

Original Article

Ways of life, experiences, and confrontations of transgender people: considerations for professional action in social occupational therapy

Modos de vida, experiências trans e enfrentamentos: considerações para a ação técnica em terapia ocupacional social

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Abstract

This article stems from a doctoral dissertation whose main objective was to understand how transgender people build strategies to cope with conditions of marginalization throughout their life histories. To this end, the oral history of life was employed as a data collection methodology; ethnographic tools, such as observation, were also used. The data were organized from the concept of ways of life in the light of Isabel Guerra's perspective and arranged in three central axes: the system and social actors; history and everyday life; the objective and the subjective in the perception of reality. In addition, the analyses were carried out from an intersectional perspective, and the results indicated that the impositions of the sex-gender-desire system operate from the first stages of life, in a mechanism that connects various actors and social institutions, as well as access to concrete conditions of life operationalization. How these impositions and limits are perceived mediates the main coping strategies, which include the reconfiguration of the support network and the struggle for recognition, which, in the case of the interlocutors in the aforementioned research, occurred through education and the social movement spaces. The analysis supported by the concept of ways of life offered a powerful lens to identify this population's demands, and it is a theoretical-methodological possibility for social occupational therapy practice.

Keywords: Gender Identity, Sexuality, Social Occupational Therapy.

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Resumo

Este artigo decorre de uma pesquisa que teve como objetivo central compreender como pessoas trans constroem estratégias de enfrentamento às condições de marginalização ao longo de suas histórias de vida. Para tanto, tomamos a história oral de vida como metodologia de apreensão de dados, além de ferramentas da etnografia, como a observação. Os dados foram organizados a partir do conceito de modos de vida, à luz da perspectiva de Isabel Guerra, disposta em três eixos centrais: o sistema e os atores sociais; a história e o cotidiano; o objetivo e o subjetivo na percepção do real. Além disso, procedemos as análises por uma perspectiva interseccional, e os resultados indicaram que as imposições do sistema sexo-gênero-desejo operam desde as primeiras etapas da vida, numa engrenagem que articula diversos atores e instituições sociais, como também os acessos às condições concretas de operacionalização da vida. A forma pela qual essas imposições e limites são percebidos media as principais estratégias de enfrentamento, que agregam a reconfiguração da rede de suporte e a luta pelo reconhecimento, que, no caso das/os interlocutoras/es da referida pesquisa, deu-se através da educação e dos espaços do movimento social. A análise amparada no conceito de modos de vida ofereceu uma potente lente para reconhecer as demandas desse grupo, apresentando-se como possibilidade teórico-metodológica para a terapia ocupacional social.

Palavras-chave: Identidade de Gênero, Sexualidade, Terapia Ocupacional Social.

Introduction

The doctoral dissertation on which this study was based stems from the discussion in social occupational therapy about the need for theoretical subsidies that enable the development of a technical action that considers the subjects and groups in their everyday life, the macro-structural aspects that permeate them, and the resources available for their participation in social life.

Several subjects and groups have been recipients of social occupational therapy actions; in the scenario of multiple experiences in an unequal society, social markers of difference¹ pervade their experiences and determine, in complex historical, political, social, and cultural relationships, their spaces of existence, possibilities of operationalizing life, and the composition of their doings.

Markers of gender and sexuality, along with with other social markers of difference, have determined specific spaces in social dynamics as they establish experiences that are not constituted within social molds and norms. Thus, marginal life becomes commonplace for some groups such as transgender people.

The invisibility, denial, and marginalization resulting from hegemonic discourses within normative systems produce subjects whose experiences of resistance go not only through the construction of their bodies and identities but also through the permanent struggle that stems from their abnormal place. These histories outside the norm produce

¹ The social markers of difference point to a perspective that seeks to understand the production of social inequalities from differences that are socially, culturally, and historically built (Melo et al., 2020).

resistance and confrontations in everyday lives and trajectories, which are individual but with collective repercussions.

Therefore, the main objective of this study is to understand how transgender people build strategies to cope with the conditions of marginalization that are imposed on them in their everyday practices throughout their life histories. It also aims to find out how these everyday lives are rebuilt, how life projects and actions are formulated and carried out, and, above all, how to develop strategies that can overcome this invisibility, marginalization, and denial of rights and provide access to citizenship.

To this end, the concept of ways of life by sociologist Isabel Guerra (1993) is used and the data are arranged in three central axes: the system and social actors; history and everyday life; the objective and the subjective in the perception of reality.

It is important to understand that, by using the concept of ways of life as an analytical lens, we seek to inform occupational therapists about processes that involve the construction of social spaces and dynamics to operationalize life from how these spaces are assimilated and/or resisted.

Ways of life

Following the dynamization of social life is one of the central elements to understanding how certain population segments organize and operationalize their lives. Work, education, leisure, access to goods and services, or even seemingly simple activities such as eating, socializing, and working are not linearly placed in the life courses of all subjects, and some variables will directly influence their exercise of citizenship and life, going through historical, economic, political, and social specificities.

According to Lobo (1992, p. 13), The study of the theme of ways of life originated in social theory, mainly in French sociology. The way of life acquires “the status of a concept that proposes a guiding principle for the analysis of social practices; the simultaneous and combined construction of social relations, representations, and the symbolic field”.

Resuming the history of the concept and the understanding of what triggered its debate, the construct ways of life, according to Braga et al. (2017), was mobilized, at first, from different perspectives in studies marked by the need to analyze characteristics of the transition from pre-capitalist societies to industrialized societies.

In modern sociological thought, however, studies on ways of life are not limited to the conditions of the factory working class. Feminist studies, as well as those on gender inequalities, for example, also become a fertile field for reasoning ways of life. In this regard, still, according to Lobo (1992), the theme is centered on the combination of productive and reproductive practices – with emphasis on the latter, such as domestic work in the construction of social places and times, opening space for the theme in studies addressing families, more specifically, working families, as widely discussed by Nabarro (2014).

