

# Travestility, transsexuality and demands for occupational therapists training

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**Abstract:** This paper presents an exploratory study performed with the occupational therapy graduation courses of public universities in the state of São Paulo - Brazil, between 2013 and 2015, in order to identify and discuss the insertion of the gender themes. We focused on travestility and transsexuality in the Occupational Therapy undergraduate training. Initially, we performed a literature revision in the most relevant national and international indexed publications, as well as in the databases SCOPUS, SciELO and Web of Science. Also, we performed a survey to find public policies and/or programs, guidelines discussed and proposals specifically for this group in Brazil. In a second moment, the undergraduate courses were invited to participate by: a) giving access to their political-pedagogical projects; b) interviews with coordinators and teachers that worked with the subject; c) interviews with senior students; d) creating debate and discussion rounds. This dataset allowed the production of results focused on the theoretical and practical training of occupational therapists in the state, which has the higher number of professionals, courses, teachers and researchers in the Brazilian occupational therapy community. These results led to a discussion on training, regarding the assistance processes in the given area, in a way that offers references for strategies to deal with the daily vulnerabilities of the people experiencing travestility and transsexuality in the field of occupational therapy.

**Keywords:** *Travestility, Transsexuality, Undergraduate Formation, Higher Education, Public Politics.*

## Travestilidade, transexualidade e demandas para a formação de terapeutas ocupacionais

**Resumo:** Neste artigo apresenta-se um estudo exploratório realizado junto aos cursos de graduação em terapia ocupacional das universidades públicas do estado de São Paulo, entre 2013 e 2015, a fim de identificar e discutir a inserção das temáticas de gênero, com um recorte na travestilidade e na transexualidade, na formação graduada em terapia ocupacional. Inicialmente, procedeu-se a uma revisão da literatura nos periódicos de terapia ocupacional nacionais e internacionais indexados e de maior relevância na profissão, bem como nas bases de dados SCOPUS, SciELO e Web of Science. Também foram levantadas políticas públicas e/ou programas e diretrizes discutidas e propostas especificamente para esse grupo no Brasil. Em um segundo momento, os cursos foram convidados à participação com: o acesso aos seus projetos político-pedagógicos; entrevistas com suas coordenações e docentes que trabalhassem com o referido assunto em sala de aula; entrevistas com seus estudantes de último ano; a realização de rodas de conversas coletivas. Esse conjunto de dados permitiu a produção de resultados que, tendo como foco a formação teórica e prática de terapeutas ocupacionais no estado que possui o maior número de profissionais,

cursores, docentes e pesquisadores titulados na terapia ocupacional brasileira, levam à discussão dessa formação no que se refere aos processos de assistência no recorte pontuado, de maneira a oferecer referências para estratégias de enfrentamento às vulnerabilidades que cercam o cotidiano das pessoas que vivem a experiência da travestilidade e da transexualidade, a partir da terapia ocupacional.

**Palavras-chave:** *Travestilidade, Transexualidade, Formação Graduada, Ensino Superior, Políticas Públicas.*

## 1 Introduction

As occupational therapy is a profession involved with the complexities with the different lifestyles and daily activities of the subjects, as well as with the vulnerabilities of populations facing deficits of insertion and social participation, having a profession was triggered the production of the study to be brought in this article the hypothesis. Despite the aforementioned implications, it does not yet encompass demands on gender and sexuality issues, when they distance from the heteronormative logic<sup>1</sup>. Thus, with the understanding that occupational therapy may have significant contributions in assisting specific and general demands of the population that experience gender and sexuality diversity, this paper discusses the graduate training in occupational therapy directed to the travesti<sup>2</sup> and transsexual population.

### 1.1 Travestility and transsexuality

Queer is all this: it's weird, rare, odd. Queer is also the subject of s sexuality - homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals, travestis, drag. It is the eccentric who does not want to be "integrated" or even "tolerated." Queer is a way of thinking and being that neither aspires to the center nor wants it as a reference; a way of thinking and being that challenges the regulatory norms of society, which assumes the discomfort of ambiguity, of "between places", of the undecidable. Queer is a foreign body that bothers, disturbs, provokes, and fascinates (LOURO, 2008, p. 7-8).

It is proposed an idea of travestility and transsexuality, taking the queer theory, which, according to Miskolci (2009), it emerged in the late 1980s in the United States. Thus, since genders and sexualities are social and historical constructions, it is necessary to break with the centrality of heterosexuality, that is, the difference should not be placed on the heterosexual model. Queer theory understands that subjects, social identities, and behaviors are not stable, coherent or even regular, transposing binarism and establishing hierarchies and subalternation (MISKOLCI, 2009).

Under this clipping, there are several works that have proposed to understand the performativity<sup>3</sup> of travestility, such as Benedetti (2005), Kulick (2008), Pelúcio (2009), Duque (2009, 2013), Leite Junior (2011), Monzeli (2013) and Andrade (2015) and on transsexuality we have works such as those of Bento (2006, 2008), Almeida (2010), Teixeira (2013), Barbosa (2013) and again Leite Junior (2011) and Duque (2013). In general, these texts show the misconception of taking such identities in a fixed and linear way, inasmuch as they are multiple, flexible, different processes and innumerable possibilities.

In this sense, establishing definitions of these identities is not sought in this text and, nor, to corroborate the "basic differentiation" between travestis and transsexuals, which, as Barbosa (2013) points out - from the positions of Harry Benjamin, in his text "Transvestism and transsexualism", written in 1953 - errs in conceiving that transsexuals would be those who seek trans-genitalization surgery and feel uncomfortable with the genital organ they have and that travestis have a pleasurable relationship with their penis or with their vagina. This idea is very widespread in health and guides many procedures that involve this population (BENTO, 2006, 2008; TEIXEIRA, 2013).

