, por meio das memórias afetivas dos participantes da pesquisa; e 2- “Institucionalidades e colonialidade na marginalização da cultura popular: conquistas e demandas dos grupos de congada”, abrangendo as relações dos grupos de Terno de Congada com o poder público local. **Conclusão:** O fazer ético-político da profissão, ao abarcar produções artístico-culturais forjadas no bojo do colonialismo, deve adotar uma nova postura epistêmica que ofereça centralidade às narrativas subalternas. Essa perspectiva abrange a compreensão de que a práxis cultural de grupos e comunidades tradicionais marginalizadas ganha contornos políticos e de identidade e memória histórica que devem ser contemplados na produção de conhecimentos e de práticas em terapia ocupacional.

**Palavras-chave:** Cultura, Terapia Ocupacional, Justiça Social.

## Introduction

Culture can be understood in a comprehensive conception, incorporated from the mid-twentieth century, as a field in which human beings elaborate symbols and signs, establish practices and values, define their possible and their impossible, the meaning from the timelines, the differences within the space, the meaning of life and death, and the relationship between the sacred and the profane (Chauí, 2009).

From this perspective, Chauí (2009, p. 57) states that “[...] each culture expresses, in a historically and materially determined way, the symbolic human order with its individuality or its structure”. However, according to the philosopher, this conception is impossible in a society that produces *cultural division*.

The field of culture is permeated by socio-historical tensions in a class society. In modernity, such tensions, largely driven by the capitalist-colonial context, produced a distinction between *popular culture and high culture*, as an important key to understanding historical and current processes of oppression, domination, and inequality (Dorneles, 2014, p. 148). From a Eurocentric perspective, the historical process of the formation of class society established a “cultural apartheid”, “[...] institutionalizing the high arts as a model of cultural expression in opposition to popular culture, less socially valued and closed to certain less favored social classes” (Dorneles, 2014, p. 148). In Brazil, historically, there is the overvaluation of European culture and the inferiorization of other cultures, especially those linked to African and Afro-Brazilian matrices. Such social values come from a historical-colonial situation that established mechanisms of control and oppression of marginalized groups.

The inferiorization of cultures linked to African matrixes is related to the historical process of slavery in the country that installed the Eurocentric colonial thought at the base of social formation. In the colonial period, economic prosperity was directly associated with the slave trade for slave labor and had the construction of the colonial imaginary as an instrument of coercion that advocated European superiority to justify the oppression of enslaved peoples (Prandi, 2000). In this way, African culture was marginally incorporated into the national culture which, in consideration of the whitening ideology, is hegemonically expressed as European, white, and Christian.

In this process, according to Prandi (2000), the black community, as a tactic of resistance, recreated religious cults in Brazil and also other aspects of African culture, which include language, cuisine, music, mystical and religious representations. Placed since the times of slavery in a situation of social vulnerability, black populations move and articulate, continually reinventing themselves in time (Pereira, 2017). These movements of resistance and re-existence of the black population establish pluralities and creativity in their daily practices, in addition to new logic and counter-hegemonic knowledge, escaping the subordination of their subjectivities imposed by the domain of modern Eurocentric rationality (Pereira, 2017).

Considering the socio-historical context in which Afro-Brazilian culture is immersed, the theory of the Decolonial Giro in Latin America stands out in this study. This theory, whose exponent is Quijano (1997) and Mignolo (2005), distinguishes coloniality from colonialism, pointing out that the concept of *coloniality* is something that transcends the particularities of historical colonialism and does not disappear with independence or decolonization. The formulation arising from this theoretical perspective is an attempt to understand modernity as a process intrinsically linked to the colonial experience. The distinction between coloniality and colonialism allows us to observe the continuity of *coloniality of power, knowledge and being* in the different political systems, even after the end of colonial administrations, since these structures of power and subordination started to be reproduced by the mechanisms of the modern colonial capitalist system-world (Quijano, 1997; Mignolo, 2005).

By defining Eurocentrism as a cognitive perspective that lasts over time, Quijano (2000) states that power constitutes a mesh of social relationships of exploitation, domination, and conflict articulated around the dispute for control of some spheres of social existence. Thus, culture and knowledge production processes reflect the power system that persists in the social fabric in visible symbolic and residual forms of exclusion

and limited access to the processes of legitimizing knowledge and actions of peoples subjected to colonial power and imagination. The devaluation of African and Afro-Brazilian culture, as well as the marginalization of the production of knowledge and its cosmovision of the world, is a consequence of the processes of coloniality of power, knowledge, and being, marginalizing the other as a subject of value and culture through a perverse and slow epistemic silencing.

Based on a critical decolonial view and considering the interconnection of the three axes of domination (capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy), we observed the need for the emergence of the *epistemologies of the South*, as proposed by sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos. The South is metaphorically conceived in this context as “[...] a field of epistemic challenges that seek to repair the damage and impacts historically caused by capitalism in its colonial relationship with the world” (Santos & Meneses, 2010, p. 12). At its base, cultural domination is also epistemological domination and historically occurs from the colonial relationship that led peoples and/or nations to the suppression or silencing of their knowledge, practices, and knowledge foreign to modern rationality.

When conceiving cultural practices of African and Afro-Brazilian matrix as part of the set of knowledge and experiences historically devalued and disqualified by the colonial logic of hegemonic Euro-Christian culture, there is a need to recognize diversity for the establishment of interculturality, valuing the knowledge and practices of colonized peoples.

Our profession has absorbed this new theoretical trend in the social sciences with productions based on a decolonial critical epistemological perspective. In the text “*Terapias Ocupacionais del Sur: demandas actuales desde una perspectiva socio-histórica*”, the authors report a movement of visibility and connection between engaged, critical occupational therapies, based on ethical and political commitment, which seek a fair and equitable society based on a relevant praxis *since, with and in* the South (Silva et al., 2019).

