

Reflection Article/Essay

Reflections on the idea of Latin America and its contributions to southern occupational therapies

Reflexiones sobre la idea de América Latina y sus contribuciones a las terapias ocupacionales del sur

Reflexões sobre a ideia de América Latina e suas contribuições às terapias ocupacionais do sul

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Abstract

It is presented a reflection about the narratives around Latin American concepts and the categories that emerged from these concepts, making the possibility of different readings about our continent. The objective of this article is analyzing these narratives and identifying what they offer to contribute to Southern Occupational Therapies debate. It is considered that their current deployment is directly related to the discussions about them, which have been taking place for several decades in our region. To this end, a reflexive essay is presented based on social theories, including anticolonial, postcolonial, subaltern, and decolonial studies, among others. We have chosen for debates to contribute to the reflection of Southern Occupational Therapies: *the contradictory heterogeneity of Latin America, the coloniality as a transgenerational legacy of colonization, politics of representation in the intellectual world* and how they have observed, studied, and represented “otherness” and the *internal coloniality*, as a starting point for processes of decolonization. It is concluded that the Southern Occupational Therapies have been recognized local-regional narratives and practices, having a great potential to mobilize power relations and asymmetries both locally and globally. The idea of Latin America allows us to identify how the course of the profession has been transformed and new meanings and practices have produced in response to historical contexts and temporalities in this continent.

Keywords: Occupational Therapy, Latin America, Cultural Diversity.

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Resumen

Se presenta una reflexión sobre las narrativas que se han elaborado en torno a América Latina y desde las cuales han emergido una serie de categorías que posibilitan determinadas y diferentes lecturas sobre nuestro continente. El objetivo es analizar estas narrativas e identificar lo que nos ofrecen para contribuir al debate sobre las Terapias Ocupacionales del Sur considerando que su despliegue tiene directa relación con las discusiones que, desde hace varias décadas, se vienen produciendo en nuestra región. Para ello se realiza un ensayo reflexivo en torno a teorías sociales que incluyen narrativas anticoloniales, poscoloniales, estudios subalternos, decoloniales, entre otras, seleccionando cuatro asuntos que contribuyen a la reflexión de las Terapias Ocupacionales del Sur: *la heterogeneidad contradictoria de América Latina, la colonialidad del poder, la política de representación que ha asumido el mundo letrado o intelectual* para observar, estudiar y representar la “alteridad” y la *colonialidad interna* como punto de arranque de procesos de descolonización. Se concluye que las terapias ocupacionales del sur se han configurado como un lugar de habla y reconocimiento de las narrativas y prácticas locales-regionales, teniendo una gran potencialidad para movilizar las relaciones y asimetrías de poder tanto a nivel local como global. La idea de América Latina nos permite identificar las maneras en que se ha transformado el curso de la profesión y se siguen produciendo nuevos sentidos y prácticas en respuesta a los contextos históricos y temporalidades en este continente.

Palabras-clave: Terapia Ocupacional, América Latina, Diversidad cultural.

Resumo

Apresenta-se uma reflexão sobre as narrativas que foram elaboradas em torno do que é a América Latina e das quais emergiram uma série de categorias que permitem determinadas e diferentes leituras sobre o nosso continente. Objetivava-se analisar tais narrativas e identificar o que oferecemos para contribuir com o debate sobre as terapias ocupacionais do sul, considerando que a sua implantação atual está diretamente relacionada com as discussões que, por décadas, vem ocorrendo em nossa região. Para tanto, foi realizado um ensaio reflexivo em torno de teorias sociais, incluindo narrativas anticoloniais, pós-coloniais, estudos subalternos, descoloniais, entre outros, selecionando quatro questões que contribuem para a reflexão das terapias ocupacionais do sul: *a heterogeneidade contraditória da América Latina, a colonialidade como legado transgeracional da colonização, as políticas de representação que tem assumido o mundo intelectual* para observar, estudar e representar a “alteridade” e a *colonialidade interna* como ponto de partida dos processos de descolonização. Conclui-se que as terapias ocupacionais do sul são reconhecidas pelas narrativas e práticas locais e regionais, tendo grande potencial para mobilizar relações e assimetrias de poder local e globalmente. A ideia da América Latina nos permite identificar as formas pelas quais se tem transformado o curso da profissão e como seguem produzindo novos significados e práticas em resposta aos contextos históricos e temporalidades neste continente.

