

Original Article

Leadership and innovation in knowledge production in Brazilian occupational therapy: a biographical-documentary study of Jô Benetton's professional career¹

Liderança e inovação na construção de conhecimento na terapia ocupacional brasileira: um estudo biográfico-documental da trajetória profissional de Jô Benetton

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Abstract

Introduction: Over the past ten years, there has been a growth in the number of publications aimed at highlighting the trajectories of key figures in the development of the occupational therapy profession in Brazil. Jô Benetton, with a career spanning more than 50 years, was one of the individuals who had contributed to the specialized education of occupational therapists. She is the author of more than fifty articles, books, and book chapters, and her work has gained increasing prominence in academic and research productions. **Objective:** This article aims to describe the professional journey of this figure as an occupational therapist, professor, and researcher. **Method:** Through documentary research, curricula, biographical materials contained in her publications, and narratives from other studies were chronologically organized based on six axes of analysis: clinical-professional practice, teaching, investigation, formal research, authorship, and international activities. **Results:** Six historical-chronological periods were identified: (1) 1971–1975: the decision to study and investigate occupational therapy; (2) 1975–1983: the military dictatorship, *A Casa*, and the beginning of the master's program; (3) 1983–1996: *Escola Paulista de Medicina*, master's and doctoral degrees, and experience in Africa; (4) 1994–2000: University

¹ Although Jô Benetton passed away on 01 Nov 2024, this work was produced while she was still alive. We hope that this publication may honor her, shedding light on her professional journey, her memory, and her life.

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of São Paulo and postdoctoral studies; (5) 2001–2012: consolidation of the Dynamic Occupational Therapy Method (DOTM); (6) 2015 to the present: recognition in the field of academic research. **Conclusion:** In addition to highlighting the author's leadership role within the profession, this study argues that Jô Benetton's social memory can foster broader reflections on the constitution of the field in Brazil.

Keywords: Occupational Therapy, History, Leadership, Brazil.

Resumo

Introdução: Nos últimos dez anos, ampliou-se o número de publicações que buscam dar visibilidade à trajetória de personagens relevantes para a construção da profissão terapia ocupacional no Brasil. Jô Benetton, com uma carreira de mais de 50 anos, foi uma das personagens que se dedicou à formação especializada de terapeutas ocupacionais. Ela é autora de mais de 50 artigos, livros e capítulos de livros, e sua obra vem ganhando destaque nas produções acadêmicas e de pesquisa.

Objetivo: Este artigo busca descrever a trajetória dessa personagem enquanto terapeuta ocupacional, professora e pesquisadora. **Método:** Por meio de uma pesquisa documental, currículos, materiais biográficos presentes em suas obras e de narrativas provenientes de outras pesquisas foram organizados temporalmente a partir de seis eixos de análise: prática clínico-profissional, ensino, investigação, pesquisa formal, autoria e atividades internacionais. **Resultados:** Foram identificados seis períodos histórico-temporais: 1). De 1971 a 1975 – a escolha por estudar e investigar terapia ocupacional; 2). De 1975 a 1983 – a ditadura militar, A Casa e o início do mestrado; 3). De 1983 a 1996 – Escola Paulista de Medicina, mestrado, doutorado e a experiência na África, 4). De 1994 a 2000 – Universidade de São Paulo e pós-doutorado; 5). De 2001 a 2012 – a consolidação do Método Terapia Ocupacional Dinâmica (MTOD); 6). De 2015 à atualidade – o reconhecimento no campo da pesquisa acadêmica. **Conclusão:** Além de visibilizar o próprio protagonismo da autora em relação à profissão, este estudo argumenta que a memória social de Jô Benetton pode contribuir para reflexões mais amplas sobre a constituição do campo no Brasil.

Palavras-chave: Terapia Ocupacional, História, Liderança, Brasil.

Introduction

Over the past ten years, there has been a growth in the number of publications stemming from research (Battistel & Isaia, 2017; Cardinalli, 2016; Melo, 2015; Mariotti et al., 2023; Mello, 2023) or from memorial accounts (Assis, 2013; Lancman, 2012; Magalhães, 2012; Mancini, 2012; Pfeifer, 2017), aimed at highlighting the trajectories of individuals who contributed to the construction of occupational therapy as a field of practice and knowledge in Brazil. Within this context, Jô Benetton stands out as an occupational therapist from the state of São Paulo who, over a career spanning more than 50 years, has devoted herself fully and passionately to occupational therapy.

Jô Benetton (Maria José Benetton) is Brazilian, born on 10 June 1946, in Laranjal Paulista, a city in the interior of the state of São Paulo. She enrolled in the occupational

therapy program at the University of São Paulo (USP) in 1968, at a time when the program was at the technical level, and graduated in 1970 (Mello, 2023), in its second cohort of higher education graduates. In addition to her dedication to the education of occupational therapists, her main contribution to the field is the development of the Dynamic Occupational Therapy Method (DOTM) (Mello, 2023). Jô is the author of more than fifty articles, books, and book chapters. Her work, in addition to serving as a reference for the practice of Brazilian occupational therapists, has gained increasing prominence in academic and research publications and is referenced in more than twenty completed and ongoing master's dissertations and doctoral theses (Benetton et al., 2021a).

Cardinalli (2016), in her dissertation *Conhecimentos da terapia ocupacional no Brasil: um estudo sobre trajetórias e produções*, interviewed five occupational therapists who contributed to knowledge construction in the field in Brazil, including Jô Benetton. Three of Cardinalli's (2016) interviewees emphasized Jô Benetton's leadership. Roseli Esquerdo Lopes reports her "motivating encounter with Jô Benetton [...] and her advocacy for occupational therapy" (Cardinalli, 2016, p. 41); Maria de Lourdes Feriotti recalls that, early in her career, she "sought out Jô Benetton's study group on psychodynamic occupational therapy (as it was then called)" (Cardinalli, 2016, p. 42); and Mariângela Quarentei remembers that, during her undergraduate studies, she "interviewed Jô Benetton and was captivated by her advocacy for occupational therapy and by her belief that the profession possessed its own body of knowledge and the capacity to build knowledge" (Cardinalli, 2016, p. 49).