This ethical and political commitment, when thinking about occupational therapies in the south, is established with our peoples and populations who suffer the historical consequences and perverse effects of the intersection between colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism – and who engage in the daily struggle for a socially fair. From the perspective of interculturality, Silva et al. (2019, p. 173, 176) point out the need to promote the “[...] decolonization of occupational therapy”, and highlight that to build “[...] knowledge, practices, and epistemologies that are capable of promoting such urgent and necessary changes in our daily reality, we have to understand the processes of creation, production, and reproduction of these mechanisms of domination and exploitation”.

The process of decolonization of knowledge in occupational therapy is also possible with the observation and appreciation of traditional cultural practices - silenced or marginalized - of people who carry the historical memory of colonization, and who suffer the social consequences of this historical period in the processes of restriction of access to their social rights and a decent life.

## Occupational therapy, culture, and *Ternos de Congada*: tacking knowledge

We know that culture, in its various interconnected dimensions, is intrinsically related to the production of knowledge, organization of social life, and human activities, which are composed in different ways with neoliberal rationality. Therefore, acting against a perverse system based on this rationality demands non-alienating constructions, in practices that are politically and contextually engaged that consider culture and interculturality “[...] as action and ethical precept” (Silvestrini et al., 2019, p. 935).

Since human activities are inseparable from the sociopolitical, cultural, and affective dimension of people, groups, and communities (Barros, 2008), it is to problematize the knowledge and practices in occupational therapy based on the articulating axis of the concept of culture in consistency with the principle of social justice.

For Barros (2008), culture encompasses values, perceptions, images, forms of expression, communication, including aspects that define the identity of people, groups, and societies. In this way, culture permeates the everyday situations of individuals and groups and is permeated by the collectivity that produces it dialectically. This theme is present in different contexts of work in occupational therapy and is significant in understanding the knowledge and plural practices of the populations being monitored (França et al., 2016; Dorneles, 2014). In this scope, cultural diversity composes human activity and, as such, constitutes an object of reflection and study of occupational therapy (Caniglia, 1991; Silvestrini et al., 2019), dimensioning experiences as ways of expression and creation of affections in the constitutional fields of knowledge and production of life (Silva et al., 2017; Quarentei, 2001).

According to Gonçalves et al. (2017), occupational therapists have historically worked with art at the interface with culture, currently articulating the challenge of their practice to current cultural policies designed to meet the social demands of vulnerable populations more susceptible to the exclusionary logic of the market. Because of the being in its complexity and its demands, the profession encompasses, in its daily interventions, issues such as marginalization, social exclusion, and citizenship in a critical articulation to public policies, developing theories and social technologies in dealing with problems related to the exercise of social rights.

In this context, occupational therapists act from the appreciation of specific cultural realities, articulating cultural citizenship with the notion of social justice, from the perspective of democratizing access to the production and enjoyment of culture, as recommended in the guidelines of cultural policies in the country and the world (França et al., 2016; Dorneles, 2014).

Based on the understanding of its various dimensions - citizen, symbolic and economic - culture is also understood in the field of occupational therapy as a sign of counter-hegemonic resistance (Silvestrini et al., 2019), and should be inserted in its epistemic tension to the defense of the plurality and life of populations, peoples, and communities marginalized by the neoliberal capitalist development model.

To contribute to the discussion on occupational therapy in articulation with the field of culture and in a critical decolonial perspective, this article discusses the trajectory of the Afro-Brazilian cultural manifestation of *Congada* - and its social demands - in a city of the interior of Minas Gerais.

This manifestation of the Afro-Brazilian matrix, in the context of popular culture, is characterized as a ritual that syncretizes the coronation of black kings and the worship of Catholic saints, more commonly known as *Nossa Senhora do Rosário* and *São Benedito*, recorded in Brazil since that colonial time (Silva, 2007). With the tactic of syncretism, the adoration of Catholic saints became an alternative for the use of public and legitimate spaces of the church by black people (Silva, 2007).

In the current context, Congada, held through parties, is shown as a means of maintaining traditions and symbolically reaffirming community ties broken by the slave trade and the slave system. Thus, the commemoration of the day of *Nossa Senhora do Rosário* is particular for recreating the traditions and re-signifying the symbols of the Afro-Brazilian tradition (Silva, 2007), in which elements, images, and drawings that highlight aspects of the Catholic religion with aspects are mixed of Afro culture, characterizing religious and cultural syncretism (Fonseca & Ferreira, 2020).

This study was designed after the contact established between the researchers and a leader of the *Ternos de Congada* in the municipality, resulting in an open invitation to participate in traditional events and celebrations. Caused by contemporary discussions on art and decolonial thinking, the authors began to observe the festive event of the Ternos de Congada in the city as a traditional achievement that was significant for the black community. In this scenario, by admitting the dialogue between plural knowledge, this research aimed to reflect on the possibilities of occupational therapy in the field of culture, based on the description of the trajectory and political and social demands of the *Ternos de Congada* in Uberaba.

## Method

This is a study with a qualitative approach, using the method of life stories, which is characterized by the researcher's direct contact with the research participant, valuing the interviewees' perspective on the subject of study (Spindola & Santos, 2003).

For the development of the research, we divided the production of data into three stages:

- ✓ Direct observation of the event of *Ternos de Congada* from Uberaba, recorded in a field diary: the researchers experienced the following events: *Festa de Nossa Senhora do Rosário* (October 2016) and *Festa da Abolição da Escravatura* (May 2017). In these experiences, we established contact with research participants and carry out photographic and video recordings;
- ✓ Data collection in the Municipal Archive of Uberaba: at this stage, documentary research of materials related to the *Ternos de Congada* was carried out. We found reports from old newspapers, handouts of the chants of Congada, in addition to descriptive materials that describe the stages of the party, its symbols, and meanings;
- ✓ Semi-structured interviews, recorded in audio: after participating in the October 2016 event, one of the researchers made contact with the first research participant, who was later interviewed. The other interviews followed the nomination criteria (snowball).