Palavras-chave: Terapia Ocupacional, América Latina, Diversidade Cultural.

Introduction

Within the critical occupational therapies that have been taking place for several decades, especially in Latin America, southern occupational therapies come to propose a reflection exercise from the specific, different, and equivalent conditions that historically concur in what contemporaneously configures Latin America (Cottet, 2016). This is to propose a transformation of the south-north relationships, in the different areas of knowledge and daily life, crossed for a long time by a binary conception that marked a tendency to conceive the north as the producer of ideas and the south as its executor (Richard, 1997).

Southern Occupational Therapies are those localized practices that have emerged from various communities of occupational therapists that put into motion a capacity to remember and think about themselves concerning their concrete practices and knowledge produced from Latin America and the global south (Oliver, 1990; Barros, 1991; Guajardo, 1992, 2012, 2016; Galheigo, 2003; Herrera & Valderrama, 2013; Zorzoli et al., 2014; Duarte et al., 2016; Testa et al., 2016). We remember that talking about Southern Occupational Therapies¹ does not refer exclusively to the geographical territory or only to South America, but corresponds to an epistemic South, a South that shares the traces of colonialism in its ways of life and from that experience shared, it has been able to build a project that recognizes other political, ethical, economic and epistemic principles, different from those that were imposed, from the logocentric discourse, in different continents and our field.

Southern occupational therapies would be a mobile platform that brings power asymmetries and their effects on the subjectivities of both those who are in the field and those who are in the place of their intervention or study. They propose to activate the capacity for self-criticism as an attentive positionality in face of the various forms of reproduction of the same order that it criticizes, since the traces of colonization are characterized by their capacity for infiltration, both in those who experienced the stories denial² and on those who imposed it³. This does not mean isolating from the global discussion, much less ignoring the value of productions in other continents that would be a contradiction. It is about sharing a critical reflection from the southern global/Latin American, under the format of an invitation to think from the internal coloniality that we embody (Cusicanqui, 2010).

Regarding the idea of Latin America, this article aims to contribute with different perspectives that are treated many times as similar. However, as indicated by the social theories that discuss these different approaches, each narrative must be analyzed as constitutive, evaluative and informative helping to define the practices it describes, going beyond a mere terminological distinction (Benhabib, 2006). Thus, categories such as anti-colonialism, Latin-Americanism, post-colonialism, decolonialism, subaltern studies, among others, address different productions of academic knowledge, some of which can create an essentialist image of Latin America and discursively a sphere of “marginality” and “exteriority”, considering the “forces that knowledge-producing

¹ It can be located in different geographical points that share the same place of enunciation, such as Central America, Africa, Asia and Europe. also, inhabiting the geographic south is not synonymous with practices in the south of occupational therapy.

² We refer mainly to South America: Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and South America, Asia and Africa.

³ We mainly refer to Europe and the United States of America.

institutions were experiencing at that time” (Castro-Gómez, 1998, p. 3). Hence the importance of making an abbreviated review of four issues that arise from these various perspectives and that seem to us to trigger a chain of reflections on Latin America and its relationship with Southern Occupational Therapies. The first debate is the *contradictory heterogeneity of Latin America*, above the idea of identity homogeneity, the second is *coloniality as a trans-generational legacy of colonization*, the third is the *politics of representation that the literate or intellectual world* has assumed for observing, study and represent “otherness” and finally, the *internal coloniality*.

First debate: On the contradictory heterogeneity of Latin America

Talking about America is a heterogeneous, polysemic concept and in its Eurocentric origin, typical of a universal and instrumental logos or reason⁴, the main producer in the history of Latin America. The invention of the concept “Latin America” in universal history, created during the colonization of the territory of Tawantisuyo, Anahuac, and Abya Yala, as the people who inhabited it up to that moment, called it.