However, when monitoring the debates that involve these subjects and historically looking at such categories, a racial/ethnic class clipping is present, added to moral values, political positions, and cultural experiences, that crosses these identities, where travestis are generally in an inferior position. However, these markers are fluid, and identification as a travesti, transsexual, black, "mulatto", white, rich or poor can be strategically triggered to suit a given situation and context (PELÚCIO, 2009; LEITE JUNIOR, 2011, 2014).

It is also perceived people who call themselves as "stick woman", "woman with a breast and a stick" and so on. However, when they need to position themselves categorically in one of the two established identities, they declare themselves to be travestis, affirming a political commitment to this identity, their history and meaning in Brazil

(CARVALHO, 2011; LEITE JUNIOR, 2011; BARBOSA, 2013).

Therefore, given the complexities that permeate the sexual and gender categories, it is important to point out what Butler (2013, p. 24) said:

Conceived originally to question the formulation that biology is destiny, the distinction between sex and gender assists the thesis that, although sex seems intractable in biological terms, gender is culturally constructed: consequently, it is not even the result causal of sex, nor so apparently fixed as sex. Thus, the unity of the subject is already potentially challenged by the distinction that opens space to gender as a multiple interpretations of sex. [...] Taken to its logical limit, sex/gender disintegration suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for a moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of “men” applies exclusively to male bodies, or that the term “women” interprets only female bodies.

Thus, according to the author, it is initially understood that sex is related to the biological organ and gender corresponds to the way the person is introduced socially since it is a cultural construction. However, further on, he suggested that:

Gender should not be merely conceived as the cultural inscription of meaning in a previously given sex (a juridical conception); the same apparatus of production that the sexes are established must also be followed. Then, the gender is not for culture as sex for nature; it is also the discursive/cultural medium “sexed nature” or “natural sex” is produced and established as pre-discursive, prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture operates (BUTLER, 2013, p. 25).

Thus, travesti and transsexual bodies are those who break the intelligibility of the genders<sup>4</sup> and who create different possibilities for living and expressing life. However, this diversity, according to Louro (2008, p. 16), has been the target of:

[...] corrective pedagogies and recovery or punishment actions. For them, society resists penalties, sanctions, reforms, and exclusions.

It is necessary to reiterate that, according to what is here, travestility and transsexuality are understood as performativities that are in the category of gender and not of desire, a rather recurrent confusion in

the approach to themes; a travesti or transgender person is not necessarily a homosexual person. Their heterosexuality, homosexuality, or any other sexual condition they identify will depend on what arouses desire or not.

## 1.2 Graduate training in occupational therapy

Discussing the historical construction of the professional identity of the occupational therapist, Soares (1987) points out that it was shaped by the contradictory conditions of social reality and that the creation of the first vocational training courses in the country took the occupational therapy for motor dysfunctions as a reference.

According to Lopes (2004), the first version of the minimum standards of the occupational therapy curriculum began to be written in 1952 and it was approved in 1954 in an action of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT)<sup>5</sup> in 1958, publishing a document, complementing the previous one, to guide the opening of courses in countries where the profession was not yet established. The review of this document was constant, the fruit of the debate around the subject in the WFOT, and in 1966, a new document entitled “Education of the occupational therapist” is published.

As explained by Hahn (1999) in 1971, the revised version of the “Recommended Minimum Standards for the Training of Occupational Therapists” was published with the purpose of adapting to the changes that occurred in several professions that worked in the health sector, in accordance with the “compartmentalization of the body” and with the “division by specialties in clinical practice”, which were mainly related to those practiced by medicine. This model guided and permeated, for several decades, the training of the occupational therapist.

New changes were made in 1984, aiming to:

[...] incorporate the changes that reflected the new terminologies and techniques in occupational therapy and also to better guide the development of new curricular structures. These are the divisions in the text that explicitly explained the general requirements, the organization of the degree of graduation and the content of the subjects, as well as the specifications of the professional internships, supervised practice (LOPES, 2004, p. 2).

In 1991, the less prescriptive review maintained the 1984 version. In this version, the WFOT required forms for the initial recognition of courses, as well

as their continuous monitoring, were used to allow national associations to this task every five years (LOPES, 2004).

In 2002, another change was needed and it was published so far. This review of the proposal of the minimum standards in the area was built from three main related aspects: the professional, society as a whole and the educational aspect. The first one concerns the promotion of the practice of research as a quality standard for the execution of occupational therapy; the second presents the need for greater visibility on the possible contributions of occupational therapy to the health and welfare of communities at local, national and international levels, where these should help people's expectations of quality of life and social well-being; the third provides for the guarantee of the maintenance of common guidelines and standards worldwide (HAHN; LOPES, 2003).

More recently, two WFOT documents have focused on recommending practices that value diversity. One of this documents is the "Taking of Position on Human Rights" (WORLD..., 2006), marking WFOT's position on Human Rights, articulating them with occupational therapy and affirming the right to occupy in that sphere. With such a position, occupational therapists must identify occupational injustices that occur, broaden their view of occupation and understand social participation as a direct, engaging in the struggle for a more accessible society.

The second is the "Taking of Position in the Face of Diversity and Culture" (WORLD ..., 2010), with the reaffirmation of WFOT's commitment to Human Rights, recommending that the "Guiding Principles for Diversity and Culture" be followed (KENEBÁNIAN; STOMPH, 2009), proposing that vocational training in occupational therapy incorporate knowledge about diversity and culture, which must be respected and incorporated into actions, research and professional practices.

In Brazil, the National Curricular Guidelines<sup>6</sup> (DCN) for undergraduate education in occupational therapy list several skills and competencies to be acquired by the graduate such as "to know the social, economic, cultural and political factors of the country's life fundamental to citizenship," relating such factors to "the specific problem of the population they will work," having as main objectives their "emancipation and autonomy." It is also expected to understand "health-society

relationships, as well as social exclusion-inclusion relationships", participating "in the formulation and implementation of [different] social policies." Also, they are expected to develop "professional activities with different groups at risk", acting

[...] as a facilitator, transformer, and manager, as well as social groups, through attitudes permeated by the notion of complementarity and inclusion [...] (BRASIL, 2002, p. 2- 3).