The inclusion criteria for the participants were: being engaged and exercising leadership in one of the groups of *Ternos de Congada* from Uberaba; participating in the

commemorative dates that involve the *Ternos de Congada*, such as the seventh of October (*Nossa Senhora do Rosário*) and the thirteenth of May; accepting to participate in the research by obtaining free and informed consent. Three men, between 60 and 63 years old, literate, who occupies a prominent position in *Ternos de Congada* participated in the study.

Following the ethical precepts, we used fictitious names to identify the participants to guarantee their secrecy and privacy for the content of the material: Antônio, José Rosa, and Benedito. The interviews were carried out individually with each participant and were interrupted based on the data saturation criterion. In the data processing phase, the interviews were fully transcribed and cataloged according to the life history method. After the transcriptions, the textual material was analyzed by the participants, with the possibility of removing or modifying excerpts, if deemed necessary. We performed thematic content analysis (Minayo, 2001) on the textual materials produced based on field diary records and transcription of the interviews. The research participants did not suggest changes to the transcribed content.

## Results

The data analysis process resulted in two thematic categories. The first, entitled *Ternos de Congada Daily Life, from the past to the present: memories and trajectories*, describes the daily life and trajectory of Ternos de Congada, through the affective memories of the research participants. They approach the Congada through a traditionalist discourse, describing the importance of intergenerational for the oral transmission of Congada knowledge and emphasize the manifestations of prejudice in daily cultural practice. The data gathered in this category show that the historical process of marginalization of Afro-Brazilian culture is revealed with the social devaluation linked to the slavery imaginary, crossing the social relationships in the daily life of Congada groups. These memories and trajectories become points of reflection on the intervention possibilities of occupational therapy from the perspective of valuing Afro-Brazilian culture and confronting historically constructed racism and prejudice, in addition to the use of resources for individual and collective memory production aimed at enhancing traditional knowledge and practices.

The second category is entitled *Institutionalities and coloniality in the marginalization of popular culture: achievements and demands of Congada groups*, covering the relationships of the Congada groups with the local government, the achievements, social demands, and the processes of coloniality of the power and knowledge. In this sense, the research results point to the historical deprivation of social rights, the restriction of access to cultural/educational policies, and social exclusion, in addition to enabling the discussion on reparatory policies as possible instruments for reversing the mechanisms of coloniality of knowledge and confronting the epistemic silencing perpetrated by modern rationality. This category enables reflections on the role of the occupational therapist from the perspective of including racial guidelines in school, cultural rights, and social justice, and deepening knowledge about the cultural practices of marginalized and historically excluded social groups.

## Discussion

### Terno de Congada Daily Life, from the past to the present: memories and trajectories

The *Congada* ritual has a procession that goes through the streets of the city. The *Cordão de São Francisco* forms a square that delimits the space of the *congadeiros*. Men and women with outfits defined by the *Festeira* carry the *Fitão*. In the center, the *Festeira* is accompanied by the *Madrinha da Sombrinha*, dressed in a different color outfit, high-heeled shoes, and ornaments in her hair (Uberaba, 1993). All Ternos de Congada gather at the couple's barracks designated as that year's festivities and depart in procession to the church, where a celebration is held. During the party, each Ternos de Congada is characterized by colors to identify the group when it appears in uniform. The songs sung in processions generally evoke the abolition of slavery. These processions recall Africa and sing their devotions to the saints (Uberaba, 2000).

The city of Uberaba annually receives groups of *congadas* from the city and the *Triângulo Mineiro* region for the commemoration of the day of *Nossa Senhora do Rosário* and the 13<sup>th</sup> of May, marked by the abolition of slavery. The tradition of this festivity in the city is linked to the Mapuaba family that forms the oldest *Ternos de Congada*, called *Minas Brasil*. The family maintains the tradition since the liberation of the slaves when Vicente Luiz was freed. The family patriarch is responsible for identifying the Mapuaba family, as he is known as a black man who fled and entered thorny vegetation with the same name.

The *Ternos da Congada* gathered in front of the Mapuaba family's house, to sing and dance for the “thirteenth of May” festivities and for the perpetual queen of the *Rosário* celebration “*Mãe Luzia*”, as well as to salute the devotion to the saint's festivities. Then, they followed in procession through the city streets towards the Santa Terezinha Church, where they held the celebration called the “Afro Mass”. (Field Diary).

The tradition of this festivity is related to the historical process of slavery in the country and the interviewees in the survey relate this historical memory to the memory transmitted between different generations, as shown in the following excerpt:

Of the Ternos, which exist in Uberaba, half are centenary, old Ternos, since the “spoken” abolition of 88, where *congada* began in Uberaba. In 88, on the 13<sup>th</sup>, the black people from the slave quarters came out singing, dancing, having fun, playing cans and screaming, because for them it was liberation from slavery. And over time, these groups started to organize themselves [...]. The procession of the party of *Nossa Senhora do Rosário*, leaves from the barracks of the Terno do Congo of the Mapuaba family because Maria Luzia Cardoso is the matriarch, the perpetual reveler of the festivity. The “thirteenth of May” look will leave because her daughter is this year's party girl. (Benedito).



The relationship between the memory of slavery and the affective memories of the family universe means the cultural praxis of the groups of Ternos de Congada that keep the parties up to this day in the municipality, being part of the groups' daily lives. We observe the influence of the historical process in the formation of the congada also in the composition and organization of the Ternos de Congada, which follow the hierarchy of a barracks. The members that make up the group are Marshal, General, 2<sup>nd</sup> General, Brigadier General, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, Major, Captain, and Soldier. In front of the members, there is the presence of the captain guide and, behind, the guide foot, responsible for the non-dispersion of the group. Benedito, in the following speech, clarifies the relationship of the Ternos de Congada with the hierarchy of a barracks, as well as the term used to refer to the meeting place of the Ternos.