Before 1492, America did not appear on any map, not even on that of the people who lived in the Anahuac valley (Aztec territory) and Tawantisuyu (Inca territory). The Spanish and the Portuguese, the only European occupiers during the 16th century, christened the continent whose control and possession were in their hands. [...] The territory existed and the settlers also, of course, but they gave their name to the place where they lived (Mignolo, 2007, p. 28).

For the colonizers, they were people without history, new, exotic, and strange territories, beings that did not reach the status of human beings, they were outside of history, for which they had to be civilized and evangelized by the literate world. The idea of Latin America was built fundamentally from the reading of the West, reading produced from a colonialist discourse of this part of the world “[...] after all, the American continent exists only as a consequence of the European colonial expansion and the stories of that expansion from the European point of view, that is, the perspective of modernity [...]” (Mignolo, 2005, p. 16). There is not a single story about this continent, on the contrary, it could be told in different ways, although the Eurocentric and modern version is the one that has occupied a hegemonic position and the one that has been legitimized even in Social Sciences and in various fields of knowledge. Other versions have always existed, but inconspicuously, silenced by the power of the universal logos, however, they have resisted universal models through anti-colonial, colonial, or decolonial turns practices and narratives.

Some narratives about Latin America have tried to diversify and propose new stories. However, other narratives have acted as a homogenization machine, which even when they seem to promote and preserve the difference (Moreiras, 1996, Apud Castro-Gómez, 1998), which control the differences, homogenize them, and put them at the service of a global representation managed from the “center”. On the other hand, as

⁴ In contrast to a situated reason whose limits are always overwhelmed by the contexts and practices that it seeks to explain or understand.

Anzaldúa (1987) points out in his book *La Nueva mestiza*, others propose intermediate spaces and border crossings of an epistemic cultural order. Or like Cusicanqui (2010), who argues that Latin America is crossed by a contradictory heterogeneity, derived from the Ch'ixi⁵ in the region, which means that there is a juxtaposition of ideas, beliefs, practices that can coexist and maintain a conflictive relationship. In a certain way, they assume that it is not possible to unify, or think about a Latin American identity, much less to believe that an idealized harmony is possible, on the contrary, the Latin American scene has been marked by a series of struggles, especially for the recognition of the difference.

Finally, the decoloniality approaches also come to strongly criticize those official logos that classify and stratify the stories, others in the place of otherness, others inferior, from the colonialist-Eurocentric discourse, creating a series of binary schemes characterized by this asymmetric value that gives otherness: Europe/America, colonizers/colonized, cult/popular, letter/orality, global/local, center/periphery, civilized/barbarian, Spanish or Portuguese/indigenous, white /black, man/woman, Quechua/Spanish, among others. Hence the importance of remembering that this Eurocentric fabrication of the idea of Latin America arises without reference to the history and specific context of this territory, therefore, “without any reference to a context of meaning” (Garcia, 2012, p. 81).

Second debate: coloniality as a trans-generational legacy of colonization.

Several authors propose the impact of colonization in Latin America, of course with different shades and tonalities. For example, in Brazil, Florestan Fernandes (1973, p. 11) in his book *Dependent Capitalism and social classes in Latin America* points out “Latin American nations are products of the ‘expansion of Western civilization’, that is, of an organized and systematic colonialism’s modern type”. In Colombia, Borda (2009, p. 408) pointed out that the colonization processes had the same corollary “this can be verified in Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Argentina, Peru, Ecuador, and Chile”. In Peru, Quijano (1992) has also been an important reference for the social theories of Latin America, like Dussel (1997), an Argentine philosopher living in Mexico for many years, who proposed material ethics of life to recognize the lives denied the victims of the systems of colonial domination. In particular, various feminist authors denounce the general effects of colonization and establish that colonialism imposed strong processes of domination on the body of women, particularly indigenous and black women, as a synonym of underdevelopment and ignorance (Gargallo, 2014).

