

DOSSIÊR

Perspectives on Indigenous Psychology in Brazil: ethical and epistemological challenges

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Indigenous Psychology or the construction of a mediation locus

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Abstract

This essay aims to explore the practical, theoretical, and methodological specificities of Indigenous Psychology, proposing the use of audiovisual languages as a means to research, document, and deepen the dialogue between academic and Indigenous communities. This field is under development and reflection, adopting a transdisciplinary, complex, systemic, and dialogical perspective that contributes to the decolonization of psychology itself by creating spaces, or mediation locus, for the recognition of the existence and resilience of Indigenous cosmology and good living. We discuss audiovisual media as a mediating instance between distinct ways of understanding the historical world through image and sound capture and editing processes. We conclude that this strategy de-hierarchizes the relationship between academia and communities, striving to empower, amplify, and enhance the voices and visibility of all involved, bringing practical, theoretical, technical, methodological, and ethical advancements in constructing, disseminating, and sharing knowledge.

Keywords: Audiovisual Media; Decoloniality; Indigenous; Mediation.

According to Pavón-Cuéllar (2022, 2024), what we call Psychology today is a cultural-historical manifestation of the modern/colonial world-system, which began with the Spanish invasion of Abya Yala - currently known as the Americas - in 1492, and the construction and subsequent imposition of the European idea of modernity on colonized subjects, along with their political and economic subalternization. The understanding that modernity and coloniality form an indissoluble theoretical pair is the foundation of decolonial thought, which posits that Eurocentric modernity cannot be understood apart from the notion of coloniality and, conversely, this model of modernity (Maldonado-Torres, 2017) cannot overcome that coloniality. However, establishing a field known as “Indigenous Psychology,” while representing an important movement toward decolonizing thought, seems to create a paradox that requires reflection.

We align ourselves with the perspectives of Ferraz and Domingues (2016), González et al. (2022), and Hwang (2017), who argue that the concept of Indigenous

Psychology is not merely a combination of psychology with Indigenous knowledge. Instead, it is a dialogue – a proposal that democratically and creatively enables encounters of knowledge. Within the context of decoloniality, Indigenous Psychology emerges from a reflexive movement that challenges ontological and epistemic assumptions, necessitating a break with the traditional model of psychological science, whose Eurocentric knowledge culturally guides the explanatory discourses on subjectivity and other psychosocial phenomena considered intrinsic to the field of Psychology. Nevertheless, a paradoxical relationship arises: it is through the concept and psychological perspectives born from the model of coloniality that the very term “Indigenous Psychology” is constituted, given that the demarcation of knowledge fields in the Western sphere demands the exercise of reason (and power) to establish territories, objects, and methods. Thus, reflecting on what we call Indigenous Psychology requires us to understand whether the term defines a new field, recognizes ancestral non-colonial knowledge (Baniwa, 2006; Faria & Martins, 2020; Jekupé, 2009; Pachamama, 2020; Pizzinato, Guimarães & Leite, 2019) that we view as psychological, or constitutes a sort of psychology rooted in Amerindian cosmivision and cosmopolitics (Dalla Rosa, 2019; Kopenawa & Albert, 2015) that emerges from intercultural dialogue.

Scientific psychology, as we know it, is imposed and reinforced by the interests and perspective of the colonizer, psychologizing the subjective and psychosocial phenomena of the peoples of the Global South (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2021). It is grounded in the notion of European knowledge superiority over ancestral wisdom, consolidated since the sixteenth century through the systematic elimination of dissenting worldviews and the erasure of the scientific knowledge produced by dominated peoples and cultures.

From this perspective, considering an Indigenous Psychology first and foremost implies recognizing that it connects, within a single concept, Eurocentric scientific knowledge and ancestral cosmogonies. However, in doing so, it is essential to distance oneself from colonialist dynamics of territorial demarcation while operating in the epistemic field. The strength of its constitution lies in the possibility of jointly constructing a field through intercultural dialogues, relating to Dussel’s (2009) concept of transmodernity, which envisions ways of addressing and articulating the many modernities historically silenced throughout the Global South.

Recognizing the imperative to interrupt the cultural silencing and erasure imposed on colonized peoples, we identify methodological issues as a fundamental point of reflection when proposing to articulate Western knowledge, such as Psychology, with Indigenous wisdom. Challenging the limits and possibilities of audiovisual media (Moura & Baldi, 2021), we propose a reflection grounded in the premise of a dialogical and systemic collaboration involving Indigenous communities and academic researchers through the production of videos. By jointly producing interpretations of social and cultural practices, worldviews, and historical understandings from the communities’ perspectives, we aim to establish a locus of speech and listening (Batista & Sampaio, 2022), where different cosmogonies can critically meet and mutually enrich each other through attentive collective construction via dialogue and broad participation (Dussel, 2009).

To support our proposal and approach Indigenous perspectives on psychology and the theoretical, methodological, and practical proposals of Indigenous Psychology, we rely on transdisciplinary perspectives shaped by systemic, dialectical, dialogical, and complex dynamics of decolonial thought, transmodernity, visual anthropology, Indigenous cosmologies and good living, and the democratic and collective processes of audiovisual production, among others.

This essay proposes considering Indigenous Psychology as a locus of mediation rather than an epistemological territorial demarcation. It aims to explore the practical, theoretical, and

methodological specificities of Indigenous Psychology, suggesting using audiovisual languages to research, document, and deepen the dialogue between academic and Indigenous communities (Miranda, 2020; Souza, 2020).