Literature reviews focused on epistemological developments in occupational therapy (Galheigo et al., 2018) or on thematic mapping of Brazilian publications throughout history (Cardinalli & Silva, 2019), when using journal indexing mechanisms from the 1990s onward, do cite Jô Benetton's work. However, they do not fully elucidate her contributions to the field or to the process of knowledge construction she undertook.

Thus, it is understood that, within the tensions of a scientific field whose autonomy may still be considered recent (Folha, 2019), there is scope for work on memory reconstruction (Pimentel, 2001). Exploring and more deeply investigating the knowledge and practices of individuals who contributed to knowledge construction in Brazilian occupational therapy, such as Jô Benetton, represents an investment in the enrichment and deepening of understanding of the discipline and its foundations (Morrison, 2014).

Jô Benetton often recounts the story of how, on the day of her graduation, her father gave her the key to a beautiful house in the city where they lived, in the interior of the state of São Paulo, so that she could set up her practice. Terrified, she told her mother that she did not know what to do with the patients, "because her profession did not exist." Her mother, a museologist and historian, then said something that would become an oracle in Jô's life: *Every profession has a history and characters; if this history does not exist, create it yourself—be its character!* Many years later, in June 2023 to be precise, Jô Benetton revealed that this statement was, in fact, her own, not her mother's (Mello, 2023).

Thus, this study aims to present the professional journey of this historical character as an occupational therapist, professor, and researcher, based on the understanding that the social memory of Jô Benetton can serve as a stimulus for broader reflections on the constitution of the field in Brazil.

Method

This is a documentary study (Sá-Silva et al., 2009) that sought to systematize the professional trajectory of Jô Benetton. Documentary research uses primary sources, materials that have not undergone prior analytical processing. The approach adopted in this study favors a broad perspective on the sources of information, seeking to place them within the historical context in which they were produced and to capture, insofar as possible, the intent behind their production (Sá-Silva et al., 2009).

Data used

The data were drawn from public documents, such as the Lattes Curriculum (Brasil, 2024), the website of the *Centro de Especialidades em Terapia Ocupacional* (CETO), the book *Trilhas Associativas* from 1991 (Centro de Especialidades em Terapia Ocupacional, 2024; Benetton, 1991a), and Jô Benetton's doctoral dissertation—bibliographic materials that contain biographical information. The study also used a copy of Jô Benetton's professional curriculum, provided by the author, which includes information covering the period from 1970 to 2003 (Benetton, mimeo). In addition to these primary sources, the study considered works in which Jô Benetton participated, specifically: Isadora Cardinalli's master's thesis, *Conhecimentos da terapia ocupacional no Brasil: um estudo sobre trajetórias e produções* (Cardinalli, 2016), and Ana Carolina Carreira de Mello's doctoral dissertation, *O Método Terapia Ocupacional Dinâmica e o Modello Vivaio: histórias orais de construções inventivas para a prática de terapia ocupacional* (Mello, 2023), both defended in the Graduate Program in Occupational Therapy at the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar).

The verification of the documents, specifically of the published articles, was carried out by two researchers. However, it was not possible to identify all the information contained in the author's curriculum, particularly materials from the 1970s. These materials will be marked with an asterisk, as in the following example: Benetton (1975a).

Ethical considerations

This study is part of a larger project titled *O Método Terapia Ocupacional Dinâmica e O Modello Vivaio: histórias orais de construções inventivas para a prática de terapia ocupacional* (The Dynamic Occupational Therapy Method and the Vivaio Model: oral histories of inventive constructions for occupational therapy practice), approved by the Research Ethics Committee for Human Subjects under no. 4.473.156. Jô Benetton signed a consent statement agreeing to participate in the study and indicating that it was not necessary to keep her identity confidential.

Data analysis

Data analysis in documentary research seeks new ways of organizing and understanding documents, considering that they do not exist in isolation and that the theoretical framework applied can enhance the understanding of their content (Sá-Silva et al., 2009). Since this study aimed to highlight the professional trajectory of Jô Benetton, the analysis framework was based on the professional recognition criteria

established by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT), namely: leadership, commitment and service to WFOT, development and promotion of the profession internationally, education of occupational therapists, publications, research and innovation, volunteer service to the profession, and exceptional service (World Federation of Occupational Therapists, 2020).

These criteria were adapted to the context of the Jô Benetton's professional and leadership activities, resulting in six interconnected categories, which were detailed across different historical periods, as follows:

Clinical-professional practice: work as an occupational therapist in various services, with emphasis on leadership activities.

Teaching: teaching activities at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, including mentoring and supervision.

Investigation: ongoing investigation aimed at theoretical and methodological developments. This category also includes selected studies that were particularly relevant to the goal of constructing an occupational therapy method. The data analysis for this axis drew on the study by Marcolino & Fantinatti (2014), which required prior analysis of bibliographic materials to allow for a historical interpretation of the knowledge construction process.

Research: institutionalized activities involving research training, conducting, and supervision, linked to universities and research centers in Brazil and abroad.

Authorship: major publications (articles, books, and book chapters), conferences, and activities related to scientific dissemination, such as editorial work.

International activities: international projects in which she was involved and through which she contributed to disseminating and transforming practices and public policies.

The analysis of the professional trajectory sought to highlight the full range of activities performed in each period. However, some dates overlap, as the intention was to emphasize the entirety of activities within each period. For example, in 1983, Jô Benetton traveled to Cuba, and because of this experience, published an article in 1984. That same year, she also began working as an occupational therapist at the *Escola Paulista de Medicina* (EPM). The first two events were included in one period (1974–1983), while her appointment at EPM was placed in a subsequent period (1983–1996), as it marked the beginning of new professional activities.