In line with the theoretical-political perspective of the coloniality of power proposed by Quijano, Segato (2015) agrees that the axis of coloniality is the invention of the race since it marks the entire history of Latin America. From there, racialization practices are produced to this day, in constant reproduction, considering that the idea of the race goes beyond the phenotype of the human person, and corresponds to a sign:

[...] it is a sign of the position of the defeated in colonial history: racism is epistemic, in the sense that the epistemes of the conquered and colonized are

⁵ The term refers to the idea of stained, variegated, mixed, like many of the rites and dances to the patron saints in different countries.

negatively discriminated against. Racism is Eurocentrism because it discriminates knowledge and productions, reduces civilizations, values, capacities, creations, and beliefs (Segato, 2015, p. 53).

Coloniality arises then from the so-called decolonial turn which is articulated based on three main axes, to problematize modernity as a development project, to make visible how the experience of domination and imposition (from the invasion of America) generates a condition of subalternity and demonstrate the ethnocentric and eurocentric sense of the social sciences, considered as epistemological racism. These problematizations, resistances, and oppositions arise from an energetic criticism of colonialism, by the brutal genocide and colonial domination (Dussel, 1997; Mignolo, 2005; Cusicanqui, 2010) both in the economic (appropriation of the land, exploitation of the hand of work of black and indigenous slaves and control of finances), political (control of authority), social (control of gender and sexuality) and epistemic and subjective/personal aspects (control of knowledge and subjectivity).

Third debate: policy of representation that the legal or intellectual world has assumed

Richard (1997) points out that some narratives about Latin America have become a globalizing meta-narrative, which through academic means generates new forms of international domination. In a similar line, Castro- Gómez (1998) proposes to deconstruct the globalizing meta-discourses on Latin America and he agrees that it is not enough for postcolonial theories incorporating the figure of Otherness into their new anti-hegemonic discourse for the other to be real (the person) formed by historical and social plots of censorship and exclusion comes to participate with its voice in the metropolitan debate.

For Richard (1997), there would be a monopoly of the power-of-representation according to which “representing” means controlling the discursive means that subordinate the object of knowledge to a conceptual economy that it is declared as superior, making a difference between speaking about and from Latin America. In the first case, the conceptual authority involved in *speaking about* Latin America from the international academy is exercised through a division of labor that, in the unconscious of many of the discourses of Latin Americanism, tends to oppose theory and practice: reason and matter, knowledge and reality, discourse and experience, mediation of this chain of oppositions (reason, knowledge, theory, discourse, mediation) “[...] designates the intellectual power of abstraction and symbolization that defines the superiority of the Center while the second series (matter, reality, practice, experience, immediacy) places Latin America on the plane of the spontaneity of experience [...]” (Richard, 1997, p. 349).

However, the heterogeneity of life experiences would produce a popular value that always exceeds the academic competence of knowledge, there would always be something *unrepresentable* as the only resistant place of the Latin American, which could also imply against representations or derepresentations, as “[...] practical recalcitrant to

the central order of academic classification of knowledge and experts in circumventing their assessment systems with unpredictable devices that confuse or disorganize the general control of the limit between the translatable and the untranslatable [...]” (Richard, 1997, p. 351).

The opposition between *representation* (abstraction, theory, discursivity) and *experience* (concretion, practice, experientiality) affirms the inequality of powers drawn between, on the one hand, those who patent the codes of theoretical figuration that will endow their objects of study with academic legitimacy and, on the other hand, the subjects represented by these codes, *spoken by* their theorization of otherness, but without much access to the institutional benefits of metropolitan theory or the right to be consulted on the validity of the categories that describe and interpret them. Subverting this dichotomy of power requires producing local theory, situated knowledge, discourse, and situational awareness, which generate an imbalance of functions within the supposedly regulated format (Richard, 1997).