Wirth (1938), Rambaud (1969), Lefebvre (1970), and Lacascade (1981) were some of the authors who discussed changes in lifestyles more comprehensively. This is configured more conceptually in the reflections proposed by these authors about rural societies in the context of the advance of industrialization and consequent urbanization,

and the debate about this concept resurfaces, quite strongly, between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s.

Lobo (1992) advocates that the re-emergence of ways of life synthesizes the importance of this concept in studies on the working class, not exclusively focused on political-institutional practices or on living conditions and standards and social indicators, but emphasizing everyday practices, traditions, differentiation of the working classes, their representations, as well as the subjective internalization of their material conditions of existence. Thus, “the questions raised point to forms of building ways of life not as defined strategies, but as habits and practices that permeate the social fields” (Lobo, 1992, p. 10).

The study of ways of life is fertile to understanding practices of resistance because this concept points to concerns focused on micro-social aspects, that is, those that seek explanations based on the agency of individuals (Lobo, 1992) while being used to identify heterogeneities in a complex society (Velho & Viveiros de Castro, 1978). Therefore, ways of life have always been constructed and represented in a collective dimension (Monteiro et al., 2019) whose formation involves a set of codes through which the group that experiences them can ensure their existence and continuity. La Blache (1954) demonstrates that a way of life involves a set of characteristics and traits that individualize the social actors, including similar techniques and cultural patterns in various contexts. In this sense, Guerra (1993) argues that when analyzing ways of life:

the following three dimensions, which are generally little used, should be considered: the system and social actors; history and everyday life; the objective and the subjective in the perception of reality. These three dimensions should be developed to combine the strength of the structure with the possibility of individual action, the level of everyday life together with the economic, political, and cultural levels, as well as the power networks established between the different social spheres (Guerra, 1993, p. 62).

The notion of ways of life necessitates the combination and integration of levels of analysis. The analysis of the complex interplay between social actors and systems leads to a departure from sociology of structures, situating these studies in the realm of interaction and interpenetration between systems and individuals. The actor does not exist outside the system that defines them and shapes the rationality and freedom of their action. In contrast, the system only exists through the actor, even though it is assumed that its logic of functioning does not directly result from the rationality of individual actors. It is in the juxtaposition of these two logics that this axis of analysis is situated.

The system—constituted by a series of relations involving social actors, institutions, practices, and discourses in which power is the guiding principle (Foucault, 1993)—builds codes and hierarchies under which the forms of organization of social life operate. Although the ways of life are discussed and developed in the light of the capitalist system, other systems, such as race, gender, etc., cross the social dynamics beyond class systems, constituting social norms and producing actors through the reproduction of these norms.

If the system and the actors make up the “setting”, the “characters” and the “rules of the game”, it is in everyday life that this chain of relationships takes place and that the codes are apprehended, reproduced (consciously or not) and faced (or “just” experienced).

Discussing this second dimension of analysis, Guerra (1993) claims that ways of life are situated at the level of everyday life and are affected by relations of inequality and power. According to this author, if everyday life refers to the private sphere and leisure activities and consumption practices, the analysis of ways of life can hardly disregard the hierarchy of power networks that combine the different social spheres – the economic, political, and cultural spheres, in other words, History. It is in this relationship between the actors’ everyday life and the social relations established by history that the analytical efforts of this axis are concentrated aiming to understand social practices. “Therefore, it is not only about detecting the complexity of the present levels and variables but mainly their hierarchies and reciprocal influences in a changing world” (Guerra, 1993, p. 66).

In this context, objectivity and subjectivity operate in the field of assimilation of these experiences in the face of the systems that outline them and the everyday life that makes them concrete. This is the process through which facts are translated into consciousness and the world is given form. The last dimension – the objective and the subjective in the perception of reality, from the perspective of ways of life, is justified by Guerra (1993) as the return of the actor, bringing the rationalities and affections inherent in everyday practices to the center of the debate. The importance of this dimension in the analysis of ways of life is evidenced in the fact that it reflects:

- a) taking an effective position on reality; b) a tension that allows a shift from the “real” to the search for tomorrow (the fulfillment of one’s desire);
- c) the potential conflict between “practices” and “representation of the world” and the world itself for the definition of a “new world”; d) the “energy” available to carry out other (or new) individual and collective projects (Guerra, 1993, p. 67).

According to Leontiev (1978), to become humanized, subjects need to apprehend the culture and cultural mediators created by humanity. Therefore, human beings are humanized only by apprehending the world, and the constitution of their subjectivity moves from this coming and going from the internal to the external world, resulting in a dialectical relationship between objectivity and subjectivity.

Transgender experiences and gender issues

The concept of genre within a system, used for the first time by Rubin (1986), was consolidated as a category of analysis in Brazil (Scott, 1995). This concept breaks significantly with the notion that there is a single male or female way of being (Goellner, 2005) and presents a series of dynamics that permeate the identity constitutions of subjects and their composition in social layers.

The Queer perspective—the theoretical contribution that supports some of the reflections proposed throughout this text—reallocates the look that centralizes the issue of gender in biologizing and binary conceptions, to think of it as an axis of social

differentiation that authorizes forms of inequalities. This highlights the need to develop strategies that problematize gendered dynamics and their repercussions on social life, bearing in mind the institutional order, rights, and power relations in a society that creates models of citizenship, that is, where the citizenship status gains adjectives that remove its substance (Bento, 2014).

One of the exponents of this perspective is the philosopher Judith Butler, who problematizes the notion of the subject and takes it as a starting point for her reflections on the centrality of the category of women in feminism.

