

POOR YOUTH, DAILY LIFE AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY: strategies of intervention for scaling down urban violence in Brazil

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Introduction: Violence is a complex, cross-cultural and global phenomenon, which becomes part of the collective memory of any given society and ends up legitimizing more violence in a no return spiral. Violence experienced by Brazilian poor youth is deeply-rooted in their daily life and has consumed lives, dreams and future projects. International/governmental/non-governmental organisations and grassroots projects have made efforts to reduce violence and build a Culture of Peace. Occupational therapists in Brazil have contributed to this endeavour in projects, which focuses on the promotion of justice, the respect for human rights and the exercise of a full citizenship.

Objectives: To reflect on occupational therapy experience in youth community-based projects and its contributions for scaling down violence and building up a Culture of Peace. To point out the contributions occupational therapy may have for youth policy-making and implementation of violence prevention local strategies.

Description: The work describes some of the most relevant experiences over a ten-year period in youth community-based projects in São Paulo, Brazil. It describes how educational, cultural and artistic projects are used to reflect about youth daily life and, work as an environment where the mediation of conflict and, social and cultural negotiations may take place.

Results: The insidious and permanent presence of violence in daily life of poor youth may be expressed, reflected and understood as they perform cultural, artistic and educational projects. They experiment new forms of communication and develop new responses to conflictive situations. The processes they go through cultivate their social participation and the engagement in community affairs, contributing to their empowerment and development of a critical stance towards daily life events.

Conclusion: Violence prevention projects present better results in community-based programs that make possible exchange and reciprocity. Since these are essential elements in social relations, they also help encouraging solidarity, tolerance to difference and the resolution of conflicts. The participation of occupational therapists in these programs helps to foster bonding and social ties.

Contribution to the practice: Getting to know occupational therapy contributions to prevent violence may help practitioners to engage more fully in the promotion of human rights.