Others authors, within postcolonial studies, pose a critique about “[...] the institutional mechanisms that produce representations of the “other” and project it as an entity capable of heard by ethnological, geographical, anthropological, historiographic, and linguistic discourses of modernity [...]” (Castro-Gómez, 1998, p. 4). It also extends to the situation in our continent where multiple approaches to the indigenous world, or the Latin American citizen, is exoticized or essentialized. In the same way, they reveal the links between imperialism and human sciences, authorizing to discursively constructing an image of “[...] non-metropolitan cultures, especially those that are under their territorial control [...]” (Castro-Gómez, 1998, p. 4). The same happens in Latin America so it is clear that every image of Latin America is always crossed by the power that sponsors it.

Fourth debate: internal coloniality

To conclude, it seems very important to point out what Cusicanqui (2010) highlights and criticizes regarding some anti-colonial narratives, even by well-known authors from the coloniality modernity group, such as Walter D. Mignolo and Aníbal Quijano, who approach the internal coloniality processes. For Cusicanqui, there is indigenous authorship silenced by the academy, which has endorsed a series of reflections that had already been developed, for example, in Bolivia. The main one is related to the idea of decolonization, a theme that he introduces in his book “Oppressed, but not defeated” (Cusicanqui, 1984), long before Quijano's (1998) elaborations on the same issue. From this, in 2010, in her book “Chixinakax Utxima. A reflection on decolonizing practices and discourses”, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui raises three important criticisms to reflect on internal coloniality. The first is the necessary transformation of the ways of understanding the global and local reality of the narrator, this implies a “[...] radical and deep decolonization in their political, economic and especially mental structures, that is to say in their ways of conceiving the world [...]” (Cusicanqui, 2010, p.56). The second criticism refers to the citations of authors pointing out that “[...] through the game of who quotes whom, hierarchies

are structured, and we end up having to eat and regurgitate, the decolonizing thought that the indigenous populations and intellectuals of Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador had produced independently [...]” (Cusicanqui, 2010, p. 66). Finally, the third criticism is the importance of recognizing the internal coloniality that runs through us, that crosses the academy and also that intellectuality that advocates for Latin America, since it is not immune to the matrix of power and the exercises “[...] of cooptation and mimesis, selective incorporation of ideas, certifying selection of which are more valid to feed [...]” (Cusicanqui, 2010, p. 68), in this case, to its disciplinary institutionality.

Latin America and its contributions to Southern Occupational Therapies

In the 1970s, within the occupational therapies that, approximately a decade earlier, began to emerge in Latin America, some divergent voices became visible and began to resonate, voices that criticized totalizing discourses and claimed multiple voices from the peripheries. or edges of the traditional theoretical and practical exercise of the profession/field (Oliver, 1990; Barros, 1991; Guajardo, 1992; Lopes, 1997; Paganizzi, 1997; Barros et al., 1999; Oliver & Nicácio, 1999; Malfitano, 2005). Progressively, the causes and conditions that stress the modus operandi of the profession are created from the plurality of local practices and conceptions of the world that end up settling in logics that recognize pluriversality⁶ (Mignolo, 2007; Santos, 2018) over understandings universalizing occupational therapy. In a certain sense, an indisputable legacy is recognized, a heritage that is dispersed with different shades in the region (Díaz, 2018), and that is embodied in these communities to this day. In another sense, creative potential is noted that emerges from the forms of life in Latin America, inevitably crossed by colonial traces, which generates the need for a situated praxis. Thus, a discourse from Latin America arises, not exempt from contradictory heterogeneities, a way of thinking about the profession, ontologically and epistemologically (Oliver, 1990; Lopes, 1997; Guajardo & Galheigo, 2015; Lopes & Malfitano, 2016), based on the specific historical contexts of the region and of each country, no longer as a product of imitation of the center towards the periphery, but as a possibility of recognizing the social, political, and economic contexts that are giving it other forms. However, just as this new positionality has a strong potentiality, it has also not been exempted, like all social practice, from the traces of coloniality that in this text we have tried to summarize in four debates.