Therefore, according to DCNs for undergraduate occupational therapy in Brazil, the precepts of professional ethics (FIGUEIREDO et al., 2017), or the internationally agreed parameters according to WFOT are:

[...] competent training in the human sciences area and the development of a critical capacity, projecting interventions based on technical, ethical and political aspects. For occupational therapy, the training of more autonomous and skillful professionals with skills to operate the complex contemporary problems that are presented (LOPES; PAN, 2013, p. 104) is based on occupational therapy.

## 2 The Research Design

This article shows the results of a study aimed to identify and discuss the insertion of the gender topic, with a travestility and transsexuality cutting, in the graduate training in the occupational therapy of public universities in the state of São Paulo. The study was conducted between mid-2013 and late 2015. In a first phase (2013-2014), we investigated only the course of the University of São Paulo (USP) - Campus São Paulo, whose choice was given as one of the oldest in Brazil, for its influence on the production of knowledge in occupational therapy and, fundamentally, for being inserted in a city where the diversity and differences of the ways of life are very present. After an agreement with the collaboration with the research, a professor who composed the course graduation Council at this higher education institution (IES) was assigned to the dialogue around the research to accomplish what was foreseen for that moment. This teacher was contacted and, after an interview<sup>7</sup> granted, the access to the Political-Pedagogical Project of the course was promptly available, to the menus of the subjects, to a list with the contact of all the alumni of the HEI. All the students who graduated in 2013 were invited to participate in the research. In the course of the conversation with the aforementioned teacher, it was questioned whether there would be a

teacher in the course who would work with teaching, research or extension, so we could contact and invite participation in the study, with the granting of an interview<sup>8</sup>, in person or Skype software.

Also, national and international occupational therapy journals were searched - nominated below - which were included because they had a greater impact on the profession. Also, the documents that said to bring policies and/or programs, directives, ordinances, among others, were put together and synthesized, that turned to the guarantee, specifically, of citizenship and rights of travestis and transsexuals.

In a second phase (2014-2015), the research could be expanded and all other public universities in the state of São Paulo that offer the undergraduate course in occupational therapy were investigated: State University Júlio de Mesquita Filho (UNESP) - Campus Marília; Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar); Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP) - Campus Baixada Santista and University of São Paulo (USP) - Campus Ribeirão Preto. Given this broadening of scope, the criteria for inclusion of students for the conversation about the training received were revised, with a focus on access to ex-students who:

- Had contact (theoretical or practical) with the subject on screen;
- Participated in research, studies or university extension activities and dealt with this theme during graduation;
- Performed the work in the area or participated in some form of organization around the theme, inside or outside the HEI;
- They were interested in the subject and wanted to talk about it.

Regarding the coordination of courses at HEI, the proposal for the first phase was maintained, with the invitation to collaborate with the granting of an interview and the availability of the necessary documents and contacts. All the teachers indicated by the coordinators and students of the different courses were also invited to participate through an interview<sup>9</sup>.

We also expanded the bibliographic review by searching three databases (SciELO, Web of Science and SCOPUS) for the production of travesti and transsexual population in the interface with occupational therapy, as well as the studies on national public policies specifically for this population.

After the data collection and with the initial synthesis of the results found, a return was made to the universities to present this material, whose analysis had not been finalized, with the holding of

a talk circle so we could talk with the coordination, teachers, and students on occupational therapy in interface with travesti and transsexual population.

Thus, five interviews were conducted with coordinators of the courses, six with teachers, 31 with students and five talk circles (totaling 126 participants).

Finally, it should be noted that all necessary ethical procedures were duly observed<sup>10</sup>.

### 3 Results and Discussion: The Reality We Find Along the Way

The following are the results of the research conducted in the literature review, in the documents and data on policies and/or programs aimed at travestis and transsexuals, as well as the empirical area in the public HEIs in the state of São Paulo, Brazil with the analysis of documents (political-pedagogical projects and menus of the courses of occupational therapy), talks with the coordination, conversation with teachers, conversation with graduates and conversational circles.

#### 3.1 Literature review

Like Beagan et al. (2013) point out, even without describing their search procedures, research on occupational therapy with transgender people is non-existent. The literature review of the area made for this study reaffirms it and broadens this perception, since, besides the inexistence of the research, there is also scarce the academic discussions, divulged in the vehicles of the area.

Initially, we considered the Brazilian indexed journals and the international journals with the greatest impact factor: American Journal of Occupational Therapy, Asian Journal of Occupational Therapy, Australian Occupational Therapy Journal, British Journal of Occupational Therapy, Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy, Hong Kong Journal of Occupational Therapy, New Zeland Journal of Occupational Therapy, Occupational Therapy Internacional, Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy, Cadernos de Terapia Ocupacional of UFSCar, Revista de Terapia Ocupacional of USP.

The proposal of the survey with these journals was to gather, quantify and analyze the productions in occupational therapy directed to the population that is the subject of this research. The two national journals cited above were considered, since, besides

being indexed, they are the major references in the scientific production of Brazilian occupational therapy.

The period considered was from 2000 to 2013, in a cut that focused on the most recent production, but with a wide range<sup>11</sup>, as we hypothesized the publication on the subject would be restricted to these vehicles.

For the search, the following descriptors were used: *Travestismo\**; *Travestilidade\**; *Travesti\**; *Transexualismo/ Transsexualism*; *Transexualidade/Transsexuality*; *Transgênero/Transgender*; *Transexual/Transsexual*. The terms in asterisks refer to travestility and these were used only in national searches since the nomenclature of these performativities is part of a Brazilian context<sup>2</sup> and is hardly used abroad.