There is a question of how feminist theorizations are built and whether they might be proposing another type of norm, as this normalization would produce the same sexed and gendered bodies. This author considers that this mechanism might end up giving meaning to the category of women solely through heterosexuality. Drawing on Foucauldian production, which posits sexuality as discursively constructed and acknowledges it as a historical power device, Butler questions whether sex has a history, transposing the problem of sexuality in Michel Foucault's work to the discussion on the relations between sex, gender, and desire.

According to Foucault (1988), the formation of the so-called sexual identities stems from historical processes that began in the 19th century, engendered in what he called the "apparatus of sexuality":

Sexuality is the name given to a historical construct: not to the underground reality that is learned with difficulty, but to a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power (Foucault, 1988, p. 56).

Therefore, Foucault defines the apparatus of sexuality as a network of knowledge-power that acts on bodies and populations, producing norms and normalizations in ways of living, taking heteronormativity as a starting point.

It is important to understand that gender is constituted and a constituent of networks of power, marked by the repeated stylization of the body, "a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory structure that crystallizes over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural class of being" (Butler, 2003, p. 59). This conceptualization underlies what Butler refers to as performativity. According to her, gender is what we perform, a becoming, in contrast to a fixed, stable, and oppositional "being". Therefore, gender is an action that provides existence to what it names. There is no gender identity behind gender expressions; that identity is performatively formed.

This notion originates from the understanding of what she called the sex-gender-desire system, in which heteronormativity is central to the linear organization of coherence between a biological apparatus, a gender identity, social practices, and the orientation of desire. Bodies that do not comply with this coherence in the conformation of their identities and sexual orientations are relegated to the space of abjection.

Butler (2003) uses the adjective *abject* for all bodies excluded from the hegemonic discourse. Thus, the *abject* body is not simply the one that threatens collective health or

the vision of purity that outlines society, but rather, the one that disturbs the identity, the system, the order (Miskolci, 2015) and, for biopolitics, is relegated to non-recognition in the spheres of citizenship and, often, of humanity.

It is from here that we reflect on ways of life within transgender experiences. Speaking about these experiences invites us to think about the place of the body in social practices, how the codes associated with it operate in the social position of individuals who bear the marks of difference, and, above all, how this difference produces social inequalities. In this sense, the transgender body is understood as a socio-historical, cultural, and political production under constant and malleable construction.

The practices that involve the transformation of trans people's bodies, family relationships and relationships with the labor market, spaces for circulation, insertion, and permanence - as in the case of formal education, forms of sociability, and the various forms of violence experienced by these subjects bring to the scene more than the need to understand how gender dissidence interfere in the practical dimension of life or the evidence of the need to expand access to rights, they inform about other ways of living, outside the normative frameworks, demanding constant preparation and elaboration of coping strategies.

Method

Analysis of the oral history of life and some techniques of ethnographic observation were employed as methodological strategies. The data were organized from the concept of ways of life and arranged in three central axes as proposed by Guerra (1993): the system and social actors; history and everyday life; the objective and the subjective in the perception of reality.

The objectives of the research from which this text derives justify the methodological choices made, since the oral history of life allows access to a set of a person's life experience, which links their story, according to their desire, and is sovereign to reveal or omit cases, situations, and people (Meihy, 1996). The interlocutors are considered the main subjects, they are free to discuss their personal experiences and participate in the entire process.

Oral history is a privileged tool for recovering memories and rescuing lived experiences, working with the oral testimonies of individuals connected by common traits. As a result, it produces sources for research that can be gathered in an archive open to the researchers. Oral history involves studying historical events, institutions, social groups, professional categories, and moments in light of the testimonies of the participating people (Cappelle et al., 2010).

This method allows access to the way research participants perceive their experiences over time. Through the narrative of life histories, the relationships with members of their group, their profession, their social class, and society as a whole are outlined, being the researchers' task to unravel them (Lang, 1996). At the same time, bearing in mind the objectives of the research and the purposes of oral history, observation—a technique derived from ethnography—was also used as a data collection tool.

Thus, data collection involved recording, transcribing, transcribing (Caldas, 1999) and textually composing the interviews together with the interlocutors, in addition to systematizing the field diaries on the observation. The data presented were collected and

organized between February 2017 and February 2019, more systematically, but the contact with the interlocutors extended until 2021.

The participants were selected based on their involvement in the field and the dynamics present within it, in line with the study objectives and methods. Five participants were chosen, all residents of the state of São Paulo, aged 19-36 years, as shown in Table 1, which summarizes information that will be further discussed, connected to references made in their life histories².

The parameters of this study were the ethical assumptions suggested by Cappelle et al. (2010), who stated that the production and treatment of data must be followed by review and approval by the interlocutors. According to these authors, their identities must also be preserved, which was also followed in the construction of this text.

Table 1. Characteristics of the interlocutors.

Name	Identification*	Age (years)	City of residence	Main occupation	Education level	Marital status
Bianca	Transvestite	32	São Paulo	Prostitution and social movement	High school	Single
Marcela	Transgender woman	29	São Paulo	Accountant	College (two degrees: Economics and Accounting)	Married
Talita	Transgender woman	19	City in the interior of the state of São Paulo	Prostitution	Incomplete High school	Single
Dan	Nonbinary transgender man	28	City in the interior of the state of São Paulo	Teacher of the municipal education network	Ph.D.	Single
Tiago	Transgender man	28	City in the interior of the state of São Paulo	Teacher of the municipal education network	College (Geography)	Single (dating)

*The identities presented here are self-assigned. Transvestite, transsexual, nonbinary, transgender man and transgender woman compose, for the purposes of this text, a spectrum of the umbrella term trans people. It is important to say that we are not going to stick to the discussion that lists the differences between these terms, since they go much more through a construction permeated by disputes of “Psi” knowledge, of legal and linguistic devices – among others, and that do not respond to the objectives of this study.