Mediation Locus: A Proposal

It is important to emphasize that we use the term “mediation” to denote the existence of a conflict between fields or agents. We adopt this term from Schnitman’s (1999, p. 17, emphasis added) socio-constructivist perspective, which highlights that:

Different domains - family, education, labor, etc. – *face social and cultural changes* that lead to increasing complexity. In such a context, conflicts between people, systems, or *subsystems of complex systems* can be seen as *undesirable* or an *opportunity for change*.

The historical perspective and the ramifications of colonialism reveal that the relationship between Western knowledge and the knowledge of traditional peoples in Latin America is marked by conflict. From the perspective of complex systems, we can say that different modernities (subsystems of modernities) make up a global system in interaction, in which the subsystem of colonizer culture and the subsystem of Indigenous culture, for example, also express conflictual relations. From the colonizer’s viewpoint, conflict (Indigenous resistance or insurgency) is undesirable. However, mediation, as a dialogical action, points toward non-colonial, non-oppressive relationships when interacting with the various attributes and characteristics of the subsystems, creating opportunities for transformation.

As a transformative dialogical action, mediation points to a type of relationship that generates movement without silencing or nullifying any of the parties involved. Since the decolonial turn is also a response to the epistemicide imposed on Amerindian cultures, it makes sense to think that the logic needed to bring traditional knowledge to light must oppose the deterministic binary logic by which conflicts tend to be conducted in contexts where there is no interest in recognizing other possibilities of truth from the Other (Angatu, 2022). In colonial domination relations, the Other can never hold any truth, and dichotomies such as good-evil, developed-primitive, and civilized-savage must be established. According to Warters (1999), what underlies this mechanism of Other nullification in conflict situations is the “win-lose” paradigm. As the author states:

Our culture has privileged the win-lose paradigm, which operates as a *deterministic binary* logic, in which *disjunction* and *simplification* limit possible options. *Discussion and litigation* – as methods for resolving differences – give rise to disputes in which usually one party ends up “winning” and the other “losing”. This way of framing differences *impoverishes the spectrum of possible solutions*, hinders the relationship between those involved, and generates economic, emotional, and relational costs. (Schnitman, 1999, p.17, emphasis added)

The linear basis inherent in the Cartesian paradigm, which became canonical in the West, is evident in the deterministic, binary, disjunctive, and simplifying aspects of non-mediated conflict resolution methods, where the logic of dominant power prevails. Instead of dialogue and respect for differences, we have discussion (as a violent act of intimidation and silencing of the Other) and litigation. As a direct consequence of this type of interaction, we see an impoverishment of the horizon of different worldviews and often irreversible losses, such as the genocide of Indigenous peoples and, with them, the disappearance of ancestral knowledge.

Within the socio-constructivist framework, mediation is seen as a “tool” or mode of relationship that points to enriching possibilities for human plurality, fully applicable to the concept of the “mediation locus” we propose here. However, given that mediation has many distinct and

sometimes conflicting connotations, we will start with Warters' (1999, p. 128) definition of mediation:

To provide a common starting point, I will define "mediation" generally as conciliatory interventions by a party (or parties) not directly involved in a problem or dispute, who works with the involved parties to facilitate the development of a mutually acceptable shared solution to a problem.

Given that psychological science and Indigenous cosmologies have distinct origins, histories, and practices, it is pertinent to adopt the term "locus" not as a non-spatial territory but as a mobile territory for articulating epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises. We use the term "mediation" to describe a dialogical, relational, and ethical mode of mutual recognition of differences, tensions, and power dynamics that involve articulating these two fields as a praxis of a new contemporary ethic of coexistence among diverse modernities.

Indigenous Psychology as a Territory of Knowledge

In the establishment of what would be defined as the national territory in Brazil, the issue of land occupation and demarcation by the Nation-State excluded Indigenous populations from the right to continue their ways of relating to the land and other peoples, beings, and the environment (Angatu, 2021). The delimitation of territory occurred through relations of violence, the denial of existence, and even the denial of the very humanity of those deemed unworthy of land ownership. Therefore, choosing domination relations based on the definition of territory illustrates how colonial mechanisms have operated - and still operate - regarding Indigenous populations (Calegare et al., 2020). This illustration is pertinent for reflecting on the demarcation of epistemic territories.

Whether through territorial demarcation or occupation (violent or not), naming and redefining spaces is inherent in the process. The colonizer's act of identifying and naming lands carries the functions of determining what is visible and what is invisible, what remains inside and what is left outside, what is named and what remains nameless. Consequently, it determines what continues to exist and what ceases to exist, providing interpretative narratives about what persists and opening discussions on processes of domination through erasure, silencing, and death (Calegare et al., 2020). The epistemic silencing produced concerning Indigenous populations of the region is evident and paradoxically concealed by the discourse that describes the Amazon as occupied and colonized, highlighting its challenges. Despite housing the largest number of Indigenous ethnic groups in Brazilian territory, which have resisted in order to continue existing both materially and symbolically, the region is characterized by the colonial discourse as a "demographic void." Embedded in the notion of a void, which denies the historical existence of the peoples who inhabited the region before the arrival of the Spanish and Portuguese, is also a void of knowledge and ways of being. This is because the parameters that determine whether the region is significant regarding human occupation are based on the demographic criteria of the colonizer's sociopolitical model.