Reflexivity

All authors have received education in the DOTM and are interested in increasing the visibility of Jô Benetton's trajectory and achievements. To avoid potential biases, the research team maintained a continuous stance of reflexivity, particularly analyzing the gaps and limited possibilities for interpreting the material under review (Nayar & Stanley, 2023). Additionally, to enhance the study's reliability, all results were submitted to the participant for review and were approved by her.

Results

The results were organized into six historical-chronological periods: 1. from 1971 to 1975, the decision to study and investigate occupational therapy; 2. from 1975 to 1983, the military dictatorship, *A Casa*, and the beginning of the master's thesis; 3. from 1983 to 1996, *Escola Paulista de Medicina*, master's thesis, doctoral dissertation, and experience in Africa; 4. from 1994 to 2000, University of São Paulo and postdoctoral studies; 5. from 2001 to 2012, consolidation of the Dynamic Occupational Therapy Method (DOTM); and 6. from 2015 to the present, recognition in the field of academic research.

1. 1971 to 1975: The decision to study and investigate occupational therapy

The difficulty of practicing the profession is what made me produce... Occupational therapy is the central core of my life (Benetton as cited in Cardinalli, 2016, p. 125).

Clinical-professional practice: Upon graduation, Jô Benetton ranked first in the first civil service examination for occupational therapists in the state of São Paulo, taking a position at the *Hospital do Servidor Público*, where she worked from 1971 to 1973. From 1973 to 1975, she was part of the team that established one of the first mental health day hospitals in the state of São Paulo, at the *Santa Casa de Misericórdia*, under the guidance of Luiz Cerqueira, then state coordinator of mental health (Benetton, 1991a). In 1973, she represented the *Associação Paulista de Terapeutas Ocupacionais* at the *I Encontro de Técnicos de Saúde Mental de São Paulo*, participating in the roundtables "Assessment and Prospects of the National Mental Health Policy at the State Level" and "Programmatic Actions for the Implementation of Community Psychiatry." In 1974, she began working in private practice.

Teaching: In 1972, she began offering clinical placements at the Psychiatry and Medical Psychology Service of the *Hospital do Servidor Público Estadual* for occupational therapy students from USP. From 1973 to 1975, the placement shifted to the Occupational Therapy Unit of the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology at the *Faculdade de Ciências Médicas da Santa Casa de Misericórdia de São Paulo*. Throughout this period, she served as a supervisor for occupational therapy units in various mental health institutions in São Paulo (*Casa de Saúde Nossa Senhora do Caminho*, *Casa de Saúde Nossa Senhora de Fátima*, *Instituto de Psiquiatria Américo Bairral*). Starting in 1973, she led study groups for occupational therapists.

Investigation: In Benetton (1991a), the author describes the scarcity of occupational therapy literature available at the time, which was based on a "functional model" (p. 26), aimed at finding the right activity to treat symptoms. During her final year of undergraduate studies, Jô Benetton completed a placement with Dr. Annelise Strauss at a school for children labeled as "borderline" and observed that "in education, specifically in the free activities used for learning, along with a certain personal approach, there was greater potential for positive outcomes than with the limited approach of 'treating symptoms'" (Benetton, 1991a, p. 26). She studied theoretically everything she could access (Benetton, 1991a). During this period, she met Brazilian psychiatrists who valued treatment through occupations and artistic activities, such as Luiz Cerqueira, Ulisses

Pernambucano, and Nise da Silveira. She traveled frequently abroad, mainly to the United States and France (Cardinalli, 2016), in search of study materials. She brought to Brazil works such as the book by Fidler and Fidler, articles by Canadian psychodynamic authors (Wittkower, Azima, and Azima), and European authors such as Herman Simon, Barahona Fernandes, François Tosquelles, Gisela Pankow, and Paul Sivadon (Benetton, 1991a; Marcolino & Fantinatti, 2014). She began studying psychoanalysis in groups and receiving supervision from psychoanalyst Amina Maggi (Benetton, 1991a). Between 1973 and 1976, she attended seminars and received clinical supervision in psychiatry from Dr. Oswaldo Dante Milton Di Loreto. She participated in Lacanian psychoanalysis seminars in Brazil and France, including sessions with Jacques Lacan at *Hôpital Sainte-Anne*.

Aware that the activities prescribed for “schizophrenics” or “amputees” were limiting for occupational therapy practice, she experimented with new approaches and evaluated their outcomes with patients (Benetton, 1991a). Through her study group, she expanded her experimental “laboratory,” involving colleagues in the practical application and discussion of results (Benetton & Ferrari, 1989).

Authorship: In 1971, she published her first article, coauthored with two colleagues, presenting occupational therapy in a publication of the Psychiatric Studies Group of the Medical Psychiatry Service of the state of São Paulo (Nakagawa et al., 1971). In 1975, she published two articles on the organization of occupational therapy units in psychiatric services, one in the *Boletim da Associação Paulista de Terapeutas Ocupacionais* (Benetton, 1975a) and another—her first international publication—in *Informaciones Psiquiátricas*, a journal in Barcelona, Spain (Benetton, 1975b).

2. 1975 to 1983: The military dictatorship, A Casa, and the beginning of the master's thesis

Who were the colleagues? Who were the revolutionaries? The occupational therapist, the nurse, and the social worker. [...] Everyone who fought back was fired (Benetton as cited in Mello, 2023, p. 73).

She is someone who made occupational therapists study occupational therapy; she created education outside the university (Quarente on Benetton as cited in Cardinalli, 2016, p. 56).

Clinical-professional practice: From 1975 to 1983, she was barred from holding public positions because of political persecution during the Brazilian military dictatorship. In 1979, she founded the *Hospital Dia A Casa* (still in operation today), together with psychoanalyst colleagues and Sonia Ferrari, an occupational therapist who has been her professional collaborator to this day (Cardinalli, 2016; Mello, 2023). During this period, her studies focused on psychoses and their treatments (Benetton, 1991a).