Results - Synthesis of the Histories

Bianca was born into a lower-class family and was the third of four siblings. She carries the scars of a childhood marked by exclusionary experiences in educational spaces

² The narrated stories can be accessed in full in the chapter “The Histories” of the doctoral dissertation “Between disruptions and continuities: ways of life and strategies to face marginal life in the everyday life of transgender people” from which this article derives (Melo, 2020).

and a transition without family acceptance, except for one sibling. The constant conflicts with her parents led to her expulsion from the household, and most of her gender transition occurred in spaces of prostitution.

She dropped out of elementary school and later completed high school through a public labor market (re)integration program in the city of São Paulo (2012-2017).

The spaces of prostitution were not only an alternative for employment but also provided a social network and opportunities to learn about bodily transformations. It was through the relationships built there that Bianca became acquainted with the institutionalized social movement, in which she recognized herself as a subject of rights through a struggle for recognition. It is in this setting that she spends a significant time of her everyday life.

Marcela is married to Paulo and works as an accountant at a health insurance company headquarters. She holds degrees in accounting (from a public university) and economics (from a private university) and speaks two languages besides Portuguese.

Her parents are a physician and a lawyer. She spent a significant part of her adolescence identifying as a homosexual man with prominent feminine traits. As she grew closer to her femininity, assisted by a psychotherapeutic process, she began to recognize herself as a transgender woman.

Her school experience was challenging but protected, especially by her parents, who kept her in schools considered prestigious.

As a resident of an upscale neighborhood in the city of São Paulo, Marcela's mobility in urban spaces is negotiated, protected, and often accompanied by her husband.

Talita identifies as a transgender woman, but depending on the situation, she also presents herself as a transvestite. She is originally from Cabedelo, state of Paraíba, and has been living with her mother and younger siblings on the outskirts of a small town in the state of São Paulo since her father's death.

Talita's mother is a domestic worker and relies on her contribution to pay for the household expenses.

She completed her studies up to high school. She worked for a brief time at a grocery store, but because of pressure surrounding her lack of conformity to traditional masculinity, she did not stay in that job.

She spends a significant amount of time at the homes of friends she made in prostitution spaces, where she has experienced numerous instances of violence, particularly from clients.

Dan lived for 30 years as a masculine lesbian. During childhood, he had a long experience in the evangelical church attended by his mother, where he held a leadership role in a "cell group". He was stripped of this position when his intimate involvement with the daughter of a pastor was discovered. As a "punishment", his parents found a job for him in the retail sector, which provided him with a tangible income and access to spaces where his experiences regarding sexual orientation were considered legitimate. With the freedom to live away from watchful eyes, he definitively broke ties with the church.

Dan studied philosophy at a public university on a campus far from his family's city, coming into contact with student movements, diverse discussions, and groups.

He pursued a master's degree at the same university. He was admitted to a municipal teaching position through a public contest, and during his doctoral studies, he lived in

Europe, where he had his first experiences of constructing his identity as a transgender man.

Dan actively participates in official advocacy spaces in his city, engaging in political decision-making processes, giving lectures, and participating in debates at academic events.

Tiago is a geography teacher and identifies as a transgender man.

He is the only child of a couple of micro-entrepreneurs, and his childhood was marked by the strong imposition of femininity.

He met Alana, his girlfriend, in academic spaces when he still presented himself as a lesbian woman, and she has been his main support in terms of identity (re)construction and his involvement in academic groups dedicated to gender issues and activism.

The conflict with his parents due to his gender identity was, for a long time, a central issue in his life, to which he responded with isolation and introversion.

Tiago engages in various debates within the academic sphere regarding the deconstruction of gender; however, he manages relatively low visibility in other social settings.

Discussion

As previously mentioned, the analyses were divided into three categories according to the variables of ways of life, as proposed by Guerra (1993): 1) The system and social actors; 2) History and everyday life; 3) The objective and the subjective in the perception of life.

These variables are not dissociated from each other and only make sense, conceptually, if they are connected, considering the macro and micro dimensions of social life. The choice of segmenting these variables occurred solely to analyze the data.

The system and social actors

One day I went out with my mother, I don't even remember where we went... I think we went out to buy something... I was about 7 or 8 years old. (...) There was a girl with a doll that I thought was beautiful, I had seen it on TV, but I had never seen it up close. I approached her and we started playing with it... She didn't seem bothered, you know, but her father came over very madly, snatched the doll from my hand with an angry look, and walked away from me taking his daughter. I felt so ashamed, but the worst part was when my mother looked at me and started scolding me, saying that I should want to play with other things, and she hit me... (Bianca, 24 June 2018).

Bianca, like all the other interlocutors, narrates situations experienced in childhood where aspects related to social expectations regarding the construction of gendered identities were marked by what Lorena (2018) calls a transient and deviant posture concerning the impositions of the sex-gender-desire system. If the sex-gender-desire system mobilizes its gears throughout various moments of individuals' lives, it is in childhood that it operates in a more structured way, considering the social institutions that oversee and enforce the norm (César, 2008). Lorena (2018) also points out that

transgender childhoods, in an act of refusal toward masculinity and femininity imposed on them as natural and solely recognizable, build alternative ways of living that are socially perceived as deviant and minority.

Our interlocutors narrated experiences in which the sex-gender-desire system, in association with other social markers of difference, operates in the sense of constructing subjects based on norms that determine acceptable behaviors, expected choices, previously determined tastes/affinities, and a whole repertoire that involves ways of living in public and private spaces and, consequently, how subjects develop their confrontations.