There is a hierarchy within the Ternos, placed like a barracks. Today, there are the Ternos that work in the person's home, where it is not said: “over there in mother Luzia's house”, but rather “in the Barracks of the Ternos de Congada”, as if it were a barracks there. [...] All this hierarchy is built within the Ternos through knowledge, age, those who are wiser, older are raised to the position of general. When a general dies, the one who is older, wiser, the one who is the Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel is raised to the General. (Benedito).

The *festeiros* (*party-goers*) present in full dress and wait for the procession of the Ternos, who walk in procession to the barracks door. The *Festa do Congo* takes place in the morning; in the afternoon, the Ternos gather for lunch and, in the evening, there is a gala, in which next year's *festeiros* are nominated. Benedito informs that some older Ternos de Congada value the spiritual practice based on the regency and hierarchy of ancestors who are honored during the festivities.

The party preparation process permeates the daily lives of families and groups throughout the year with the design or preparation of costumes and instruments, drum rehearsals, standard design, organization of events to raise money for costs, reservation transport, articulations with the government, among other activities. The maintenance of the tradition of the festival – which annually perpetuates the memory of slavery in the region – is therefore sustained in the daily lives of these individuals, involving a significant act that is productively staged in the dimension of the collectivity.

Costa (2012) states that occupation understood as a social right is one that collectively means and produces social meaning. Therefore, the traditional occupation can be understood as a significant practice that produces heritage (material and immaterial), characterized by work as a mediator between human beings and nature (Costa, 2012). The relationship between memory and tradition – as agglutinating elements in the significant production of the daily life of populations that engage with traditional cultural practices – can be quite powerful to think about possibilities of resources that empower these individuals in engaging these practices.

An important aspect observed is the reference to the past in connection with the maintenance of tradition. Memory passes through orality and these social actors, as we can see in the speech below, recalling the congo parties in a nostalgic way, sometimes even romanticizing the lack of infrastructure.

At the time, there was no driver to take the Ternos, buses, those things. It was all done on foot. (José Rosa).

Thus, in José Rosa's position, a traditionalist discourse can be seen, which sometimes comes close to the rhetoric of loss, negating the process of change that occurs over time, even in the face of the maintenance of traditions.

[...] and there wasn't, for example, this one, which I say was the bad thing about congada not only in Uberaba but in Brazil, this unnecessary modernization. So, this unlimited modernization, which, in my opinion, was causing the congada in our city to lose its way a little. (Antônio).

In this fragment, the notion of tradition is reinforced as an untouchable and solid element that should not change, contrasting it with the notion of modernity. According to Hall (2011), tradition must be conceived in a non-fixed way, understanding culture as an active, historical and procedural element. Culture must be understood as something alive and dynamic, which accompanies historical changes (Hall, 2011). Cultural manifestations adapt over time and tradition remains: therefore, flexibility is not synonymous with loss of identity (Luvizotto, 2010).

However, the tension of this conflict between past and present, the cultural practice takes place, enabling the intergenerational transmission to occur through the preservation of an aesthetic that crosses time (Luvizotto, 2010). According to Costa (2012, p. 50), it is necessary to remember that the traditions of a people change “[...] and it is not the movement to avoid change that guarantees the maintenance of tradition, but the right to tradition and its inevitable change”. The risk that inequality is maintained under the justification of preserving a culture must be avoided (Costa, 2012), which, in this case, would lead to the lack of infrastructure and financial resources of the *congadeira* communities to carry out the events.

With regard more specifically to tradition, the aspect of intergenerational is recurrent in the speeches of the participants, being especially related to the maintenance of congada, in a discourse that emphasizes the appreciation of knowledge passed from generation to generation:

In my family, there is congada, there is Mozambique, Umbanda terreiro, Candomblé terreiro, every part of the culture, especially the black culture, so it is preserved. There it is a heritage; you are born inside and you learn. My children already dance, my grandchildren already dance, I have 3-4-year-old grandchildren who already dance, it's a family thing, we were born into this culture. (Benedito).

Well, I was born into a congadeiro family. My grandfather was a congadeiro, my father was a congadeiro, my mother, everyone helped with the congada. (Antônio).

In this sense, Araújo & Morais (2013) highlight the relevance of this process, since the culture of a people is transmitted from generation to generation as a way to maintain their customs, values, beliefs, traditions, and conceptions of the world. Even though

tradition is not fixed in time, it follows a line between past and present, preserving in the memory of a people the historical and affective-family meanings of their cultural practices.

The phenomenon of intergenerational asserts in the everyday life, between memory and tradition, forming a terrain that settles through orality, experience, and affectivity around traditional cultural practices. These practices, being significant for this population, can be understood as a traditional occupation (Costa, 2012). In this way, corroborating Costa (2012), we believe that the occupational therapist can contribute with social technologies “[...] for the individual and collective production of memory [...] strengthening of traditional knowledge and practices, and for the strengthening of ties, networks, and movements that deal with the creation and maintenance of cultural products” (Costa, 2012, p. 52).

While making the occupational therapist's practice possible with traditional communities, the community articulation around the construction of the memory of the trajectory of their cultural practices can not only stimulate intergenerational engagement around the daily life of congada, but also stimulate that this memory can be valued in broader social circles, creating new protective relational networks for the maintenance of the traditional occupations of the congadeira community.

In this analytical category, marking the trajectories and memories around cultural practice, the manifestation of racial prejudice in the daily life of the congada is identified, which shows black culture as an expression of historical exclusion.