To consider Indigenous Psychology as a "territory of knowledge" in a way that dismantles the forms of power imposed by colonial knowledge requires a constant exercise in avoiding epistemological domination - a challenging task since the tools that give power to academic discourse are products of colonial thought. Recognizing these tools is, therefore, an important step towards approaching a "space" without imprisoning what it contains or excluding what escapes our perception due to the absence of references capable of helping us understand the different logics of existence (Ferraz & Domingues, 2016; González et al., 2022).

In the interactions between Eurocentric academic knowledge and the ancestral knowledge of Indigenous peoples, the literature has discussed the effective equivalence of terms and concepts

constructed in intercultural dialogues. Terms such as “Indigenous Medicine” can encompass multiple meanings and serve different purposes in their appropriation, considering the needs of the community, the Indigenous populations, and even the non-Indigenous population at large. Far from being a matter of translation or adaptation that reveals a common ontology capable of defining an epistemology applicable to all rationalities included in the intercultural dialogue, this seems to be a task of the untranslatable – an attempt to translate networks of relationships that have no equivalence with the way we conceive the world.

Subjectivity, Cosmology, and Indigenous Good Living

Despite the transformations it has undergone throughout its existence, psychological science retains contours that confer a certain unity upon it, even in its recognition as a hybrid field or as a field of theoretical and methodological plurality and dispersion. As a science, it has been primarily invoked to recognize subjectivity and the complex biopsychosocial constitution of the human being. However, this demand does not necessarily present itself as a requirement to establish a specific field of knowledge, as is necessary within Western epistemology.

Assuming that the colonizer’s impositions shape the academic perspective, we understand that our way of organizing and comprehending the world distances us from the Other. This is particularly evident within the liberal perspective that sanctifies the Individual as an unquestionable entity, in opposition to all the “Others,” who were treated by the logic of colonial knowledge production as “Objects of investigation.” Such a worldview also alienates us from collectivity and other modes of relationship, where it would not be necessary to institute the subject since neither the subject nor the object has always been present. This occurs because, in other cosmologies, it is possible to establish a direct interrelationship with beings (both human and non-human) without objectifying them. From this perspective, it is even understandable that Westernized knowledge, recognizing the limitations of the prevailing scientific paradigm, might feel the need to construct an Indigenous Psychology within the History of Psychological Science to restore the relationship with this Other.

Talak (2022) offers an important contribution for us to develop a dialogical relationship that does not reproduce power relations between the culture of the colonizer and the peoples whose ways of being have been silenced. She emphasizes the formulation and treatment of an agenda of local and global problems relevant in the context of the world-system. However, she warns that defining an agenda of local problems specific to the culture in focus does not by itself immediately convert the adopted approach into a decolonial one since similar problems are addressed in different parts of the world through various approaches. Thus, the agenda for an Indigenous Psychology itself needs to address its relationship with the power structure of which we are a part. Without this reflection, it is impossible to raise awareness about the geopolitical position that psychological knowledge occupies in its relationship with traditional peoples. An example of how such relations become harmful without an awareness of the power that this position emanates can be seen by revisiting psychology’s relationship with ethnic-racial issues, as observed by Martins (2020) regarding the disastrous use of medico-psychological ideas about Black people in Brazil.

Indigenous peoples may not need Psychology as a science that subjects them, that grants legitimacy to their subjectivity, given that there does not seem to be a demand, from their cosmologies, for the affirmation of their status as subjects embedded in relationships within the system they integrate. However, they may need it as a tool in other relationships, such as in interactions with other cultural systems that delegitimize them. Among Indigenous peoples, life is intrinsically and

deeply connected with a diversity of elements: Indigenous cosmologies, or Amerindian cosmopolitics, recount that forests, rivers, animals, and phenomena such as wind, rain, celestial bodies, etc., are recognized as possessing subjectivity and agency (Calegare et al., 2020). Amerindian cosmology also conveys the understanding of a living universe that pulses and is richly articulated. In this sense, the recognition of subjectivity belongs to the realm of lived experience, perhaps dispensing with the need to establish an object of reflection to explain something experienced in living. Furthermore, subjectivity, intelligence, sensitivity, will, and creativity are recognized not only among humans but also among other living beings and elements, which are endowed with form, substance, and a vision of their own existence and connection (Fernandes et al., 2021).

The Western logic, under which it became possible to objectify Indigenous people as exotic, savage, and primitive, as well as to dominate them, has a profound connection with the materialistic and mercantile dynamics of the colonizer, rooted in Cartesian, linear, mechanistic, deterministic, atomistic, reductionist, and disciplinary rationality. Therefore, Indigenous wisdom, with its ancestral foundations, was considered “non-knowledge”, “superstition or something primitive” (Dalla Rosa, 2019). However, this cosmology underpins Indigenous good living and holds central importance in the ways of organizing and understanding the world of these peoples. In the words of Katu Arkonada (Conselho Regional de Psicologia de São Paulo, 2016, p. 8):

Good living invites us to move beyond the dichotomy between human beings and nature: to awaken to the consciousness that we are children of Mother Earth, of Pachamama, and to become aware that we are part of her, that we came from her, and that we are completed by her.