It is through gender technologies (Moutinho, 2014) that the propositions and norms of the sex-gender-desire system are imposed, and activated through the social actors and institutions that are present in the most diverse practices and spaces accessed and apprehended by the subjects in the scope of everyday life, requiring them to develop strategies of existence amid the context that permeates them.

By showing interest in a toy that, according to the assumptions of heteronormativity, should only be used in girls' sociability practices, Bianca ends up challenging the father of the girl with whom she was sharing the doll, who challenges and embarrasses her authorized by implicitly naturalized discourse that "dolls are not for boys", making his interest in it illegitimate.

In this context, the toy is a key element of a complex network of presuppositions that structure the expectations not only of Bianca's mother, who also represses her, but of the girl's father, being understood as a sophisticated gender technology³ that operates within the sex-gender-desire system, insofar as it constructs practices and discourses, and which "end up bringing forward the effect that was supposed to be the cause" (Bento, 2011, p. 549), so that its uses are before the subject itself (Lauretis, 1994).

The illegitimacy of Bianca's use of the doll authorizes the girl's father to treat her in a hostile manner and is also the reinforcing element of the response given by her mother. Later, Bianca comments:

If even my mother hit me because of that, what would I expect from people on the streets? It was like that all my life. (Bianca).

showing the absence of a protected place for the violence suffered, demanding from her, from an early age, a position of confrontation, even if there was no understanding of the situation as actual violence.

The girl's father operates, therefore, from a place of surveillance of Bianca's gender expressions, a place that also tends to be occupied by neighbors, relatives, friends, and other individuals who make up the everyday lives of these people.

Toys constitute a powerful modeler of subjectivities, operating toward the regulation of gender identities. The school, as well as other institutions, also stand as elements that support the gears of this system.

While Bianca, who was read as a feminine, black, poor boy, became the target of questioning and violence by not only the father of the girl who owned the doll but also her mother, by reinforcing his repression, Marcela was read as a feminine, white,

³ Read more and in full in Lauretis (1989).

middle-class boy, who, therefore, accessed spaces with a structure that has dynamics that made him feel protected and less exposed to situations of violence (which does not mean that these structures protected him).

Once, during a fight with the boys in my class, a classmate stuck up for me, saying, 'The teacher said she's sick'. Some boys stopped; others continued... (Marcela).

This shared memory helps us understand how Marcela was perceived and constructed by the teacher for her classmates, and in doing so, we refer to Carvalho's (2011) proposition: looking from pathologizing frameworks removes the moral burden from transgressions of the sex-gender-desire system; however,

this depends on the social class of the individuals involved, especially those who can come to understand such phenomena as acceptable within the possibilities of existence, so that social class tends to be an important element in acquiring possible less marginalizing interpretations of deviant experiences, despite the potential pathologizing dimension, for example (Carvalho, 2011, p. 90).

On the one hand, the school imposes itself in this scene as a regulatory place of norms, and this interpretation allowed some children to no longer bother Marcela and even "defend her" (as in the case of the girl in the mentioned situation), since assuming the pathologizing assumption, it was no longer a moral deviation, but rather it placed her experience in the realm of intelligibility by treating her as a sick boy, as it destabilized the normative conceptions constructed through the apparatus of the sex-gender-desire system.

I didn't mind... At least that way, some kids wouldn't torment me... Some of them... (laughs). (Marcela).

The mobilization of this discourse ends up relegating a more protected place in the field of school relationships in Marcela's experience, which is not perceived in the repertoire of protective possibilities in Bianca's experience.

The evangelical church was the institution that stood out in most of the experiences of sociability and construction of meanings in Dan's experience. Dan discovered his homosexuality in his early teens, and the imposition of heteronormativity was evident when he became involved with the minister's daughter.

By considering institutions such as the school and family as potential regulators of moral codes that aim to maintain the sex-gender-desire system, the discourse surrounding the traditional family plays a decisive role, particularly in what has been referred to as Christian fundamentalism. To interdict and normalize sexualities, fundamentalist religious discourse needs to strategically combine with other discourses and extend its influence within the family institution, as it establishes a family pattern pervaded by a specific set of values.

In this context, churches function as instances of surveillance and enunciative loci, becoming discursive fields of action in terms of confronting moralities regarding gender and sexuality. In Dan's experience, they were spaces of various forms of violence. In

practical terms, these acts of violence resulted in the loss of an important space for sociability and a position of leadership, thereby depriving Dan of participation in meaningful activities. They also led to the delegitimization of his expression of affective and sexual desires, his mother's shame and guilt, conflicts between what Dan felt and what was expected of him, and other losses. Being expelled from the evangelical church and subsequently being given a job as a form of punishment became his "letter of emancipation". He sought to establish new social practices while familiarizing himself with the universe that was assigned to his transgression: parties, gatherings, drinking, and hook-up places. He confronted exclusionary practices by constructing new social circles, spaces of interaction, and a new repertoire that challenged the moral codes of the church he used to attend. Dan highlights education (in this experience, specifically his enrollment in a pre-university course and subsequent acceptance into a college program located outside his hometown) as a pivotal element in breaking away from the assumptions that made him perceive himself as different and, therefore, inadequate.

It is important to emphasize that the confrontation produced by the interlocutors of this study is not specifically directed to the system that produces the violence suffered, but to its consequences, creating tools of resistance to compose bodies and experiences of masculinity and femininity, in opposition to the gender identities previously established by the biological apparatus.

Everyday life and history

A situation experienced in the field of this research, which involved being late for one of the interview meetings because of a change in route and the need to accompany Bianca to reach the agreed-upon location, serves as a starting point for reflecting on the issues related to the daily negotiations of transgender individuals in public spaces. This situation highlights one of the most significant aspects of the everyday life of transvestites and transgender women engaged in prostitution: violence and its normalization by society in general (Peres, 2005).