Of the eight texts found, the abstracts were read to know the proposal of the articles produced. Those dealing with the issues in focus were read in full. Only the article “Working with transgender clients: learning from physicians and nurses to improve occupational therapy practice” discussed the issue of transsexuality centrally. Beagan et al. (2013) interviewed physicians and nurses who worked with transsexuals to understand whether occupational therapy would have contributions to care for this population.

“Professionalism, personal taste and social inclusion: does it matter what clients wear?” (POPE; DAVYS; TAYLOR, 2008), also read in its full, focused on the discussion of clothing worn by clients, a transsexual case.

The second review took place between October 2014 and July 2015, in the SciELO, Scopus, and Web of Science databases, with the search period open, using the same descriptors of the previous review and accompanied by the descriptor *Terapia Ocupacional/Occupational Therapy*<sup>12</sup>.

With this expansion, it was possible to obtain even more reliable results regarding the production involving occupational therapy and the theme of travestility and transsexuality, since, unlike the one performed in the first phase of the research, when we selected the bases, we also extended the journals to be considered, covering those that are not specific to the profession. In spite of this, the almost inexistence of production in the area on the subject was ratified, and only two texts were found, one of which is the already mentioned article by Beagan et al. (2013) and the second is “A Treatment Package for Transsexualism” (KHANNA; DESAI; CHANNABASAVANNA, 1987), aimed to show a treatment for transsexuality, in which interventions

were made so the person (a transsexual woman) could “adjust” to his gender role, a gender that the authors understood as the correct one, in this case, the masculine. The referral to occupational therapy was

- (1) avoid his fantasizing excessively about his sexual experiences and keep him occupied and
- (2) facilitate the process of modeling, social skills training, and fantasy training by asking him to take on a male role (KHANNA; DESAI; CHNNABASAVANNA, 1987, p. 197).

Therefore, the therapeutic-occupational practice did not respect the differences of genders, corroborating the binary and phallogocentric maintenance of the understanding of gender.

Taking the reading of the selected articles, it was identified that the work of the occupational therapy with the transsexual and travesti population is a field to be constructed. Although the texts point out the possibility of occupational therapists - in this case, articles aimed only at the transsexual population - this should not be done in an uncritical way.

When we get in touch with the complete article by Beagan et al. (2013), we had access to another production (JESSOP, 1993), in which the authors point out that this is the only text related to the transgender population in occupational therapy until then. Given the relevance, this reference integrated the scope of the dialogue that we have seen. The paper published in 1993 in the *British Journal of Occupational Therapy* is called “Occupational therapy with a Male-to-Female transsexual: a case study.” This is a case study in which the author followed a transsexual woman who was referred to the occupational therapy sector of a regional hospital by a psychiatrist who doubted she could perform successfully as a woman. Therefore, the treatment plan was based on

To improve M’s physical presentation in her chosen gender role, with particular attention to dress, make-up and hair; To develop M’s confidence in her new role; To facilitate decision making and formation of plans for the future (JESSOP, 1993, p. 323).

These articles focus specifically on the transsexuality are based on a medical-pathologizing view, contrast with the references built for this study, which does not see such performativity as some deviation or disease.

A common point in the articles is the intervention proposal related to the development of femininity (in the case of transsexual women) and masculinity

(in the case of the transsexual woman reported in the text of Khanna, Desai, and Channabasavanna), assisting transsexual women to understand the feminine or reinforce masculine postures. This is a point that requires attention. What would it be to work on femininity or masculinity? What idea of woman or man does Pope, Davys, and Taylor (2008) and Khanna, Desai and Channabasavanna (1987) refer to in their texts? Would only one answer be possible for the thousands of women and men in the world? The assumption of this study is that occupational therapists focus the social participation and autonomy of people on their practices, helping them to overcome what prevents or limit them in the fuller performance of their daily lives. Feeding the gender stereotype does not go in that direction. Therapeutic-occupational actions should help travesti and transgender people to walk freely and safely between the possibilities of gender.

This formatted search for a “feminine being” is widely portrayed by Bento (2006), pointing out, in general, that with this model that teams responsible for the transsexualization process operate. However, not all transsexual women are, in fact, corresponding to it, nor are all female cissexuals<sup>13</sup> either. Stereotyped assertions assume that delicacy, emotion, and sensitivity are to the woman just as to man are aggressiveness and reason.

It is not a question of saying that travestis and transsexuals cannot or should not be helped with clothing, makeup, walking in heels, skin or hair care, if they are their demands, but certainly, this process cannot be naturalized nor take it as the most ambitious project of their lives.

In this sense, Beagan et al. (2013) go further, proposing the creation of environments and transpositive interactions, in which occupational therapists must be educated to the issues that involve “being transgender.” They propose knowledge about the difference between sex, gender, and sexual orientation, among other things, an issue that has already been highlighted here. Forms are also suggested that allow people to self-identify, as well as how to call them by the name they prefer (this is the social name), work with the option of placing, besides the legal name, the social name in the forms, to place the client in the spotlight and to eliminate all possible spaces in which the genders are segregated and, where this strategy is not possible, to develop a policy that also addresses the needs of transgender people.

By focusing on people’s work in the transition process, there is a need to reduce the social isolation that these people suffer, as well as intervention in schools, jobs, health services, among other places, ensuring their rights.

The strategies outlined show great possibilities of action, extrapolating the space of the hospital, not restricted to the population that is in the process of transition or in the pre-surgical period.

### 3.2 Around public policies and/or programs

Regarding current public policies, programs and/or guidelines, aimed specifically at travestis and transsexual people, the reading of some texts shows a great national gap. There is still a long way to go live in a country where this population is seen as a citizen, that can access social goods and be fully respected as human beings.