Teaching: The study group remained active until, in 1981, in partnership with Sonia Ferrari, she founded the *Centro de Estudos de Terapia Ocupacional* (CETO), an education, research, and clinical care institution that is still operating. At CETO, she began offering specialized clinical training courses (Benetton & Ferrari, 1989; Mello,

2023). Drawing on her experience with Di Loreto and the study group, the collective synthesized guiding principles for the teaching and practice of occupational therapy:

- 1 - Any type of activity should be used in patient care, and the choice should preferably come from the patient. Otherwise, we should make the choice, mainly through dialogue, in which we tried to identify the patient's "preference." Something would be intuited during the initial interview, and the patient's history was also considered important; however, as most of the data usually remained in the hands of the psychiatrist, we did not use it.
- 2 - Teaching and learning in activity groups were part of a dynamic in which the therapist's "good humor" and "enthusiasm" were essential elements.
- 3 - It was necessary to maintain a pleasant work environment for the patient, not only regarding the aesthetic quality of the spaces but also by striving to de-escalate conflicts and arguments.
- 4 - We believed that the multiple aspects of treating mental illness should be expressed in a shared language among the therapeutic team. Accordingly, we fostered a strong commitment to team meetings.
- 5 - We disliked and rejected having doctors prescribe activities from a distance. On the one hand, we believed they should give us the freedom to work with the patient to choose activities; on the other hand, we wanted their presence in our rooms and team meetings to promote shared authority.
- 6 - We held that the goal of occupational therapy was social reintegration. We therefore participated, along with the social worker, in family meetings and counseling sessions.
- 7 - With the nursing staff, we collaborated in maintaining the therapeutic environment, promoting health education and hygiene groups (Benetton, 1991a, p. 28).

This group included Ana Ambrósio, Edmara Barbosa, Eliana Lucatto, Elisabeth Mângia, Fátima Óliver, Gilda Braga, Jussara Pinto, Mariângela Quarentei, Maria Cristina Budeu, Michelle Hahn, Neusa Gonzaga, Reinaldo Silva, Selma Lancman, Sonia Maximino, Suzete Guardiano, and Sonia Ferrari (Benetton, 1991a, p. 28).

Research and investigation: In 1976, she enrolled in the master's thesis program in Social Psychology at the *Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo* (PUC-SP), but defended her thesis only in 1989—thirteen years later—because of the lack of faculty willing to supervise research in occupational therapy (Cardinalli, 2016; Mello, 2023). Always determined to find ways to teach and practice occupational therapy (Mello, 2023), Jô developed the "Theory of Technique," a framework that positions practice as an object of study (Benetton, 1991a; Marcolino & Fantinatti, 2014).

International activities: In 1982, she completed a placement at the *Dynamic Psychiatric Clinic Mengerschwaige* (*Dynamisch Psychiatrischen Klinik Mengerschwaige*) in Munich, Germany (Benetton, 1991a). In 1983, she undertook a placement in Cuba, in the Occupational Therapy Program at *Hospital La Habana* and the Adolescent Psychiatric Clinic, coordinated by Dr. Elza Gutierrez.

Authorship: In 1983, she published an article in the *Arquivos da Coordenadoria de Saúde Mental do Estado de São Paulo* (CSM-SP) (Benetton, 1983). In 1984, she

published *A psiquiatria em Cuba* in the *Boletim de Psiquiatria* of the *Associação Brasileira de Psiquiatria* (Benetton, 1984a).

3. 1983 to 1996: Escola Paulista de Medicina, master's thesis, doctoral dissertation, and experience in Africa

It took me thirteen years to defend my master's thesis. Every year I would go to PUC wanting to enroll, but there was no one willing to supervise me because I refused to give up on doing a master's in occupational therapy (Jô Benetton as cited in Cardinalli, 2016, p. 61).

Clinical-professional practice: From 1983 to 1996, she worked as an occupational therapist at the *Escola Paulista de Medicina*, which had been incorporated into the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP). Jô Benetton was part of interprofessional teams in various mental health services, such as the Affective Disorders Clinic and the Crisis Clinic at UNIFESP.

Teaching: She continued her teaching activities in the CETO training program. From 1985 to 1990, she coordinated the *Curso de Aprimoramento em Terapia Ocupacional em Saúde Mental* at UNIFESP, which later became a specialization course, where she served on the faculty from 1990 to 1996 (Benetton et al., 1998). Within the services of the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology at UNIFESP, she worked as a professor and supervisor in various educational activities: undergraduate placements in occupational therapy (1983 to 1985), supervision of professionals in specialization programs (occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers), and supervision of medical residents in psychiatry. During this period, she also collaborated with CSM-SP in various teaching and consulting activities. In 1985, she taught the course *O Hospital Psiquiátrico – Seu Papel na Política de Saúde Mental do Estado*, and in 1986, the course *Terapia Ocupacional Psiquiátrica*, both promoted by the Division of Studies and Programs of CSM-SP.

Research: She defended her master's thesis in 1989, entitled *Terapia Ocupacional – Uma Abordagem Metodológica em Saúde Mental* (Benetton, 1989). Her research presented *Trilhas Associativas* (Associative Path), a technique for analyzing activities through a dialogical process between occupational therapist and patient, conducted through groupings of activities and conversations about lived experiences, promoting the construction of new meanings and conscience (Benetton, 1991a; Marcolino & Fantinatti, 2014). Initially designed for individuals with psychotic disorders, this technique has proven useful over time for various populations served in occupational therapy (Benetton, 1999, 2006). In 1990, she began her doctoral dissertation in Mental Health at the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP).

International activities: Between 1986 and 1988, she made several international visits to mental health institutions: *Maudsley and Bethlem Hospital* in London, England (1986); *Hospital Marmottan* in Paris, France (1986), influenced by Claude Olievenstein, whose work inspired her contributions to the development of the Crisis Clinic and the Alcohol and Drug Program (PROAD/UNIFESP); *Larimer County Mental Health Center*, Colorado, United States, focused on programs for chronic psychiatric patients (1988); *Casa de Saúde Idanha* in Lisbon, Portugal (1988); *Centro de Saúde Mental*

Nanterre in Paris, France, focusing on the individual treatment of young psychotic patients (1988); and *Centre Hospitalier Henri Ey* in Bonneval, France (1988).