Therefore, the first question that we consider important to highlight is based on what these various narratives about Latin America propose is to conceive how their stories were creating and re-creating the praxis of occupational therapies in a unique way in our continent as an action in the world, always historicized, localized and situated (Guajardo, 2016). In each country, its configuration was directly related to the various historical projects that each Nation-State had to face

⁶ Understood as knots of a genealogical network from where there is a “[...] takeoff and opening point that reintroduces languages, memories, economies, social organizations, subjectivities, splendors and miseries of the imperial legacies [...]” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 45).

after the implementation of a modern project that, in the same way, was uniquely implemented in each territory. This reading allows us to release differences and not prolong this old but always present search for an origin or universalist foundation, which gives us an identity, from the Latin *identitas*. There are many beginnings and re-beginnings, twists, detours, therefore, never a linear or unique story, as Adichie (2009) points out when emphasizing the dangers of a single story. Occupational therapy practices as part of life practices in this continent are elusive and impossible to delimit and contain in words, terms, or categories, they always go beyond the academic discourse that, seeking to represent them, cannot even identify them in their vast diversity. Therefore, concerning the first debate, the *contradictory heterogeneity of Latin America* is also present in the same occupational therapy characterized by a wide heterogeneity and multiple histories that compose occupational therapies in our continent.

Regarding the second debate, *coloniality as a trans-generational legacy of colonization*, it is difficult to think that academic education and its practices have been unscathed results from that historical event that survives to this day. That matrix of power that has established and has been establishing new ways of domination in all directions, through colonization, neo-colonization, or globalization on the political, economic, social, epistemic, and subjective area; challenges us to scrutinize how it was embodied in the speech, in the academy, and its practices. Activating a criticism that is not external to itself is a necessary but not sufficient condition, since proposals are required to stop this always insatiable and largely devastating project.

Coloniality operated in various ways in the world, on the continent, and within each continent and country. Thus, the implantation of capitalism, for example, in America was strongly due to the exploitation and use of various forms of slavery, modernization processes with the introduction and use of differentiated resources and technologies, modernism and its artistic tendencies with more or less openness and the universities acquired the task of progress and the civilizing function with greater or less confidence and desire. So, it is easy to understand why occupational therapy has been developing in such particular ways in South America, Central America, the Caribbean, and parts of North America. Therefore, thinking of *coloniality as a trans-generational legacy of colonization* in occupational therapy implies recognizing the strong influence of economic and political determining factors in the development of the profession and how, historically, we could have been at the service of the modern/colonial/capitalist/patriarchal system in our professional practices.

Regarding *the representation policies that the literate or intellectual world* has assumed, in occupational therapy, it is possible to identify the risks of monopolizing knowledge and the production of knowledge in the region, due to the strong Anglo-Saxon, Cartesian influence, either as medical knowledge or scientist knowledge. By the way, some groups of occupational therapists showed their distancing and unwillingness to be represented by that single discourse or having to represent people of their intervention under a single ontology, epistemology, and methodology. How has the relationship between occupational

therapy and its particular otherness? Who did you define as a research or intervention objects? How were unequal gender, class, and ethnic-racial relationships problematized? To what extent did you name and thereby pre-figure, be it as a nurse, patient, or case, your intervention or research subjects? How did this allow the incorporation of terms such as users, consultants, clients, vulnerable groups? In other words, did these different discursive media modify the relationships of subordination or subalternization within the professional practice? Therefore, the permanent interrogation of its positionality is required not to assume it in a mythologized or essentialized way, because even by changing the concepts that we have used, paradoxically, it can reproduce the same order and a figure of otherness as a mere representation and not as coexistence.

Hence, *the representation policies that the literate or intellectual world has assumed are reflected* in occupational therapy by the reproduction of medical knowledge or scientific knowledge without considering other types of knowledge, generating a relationship of subalternation of knowledge or mere representation, for example, when the occupational therapist acts and works without questioning medical explanations in situations that are related to structural problems in society.

Finally, the idea of *internal coloniality* seems to us to be the starting point, this is to question those who narrate, act, or try to produce knowledge with the realities of this region because we necessarily assume a place of enunciation that is not external or alien to what is narrates. It implies a reflective position on our practices and the divisions and asymmetries of power, in all the scenarios of professional/field of work. Consequently, assuming a narrative from Latin America implies assuming, at the same time, a logic that does not homogenize people, productions, and practices in this continent, due to the risk of essentializing, victimizing, or attributing a degree of heroism that prevents the encounter with the other, leaving some of them in the position of knowledge of the intellectual/professional and the other in the fixed place of a subordinate.