Mello et al. (2013), as well as Pelúcio and Duque (2013), present data that show how the construction of agendas that demand an intersectoral articulation is a great illusion since, in the case of the LGBT population, these demands are seconded by the different sectors.

The Brazil Without Homophobia (BSH) program, launched in 2004 with the objective of promoting LGBT citizenship, equating rights, combating violence and respecting the specificities of each population group, involving the federal, state and municipal spheres, although pioneering and innovative, did not have the necessary funding, transferred responsibilities to social movements that militated in the area, did not aggregate the different levels of government, causing few actions to be developed and almost nothing that was proposed became real.

In June 2008, the Federal Government held the First National Conference on Public Policies for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Travesti and Transgendered People whose Annals presented 599 resolutions approved in the final plenary session. In May 2009, the National Plan for the Promotion of Citizenship and LGBT Human Rights was launched, based on proposals approved at the First National LGBT Conference (MELLO et al., 2013). According to these authors, just like Brazil Without Homophobia, the LGBT National Plan does not precisely present the budget forecast and also lacks inter-sectorial and interministerial partnerships.

With such difficulties, along with so many others (such as the conservatism of the representatives of the National Congress, the sociocultural devaluation of this population, the lack of recognition and invisibility of their demands), the country has only a few programs, guidelines, decrees and laws that, while important, do not constitute a compatible minimum agenda.

Thus, there are guidelines at the national level to guarantee the use of the social name in health (Health Users' Rights Letter and Technical Note DATASUS 18/2014) and education (Ordinance Number 1,612 of the MEC), created to reduce the travesti and transsexual constraints in the services being treated and identified by the name in their records.

Also, there is also the Transsexualization Process (instituted by Ordinances Number 1707 and Number 457, August 2008 and extended by Ordinance Number 2.803, November 19, 2013, Ministry of Health). This program has several assistance strategies to meet the demands of travestis and transsexuals who wish to make corporal modifications. This is strongly linked to health services, offering therapeutic, surgical and outpatient care. The reality of this program is marked by stereotypes and pathologization of travesti and transsexual experiences, and it is common for transphobic and stigmatizing treatment even by the technical staff (ALMEIDA, 2010; BENTO, 2006, 2008; BORBA, 2014).

Besides to the programs presented above, Mello et al. (2013) cite the Astral Program TOP (Work, Opportunity and Social Security), the Sectorial Plan for Qualification aimed at the LGBT population (PLANSEQ-LGBT) and specific actions of insertion of the LGBT population in social assistance, such as Specialized Reference Centers of Social Assistance (CREAS) LGBT. In the state level, according to the one accessed on the website of the Secretariat of Justice and the Defense of Citizenship, in the area of Policy Coordination for Sexual Diversity (SÃO PAULO, 2015), São Paulo, there are:

- Decree nº 54.032 of 02.18.2009 - Creating and organizing, the Coordination of Policies for Sexual Diversity of the State of São Paulo, in the Secretariat of Justice and Defense of Citizenship. This Coordination focuses on issues related to the defense of the rights of sexual diversity and the population of lesbians, "gays", bisexuals, travestis, and transsexuals;

- Decree nº 55.588 dated 03.17.2010 - Providing for the nominal treatment of transsexual and travesti person in public agencies of the state of São Paulo, ensuring the right to choose nominal treatment in acts and procedures promoted within the direct and indirect administration of the State under the terms of this decree;
- CEE Deliberation N° 125/2014 of 04/30/2014
- Providing for the inclusion of the social name of travestis and transsexuals in the school records of public and private institutions in the Education System of the State of São Paulo, proposing to respect citizenship, human rights, diversity, pluralism and human dignity;
- Law nº 10.948 dated 11.05.2001 - Providing for the penalties to be applied to the practice of discrimination based on sexual orientation;
- SAP Resolution 11 of 01.30.2014 - Providing for care to travestis and transsexuals within the penitentiary system, respecting, for example, their gender, the use of clothing according to their gender identity, with the possibility of implantation of wards for travestis and transsexuals.

Some of the managers try to justify the treatment of policies for travestis and transsexuals from those of a universalist character; for Mello et al. (2013, p. 144), there is no need to ignore focused policies:

To establish that the existence of a policy that generalizes subjects is a guarantee of compliance with the perspective of protecting the rights of LGBT people is not to recognize the limits imposed by institutional (or State) homophobia that permeates public policies in the Brazil, that is, homophobia that materializes within the government bodies or their actions, projects, programs and policies, either through the direct prohibition of the access of LGBT people to supposedly universal citizenship rights, or through the deliberate omission of these segments when policies are formulated that benefit only the people who structure their lives from heterosexual affective and sexual bonds.

Although little has been proposed, and still less effective, the lack of knowledge of these resolutions contributes to professional conduct with incomplete referrals, unethical procedures, also resulting in the maintenance of the exclusion of these people in public and private services.

The courses researched, even if they deal broadly with the subject of "Public Policies", do not bring

to the scope of the training of the occupational therapist those that specifically refer to travestis and transsexualities. The need for insertion of the teaching of these policies and/or programs, legal guidelines in the day-to-day of graduate training brings knowledge so in the future the professional qualifies and humanizes the therapeutic/occupational intervention/care.

### 3.3. The field in the universities

- Political Pedagogical Project, Menus and Interviews

In the universities surveyed, occupational therapy courses underwent several curricular transformations since its inception to include a graduated critical, generalist formation that contemplated the demands placed on the country in each historical moment. We talked with former students, coordination, and teachers to grasp the current momentum of each one of them.

Table 1 shows the number of graduates and teachers interviewed in each University. All coordinators have appointed a representative to speak with us.