Pereira (2017) recognizes that racism, in Brazilian society, assumes the role of a power system that regulates and conducts social relationships, causing damage to society as a whole. Therefore, racism is a structuring element of these relationships at different levels. The Afro-Brazilian culture comes to be considered as a marginalized, stereotyped, and inferior culture, highlighting the importance of discussions about racial discrimination (Araújo & Morais, 2013). Such consideration can be identified in the following speech of one of the study participants who, when reporting the daily life of the congada parties, reveals the process of marginalization of cultural manifestations of African matrix and racist or prejudiced ideas about the practice:

It's a freedom in quotes, it's an abolition in quotes, because the prejudice is still there, explicit, but at the same time camouflaged. [...] It makes it difficult; it is difficult. People often say “Ah, the 13<sup>th</sup> of May party, the black party”. [...] For a black person, it is much more difficult... Some say “Ah, there is a black day so there has to be a white day”. (José Rosa).

José Rosa outlines the problematization of the real freedom of blacks. The celebration of May 13<sup>th</sup> continues as a tradition, but many chants sung during the party criticize the abolition in Brazil in the figure of Princess Izabel, since the signing of the Áurea Law, despite being an important milestone in the historical process, did not guarantee the blacks have real social opportunities as liberated people (Fernandes, 2008).

In the participants' reports and memories, we observed processes of marginalization, inferiority, and discrimination based on the lack of knowledge of Afro-Brazilian culture in the educational environment. One of the participants reports an episode in which

one of the Ternos de Congada was called to carry out an experience with students from a private school:

[...] it is an upper-middle-class school, there were only white people, no black people. On the first day, the teacher introduced me and I asked: - Have any of you heard about congada? Nobody knew, I said that in this first class, we were going to start talking, then bring a video and show how it is. A boy from the back, he was about 10 years old at the time, said: “- Uncle Congada is that dance like a monkey, who keeps jumping”. (Benedito).

The data reveal a social devaluation linked to the colonial imagination that is manifested through racist discourses, crossing the social relationships present in the daily life of congada groups. Social spaces are spaces of conflict and, at the same time, spaces of resistance and transformation when groups linked to Afro-Brazilian culture penetrate them to invert the colonial logic of this imaginary through the transmission of historically constructed knowledge and experiences. From this perspective, Pereira (2017) points out that the black issue is not only related to the issue of skin color but also the recognition that black people are subjects of history, logic, knowledge, and technologies, which is in line with Benedito's statement:

Often, our culture's discrimination is due to a lack of knowledge. (Benedito).

We perceived that the positive and informed visibility of black culture, especially in social institutions such as schools, is necessary to deconstruct the colonial imaginary invested against black people and the cultures of African and Afro-Brazilian origins. In this sense, it is important to reflect on social technologies and practices, highlighting occupational therapy in the production of intercultural strategies that can articulate anti-colonial and anti-racist actions in the search for justice, equity, and respect for human diversity (Silvestrini et al., 2019).

The anti-racist practices of occupational therapists, in different public spaces or territories, must occur when it is admitted that the colonization of the imaginary is reproduced daily in social and institutional relationships. The issues that permeate the devaluation, the invisibility of cultures, peoples, histories, and voices give space to the questioning brought by Costa & Alves (2017): “Where are traditional knowledge and occupations - its orality, its spirituality, its perspective of integrality - when we talk about occupational therapy in a country as diverse as it is violent with its differences?” (Costa & Alves, 2017, p. 527).

Afro-Brazilian artistic and cultural manifestations and their translational movements that bring in their wake the expressions of memory and the processes of resistance of Afro-descendant populations are related to occupational therapy insofar as they present the people as belonging to a collectivity whose praxis, in the context of culture, was historically produced through the experience of exclusion and marginality.

In this way, the artistic-cultural production of traditional peoples and marginalized populations - who live the social consequences of colonization - is political, ethical, public and tells a story of oppression that is traditionally (re)played every year among

the systemic processes that are structurally based on social/racial inequality and the coloniality of power and knowledge.

By outlining the diversity of knowledge as an epistemic posture, the occupational therapist, from the perspective of social justice, is ethically committed to deepening their knowledge by dialoguing with the cultural and identity universe of the population, especially with socially excluded groups. The recognition of human, cultural, and economic rights, as well as the appreciation of the diversity of traditional populations, go through the interaction and recognition of the identity of these groups. In the direction of enhancing life and promoting social well-being, occupational therapy focuses its actions on the individual as a collective expression, respecting the complexity of their identity and their socio-historical-cultural and affective insertion in the territory.

Looking, learning, recognizing, and respecting historical events of cultural resistance, unfolded after slavery, added to the mechanisms of reproduction of the coloniality of power in contemporaneity, requires a social-ethical-political commitment to the know-hows excluded by modern rationality. By promoting cultural expressions as a principle of valuing the diversity of ways of existing, occupational therapy must understand that the cultural praxis of traditional populations is invested with historical and affective memory, transmitted between generations, positioning its practice in the sense of subverting the logic of the epistemic silencing they suffered and still suffer.

Intercultural actions to support the recognition and appreciation of diversity require attitudes, actions, and engagement through contextualized and collaborative, academic and non-academic knowledge and practices. It is necessary to understand other cultural universes through a dialogical and open posture, epistemologically committed to excluded social groups.

The fight against racism and discrimination within the practice requires the occupational therapist to build devices, resources, and collective spaces that mobilize local knowledge and promote the exchange of knowledge and the appreciation of African and Afro-Brazilian culture in the intertwining between culture and education. This practice should be promoted from the perspective of socio-cultural inclusion, encompassing civil society as a whole, as well as cultural managers.