“Good living” is a concept that emerges from Indigenous cosmology and involves a way of life inseparable from understanding the universe in its plurality. Dalla Rosa (2019) proposes an approach based on what he presents as a pedagogical epistemology of decoloniality to explore this understanding. For this, it is necessary to adopt a pedagogical thinking of alterity “in which the ethical sense of the wisdom of good living and the land without evil must touch the sensitivity of the Same (the self).” Methodologically, the author suggests that to continue the dialogue with cosmologies that involve good living, it is initially necessary to “assume the condition of testimony of the Other, before whom the investigative and reflective act becomes proximity, a face-to-face relationship that, among other possibilities, calls for educational mediation” (Dalla Rosa, 2019, p. 299). Audiovisual media seems to provide a relationship that meets this dimension.

Considering the reflections on the practical and theoretical specificities of an Indigenous Psychology that we have developed so far, within a critical and reflective perspective of cosmology and good living, we present audiovisual languages as a means to research, document, and deepen the dialogue between academic and Indigenous communities.

Documentary as a Medium

Audiovisual languages allow the emergence of diverse perspectives and interpretations of participants’ subjectivity and psychosocial processes, often leading to insights that go beyond the predictions and controls of traditional academic methods (Mitjans Martínez et al., 2019). These languages can serve as a mediation between different ways of understanding the historical world through processes of capturing and editing images and sounds that challenge hegemonic positions and deconstruct the hierarchical relationship between academia and communities, striving to empower and amplify the voices and visibility of all those involved.

When we consider Indigenous Psychology as a locus of mediation, we suggest using audiovisual media as a potential path for the various stakeholders to meet and engage in dialogue.

This is not an unfamiliar methodology within the Human Sciences. The field has employed audiovisual ethnographic resources since the early decades of the 20th century, when large scientific expeditions and Euro-American colonial explorations included filmmakers tasked with documenting the customs of colonized peoples and, especially, highlighting the significance of such expeditions (Costa, 2018; Costa & Galindo, 2021). Our stance distances itself from these pioneering explorations, reaffirming our intention to redefine the use of audiovisual media, focusing less on the documentary film as a product and more on the dialogical process it engenders. Although it is not within the scope of this section to outline even a brief genealogy of what has come to be known as Visual Anthropology, it is worth remembering that the very field of Anthropology was created to scientifically explain to North Atlantic societies their supposed superiority over the subjects of the Global South. Pioneering works, such as the ethnographic films of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson in Bali and New Guinea, contributed to expanding the methodological scope of the discipline while simultaneously reinforcing the notion that the studied populations required Eurocentric civilizational support due to their presumed primitive condition. Typically, a Western narrator would analyze, in an off-screen voice, the scenes revealed by the images, referencing North Atlantic science.

A critique of the method emerged from within the field itself in the 1950s, with the experiments of French anthropologist and documentarian Jean Rouch in Africa. As noted by Sztutman (2004, p. 52), "(...) the theoretical discourse is included in the praxis of cinema, which becomes the condition for producing knowledge that can be shared, constructed through a two-way interaction between observers and the observed." Indeed, Rouch produced several films in which he engaged in dialogical and collaborative processes in documentary construction, seeking "to emphasize an ethnographic and audiovisual know-how based on mutual understanding between the subjects involved in the documentary development process" (Teixeira, 2022, p. 37). In Rouch's words (1993, p. 543):

It is a permanent "ethno-dialogue" that seems to me one of the most interesting aspects of the current ethnographic process: knowledge is no longer a stolen secret devoured in the Western temples of knowledge; it is the result of an endless search, in which the ethnographers and the ethnographed engage in a path that some of us have already named "shared anthropology".

Several aspects of Jean Rouch's work reinforce the relevance of employing documentary as a methodology for an Indigenous Psychology, two of which stand out. First, his films challenged the anthropological practice of observing, describing, and analyzing the historical world from a distance, shifting to a collaborative interpretation with the filmed subjects, inaugurating an understanding that academic knowledge and local knowledge contribute equally to knowledge production. The reverberations of this choice in research practices were significant, provoking what Costa and Galindo (2018, p. 30) call a crisis of representation, as "the idea of 'speaking for the other' came to be profoundly questioned, and with it, the very notion of the native as an 'object'".

Jean Rouch was, above all, a European sensitive to the atrocities of European colonization in Africa, developing his work at a time when these colonial ties were transforming into what Anibal Quijano (1992) later defined as "coloniality," or the perpetuation of the Western colonial yoke over the peoples of the Global South, even after their political independence. His film *La pyramide humaine* (Rouch, 1959), which we will analyze further, reveals to the viewer an *avant la lettre* intercultural dialogue, as later deepened and grounded by Dussel (2009). From this perspective, Rouch's work – including his invaluable contribution through the Ateliers Varan – constitutes not only a critique of the classical ethnographic film but also inaugurates the understanding of documentary as a process, as a medium in and through which the filmed subjects relate, expose themselves, and revisit their own convictions.