Regarding the PPP (Political-Pedagogical Projects), all had convergences that turned to the proposal to train occupational therapists “[...] to understand human activity in all its forms of expression and potentialities [...]” (UNIVERSIDADE..., 2012? p. 1), of working

[...] with contradictions produced by the society-individual-community relationship that may sometimes be moving in dissonant rhythms marked by social, political and health-disease differences (UNIVERSIDADE..., 2011, p. 36).

still be present in the processes of

[...] formulation and implementation of public policies appropriate to the transformations necessary for health promotion and therapeutic procedures that allow a healthy insertion of the citizen in the daily life of

his social and professional relationships [...] (UNIVERSIDADE..., 2013? p. 5).

The PPPs of some universities also brought the menus of the course subjects, while in others it was necessary to access them separately. Along with this, the different pedagogical proposals implied curricula with different designs, so, for example, UFSCar worked from the active methodologies and UNIFESP turned to

[...] a training in an interdisciplinary perspective, focused on the relationships and the development of competencies, focusing on the regional and national context, directed to the principles of Interprofessional and Permanent Education (UNIVERSIDADE ..., 2014, p. 40),

with common subjects for all its courses in the Baixada Santista campus. Also, USP-RP currently works with an integrated curricular matrix, in major axes; its coordinator indicated what she called the longitudinal/horizontal axis as the main axis of the course, focused on the life cycles. In the courses, different subjects were identified that could incorporate the debate of the population in focus in this research. They are disciplines that turned to diversity, culture, corporeity, populations in social vulnerability, processes of social exclusion, anthropology, ethics, society, collective health, stigma, prejudice, social field, public health, for example. However, only two HEIs pointed out the specific discussion with the travesti and transsexual population incorporated into the curriculum.

One of them is UNIFESP, where this content is offered in the “block” of the interdisciplinary subjects, not being a specific discussion about the interface with the occupational therapy. The interview with teachers of the “Human Being and its Social Insertion”, indicated by the Coordination, found that the teachers who study the subject have their education within the humanities and are people who have worked with the population, whether in research or in the professional practice, then, understanding the pertinence of the subject, they are committed to their teaching. Even UNIFESP taking the subject to the classroom on the common axis, provoking initial questions, one of the teachers states that:

*There is no theoretical training, there is no practical training, there is no research training, evaluating today, aimed specifically at travestis and transsexuals... Except in these initiatives,*

**Table 1.** List of interviewees for the survey.

University	Interviews	
	Students	Teachers
UNESP	4	1
UFSCar	13	2
UNIFESP	2	3
USP-RP	2	-
USP-SP	10	-

*scientific initiation, and TCC, and usually, fall with me. In the master's degree, I even went on a board of a professional master's degree... [...] But after graduation, it is only for the student's own interest... (TEACHER 4, UNIFESP).*

Regarding the content of occupational therapy for the collaborators, even the conversation having been initiated in general, which is valid and important, there is no tie in specificity and the course does not continue the discussions.

Another university that works with the subject is UFSCar. The graduates reported that in a Problem Situation (PS)<sup>14</sup> during the graduation the subject was approached, but the people interviewed evaluated that they did not feel contemplated in the necessary knowledge on the subject, since the teacher (facilitator) did not dominate the subject and what was punctuated contributed to reiterate stereotyped views on the population, as shown below:

*It was that thing that kept us arguing that the travesti is the one who dresses as a woman, the transsexual is the one who does surgery. And there was such a thing of discussion of categories, there was this very strong question of prostitution, the sexual issue, prejudices, some very prejudiced phrases from some colleagues, but at no time did we discuss the role of occupational therapy with these subjects (F.E., graduated from UFSCar).*

Institutionally, the coordinator was not able to say if the dialogue with the themes we punctuate exists in the training continuum, believing that the debate generally takes place with the intense discussion of diversity, but not necessarily in this specificity. She said that this discussion is foreseen in the theoretical axes, but could not say whether it is done in a satisfactory way. Another possibility for her is that the theme appears in the contexts of practice. She mentioned perceiving the social field appropriating the theme, given its approach to sociological studies.

In fact, the practice - via extension or internship - was identified as an insertion field where the theme appears. One of the teachers interviewed says that the theme is expensive for the group, as well as violence and sexuality, for example, to the extent that this is evidenced in practice - specifically in practice with young people - and also pervades as a contemporary theme, which are the object of the teaching of this collective. Specifically, however, this occurs more in the scope of the post-graduation, having been mentioned two works that effectively dialog with the travesti.

The other professor at UFSCar stated that this population appears in the extension project with the street population. This theme composes the transversality of subjects that involve the complexity of the life of the subjects who access the project. The specific subject of travestility and transsexuality comes precisely when the debate over the multiplicity of living is patterned.

Most interviewees, regardless of the HEI, believe that occupational therapy has contributions, whether in the field or in the professional nucleus:

*This is a question that frequently appears regarding transsexuality in hospitals. When you intern, where do you intern? If the person identifies with the opposite gender, do you intern the ward of men or women? So they are questions that permeate professional practice, but that is only posed when the question exists. From this bulge, you can imagine the prejudices, violence that is happening with regard to the condition of travesti and transsexuality. When this is given in the training, the person arrives differently to practice (REPRESENTATIVE COORDINATION USP/SP).*

However, proposals for inclusion of this subject run into a frequent impasse in the courses: lack of workload. The inclusion of more content, the creation of new subjects, implies the extension of training time. Students, teachers, and coordinators, in some HEIs, have been demanding the suppression of subjects so one does not have a graduated formation that is so long or "overloaded".

*I think this is going to have to come in because there are some guidelines that point out that both this issue of differences, that these population segments are little me ... As we will insert this into the curriculum, I do not know... [...] But I think it's a segment that is there, it's part of it (COORDINATION REPRESENTATIVE, UNIFESP).*

*I find this subject pertinent to occupational therapy. But in fact, I think we should first think about the issue of training much more broadly, than disciplinary training. [...] I think that in this sense, the more widely we can work with different populations, the different demands of our populations, I think it is important; but also how we can bring this discussion to other spaces, events, courses, discussion forums, because there we would work more broadly on the question of travesti, in general, and a look at this population (REPRESENTATIVE COORDINATION, USP/RP).*

This debate is conflicting and it seems to be necessary to use strategies to include content related to the subject matter without major curricular changes.