It is in everyday life that the experience of abjection is lived concretely, resulting in practices of violence at different levels (Pelucio, 2007), so that it is within everyday life that ideas, values, concepts, and creations are apprehended (Galheigo, 2020), composing the social fabric that enables different ways of developing practices and conducting the dynamics of life.

Silva et al. (2016) point out the everyday violence faced by transvestites and transgender women who engage in prostitution as naturalized in the social imaginary. Pelucio (2007, p. 79) states that "violence can come from clients, as well as from the police and often from people within their social group", highlighting the specific experiences of transgender individuals involved in sex work, a group to which Bianca belongs. Outside of the realms of prostitution, this is confirmed by data on the violence faced by this population in Brazil (Carrara & Vianna, 2004): 10% of the interviewed subjects feel hatred and aversion toward transgender people, with a higher proportion confessed by men.

In this context, fear, need for protection, and survival are common themes in the narratives about the everyday lives of all the participants in this study. When Bianca has to wait for a friend to accompany her to an appointment because she is "afraid of being

beaten again”, this fact is associated with numerous variables, including the time she was leaving home and the space she would be accessing. Thus, we encounter elements that highlight violence as a starting point to redefine mobility strategies, using two categories that help us reflect on everyday life and the construction of strategies in response to these experiences: spatial displacement and circulation time.

This spatial displacement is not the one discussed by Osborne (2004), Emakunde (2001), Pelucio (2007), and Askabide (2006), which refers to the rotational aspect directly linked to prostitution as a labor activity, nor is it the one discussed by Piscitelli (2009) and Mayorga (2011) when addressing issues related to the movement, circulation, and immigration of women for prostitution, taking displacement as a category, among other interpretations, as a strategy to access economic and social opportunities in places other than those of origin (Rodrigues, 2016). Spatial displacement, in this context, refers to the possibilities of mobility within the city beyond prostitution activities, as an integral part of a set of practices that involve the maintenance of life, which becomes a central point in the narratives about the everyday life of the transgender people who were our interlocutors, especially those from low-income backgrounds.

The negotiation of displacements is directly related to the demarcations of urban spaces in the intrinsic dynamics of the city, which, in this context, emerges as a scenario full of antagonisms and conflicts, where people move within its crowded surfaces filled with cultural contents that, in turn, offer meanings and norms that serve as a substrate for interactions. These interactions are mediated by power relations that, in this context, are expressed through heteronormativity (Pelucio, 2007), among other factors. In Talita's experience, accessing the public space during the day directly entails facing certain constraints:

(...) I take the bus wherever I need to go. I'm more afraid of taking an Uber than taking the bus. I've experienced prejudice from a driver before, and I was really scared that he would do something to me, (...) When you have money, you can also buy nicer clothes, style your hair, and then people see you and say, 'Oh, it's a tranny, but she's clean'. (...). But if you're poor, it's a different story: banks, waiting in line, places where the common people go... Common people are ruder than educated people... They exclude you too but in a different way. (Talita, 29 May 2018)

Having access to some resources, especially material ones, offers tools for confronting situations of prejudice, without losing sight of the fact that, according to Oliveira (2019), 'going through' is a result of interaction, contextuality, and, especially, who is part of the relationships and contingent situations involving the interlocutors. In other words, Talita, who has few financial resources, a low level of education, and little support from social policies, has few tools to face the few possibilities of spatial mobility.

It is common to relate the social reality of transvestites to poverty, trafficking, and shanty town (Carrara & Vianna, 2004). It is also possible to suggest that among transvestites, there is a “predominance of black and mixed-race individuals, indicating their belonging to the poorest strata of Brazilian society” (p. 235). These relationships need to be established to consider the levels of social, economic, and cultural exclusion

that transvestites are subjected to, as much of what is considered part of the transvestite project can be understood “in terms of broader socioeconomic patterns of inequality” (Kulick, 1998, p. 61). This framework suggests that the social reality in which the transvestite identity is produced and its reproduction as a collective identity is, among other things, a result of material living conditions and their insertion into a specific social class. We are not saying that the transvestite identity is universally a product of poverty, or that poverty defines this gender identity. However, it can be said that among all the determinants that reflect in the construction of cultural identities, social class—and therefore, the socioeconomic context—is also central (Ferreira, 2014). This centrality marks, among other things, an important tool for everyday coping: ‘trans passing’⁴.

Relating ‘trans passing’ to social class in terms of mobility strategies, the story of Marcela, who identifies as a transgender woman, is white and comes from a middle-class background, offers us insights into the resources available to her for coping with challenges. Marcela has financial resources that allow her to present herself in a way that minimizes the impact of negative reactions to her presence in public spaces. With designer handbags, well-groomed hair, manicured nails and eyebrows, and a rich vocabulary, Marcela ensures her ability to navigate spaces “*where people are more educated*”.

Marcela’s cultural and economic capital shapes her practices and provides her with access to more protected spaces for circulation. However, this does not mean that she only frequents environments where her gender identity is respected, given the education level of the people in those spaces. She also goes to banks, supermarkets, and beauty salons, but her choices and the way she accesses these places ensure a lower exposure to situations of discomfort, although in certain circumstances she may even rely on the presence of her husband to facilitate her circulation.

Tiago does not use this strategy to transit in public spaces. The strategy he uses is the reconfiguration of these spaces in their daily dynamics. The re-elaboration of the accessed circuits and the reconfiguration of the spaces of belonging gain body and strength in his life history, especially after his identity transition process. He says:

I don't go out much. My life revolves around work. (...) My social life is very limited nowadays. (...) When I need to, I go out and face life, but compared with how my routine is structured, these things are small because they very seldom happen. (Tiago, 21 November 2017).