By the mid-1950s, Rouch had utilized the technical advancements of small, lightweight 16 mm cameras – and, from 1974 onward, 8 mm cameras (Rouch, 1979) – to follow characters in dynamic scenes and city movements, providing framings and approaches from viewpoints that had been little explored in ethnographic film until then. In doing so, he developed the idea of a participatory camera, inspired by Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov, who, in the early decades of the 20th century, challenged the weight of existing cameras by positioning them on moving vehicles, seeking to endow cinematic images with the kinetics inherent to the human eye. Both Vertov’s kino-eye and the *cinéma-vérité* of Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin consider the observer part of an observed system, capable of influencing it by their presence and being transformed by this interaction. Such an understanding of observation is particularly interesting to audiovisual experiments that involve the dynamic observation of spontaneous interactions in groups of filmed subjects.

Starting with the participatory workshops conducted in various African countries in the second half of the 1970s, Jean Rouch developed a comprehensive methodology for collective audiovisual construction, eventually founding the Ateliers Varan⁴ in Paris in 1981. The mission of these workshops was to provide training to individuals from Third World countries and develop multipliers. Unlike the narratives rigidly controlled by European anthropologist-filmmakers, the methodology encouraged participants to tell their own stories according to their sociopolitical interests and in line with their cultural universe. Teixeira (2022, p. 45) notes that “the relationship between all the people involved in this audiovisual production process – filmmaker, filmed subject, and audience – assumed a different form, more reflective, both subjectively and collectively.” In this profoundly systemic process, the filmmaker-researcher becomes just one of many contributors to constructing narratives.

Indigenous Cinema

These audiovisual media provide a selection of pedagogical content aimed at disseminating silenced knowledge and shaping perceptions about the world. They explore themes such as race/ethnicity, identity and body, religiosity, and the education of ethnic-racial relations, teaching us how to view others and ourselves, as well as offering a deeper understanding of Brazilian social and racial reality (Teruya, 2021, p. 74).

Participatory practices in audiovisual creation are not unfamiliar to Indigenous communities in Latin America. Numerous examples could be cited here, including the collective audiovisual efforts of the Ukamau Group in collaboration with Indigenous peoples in Bolivia (Sanjinés, 2018) and the Brazilian project *Vídeo nas Aldeias* (Video in the Villages), which has national reach (Araújo, 2020; Barros & Fresquet, 2023; Queiroz, 2008).

In 1979, Rouch led the first workshop in Brazil at the Federal University of Paraíba alongside Brazilian filmmaker Mari Corrêa, who was trained at the Ateliers Varan. She was later invited by Vincent Carelli, a Franco-Brazilian anthropologist, Indigenous rights advocate, and documentarian, to join the *Vídeo nas Aldeias* project (Araújo, 2020) and adapt the Ateliers’ methodology to the local Indigenous context (Carelli, 2011). This project, which began in 1986 during a period of government inaction on Indigenous issues (Brasil & Belisário, 2016), remains one of the most comprehensive and robust non-state initiatives for citizenship building involving Indigenous and non Indigenous communities in Brazil. The project has interwoven political and documentary filmmaking efforts since its inception, providing audiovisual technical and logistical support to Indigenous struggles,

⁴ The Ateliers Varan still exist today and maintain the same ideals and methods with which they were founded. See website: <https://www.ateliersvaran.com/fr/article/qui-sommes-nous>.

thereby strengthening their identity and their territorial and cultural heritage. Supported in the 2000s by federal cultural policies, particularly the *Programa Cultura Viva* (Living Culture Program), the project's workshops in numerous villages continue to be popular among Indigenous peoples, who are encouraged by the opportunity to represent themselves and articulate their own interests (Jesus & Moreira, 2018), taking control of their own image (Gallois & Carelli, 1995). In addition to the absence of a pre-conceived script, the collective production process, and the spontaneous capturing of images and sounds, the project also retains from Rouch's methodology the direct involvement of filmed subjects in composing scenes and the inclusion of village comments during the first screening of the filmed material in the final films.

It is important to note, finally, that the strengthening and protagonism of Indigenous peoples in the audiovisual field, which began in the 1990s, consolidated in the following decade, thanks to a set of external conditions categorized by Costa and Galindo (2018) as the articulation of a sociotechnical conjuncture, a political conjuncture, and an epistemic conjuncture. The authors argue that:

The *sociotechnical* aspect is rooted in technological advances in electronics and, later, in digital convergence, leading to the emergence of new tools in the communication field, particularly in audiovisual production; *politically*, the context of Indigenous self-determination gained prominence, especially after the achievements enshrined in the 1988 Constitution; and from an epistemic perspective, the challenges of anthropology and its search for more shared and symmetrical methodologies for knowledge production are highlighted. (Costa & Galindo, 2018, p. 23, emphasis added)

Applying these categories to the present, we observe that this tripod now consists of: 1) The ease of video production and dissemination using smartphones, software applications, and expanded internet access, which is particularly relevant for Indigenous peoples in urban contexts⁵; 2) The growing attention given to Indigenous peoples and issues of race, gender, and intersectionality, resulting from the organization of their movements occupying political spaces; 3) The incorporation of decolonial thought into academic agendas across the Global South, driven by the expectation of a multilateral and multipolar world.

Modes of Mediation

In proposing a methodological approach for Indigenous Psychology practices, we invite a brief examination of how documentary film can be used in the processes of constructing intercultural dialogues and spaces of mediation. Among numerous explorations across various fields of knowledge, we will employ, as a theoretical and practical lens within the scope of this text, two categories that we have formulated in close dialogue with the issues discussed in this essay: 1) documentary as a record and 2) documentary as interlocution.