In 1991, at the invitation of the then Minister of Health of Cape Verde, Jô Benetton visited the country to develop a mental health care project focused on prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation, integrating outpatient services, short-stay wards, and an Occupational Therapy Center. In 1993, she worked on the project for establishing the *Centro de Terapia Ocupacional* (CTO) in Ribeira da Vinha, which became a reference in Cape Verde and other Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa (Coppini, 1995).

Authorship: This was a period of intense academic output. In 1983, she participated in the *Grupo de Trabalho para Elaboração de um Manual de Ações de Saúde Mental* for primary and secondary levels, implemented in clinics and health centers connected to the Mental Health Division and Basic Health Network of CSM-SP. In 1985, she participated in the roundtable *A Contribuição Multiprofissional para Implementação de uma Nova Política de Saúde Mental – O Papel do terapeuta ocupacional*, at the *I Congresso de Trabalhadores de Saúde Mental da Rede Pública do Estado de São Paulo* (Benetton, 1985).

In 1984, she published her first conceptual article, *Alguns aspectos do uso de atividades artísticas em terapia ocupacional* (Benetton, 1984b), in which she discussed the free use of activities and the establishment of the triadic relationship (occupational therapist, patient, and activities) (Marcolino & Fantinatti, 2014), using psychoanalytic concepts to propose a more active role for the occupational therapist (Benetton, 1984b). Also in 1984, she published the article *Terapia ocupacional e Saúde Mental* (Benetton, 1984c), discussing theoretical-practical specificities and presenting the possibilities of occupational therapy within the primary health care network.

In 1989, she coauthored, with Sonia Ferrari, an article systematizing specialized training in occupational therapy with a psychodynamic approach, published in the French journal *Journal D'Ergothérapie*, under the title *Pour la Spécialisation d'Ergothérapeutes en Psychiatrie: Une Approche Psychodynamique* (Benetton & Ferrari, 1989). In 1991, she published her master's thesis as the book *Trilhas Associativas: ampliando recursos na clínica da psicose* (Benetton, 1991a).

In 1990, the first Brazilian academic journals in occupational therapy were established: *Revista de Terapia Ocupacional da Universidade de São Paulo* and *Cadernos de Terapia Ocupacional da UFSCar* (now the *Brazilian Journal of Occupational Therapy*). Jô Benetton intensified her conceptual production, grounded in clinical practice, publishing in *Revista da USP* the articles *Uma Abordagem Psicodinâmica em Terapia Ocupacional* (Benetton, 1991b) and *Na Articulação entre o 'Falar' e o 'Fazer'—A Construção da Historicidade na Psicose* (Benetton, 1992). In *Cadernos de Terapia Ocupacional da UFSCar*, she published in 1995 *O Silêncio*, her only article addressing occupational therapy practice with children (Benetton, 1995a). As a result of her theoretical and practical work at UNIFESP, she published the article *A crise na terapia ocupacional ou a Terapia ocupacional na crise?* (Benetton, 1995a), later published in the *World Federation of Occupational Therapists Bulletin* (Benetton, 1996). She also coauthored the book chapter *A Questão da Independência e Dependência sob o Vértice da terapia ocupacional* with Solange Tedesco (Benetton & Tedesco, 1996). Her experience in Cape Verde was presented at the *World Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Congress* in Dublin, Ireland, in 1993, and described in the article

République du Cap Vert: Un Centre d'Ergothérapie, published in the *World Federation of Occupational Therapists Bulletin* (Benetton, 1995b).

4. 1994 to 2000: University of São Paulo and postdoctoral studies

[...] my time at USP ended up pulling me away from my path, because during that period I was unable to produce [...] The move to USP was a turning point, but also a fortunate encounter with the history of health. These experiences helped me move forward (Benetton as cited in Mello, 2023, p. 77).

Clinical-professional practice: During this period, Jô interrupted her private practice work, devoting herself to teaching and research activities at the university. Regarding cultural activities, her participation as a juror in the *I Concurso Nacional de Arte "Arte de Viver"*, held in 1998—a landmark event in Brazilian psychiatric reform—is noteworthy.

Teaching: In 1996, Jô was appointed professor in the Occupational Therapy Program of the Department of Clinical Medicine at the Medical School of the University of São Paulo (FMUSP), where she remained until 2002. This was the only period in which she worked exclusively in undergraduate education in occupational therapy. Although she continued to teach a few classes in the CETO program, the institution came under the leadership of Sonia Ferrari and Solange Tedesco.

Research: Jô Benetton defended her doctoral dissertation, *A terapia ocupacional como Instrumento nas Ações de Saúde Mental*, in 1994 (Benetton, 1994). In this dissertation, she outlined the initial framework for developing an occupational therapy method. Through the *Theory of Technique* approach, her aim was always to derive concepts from practice—concepts that could help occupational therapists structure various types of practice-based information and enable them to reflect and make decisions in action, while considering the dynamic and complex nature of clinical situations (Benetton, 1994; Marcolino & Fantinatti, 2014). The dissertation included an epistemological defense of occupational therapy as an empirical science, valuing practice-based empiricism as the foundation for any theoretical and/or methodological construction (Benetton, 1995d).

As a professor and researcher at USP, between 1997 and 1998, she secured funding for research in partnership with Prof. Selma Lancman, focusing on a reliability and validation study of the instrument *Entrevista da História do Desempenho Ocupacional*, developed by Gary Kielhofner (Benetton & Lancman, 1998).

Between 2000 and 2001, Jô pursued her postdoctoral studies at the *Centre de Recherches Historiques – École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* (EHESS), with a project entitled *Ergothérapie et Terapia Ocupacional en France et au Brésil - Un Projet d'Histoire Comparée (vers 1960 - vers 2000)*, under the supervision of Prof. Jean-Pierre Goubert (Benetton, 2001).