The sociability built through belonging, via the relation with peers, enables Tiago to construct concrete coping alternatives; however, an important factor should be noted from this affirmation: Tiago is a transgender man in a society that considers the spaces produced by masculinity as more respectable (Braz, 2019). This, combined with his assertive vocabulary regarding rights, public policies, and the State, which is a result of his education and trajectory, provides him with a certain ability to deal with circulation and social relationships compared with the experiences of transgender women, for instance.

⁴ An emic term used to express the ability to “go/pass through” a given gender identity corresponding to that assigned by biological sex. It is suggested to read more in Duque (2017).

The objective and the subjective in the perception of reality

The objective and the subjective in the perception of reality involve taking an effective position on reality considering the resources available at different levels and the energy needed to build other (new) individual and collective projects (Guerra, 1993). Subjectivation or forms of subjectivity were discussed by Foucault (1993) as a historical ontology of the present that reveals how people become subjects of certain truths. The nodal point of these discussions is the concepts of truth and politics, as well as the relations between knowledge and power that establish tensions, for example, those related to the categories of body and gender. Therefore, the construction of the subjectivity of transgender people is closely linked to how the sex-gender-desire system operates based on heteronormative assumptions and the abject everyday life it produces.

Peres (2005) states that a paradigm shift regarding sexualities can only occur together with a social change, a rearrangement of meanings, values, and senses attributed to social, economic, political, cultural, sexual, and gender practices within a collective perspective that involves not only awareness of the individuals experiencing processes of abjection but also of society as a whole. If confronting conditions marked by deprivation in access to spaces and practices becomes possible in the lives of these individuals through ways of operationalizing their everyday life, it is in terms of how these deprivations are perceived that Bianca, for instance, an active member of the social movement, builds tools for this operationalization both in the concrete and subjective dimension of life.

The spaces of the social movement were fundamental for some of our interlocutors to become aware of their reality as a strategy to face it. In Bianca's history, the social movement is composed as the locus where it is possible to denounce the scenario of violence and discrimination in which she and other transgender people live, in response to the impositions of the sex-gender-desire system and the consequent practices that this system ends up not only announcing but also producing.

The system tells you that you have to accept this place [of humiliation] and function in this invisibility so as not to create problems for yourself or anyone else. Then comes a space like that, where the social movement organizes, marches, fights... My eyes lit up... (...) that was very important to me... It was life saying: The world is unfair and you don't have to accept this! (Bianca, 24 June 2018).

Unlike Bianca, Talita does not have access to spaces of mobilization and political articulation as part of her repertoire of sociability and composition of social practices. Her perceptions of her living conditions are formed by the combination of all the negatives she has found when operationalizing certain practices compared with those of people who live their gender by their biological framework.

Then you want to go somewhere but you can't, you want a decent job but you can't get it because they won't accept you, you want to do simple things and you can't. I think this is very unfair! I know I'm different, and people don't accept that, but there's nothing I can do about it, and I have the right to be who I am! (Talita, 03 April 2018)

According to Guerra (1993), it is crucial to remember that rationality is negotiated because it is limited by two causes: those arising from knowledge about situations and the uncontrolled effects they produce. These effects can be noticed in Talita's narrative; however, the limitations and their supposed limiters do not seem as apprehended as in Bianca's narrative. .

Dan advocates from an "intellectual place", as a "transgender academic man", a position granted both by his role in activism and as a teacher with a doctoral degree. This opens up a wide range of possibilities that authorize his speech and make it more legitimate and accepted.

Participation in formal education spaces in conjunction with militancy spaces is seen as a potential for apprehending reality in Dan and Tiago's experiences.

Dan is invited to participate in debates at events organized by spaces of control and discipline (Foucault, 1993), such as Medicine, Law, Social Work, and Pedagogy courses in both public and private universities, as well as teacher training courses for primary and secondary education. This situates his work, within the realms of activism, as a confrontation of cultural issues through mediating reflection among professionals in education processes. He also takes part in organized social movement spaces but usually speaks from a perspective informed by his academic experiences. In addition, he fosters and mediates spaces of support and reflection for other transgender men in the early stages of gender transition.

Considering the low level of education of a large number of transgender people, mainly transvestites, and transsexual women, presenting someone who currently occupies a space in academia is in itself an alternative advertisement for transgender biographies (Carvalho, 2015). Dan wants to and does use the narrative of his life history to create alternatives to visibility regimes.

Despite considering himself a shy person, Tiago also mobilizes repertoires similar to those of Dan, both in terms of criticism and identification of accessible social circles. However, they develop different stances and subjectify these experiences in distinct ways. Although their level of perception of reality is similar, it produces different effects in terms of the combination between that perception and a prospective dimension. Despite the knowledge he possesses about his condition and its relation to the historical and social dimension that permeates his experience, which he has constructed through collective discussions on gender and sexuality within the university, Tiago seeks a certain level of invisibility when managing this knowledge:

I like being in these spaces of political formation, but I don't see myself as a figure who has the strength to be in an organized social movement. I'm male now, but before I was a woman, you see! [laughs] (...) I think those people who show their face must suffer a lot more... (Tiago, 03 December 2019).

Dan also comments on the same fear, remembering how important psychotherapeutic support was to deal with the feelings resulting from the exposure. Fears like those of Tiago and Dan can lead to regimes of (in)visibility and directly impact their search for recognition.

In spaces of political claim, visibility suggests a process in which certain actors are considered subjects of rights and, as discussed by Carvalho (2015), when producing a

transgender visibility regime linked to activism, a political subject is constructed that serves simultaneously to combat stigmatized images of transgender people and to publicize the very existence of activism, implying processes that aim to overcome the symbolic exclusion from the human intelligibility spectrum.