The Documentary as Record

When working with Indigenous cultures, systems, and cosmologies, where oral tradition plays a crucial role in preserving knowledge and sharing it across generations, it is reasonable to explore the possibility of creating collective content not mediated by written language (Figueiredo, 2018). Indigenous groups have used audiovisual and photographic records (Carneiro, 2019; Dorrico,

⁵ We avoid using the categorization "unvillaged," which typically refers to Indigenous individuals living outside demarcated Indigenous Lands, often in urban environments. In doing so, we reaffirm our distance from the notion that an Indigenous person living in the city and adopting urban habits loses their ethnic and cultural legitimacy (Batista & Sampaio, 2022).

2017; Teruya, 2021) both as “tools that Indigenous peoples themselves use to tell their stories to one another, educate their youth, and preserve aspects of their cultures” and to “inform the broader society about who they are, how they live, and, most importantly, how they are treated by a society that has used communication tools to industrialize and homogenize cultures” (Jesus & Moreira, 2018, p. 95).

Brazilian Indigenous cinema includes various records (Brasil & Belisário, 2016; Daminello, 2022; Macedo Nunes et al., 2014). These records capture foundational aspects of daily village life, such as the retelling of dreams at dawn, collective discussions around the fire, prayers, rituals, and spiritual practices, as well as storytelling, songs, dances, food cultivation and preparation, the production of objects, and the relationship with territorial space, nature, and the universe. They document memories, affectivities, and ancestral knowledge that colonizers violently erased over centuries of subjugation, representing traces of alternative modernities and a type of scientific knowledge rooted in different definitions of science, far removed from Western academic standards. Additionally, they capture the struggle for land, for recognition and visibility, for being heard by non-Indigenous people, and for occupying spaces in society beyond the confines of exoticization and criminalization. These documentaries testify to the resistance against the imposed silencing, documenting conflicts, aggressions endured, and agreements often unfulfilled by governmental agencies.

Furthermore, as Brasil and Belisário (2016) note, these audiovisual records contain a multitude of elements situated in what we call, in audiovisual jargon, “off-screen space” or “non-diegetic space”. This term generally refers to the set of signs, sounds, and elements that contribute to the narrative, perceptible to the audience but not always to the characters on screen. In their analysis of films made by Indigenous filmmakers, Brasil and Belisário (2016) use the term “off-screen” to refer to the symbolic dimension – or cosmological dimension, as they suggest – with which the elements on the screen, or the phenomenological dimension, continuously interact. Images of the lively emptiness of the village’s central space, the shape of the buildings, the presence and gaze of shamans, the sound of bamboo flutes, whistles, and calls, the painting and adornment of bodies, their movements and emitted sounds, the omnipresence of the forest, its varied fauna, flora, spirits, and deities are all present and influence both the action and the narrative with their subjective significance.

In other words, in many of these films, the visual record transcends what is concretely inscribed in the image, as what the camera captures is ultimately the relationship between visible elements and “processes often invisible that affect the image but go beyond it” (Brasil & Belisário, 2016, p. 604). We can see an example in the film “A House, a Life,” made by young Xavante in partnership with the *Raiz das Imagens* collective and the *Instituto de Tecnologia Intuitiva e Bioarquitetura* (Tibá, Institute of Intuitive Technology and Bioarchitecture), which showcases the planning and construction of wattle and daub houses and adobe blocks in the Santa Cruz and Belém villages, involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Lengen & Santos, 2013). Beyond an initial discussion about the Xavante building tradition and the inadequacy of government-provided housing for this culture, the film shows the extraction of wood, the preparation of the earth and straw mixture, the production of construction components, the dynamics of the teams, and the completion of the buildings, concluding with a collective ritual. However, at one point, Chief Tsitoti’s testimony situates the activity within a cosmology that is perhaps evident to Indigenous people but previously unnoticed by the non-Indigenous viewer. He recalls that we are all part of a great cycle and that everyone has a connection to the earth: Our body, which is our home, is made from the same earth that provides food for our lives. This house is made from the same earth that gives

us our food. We are from the same earth as our food and return to the same earth. We are part of this great cycle (Lengen & Santos, 2013). From that moment on, all images depicting the earth – including the village ground, household utensils, and surrounding mountains – take on new meaning.

Analyzing sequences extracted from various films, Brasil and Belisário (2016, p. 604) suggest that:

Just as in shamanic and ritual situations, the body is affected by agencies whose presence we cannot see; the camera is also affected: what it captures and inscribes is influenced not only by its relationship with visible objects and phenomena but also by these invisible agencies.

From this perspective, understanding the documentary as a record within the context of Indigenous Psychology can create tensions that will contribute not only to intercultural engagement but also to a deeper understanding of audiovisual media as a mediator between the historical world and the realm of symbolism and subjectivities. Understanding what constitutes the non-diegetic spaces in footage shot by Indigenous people – or about Indigenous people, or with Indigenous people – and their relationship with what is visible on screen seems essential for advancing the creation of spaces for intercultural mediation.

The Documentary as Interlocution

When a documentary film chooses to follow the interactions of a group of people connected by shared motivations, it positions itself as a participant observer of a complex system, in alignment with Edgar Morin's (2005) concept of Complex Thought. Conceptually, complex systems consist of interacting parts devoid of hierarchies and open to external influences. The continuous circulation of information among these parts – a *sine qua non* condition for the system's existence – drives their interaction based on an initial agreement that serves as the common denominator among the parts. From this interaction, unforeseen actions, referred to as emergences, may arise (Morin, 2005). Many documentaries draw on these theoretical foundations to address specific issues pertinent to particular groups of people and to foster the emergence of new ideas, understandings, and actions.