At USP, she supervised five undergraduate research projects and joined a graduate program. However, due to challenges and incompatibilities with academic life—which led to health issues—Jô requested her resignation from USP, thereby bringing an important chapter of her academic career to a close (Mello, 2023). She went on to co-supervise two master's theses in Brazilian programs and two more at EHESS, in Paris, after completing her postdoctoral studies.

Authorship: In 1995, Jô published the article *A Case Study Applying a Psychodynamic Approach to Occupational Therapy* in *Occupational Therapy International* (Benetton, 1995c). This article was cited by Ivarsson et al. (1998), who recognized Jô Benetton as a contributor to the development of new concepts in occupational therapy. In 1995, she founded *Revista CETO*, a theoretical-clinical journal, driven by the need for publication outlets for clinical articles in the field. In 1998, she coauthored an article updating the CETO training program in the *Journal d'Ergothérapie*, under the title *De la Spécialisation d'Ergothérapeutes en Santé Mentale* (Benetton et al., 1998). The collaboration with Selma Lancman led to a publication presenting the findings of the reliability and validation study of the *Entrevista da História do Desempenho Ocupacional* instrument (Benetton & Lancman, 1998).

She published results from her doctoral dissertation in the article *Sentiers Associatifs - Pour Élargir les Ressources dans la Clinique de l'Ergothérapie* in the *Journal d'Ergothérapie* (Benetton & Shirakawa, 2000) and presented the paper *Théorie de la Technique en Ergothérapie* at the VI European Congress of Occupational Therapy in Paris. The outcomes of her postdoctoral historical research were shared through seminars at EHESS and published in articles in France and later translated into Portuguese for *Revista CETO* (Benetton & Goubert, 2000a; Benetton & Goubert, 2000b; Benetton, 2002).

The results of undergraduate research projects linked to the postdoctoral work were also published in *Revista CETO* (Benetton & Varela, 2001; Ducros et al., 2002; Vogel et al., 2002). In addition, two other articles were published in collaboration with her postdoctoral advisor, Jean-Pierre Goubert, in Brazilian journals (Benetton et al., 2000; Goubert et al., 2002).

During this period, Jô also translated into Portuguese several articles by European occupational therapists, particularly French and Italian authors, such as J. C. Legros, J. C. Piergrossi, C. Gibertoni, J. G. Jobin, I. Pibarot, and J. P. Guihard. Other notable publications include the article *Terapia Ocupacional e Reabilitação Psicossocial: Uma Relação Possível?* (Benetton, 1993/1996), which was included as a chapter in the book *Reabilitação Psicossocial no Brasil*, edited by Ana Pitta in 1996 (Benetton, 1993/1996), and the revised and expanded second edition of the book *Trilhas Associativas: ampliando subsídios na clínica da terapia ocupacional* (Benetton, 1999).

International activities: In 1997, her curriculum records her participation, though without further detail, as an evaluator of Mental Health Programs for the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse of the World Health Organization.

5. 2001 to 2012: Consolidation of the Dynamic Occupational Therapy Method

[...] the only way to know occupational therapy is to do occupational therapy
[...] (Benetton as cited in Cardinalli, 2016, p. 67).

The Dynamic Occupational Therapy Method is the most important legacy I will leave behind (Benetton as cited in Cardinalli, 2016, p. 127).

Clinical-professional practice: After leaving USP, Jô resumed her private practice and her activities at CETO.

Teaching: Jô continued her teaching activities at CETO. Starting in 2000, the institution's training program was renamed *Dynamic Occupational Therapy*, signaling a move away from psychodynamic theories to support occupational therapy practice, given their limitations in addressing concrete evidence of everyday life (Benetton, 2010). Beginning in 2005, the program became known as *Training in the Dynamic Occupational Therapy Method* (Benetton et al., 2021a). During this period, CETO was renamed *Centro de Especialidades em Terapia Ocupacional*, under the leadership and coordination of Sonia Ferrari and Jô Benetton alone.

Investigation: Jô Benetton dedicated herself to refining what is now known as the Dynamic Occupational Therapy Method (DOTM). In her initial and ongoing studies, she organized clinical care around situational diagnostic, initiating the therapeutic process through management of the triadic relationship, and dialogically analyzing the lived experience using the Associative Path technique (Marcolino & Fantinatti, 2014). Upon returning from her postdoctoral studies, after conducting research on the history of occupational therapy, Jô Benetton focused on the work of Eleanor Clarke Slagle, identifying numerous similarities between Slagle's approach to occupational therapy and the *Habit Training* technique, which promotes health and habit formation (Benetton, 2005). Building on the understanding that Slagle inaugurated a new paradigm—the occupational therapy paradigm, distinct from the medical paradigm centered on symptom and disease management—Jô began to ground her practice in this paradigm (Benetton, 2005).

In this final phase of shaping the DOTM, a conceptual refinement took place, always with the understanding that these concepts should serve as practical tools, enabling mental representations that would support reflection and, consequently, practical action (Marcolino et al., 2021). Among the main concepts developed were *everyday life*, understood as an update of the term *habits*, and conceptualized based on the Brazilian philosopher Gilberto Kujawski as "*the unavoidable grammar that we must fill with our creativity*"; and *health*, based on the work of Georges Canguilhem, defined as a concept to be individualized for each person, regulating actions in life (Marcolino & Fantinatti, 2014).

Authorship: In 2005, she published the article *Além da opinião: uma questão de investigação para a historicização em terapia ocupacional* in *Revista CETO*, offering reflections on the need to revise the chronological history of the profession and proposing three paradigms for its development: the medical paradigm, the rehabilitation paradigm, and the occupational therapy paradigm (Benetton, 2005).

In 2006, she released the updated third edition of her book *Trilhas Associativas: Ampliando Subsídios Metodológicos à Clínica da Terapia Ocupacional* (Benetton, 2006). She gave numerous lectures at Brazilian Congresses of Occupational Therapy and Psychiatry Congresses, among other events. Highlights include her keynote address at the XI Brazilian Congress of Occupational Therapy in 2009 (Benetton, 2010), and her participation in the I International Symposium on Research in Occupational Therapy in 2010 (Benetton, 2012).