One of the teachers interviewed points out that there are many variables that exist and perhaps the training does not manage to cover all of them in depth. However, she understands that the graduation would be geared more to awaken the sensibility, the reasoning, the care, considering the differences and singularities. For another teacher, it is important that we have a strong sociological base, so we will be able to form good professionals, even if we do not deal specifically with travesti and transsexuality.

*We have lived through a time when moral judgment and the issues of what are rights are very much at the forefront of the context. Recognizing the importance of gender, travesti, transsexuality, and other themes as well, what worries me more deeply is "have we been able to offer the foundations for a critical and nonjudgmental reading of contemporary society?" [...]. As we solve this, I think it's the challenge put today for training in several areas, for us too (TEACHER 2, UFSCar).*

Also, another teacher understands that breaking with the "generalized" logic of the subjects would broaden the practice potency of the profession.

*I think that discussions of gender and sexuality are transversal to the whole look at the subject [...] when I think about these dimensions of gender and sexuality within O.T., I wonder how the destruction of these normative conceptions would make the people broaden the view of the subject within their broad possibilities (TEACHER 1, UNESP).*

It is not the focus of this work, but deciding what is inside or outside a graduate training should also make us reflect which variables lead us to privilege knowledge about certain populations to the detriment of others, why some groups are more expensive.

Some interviewees mention that in the labor market occupational therapy is seen as a profession that has the capacity to intervene in specific issues of the travesti and transsexual experience:

*Now working, I have contact with a population with this type of issue, I am getting reference services for the population. None of this was in college, in college I did not even have the knowledge that existed, I have the knowledge now at work [...]. I'm even following a patient with this problem, wanting to have sex-change surgery [...] I did not*

*know how to refer. [...] Occupational therapy can empower, giving autonomy and fight for rights. This opens the way a little. In this case, this person did the hormonal treatments without any kind of medical advice, so it was also an orientation that we gave [...] so he could achieve what he wanted, he wanted, I know, to have a body more feminine, but that it was very dangerous to do this without any kind of orientation (M., GRADUATE, USP-SP).*

*In the issue of transsexuality, there were two, but it has the question of sexual orientation, it has even more, in fact, but that I worked was that number, more or less. [...] working this was working my training outside the university, and I can even say that it was a collective formation with the people with whom I had experience [...]. A teenager who arrives from the trade is different from the adolescent who arrives because he stole a doll from a supermarket, and there is a specific question, the story of being a woman or not, "I do not know what I want to be", "Sometimes I want to..." (MS, GRADUATE, UFSCar).*

*I'm in the family's health home, and there's a case of a patient who is in the process of recognizing herself as a woman and assuming herself, and he was in a lot of trouble, emotional, assuming, and social, for not being accepted. [...] So, which is the best professional to solve this type of demand, according to the multi-team? It's the O.T. and Social Service (C., GRADUATE UNESP).*

- Conversations circles

The idea of the Conversation Circles was to create opportunities for an expanded debate on travestis, transsexualities, the training of the occupational therapist in the contemporary problems and their insertion in the agenda of these professionals, as well as to take a return of the results found in the research, discussing them with current students, teachers, course coordinators, among others (students of other courses in HEI, trained professionals, etc.) willing to dialogue about these topics.

It was a moment to turn to the current HEI - graduated training project that is a reference in the country - to think about internship fields, as well as the debate about possible paths for teaching and therapeutic-occupational practice with the travesti population and transgendered.

Thus, having as partners the academic centers of each HEI that integrated the research, five circles of conversations were held, registered in audio and video, with the authorization of the participants. Also, academic centers brought the demands of

**Table 2.** List of participants in each University.

Conversation Circles	
University	N° of Participants
UNESP-Marília	28
UFSCar	33
UNIFESP	21
USP-RP	19
USP-SP	25

students from other courses wanting to compose the circle so they were open to all those interested in the subject at the HEI, although with the specific invitation to students (all periods), teachers and to the coordination of the undergraduate course in occupational therapy<sup>15</sup>. In Table 2, we synthesize the number of participants in each university.

On the execution of the activity, we first presented a synthesis of the general preliminary results of the research, as much as the documents as in relation to the interviews made. With the big picture, the discussion lingered on the results of the HEI in which the circle was taking place.

An environment was created that favored dialogue and discussed paths, proposals, possibilities and needs about the travesti and transsexual population in graduate training in occupational therapy. Also, it was possible to discuss how to act professionally, ethically and technically, with travestis and transsexual people. The students reported the lack of preparation within their graduate education and the insecurity about the possibility of being called to act with these people. Also, they have discussed how the programs and guidelines were also not known and the impact that this (un) knowledge can bring in practice.

Finally, a well-accepted strategy was the insertion of the theme in existing subjects among the ways to trim the edges, as well as considering the curricular revision in the process in some HEIs an opportune moment for it.

#### **4 “I know you cannot change the beginning, but if you want, you can change the ending”<sup>16</sup>**

As opposed to what was exposed in the research, how to build another reality of occupational therapy with the travesti and transsexual population?

Along with the difficulty of creating new subjects and a faculty that could convey a consistent knowledge,

the path we had foreseen, also presented as possible on the circles, would be to treat the theme more transversally in existing subjects, guaranteeing its presence. To understand what considerations are in a hospitalization when a travesti or transsexual person is hospitalized, to appropriate what strategies public health should take to approach these people, to apprehend dimensions of such experiences by the subjects in the different courses of life. It is the discussion within the area of physical rehabilitation, approaching, for example, research that proposes to investigate the use of hormones and their impact on bones and joints. It is also possible to insert this population when studying the economic-social processes, the insertion in the formal labor market, in the strategies of solidarity economy. In the social field, understanding the processes that can lead this population to disaffiliation, which networks are building inside or outside the margins, in what way the experience of travesti and transsexuality impacts the social insertion of such subjects are possible paths.