Occupational therapy, through a critical reflective investment, is capable of producing “[...] counter-hegemonic, anti-colonial, anti-hegemonic (sic) and anti-racist strategies, reflections and practices in the search for rupture and overcoming the impacts generated by hegemonic practices and violent, in the ways of life and human relationships” (Silvestrini et al., 2019). Thus, there is a demand for a professional project that contributes to the collective construction of a fairer and more egalitarian society, daily dialoguing with historically marginalized individuals and with social policies.

### **Institutionalities and coloniality in the marginalization of popular culture: achievements and demands of congada groups**

This category discusses the coloniality of knowledge, emphasizing the marginalization of popular culture in knowledge production processes and its relationships with public management.

We can say that modernity is constituted through a hegemonic way of thinking about political, ethical, social practices, and everyday knowledge. Such characteristics of

the modern world refer to coloniality and the Eurocentric mode of interpretation, which gives Europe the idea of civilization and modernity. Thus, in the colonial imagination, what is not modern is marked by marginalization and non-civilization (Nascimento & Garrafa, 2011). In this sense, in multicultural societies, there is an overvaluation of one culture over another, in which Afro-Brazilian cultures are inferior and those of European origin are valued (Araújo & Morais, 2013):

Discrimination exists, they think that the place of black people is underneath... (Benedito).

Modernity was forged through a form of exercise of power that makes inferior and creates identities through the violent creation of alterities based on processes of subordination, violence, and oppression of the “other” (Quijano, 1992, 1997). From this perspective, coloniality is maintained as a power regime that establishes ways of dealing with the political and moral economy of other peoples and is supported by a specific way of producing knowledge (Nascimento & Garrafa, 2011).

The colonization of the social imaginary expressed in the writing of official history is revealed when participants question the process of knowledge production through a Eurocentric episteme, as indicated in the excerpts brought by Benedito and José Rosa:

Today we already have better knowledge, can study a little, we read something, not agreeing most of the time with what is written, these books written by white people, the white man is the one who was the captain of the forest, and doesn't want to tell the story as it was, so he tries to make up the story. (Benedito).

the story tells in one way, but the reality is another. There, the book was written by those who did not experience this situation. [...] Same thing with us. They brought us from Africa anyway, they threw us in a corner there, in the slave quarters, we only cut cane, picked it up, we didn't know how to read, we didn't know how to walk in the street, here it comes and it's free, the blacks no longer slaves. I didn't have a house, I didn't have land, I didn't know, I didn't have a tool at all. What freedom is this? (José Rosa).

Through the wealth of icons in their symbolic, aesthetic, and poetic representations, Congada constitutes one of the channels for conveying the knowledge of a people historically enslaved, discriminated against, but, above all, resistant. This social group shows a critical elaboration on the process of knowledge production that is anchored in a Eurocentric view of the world, excluding the knowledge of African and Afro-Brazilian peoples who directly experienced the colonial-capitalist power hierarchy, from the historical period of colonialism to the present day. As we can see from the excerpt below:

I don't agree with many things that I read, especially about the congada, you see in the books today “the congada is a dance”, the congada is not a dance. Congada is an African origin dance that enters culture, enters wisdom, enters the part of the religions of the African matrix, in short, it is a traditional dance of African origin... (Benedito).

For a counter-hegemonic epistemic change that emphasizes erased voices and knowledge – Southern epistemologies (Santos & Meneses, 2010), it is necessary to carry out reflections that redirect society's view to the importance of educating ethnic-racial relationships in all spheres of knowledge and practices, as well as in the production of knowledge. This reversal of the enunciation pole must take into account the colonization process that marginalizes and excludes experience and knowledge arising from African and Afro-Brazilian cultures.

From this perspective, the coloniality of power and knowledge, understood as a mechanism of economic, political, and knowledge control (Quijano, 1992), is also manifested in the historical restriction of access to basic rights, such as education:

My mother doesn't know how to read, she writes her name, she worked for 40 years in a house where she went in at seven in the morning and left at nine at night, this is slavery. (Benedito).

The boss's son studied in a private school, he didn't need to work, he took a course, hired a teacher, took an English course. My children didn't study in public schools, but they had to work to help and how are they going to compete in the entrance exam? (Benedito).

Araújo & Morais (2013) point out that behaviors that reaffirm the coloniality of power and knowledge are not acquired in an occasional way, but rather through a historical situation that favored the emergence of mechanisms of control and oppression of less favored groups and stigmatized, like the black population. The coloniality of power is revealed in contemporaneity through processes of restriction of access to basic rights amid socio-economic exclusion in the neoliberal context, a reality experienced by the peripheral poor population. The imperial power, by abolishing slavery, did not offer freed enslaved blacks a policy of integration into class society, which resulted in processes of exclusion, marginalization, and violation of rights to this day.

We observed that racial inequality and the elitization of Brazilian society – present in the interviews during the account of family trajectories are presented as direct consequences of colonialism. In this context, another aspect, in the view of these participants, concerns the local government, discussing the current dynamics and social demands of congada groups for the maintenance of traditional festivals. These individuals reveal the achievements in the field of cultural rights present in public policies at the national level, obtaining funds through public notices and agreements. However, although there have been many advances in recent years in the visibility and recognition of Afro-Brazilian culture, there is still no regularity, as explained below:

[...] lack of support. Because today it is very difficult to do without the *help* of the public power, we have already managed to do it, but most of the time we need the *help* of the public power. Often this help comes with so much difficulty, it is so humiliating, and sometimes it arrives at the last minute. (José Rosa – we did the italics).

The city hall made an agreement with the Council, we discussed and the city hall spoke, let's help, and made the agreement. Not now, the rules have

changed, which instead of spending the money, is doing “for them”. We feel this difficulty because the congada groups only have one or two that are up to date, for that matter, 18 groups will leave, one or two only that are up to date [...] Most of them due to ignorance were very simple people, they did not know that the minutes expired every three years. Every year, even if you are exempt, you have to file your income tax return. There's no way, it's the difficulty we're having. Let's wait for the party to pass and we're going to have a job to re-register all these ternos, to legalize all the documentation, because according to the city hall *now the rule will be that*. (Benedito).