The close intellectual and personal relationship between Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin in the 1950s and 1960s Paris contributed to some of the most valuable ethnographic films concerning the emergence of ideas in group dialogues. The very concept of *cinéma-vérité*, which helped to renew ethnographic methods from the 1960s onwards, is profoundly systemic and complex. One of the most emblematic films of this period in Rouch's oeuvre, *La pyramide humaine* (1959), presents a structure and set of elements that are particularly relevant to our discussion.

The film is based on an initial agreement proposed by the filmmaker to a group of French and African students at a French school in Ivory Coast one year before the country gained independence from France. Rouch proposes an in-depth examination of the issue of racism between whites and Blacks amidst the decolonization⁶ process, using the documentary as a catalyst for the group's perspectives and, subsequently, as a stimulus for broader societal debate. The methodological choice of the film as a collective process for constructing ideas is conveyed in the opening titles, where Rouch (1959) announces that the recorded material is an experiment in which he initiated a provocation among groups of Black and white teenagers, filming its unfolding. In doing so, Rouch abandons the comfortable, neutral, and hierarchical position of the traditional anthropologist

⁶ We assume here the terminological distinction between decolonization, which refers to the end of the colonization of one country by another, and decolonization, which designates the effort to overcome coloniality by colonized peoples and subjects.

(Symphor, 2017), bringing together the participants in “group discussions, intense interviews, and enactments – modern methodologies borrowed from psychosocial studies that reveal cinema’s ambition to serve as the privileged medium for self-examination and to effectively foster authentic social relations” (Margulies, 2019, p. 114).

Although the proposal clearly relates to the field of psychology, as partially explored by Morin in *Chronique d’un été* (Rouch & Morin, 1961) through references to psychodrama and psychoanalytic dynamics (Morin, 1960), our interest here lies in examining how the audiovisual medium, in this case, constitutes a privileged space for fruitful intercultural dialogue that would be unlikely to occur otherwise.

The camera’s presence as an observer of the system stimulates discussion rather than inhibiting it, evoking the gaze of future viewers during the construction of scenes. Held in hand or on the shoulder, the camera frees itself from the static tripod typical of ethnographic films of the time, moving among the participants, following them in games, on the streets, and at the beach, producing unstable images and inserting the filmmaker observer into the off-screen space. The camera ceases to be an invisible boundary between observer and observed and becomes a vector of interactions, a producer of effects, dissolving the distance between the researcher and the subject of study. The camera and the filmmaker thus form an indivisible entity, performing the role of the controller described by Morin (2005), whose function is to stimulate the circulation of information within the system. There are no more objects; everyone becomes a subject, captured by the audiovisual experience. Presented to participants as an aesthetic project, the successful and challenging confrontation of ideas corroborates what Ivone Margulies (2019) considers the existential principle animating the cinematic vision of Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin: “sociability, or the subject’s porosity to another person, can transform into an effective form of interpellation when articulated through an aesthetic device” (Margulies, 2019, p. 122).

In both *La pyramide humaine* and *Chronique d’un été*, at a certain point, participants are invited to watch and critically comment on the filmed scenes. This process is essential for building intercultural dialogue, constituting what Complex Thought calls a “loop-feedback” or a feedback cycle within the system that generates its self organization (Morin, 2005). Seeing themselves represented in the audiovisual language, participants revisit and revise the stated positions in the discussions – their own and those of others filmed – observe body language and intonations, remember what they may have chosen not to say on camera, and are given the renewed opportunity to express it. They also perceive a multitude of visual and auditory elements, both in and off the frame, which they may not have noticed during the filming. The footage of this session is also incorporated into the final film.

Finally, to encourage the minimization of hierarchies and the symmetry of roles, any of the participants can operate the camera, and there can be multiple cameras and sound recordings, multiplying and adding diversity to the levels of observation. Similarly, the process of selecting and editing images and sound represents an intense moment of analysis and synthesis of what was documented, requiring careful and repeated review of scenes and statements to assess their relevance to the intended narrative. Targeting an audience that includes the filmed subjects – primarily the residents of their own village, as in the case of the *Vídeo nas Aldeias* films – the final editing process serves as “a means of stimulating critical reflection through the articulation between filmmakers, filmed subjects, and viewers” (Teixeira, 2022, p. 51).

The notion of documentary as interlocution and the experiences of Rouch and Morin, the Ateliers Varan, the *Vídeo nas Aldeias* project, and the *Raiz das Imagens* collective, among many other

successful explorations (Carelli, 2011), reinforce the hypothesis that audiovisual media provides a qualified space for conducting intercultural dialogues. It operates as a possible pathway to breaking down barriers that separate us. In groups organized as complex systems, where the initial agreement includes the audiovisual experience, there are no a priori distinctions such as Indigenous and non-Indigenous, white and non-white, binary and non-binary genders, but rather non-hierarchical subjects in interaction, who may culturally reference different cosmogonic traditions. They experience a collective endeavor that mobilizes personal expectations, with unpredictability and openness as its main foundations.