In 2015, Jô Benetton officially registered the DOTM with the National Library of Brazil under registration number 702.221 BN.

6. 2015 to the present: Recognition in the field of academic research

What I mean is that, truly, what is pre-established in the relationship between

science, knowledge, and life does not work for me (Benetton as cited in Mello, 2023, p. 88).

Science [...] is no longer theory that leads to observation, but observation that leads to theory (Benetton as cited in Mello, 2023, p. 91).

Clinical-professional practice: In 2018, Jô Benetton carried out her final clinical activity at the NGO *Despertar*, participating in a social project offering after-school activities for adolescents in the Cidade Ademar area, on the outskirts of São Paulo. She retired in 2017.

Teaching: Jô continues to teach some classes in the clinical training program in DOTM at CETO.

Research: Jô Benetton began receiving invitations to contribute to academic research, and her theoretical framework has increasingly been explored (Cardinalli, 2016; Mello, 2023). In 2020, she began coordinating, together with Prof. Taís Marcolino, a research group on Dynamic Occupational Therapy, which brings together researchers from various Brazilian universities interested in advancing knowledge based on the DOTM framework.

According to a recent survey, approximately twenty master's theses and doctoral dissertations in Brazil have employed the theoretical framework proposed by Jô Benetton (Benetton et al., 2021a). Specifically at the PPGTO/UFSCar, two doctoral dissertations have been defended (Araújo, 2022; Mello, 2023), with two additional doctoral and two master's projects currently underway.

Also in partnership with Prof. Taís Marcolino, Jô has further refined the definitions of some of the key concepts in DOTM, such as *social insertion*, publishing in 2020 the article *Dialogues with Benetton and Latour: possibilities for an understanding of social insertion* (Marcolino et al., 2020).

In 2021, she published two chapters in the book *Terapia Ocupacional em Neuropsiquiatria e Saúde Mental* (Benetton et al., 2021a, 2021b), together with the professionals she now recognizes as her network: Sonia Ferrari, Renata Bertolozzi, Ana Paula Mastropietro, and Taís Marcolino, who also teaches in the DOTM training program (Mello, 2023).

Discussion

The analysis of Jô Benetton's professional trajectory, based on the proposed analytical axes and viewed through the lens of innovation and leadership, allows for a discussion of the impact of her various activities on Brazilian occupational therapy. Regarding her professional practice, particularly in the field of mental health, it is possible to identify the focus of her efforts on highlighting the contributions and specificities of the profession within this field, always connected to her interest in investigating practice and in "discussing an internal logic for occupational therapy procedures" (Benetton, 2006, p. 23).

Clinical innovations appear to follow a two-way path: emphasizing the construction of a distinct framework within occupational therapy while also influencing mental health programs, such as the day hospital at *Santa Casa* (in partnership with Luiz

Cerqueira), the Crisis Clinic, and the project implemented in Ribeira da Vinha, Cape Verde. These and other actions, carried out in collaboration with the Mental Health Coordination Office, also provided a tangible contribution toward shaping a mental health care policy, as reflected in her words: “*there wasn’t a single fight I didn’t take on in the name of ‘opening the doors’ of hospitals and then close them from lack of use*” (Benetton, 1991a, p. 27).

Thus, it is possible to identify her as an active figure who contributed to the development of innovative initiatives, participating in the psychiatric reform movement as it gained momentum within the Brazilian context of the time (Amarante, 1998). Even in experiences outside mental health services—such as private practice or projects with adolescents in the socio-educational field—mental health remained a central focus of occupational therapy practice (Benetton, 1994, 2012), without being restricted to a single field of professional practice.

At CETO, Jô has always trained occupational therapists to work in community-based mental health services for children, adults, and older people, as demonstrated by many articles by her students published in *Revista CETO* (Quintino, 1998; Pinto, 1998; Cunha, 2005; Colato, 2010; Sousa, 2010; Maximino, 2008; Ceccato et al., 2007; Melo, 2007, 2010).

In the late 1980s and during the period from 1994 to 2000, her activities in the field of mental health decreased in volume. However, during this time, Jô published the thought-provoking article *Terapia Ocupacional e Reabilitação Psicossocial: Uma Relação Possível?* (Benetton, 1993/1996), which was included in a book edited by Ana Pitta—an important figure in the Brazilian psychiatric reform movement. In this text, Jô Benetton questions the power dynamics that might be implicit in psychosocial rehabilitation approaches, while also discussing occupational therapy’s potential contributions to the field, stating that “*wherever occupational therapy is respected, it will be able, through cordial interdisciplinarity, to fulfill the goals of psychosocial rehabilitation*” (Benetton, 1993/1996).

Could this stance be interpreted as a challenge to the direction taken by the psychiatric reform movement, particularly regarding the political-ideological dimensions of psychosocial rehabilitation? (Saraceno, 2001). Originating from Italian democratic psychiatry, with its drive to transform psychiatric issues into social and political issues (Amarante, 1998), psychosocial rehabilitation represents a framework that seeks to link rehabilitation unequivocally to the achievement of citizenship and to greater contractual power in employment, housing, and social relationships (Saraceno, 2001). Its implementation practices rely on the political and technical strength of avoiding fragmented and/or specialized care, aiming instead to overcome traditional clinical approaches and foster an expanded clinical practice grounded in the construction of transdisciplinary interventions (Onocko-Campos, 2001).

A possible answer to the initial question may be found in Jô Benetton’s own 1996 article, where she affirms her project to seek the specificity of occupational therapy rather than adapting it to existing health programs and projects (Benetton, 1993/1996). Considering the centrality of practice in her project of knowledge construction (Benetton et al., 2021a), one can see throughout her career an inseparable relationship between clinical practice, teaching, and research. Regarding teaching, as early as the 1970s, the study group she organized brought together key figures who would later

contribute to the development of the profession and its body of knowledge in Brazil (Benetton, 1991a). Within this group, seven core principles for the teaching and practice of occupational therapy were articulated, addressing the use of patient-chosen activities, professional autonomy, social reintegration, and teamwork.