Taking the lens off the activist experiences of Tiago, Dan, and Bianca and focusing on the broader social context, it is possible to reflect on how visibility regimes have an impact—or face repercussions—and how these identities are perceived and mobilized in the production of confrontations and ways of life. On one hand, experiences like that of Bianca demonstrate that tools for confronting issues stemming from the sex-gender-desire system become more feasible in collective spaces, through propositions that challenge visibility and demand recognition of the group as subjects who seek access to citizenship; on the other hand, experiences like that of Tiago are more aligned with a form of activism that does not directly engage with governmental agencies and operators of public policies but rather composes spaces to critically construct reality. Dan occupies a hybrid position between these poles, participating in various spaces for debate and political articulation, as well as engaging in direct actions on the streets.

If imaginaries, projects, and identities cross the perception of oneself as a subject and part of a given social group in the experiences of Dan, Tiago, and Bianca, in experiences such as those of Marcela some other spaces and dynamics give meaning to this perception that marks out the relationship between the objective and the subjective in the perception of reality.

Marcela occasionally attended the organized social movement space in her city and, although she expressed enjoying the discussions and proposed objectives, she did not remain actively involved. Nevertheless, she incorporated a series of terms and expressions from the knowledge brought forth in that space into her vocabulary. Melo (2016) states that through the sociability produced in activist spaces, whether official or not, vocabularies of existence are learned and redefined to make sense of experiences lived outside gender norms. This points out that not only those who actively enter and participate in these spaces mobilize these repertoires, but also highlights the growing reach of the debate.

Marcela experienced the student movement when she was in college when she identified herself as a gay man. This identity, even though it sounded transgressing, was welcomed by the family and placed her in important circuits within the scope of sociability, generating a feeling of protection compared with the identity constructed today, that of a transsexual woman.

I'm very discreet, I don't like this stuff of linking the fact that I'm a transsexual woman to prostitution, slums, and lack of education. (Marcela, 20 May 2018).

Marcela builds a sense of belonging outside the circuits understood as polluted, among family members and those closest to her in social contexts, and does not link her sociability to spaces frequented by her peers. She belongs to a family that invests in the social advancement of their children and has the resources to do so, as well as numerous opportunities for access to goods and services. This directly affects the perception of the issues experienced by Marcela and other transgender individuals, outlining spaces of

similarity and difference and, mainly, influencing how she positions herself about reality and aspects of her identity.

Informing the Occupational-Therapeutic Action

The formulations of social occupational therapy in Brazil emphasize the need for concepts that refer to understanding the dynamics of social negotiations, the incorporation of socio-anthropological knowledge into occupational therapy, and investment in individual and collective actions for professional practice in the social field (Barros et al., 2002; Lopes, 2016). In this context, Lopes (2016) — from the developments, in concrete reality, of what is understood as social needs, professional actions, and the role of occupational therapists — bases the foundations of social occupational therapy on the notion of “citizenship and rights” in a structurally unequal society in which struggles for redistribution and recognition are essential for the social participation of people (Fraser, 2003).

There is no homogeneity when it comes to the ways of life of transgender individuals, as they are influenced by multiple factors that individualize the experiences of subjects while informing the ways of life of groups. However, based on the life histories that are the focus of this study, it can be observed that their ways of life are produced: (1) through the need to confront a system that pushes them to marginal life, present in many of the spaces where they circulate and develop their everyday practices, whether in domestic and public spaces, work contexts, or private spheres where they seek to be and exist; (2) through the possibility of operationalizing life through the everyday experiences woven within these contexts and made viable through the construction and consolidation of more robust support networks that offer support and protection and recognize their bodies and identities as legitimate, thereby producing a sense of belonging; (3) where the marker of “social class” proves to be decisive in terms of concrete possibilities to access opportunities within these experiences; (4) in the field of recognition where their main alternatives for emancipation are located, whether through the State and the creation and implementation of public policies that minimize the impact of social non-recognition of these bodies, or through daily operationalized recognition through the perception of the production of their experiences and the system that produces them; (5) in the spaces where this system is assimilated that, because of the absence of debates and public policies that bring to the forefront and consider the vulnerability it produces, are included in the social movement.

Operationalizing the concept of “ways of life” through the proposed analyses provides us with elements to consider the practice of occupational therapy in contexts where social inequalities create barriers to the formation of more democratic everyday lives, as seen in the experiences of transgender people.

Since the early debates in the late 1970s, social occupational therapy has engaged in dialogues with various fields of knowledge that contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of social realities and the development of technical actions that consider the multiple aspects intersecting with social inequalities. In this context, ways of life emerge as an important analytical tool, as it provides insights into the difficulties that subjects or groups face in operationalizing their everyday life. This requires a substantial

understanding of the mechanisms intrinsic to systems that produce social dynamics and the processes that shape the subjectivities that guide and drive action.

In these theoretical and methodological reconfigurations and in the approach through lenses that enable an understanding to propose practices that meet the concrete demands of individuals, ways of life, as a conceptual tool, can inform occupational therapists about needs, contexts, contradictions, practices, assimilations, and disconnections. Above all, they shed light on possible paths, considering how people build their everyday lives and manage tools and multiple means of care that can be generated from these experiences. This enables therapists to understand and respond to the complexities and dynamics of people's lives better, offering more tailored and effective interventions.

In this sense, discussing the technical action in social occupational therapy requires understanding the mechanisms that construct the social positions of these individuals and how they are assimilated. This understanding can then foster possibilities to move within the social fabric through the creation of strategies to access basic rights, combine resources, and expand life opportunities. Creating alternatives to entering the labor market, remaining in formal educational spaces, navigating public spaces, and strengthening social and personal networks, among other things, involve the subtleties—sometimes glaring—of the challenges faced in living a life that deviates from normative identities. Occupational therapists may encounter these challenges when engaging with individuals whose non-normative identities intersect with the social fabric of life.

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Author's Contributions

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