Municipal resources exist and have already been offered in the form of agreements, but as long as they are not conceived as a cultural right and duty of the State, a hierarchy of power is maintained covertly through the obligation to comply with bureaucratic formalities that may constitute an obstacle to a public that often had no access to education. In this regime of coloniality of power, even with access to public resources through institutional means, the fulfillment of cultural rights can be hampered if the particularities of a population that went through a historical process of exclusion and violation of rights, restricting its autonomy to self-manage their cultural practices.

As we see in the analyzed reports, racism can be diluted in the daily functioning of institutions that, according to López (2012), operate differently in the distribution of services, benefits, and opportunities to different segments of the population from a racial point of view. The excess of bureaucracy and documentation required for the fulfillment of a public notice in the scope of culture can privilege certain white-elitist-scholarly cultural practices, to the detriment of the cultural productions of a population that has historically restricted access to goods, capital, and services.

Look inside the public power, how many blacks are there? Is this a disability? No, it's a lack of opportunity. They don't give us an opportunity. I don't know if it's fear. Things for black people are so difficult, that when he gets something, it's so safe that you can't take any more. (José Rosa).

Public policies in the area of culture accessed by the black population linked to the congada tradition are predominantly at the State and Federal level, reflecting the lack of regulation of the fixed budget destination of public notices at the local level, specific for the maintenance of artistic and cultural manifestations of African matrix. Without the regular and frequent maintenance of specific notices for Afro-Brazilian culture, exempting this population from complying with an excessive bureaucratization that restricts their participation, the public authorities at the municipal level run the risk of failing to exercise the role of the cultural manager in the perspective of cultural rights, to adopt a coronel stance towards black cultural production, as explained by Benedito in his remarks:

If it is not through the public power, it has to be through the benefactors and we have few who have this condition. Some people help, but they are few. (Benedito).



Every year here I do around 50 projects, all of them with public notices. Last year I got it. We were awarded in two public notices, one by the State and one by the Federal Government [...] The [Afro-Brazilian] Council is that today, it is to look for partnerships, we participate in all public notices that come out of the State, the Federal Government, the municipality, public notice in our area... why are we going to enter a public notice to take a ballet course? Although I find it interesting, it has nothing to do with us. (Benedito).

The occupational therapist can be on the side of communities in the processes of reflection and co-creation of mechanisms and technologies to confront the coloniality of power exercised by local institutions, increasing the sociopolitical participation of this population in cultural councils where the agenda of cultural accessibility is directly discussed. This cultural mediation between local government and traditional communities can be carried out through oratorios carried out by the population that highlight the inequalities caused by the normative requirements of cultural notices and the consequent exclusion or restriction of the participation of the black community. The occupational therapist's posture must express the ethical commitment to the black population and their traditional ways, co-creating forms of counter-hegemonic resistance in the field of political debate to expand access to their cultural rights in consideration of the historical violence of the colonizing process that marginalized and excluded this knowledge and actions in the context of culture.

Together with the cultural policies, affirmative action public policies enable to correct the history of inequalities and disadvantages suffered by ethnic-racial groups (López, 2012). As an example of such policies, we can mention Law 10639, of 2003 (Brasil, 2003), later Law 11,645, of 2008 (Brasil, 2008), which establishes the teaching of African History and Afro-Brazilian Culture in education systems (Brasil, 2009). According to Araújo & Morais (2013), the Brazilian education system has not shed the bonds of a homogenizing, Eurocentric, and monocultural curriculum. Therefore, it does not meet the demands and interests of different ethnic-racial and cultural groups that attend the different levels and teaching modalities.

The school as a space in which ethnic-racial and cultural diversity is present has a prominent role in combating prejudice and intolerance. Benedito reported the failed process of implementing Law 10.639 (Brasil, 2003), criticizing the restricted access of congada groups to formal school, which is limited to commemorative dates linked to black consciousness and the abolition of slavery, without a continuous and profound project of entry of artistic manifestations. Afro-Brazilian cultural aspects in the school curriculum throughout the year. In Benedito's speech, we saw that this law brought a unique opportunity for a reversal of the coloniality of knowledge through the appreciation and recognition of the knowledge of black communities in the school space since the implementation of the Law the MEC requires a partnership with these local black groups. However, in his view, the Law has not yet been well implemented in the municipality:

This law (10,639) is more than 10 years old and was never instituted [in the municipality]. Both in municipal, state, and private schools. They only do something when it gets close to May 13<sup>th</sup>, the week of culture, and you feel

that it is more of an obligation for managers, it has gone beyond that, there are isolated cases [...] but there is no municipal law. (Benedito).

Despite this Law 10.639 being many years old, the struggle of the black movement was not just creating the law, because you created and let people put a false story as they have in the books, so it was very well sewn; for the municipality of Uberaba to include in the curriculum it had to qualify the managers, the MEC only gave authorization if the city's cultural entities participated with the information. So here in Uberaba there were only a few rehearsals [...] You have to have partnerships with the local black communities because it is not a unique story, otherwise, it would be easy [...] I said I go in as long as the Council nominates people to guide the teachers because otherwise you'll get the books, get the internet and tell the wrong story, and for us, it's not interesting.

From this perspective, Pereira (2017) states that decolonizing is, above all, sensitizing people to deal with diversity and difference, to discuss issues such as racism and religion, which will lead to the recognition of knowledge and values that had been denied until then. The black community observes a decolonizing potential in the Law, enabling blacks to tell their version of history, which so far has been told only by whites.

These new trends, however, may run into political conservatism that is expressed at the local level, making the implementation of these policies difficult. In this current context of political setback and lack of public investment in the area of culture and education, there is a threat to the restriction of access to social and cultural rights by black communities.