This study group, initiated in 1973 and transformed into a specialized training course that continues to this day, invites further reflection: What is the significance of these principles, and what has been their impact on the shaping of occupational therapy in Brazil?

Training occupational therapists to work in diverse clinical and institutional settings has always been a constant feature of Jô Benetton's professional trajectory. There are no studies providing data on the number of professionals trained at CETO since its establishment in 1981. However, field research points to the existence of a substantial group of professionals who have completed this training (Lopes, 1999; Galheigo, 2008). Today, this group can also be examined in light of their academic and research practices based on the principles of DOTM (Araújo, 2022), as well as through a systematic review of the body of literature inspired by this framework (Cestari et al., 2024). Regarding publications, the book *Trilhas Associativas* (Associative Path) was updated with each new edition (Benetton, 1991a, 1999, 2006), reflecting its theoretical advancements. However, this process was only fully understood by those who followed the evolution of her ideas. The name *Trilhas Associativas* (Associative Path), for example, refers to just one component of the theoretical-methodological framework—specifically, to the evaluation of intervention through the dialogical narrative of lived experience within the triadic relationship, aimed at constructing new meanings and gaining conscience (Mello et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the creation of *Revista CETO*—which coincided with the emergence of other academic journals in the field—provided a sense of identity for a particular group, serving as a resource for training, study, and publication of their intellectual work. However, one must ask: did this choice result in a more limited circulation of their publications?

Today, with the changes in the system for analyzing and evaluating knowledge production, a non-academic journal is excluded from the indexing system, making its publications less visible, as demonstrated by Galheigo et al. (2018). These authors acknowledge the limitations of conducting review studies based only on indexed material and contribute meaningfully by highlighting the institutional and academic consolidation of occupational therapy as a field of knowledge. In this regard, our findings are also intended to help reveal other facets that coexisted within the same historical and professional space of Brazilian occupational therapy.

The activities of investigation and research were presented separately, and in Mello et al. (2024) and Mello (2023), it becomes increasingly clear that this was a bold project, not a dichotomy between clinical practice and knowledge production. How might the development of the DOTM have unfolded if Jô Benetton had had a long-term academic career? It is well known that in Brazil, most research activities are carried out within public universities (Folha, 2019). Thus, unlike other leading Brazilian occupational therapy researchers, Jô's six years as a faculty member at USP were her only experience in a university setting—making her career trajectory quite distinctive. She remained active in research, teaching, and clinical occupational therapy outside the

university environment throughout her fifty-year professional career, consistently dedicated to training occupational therapists to work in a wide range of practice contexts.

Nevertheless, in terms of visibility, challenges remain to ensure that information about the existence of the DOTM and its possibilities extends beyond the local scope of what is produced at CETO. Although many publications present the DOTM and discuss specific aspects of its use, Jô Benetton has not written a dedicated book on the DOTM. Similarly, compilations that seek to systematize knowledge in the field in Brazil do not yet present the DOTM in its updated form (Cavalcanti & Galvão, 2007, 2023).

Thus, in articulating past and present in this analysis of Jô Benetton's professional trajectory, we aim to avoid the risk of historicism and the potential distortions that can arise from misinterpreting historical periods (Pimentel, 2001). The analysis of documents can be viewed as one of the tools for reconstructing memory, and it is necessary to understand these documents as elements that are still present, not confined to the past or to oblivion, because both in our practice and in the production of knowledge, "[...] *we are engaged with and proceed precisely from what was previously developed*" (Pimentel, 2001, p. 192).

Considering that the production of ideas and scientific knowledge is inherently social in nature (Pimentel, 2001), we have sought to develop reflections and questions that, as a field of knowledge, we need to address so that the profession's relationship with its foundations can be properly considered in understanding the discipline, as well as in professional education and research (Morrison, 2014). We hope that this analysis can help us frame good questions and inquiries about the history of occupational therapy in Brazil. Our effort to bring visibility to the trajectory of one of the most important figures in the development of Brazilian occupational therapy is also accompanied by the reflections of Jô Benetton herself, as a key figure in this history, to whom we now extend the following invitation:

The person is not that important. What matters is the work. That is the difference between me and my mother. I sought the work. What remains is the work. So, what I want to say is that what I would like to remain from my life, to remain in occupational therapy, is the work—not me (Benetton as cited in Mello, 2023, p. 92).

The invitation, then, dear reader, is to study the work of Jô Benetton and, beyond the professional journey presented here, to explore her contributions!

Final Considerations

This study aimed to present the professional trajectory of Jô Benetton, highlighting her leadership activities within the Brazilian occupational therapy landscape. Her clinical-professional practices, teaching, investigation, research, authorship, and international activities were analyzed across six historical periods, spanning a career of just over fifty years. Her dedication to a bold and innovative investigative project stands out, culminating in the development of an original occupational therapy framework: the Dynamic Occupational Therapy Method.

The study's limitations include the lack of exhaustive exploration and verification of the documentary material from a historiographic perspective, as well as the absence of an in-depth socio-historical discussion of that material. Moreover, we recognize the limited possibilities for interpreting this study; therefore, we sought to shift the focus from viewing the historical record as a definitive truth about the past to using it as a tool for reflecting on its potential implications for the present.

In asking ourselves what we might learn about Jô Benetton from this study, we sought to construct a reflection that, rather than simply offering answers, helps us formulate new questions about the history of occupational therapy in Brazil—beyond deepening our understanding of the life of one of its key figures.

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Author's Contributions

João Paulo Charles Albino contributed to the development of the research and the discussion of the findings and reviewed the information sources. Ana Carolina Carreira de Mello contributed to the development of the research and the discussion of the findings. Taís Quevedo Marcolino contributed to the development of the research and the discussion of the findings and reviewed the information sources. All authors participated in writing the text and approved its final version.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

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