Regarding to occupational therapy interventions, it is assumed that the profession has a lot to contribute to this population, either in the construction of life projects, in the expansion of social participation, in the aid of new activities/occupations/corporations, in the struggle for the expansion and the guarantee of the effectiveness of rights, in the interlocution in humanized care, regardless of the sector or the service.

It is also necessary to invest in the possibilities beyond the general demands, which are not tied to the travesti and transsexual experience, where, even for these interventions, the professional must be prepared to receive these people, creating, as suggested by Beagan et al. (2013), a transpositive environment in which these people will feel welcomed.

Also, to insert the theme in the graduate training is to commit to the qualification of professionals who are already being called to intervene with these people in the different social equipment, whether public or private. Also, it awakens to the possibility of expanding the performance of the profession, with the incorporation of occupational therapists in services beyond those in which the profession is traditionally inserted.

It should be pointed out that most of the students who reported having knowledge about the subject point the student movements as training spaces also in this scope, and it is important for the courses to value and encourage the linking of undergraduates

to them, since they are rich spaces of complementary training with experiences of different orders.

It is also understood that to expect that the theme comes from the practice having space for discussion in the graduate training is to corroborate with the violence so present in the daily life of these people since some of the graduates and graduates in occupational therapy will remain oblivious to the demands of this population. It takes a formation that arouses sensitivity, empathy with these subjects and creates ruptures in the historical exclusion, stigmatization, and transphobia with these people and their bodies. It is building bridges for qualified and ethical actions.

Thus, in the following ways, it is possible to define which occupational therapy is wanted to construct: one that reinforces the gender stereotypes, that of the invisibility of other diversities, or an occupational therapy that opens, in fact, to the many ways life is imposed and which proposes to update and incorporate knowledge that can deal with different social demands.

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## Author's Contributions

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Miskolci (2009, p. 156-157) clarifies that “[...] heteronormativity is a set of prescriptions that ground social processes of regulation and control, even those that do not relate to people of the opposite sex. Thus, it does not refer only to legitimate and normalized subjects, but it is a contemporary denomination for the historical device of sexuality that shows its objective: to form all to be heterosexual or to organize their lives from the supposedly coherent, superior and ‘natural’ of heterosexuality.”

<sup>2</sup> Leite Junior (2012) points out that as Don Kulick (2008) had already noticed, “travesti” in Brazil is a local classification, not referring to the clinical concept of “transvestism”. The important thing to note is that transsexuals, travestis and transvestites are scientific categories, referring to psychic pathologies, while travesti is also a Brazilian native classification coming from popular and media culture. This observation does not negate nor deny the existence of other travestilities around the world.

<sup>3</sup> Miskolci and Pelúcio (2007) point out that the term queer performativity was associated with performance, suggesting that this would turn to a capacity of the subjects to rebel against the norms of gender. For them, Butler, in “Bodies that matter,” resumed and clarified the concept of performativity, dissociating it from the voluntarism contained in the idea of representing the “gender role”, with the construction for a body that expresses and marks a choice of subject adopting an identity. On the contrary, it has demonstrated that performativity is based on the reiteration of norms that are prior to the agent and that, being permanently reiterated, materialize what they name.

<sup>4</sup> For Butler (2013, p. 38), “[...] ‘intelligible’ genders are those that, in a sense, establish and maintain relations of coherence and continuity between sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire.”

<sup>5</sup> World Federation of Occupational Therapists.

<sup>6</sup> Established through Resolution 6/2002 of the Higher Education Chamber of the National Education Council, dated 02.19.2002.

<sup>7</sup> In the meeting with the coordinators, the objectives of the research were presented, requested the related documents and the contact of the graduates. Specifically, the interview sought to gather data on the formation and teaching experience of the coordinators, as well as on the history and current moment of the course, propositions of the political-pedagogical project and the training on travesti and transsexuality.

<sup>8</sup> In the interview with ex-students, the objectives of the research were presented, questions were asked about the trajectory undergone in the undergraduate course, observations regarding the political-pedagogical project of the course and the training and experiences around the theme of travestility and transsexuality.

<sup>9</sup> In the interview with teachers, the objectives of the research were presented, the aim was to gather data on teacher training and experience, as well as on the history and current moment of the course, propositions of the political-pedagogical project and the training on travesti and transsexuality.

<sup>10</sup> Without being restricted to this aspect, regarding ethics, this research was also submitted and approved by a process with the Brazil Platform (Opinion Number 282,798).

<sup>11</sup> In the review, we worked with the available literature electronically. However, the 1993 text, “Occupational therapy with a Male-to-Female transsexual: a case study”, was accessed from the printed collection available in the UFSCar library.

<sup>12</sup> In the results, the letters of the readers were not considered.

<sup>13</sup> Cis-gender is people who follow the sex-gender linearity, that is, woman-vagina and penis-man

- <sup>14</sup>Problem Situation is a learning resource commonly used in courses that use active methodologies. In them, cases are presented, and from this, theoretical questions are listed for study and interventions are discussed.
- <sup>15</sup>With the extension of the invitation, undergraduates and graduates of the following courses were present, as well as Occupational Therapy: Archivology, Social Assistance, Librarianship, Social Sciences, Law, Physical Education, Electrical Engineering, Physiotherapy, Journalism, Letters, Linguistics, Psychology, Advertising and Propaganda, International Relations, Public Health and Social Work.
- <sup>16</sup>Excerpt from the poem “Só de Sacanagem” by Elisa Lucinda.