In the scope of occupational therapy, a profession articulated with the defense of human rights, culture can be seen as “[...] a strategy for valuing being and diversity [...] as a human expression that fosters transformation and engagement for the struggle” (Silvestrini et al., 2019, p. 937). The articulation of the occupational therapist with cultural and socio-educational practices that unveil the memories and knowledge silenced by history is a contemporary and urgent demand. In particular, the school can be an important space for building anti-racist actions and for valuing Afro-Brazilian culture.

The ethical commitment of this professional to social groups excluded under the aegis of coloniality must occur following what Santos (2000) calls knowledge-emancipation and in the perspective of the ecology of knowledge that breaks with the logic of the monoculture of knowledge installed by rationality modern science (Santos, 2002). Occupational therapists, in a critical decolonial perspective, must increase their commitment to the co-creation of strategies and resources towards the potentization of cultural practices and traditional knowledge that break with the epistemic silencing of peoples and populations that have transgenerationally suffered the perverse effects of the colonial-capitalist system-world.

## Conclusion

This study allows a reflection on the role of occupational therapy in the field of culture from a critical decolonial perspective. In the direction of interculturality, it is necessary to think of actions that help in the process of confronting the coloniality of power and knowledge manifested in the daily cultural praxis of historically excluded populations. Therefore, an occupational therapist must meet these individuals to co-construct the actions, avoiding a colonialist posture in the hierarchization of technical-scientific knowledge over traditional and popular knowledge.

Therapeutic-occupational actions must meet the diffusion of knowledge of these social groups from the perspective of epistemic resistance, offering centrality to the narratives, experiences, memories, and knowledge arising from cultural matrices that suffered historical marginalization as a result of colonial thought and imagination.

The occupational therapist can carry out practices that value the African and Afro-Brazilian matrix culture, as an element that consolidates the various social technologies produced in a territorial approach. Valuing traditional knowledge and cultural praxis of marginalized social groups constitutes the ethical commitment of occupational therapy, since, presenting these subjects as belonging to a community, expands and reframes the practice of the profession, dialoguing with the diversity of knowledge.

The research data reveal, based on the social demands observed in the trajectory of the Ternos de Congada, possibilities for occupational therapists to act in the process of articulating knowledge and memories of these social groups, facilitating access to public reparation policies and cultural rights, as a tool for confronting the coloniality of power and knowledge at the local level. This interventional mediation of access to cultural rights is justified given the historical restriction of this population to basic social rights that limit their articulation with the State, but it should not be carried out without safeguarding the social protagonism and historical and citizen awareness of these actors.

Occupational therapists must promote aesthetic-political practices that confront the processes of marginalization and stigmatization involved in coloniality, through the valorization of counter-hegemonic epistemologies of the South, allowing these groups excluded from the processes of knowledge production a new narrative centrality about their cultural practices, memories, and worldview, which is often imprinted on voice and body.

This epistemic perspective encompasses the understanding that the cultural praxis of marginalized social groups and traditional communities gains political contours and historical identity and memory that must be considered in the production of knowledge and practices in occupational therapy. The expressions presented in the study contribute to the rescue of memories about the identity and political position of a population marked by racism, intolerance, and social vulnerability. They mobilize knowledge through speech and the body. Through struggle, these socially excluded people are seen as an identity group and are reaffirmed as citizens with full civil and cultural rights.

This practical-reflective movement brings the academy closer to populations that present structural issues, demanding the articulation of actions that value cultural representation as a social value, as well as the protagonization of an episteme that turns to the knowledge excluded from the modern world-system. Cultural actions within the profession are presented as an important initiative in the process of historical centralization of these narratives, expanding their perspectives of resistance and struggle for cultural rights. Thus, the State must provide opportunities for the enjoyment and cultural production of excluded peoples and social groups.

We noticed the importance of deepening studies and reflections on occupational therapy in the field of culture, in the direction of a greater strengthening and expansion of the production of knowledge that underlies the professional practice. Faced with this theme, the movements, productions, and epistemological tensions characteristic of the field of occupational therapy (Bourdieu, 1983) are considered. Corroborating Morán & Ulloa (2016), it is necessary to build a critical perspective claiming epistemic disobedience and, more broadly, the decolonization of thought in the scope of occupational therapy, racializing its productions, problematizations, and practices. In this context, this study does not intend to propose definitions, to rush or exhaust a process under construction. Above all, it is about reaffirming the need and relevance of the category's investment in studies and practices in the field of culture, based on cultural, epistemic, and social justice rights in a decolonial perspective.

In this sense, the tensioned reflections based on the notion of culture as the articulating axis of the practice in occupational therapy can mobilize the production of a new attitude towards the epistemology of knowledge within the professional training process. The occupational therapist, from the perspective of inclusion, cultural citizenship, and social justice, should deepen their knowledge about cultural practices and the cosmovision of socially marginalized or socially excluded groups, understanding such practices in the dimension of everyday life and the process of social struggles. The study points to the need to bring together academic knowledge and traditional and popular knowledge in the co-construction of culturally engaged actions in the territory. By referring to historically excluded populations who made their life production processes a powerful artistic-cultural creation that crosses time, it is necessary to understand the historical importance involved in the intergenerational transmission of intangible cultural artifacts present in the body, language, and song. The occupational therapist must be a sensitive professional to enhance the mechanisms of these social dynamics present within communities and excluded social groups, co-creating interventions that can safeguard the protagonism of these cultural productions and their social visibility, through an epistemic struggle to face coloniality of power and knowledge in contemporaneity.

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### Author's Contributions

Amanda Queiroz de Souza research project development, data collection and analysis, article writing, and text formatting. Heliana Castro Alves research project guidance, data collection, and analysis, article writing and review. Paula Tatiana Cardoso writing and review of the article. All authors approved the final version of the text.

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