From the academic panopticon and particularly from the logocentric panopticon of occupational therapy, it is essential not to capture with our concepts or terminologies. What means the impossibility of standardizing and explaining exclusively from the technical field, it occurs, for example, when the uniform terminology of the American Occupational Therapy Association is applied to describe and evaluate situations that affect groups in contexts of structural inequality in Latin America. It is important to take the necessary precautions when we want to create new concepts to name something, be it to mobilize some transformation, tension or break with other categories or, to be distanced from a position that is insufficient to explain and understand a specific field of practice. It is necessary to be careful with the use of categories that we create, because sometimes they are trying to expand, however they can rather cut original ideas, for example, by adding the term “occupational” to terms whose origin and meaning exceed the boundaries of a profession or field. This is the case of the social justice concept and its contraction through the use of the concept of “occupational justice”. In other words, internal coloniality can also be expressed in the search to legitimize occupational therapy and its borders, marking the perimeter of it with the “occupational” brand to absolutely transdisciplinary categories and concepts that have a strong historical heritage and that dialogue with other stories in Latin American occupational therapy.

Final Discussion

It seems relevant to us to consider the narratives about Latin America to think about the performance of occupational therapy in our continent. Thus, the four debates addressed had the objective of offering contributions to the debate on Southern Occupational Therapies, since thinking about the idea of Latin America allows us to identify how the meaning of the profession was transformed and new meanings and practices continue to be produced in response to historical contexts and temporalities on this continent. The intensification of writing practices, through articles, books, and other means of diffusion, with a strong Latin American sense is a reflection of this and of their will not to “[...] stop reading, talking and participating in the global movements of the profession [...]” (Botinelli et al., 2016, p. 97).

We know that it is a partial reflection on the field and much remains to be deepened, our objective was not to cover the whole subject, nor to propose a theory on the conceptualization of Latin America for southern occupational therapies, but to propose some ideas that would allow us to establish an initial dialogue between the disciplinary field and the social theories that discuss Latin America and the various forms of coloniality in our continent, focusing on their application to the profession. Specifically, the narratives on the “idea of Latin America” allow us to problematize our analysis of people and practices - both in the interventional, investigative, or any other field - and to analyze the politics of representation or how we have and we continue to produce otherness in the field of occupational therapies. In the case of our professional work, this otherness is very directly linked to individuals or communities with disabilities, street children, Latin American migrants, among others, and how we are being produced in that relationship, a mere representation or coexistence?

Reflecting on these four debates challenges us to understand how certain ways of feeling, thinking, being, and doing occupational therapy have been produced in Latin America. We hope that the conceptualization of Latin America can be present in the occupational therapies that we do, influencing their practices, aimed at our local realities, where the dialogue between action and theoretical development is fundamental and must be assumed by everyone, especially by who are in the academic field, like us. These dialogues invite us to also reflect on the ways of life of the people and the communities in which we are working, based on a narrative from the South and Latin America, which should mobilize occupational therapies on the continent to build collective projects contrary to the capitalist, patriarchal and racist logics, inherent to coloniality in Latin America. Accordingly, a south⁷ thought is the possibility of maintaining open dialogues and exchanges, connecting the different experiences of Latin American countries, beyond a single instituted reference to think about occupational therapy.

⁷ It can be located in different geographical points that share the same place of enunciation, such as Central America, Africa, Asia and Europe. Likewise, inhabiting the geographic south is not synonymous of south occupational therapy practices.

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Author's Contributions

Mónica Matilde Díaz Leiva is the author of the doctorate dissertation in development on the theme of this article, under the supervision of Ana Paula Serrata Malfitano. Mónica Matilde Díaz Leiva is responsible for the central development of the text and Ana Paula Serrata Malfitano for her supervision and review. Both authors approved the final version of the text.

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