Indigenous Psychology: Ethics and Audiovisual Media

Audiovisual productions developed with Indigenous communities, such as those conducted by the *Centro de Trabalho Indigenista* (Indigenous Work Center) through the *Vídeo nas Aldeias* project (Conselho Federal de Psicologia [CFP], 2022, p. 41) and the documentary “*Mokoi Tekoá Petei Jeguataá – Two Villages, One Path*”, serve as indicators of a decolonial and Indigenous cosmological perspective in addressing the demand for an Indigenous Psychology intertwined with good living. These examples are complemented by doctoral theses available in the bibliographic repertoire on Indigenous issues in Brazil (Ferreira, 2023), which include: (a) audiovisual documentation of the Brazilian state’s omission in public health policies, according to testimonies of Indigenous leaders; (b) audiovisual media at the Terena Lutuma Dias School: differentiated Indigenous education and the media; and (c) Heinz Forthmann and Darcy Ribeiro: documentary cinema in the *Serviço de Proteção aos Índios* (Indian Protection Service).

From an ethical standpoint – concerning the care for the rights of Indigenous individuals and communities who use our psychological services – we must handle images, language, information, and all matters related to Indigenous peoples with great diligence and responsibility. To this end, the fundamental approach is to respect the local deliberative bodies, that is, the social organizations of each people, as explained by Edgar Xakriabá, which entails obtaining the necessary permissions and engaging in dialogue with each individual regarding the recordings. (CFP, 2022, p. 42)

Since audiovisual production involves images and the potential exposure of filmed subjects, it conflicts with the very code of ethics governing psychology as a profession and science, particularly regarding confidentiality. It also conflicts with Resolutions No. 466/12 and No. 510/16 on research involving human subjects (Conselho Nacional de Saúde, 2013, 2016). In the context of the psychological code of ethics, confidentiality refers to a concept of secrecy, which is at odds with the perspectives of Indigenous communities. While confidentiality is rooted in a Eurocentric, individualistic concept of humanity, within Indigenous territories, this notion is reversed in psychosocial contexts because secrecy becomes a collective matter, “linked to memory and orality, and must be maintained collectively rather than through a hegemonically psychological listening” (CFP, 2022, p. 45).

The second ethical domain, governed by the resolutions of the *Comissão Nacional de Ética em Pesquisa* (National Research Ethics Commission), pertains to the non-identification of research subjects. Here, too, confidentiality is contested. Besides the fact that studies involving Indigenous peoples are subject to their own specific resolution, Resolution 304/00 (Conselho Nacional de Saúde, 2000), the process of protecting research subjects and obtaining consent outlined in the resolutions does not align with practices aimed at amplifying Indigenous voices and enhancing their visibility, which can be shared through audiovisual media. “Indeed, another ethical aspect that needs to be considered is how each people integrates Psychology – as both a science and profession, along with its ethics” (CFP, 2022, p. 44).

Historically, there have been significant ethnographic contributions in interactions with Indigenous communities, with which psychology should engage more closely (Daminello, 2022). Therefore, other forms of knowledge, from a transdisciplinary perspective (Martínez Ramos et al., 2019), are necessary to advance Indigenous Psychology initiatives. In this context, Indigenous peoples themselves recognize the use of technologies, resources, materials, and audiovisual languages as a strategy to strengthen their identity and self-determination, to preserve their memories, languages, and histories, and as a strategic means of existence and resistance (Almeida, 2009; Carvalho & Santos, 2023; Gallego, 2021; Krenak, 2018; Lopes, 2018; Neto, 2023; Tenente et al., 2023). It is crucial to highlight the leading role of Indigenous communities in audiovisual productions, engaging in a continuous exercise of alterity and comprehension, moving beyond a mere understanding of Indigenous cosmology, and establishing bonds that intertwine co-authorship in psychosocial practices and good living (CFP, 2022).

Investing in theoretical-practical and methodological approaches that involve audiovisual media touches upon possibilities for creating spaces of mediation aimed at recognizing the wisdom, good living, and cosmology of Indigenous peoples, referring to notions of justice and rights (Cruz Souza et al., 2021).

These rights cannot be perceived as favors from the government, as this undermines the very essence of citizenship. Therefore, it is essential to revisit the historical struggle led by the Indigenous and Quilombola Movements, which culminated in the creation of Affirmative Actions aimed at mitigating injustices and securing these rights through the overdue reparation of a significant historical-social debt owed by the state to Indigenous and Quilombola populations, who have mobilized to reclaim their rightful place within the university. (CFP, 2022, p. 44)

Thus, employing documentary film in the way we have discussed opens spaces for raising awareness, fostering sensitivity, and reflecting on the political dimension of Indigenous communities. By abandoning the traditional perspective of documenting the exotic, symbolic violence, and colonial acts, we instead create opportunities for reclaiming Indigenous identity (Angatu, 2021) and for continuous dialogical and democratic action, promoting ethical and emancipatory contributions and exchanges.

Final Considerations

We have identified and critically addressed theoretical, methodological, practical, technical, and ethical limitations within the field of psychology to maintain broad horizons in the necessary project of decolonizing psychological knowledge. This process aims to foster the emergence of new methods and theories that can integrate with new knowledge, which will undoubtedly arise from an ethical approach that transcends disciplinary boundaries and embodies a transmodern perspective. This approach encompasses knowledge that has long been denied as part of the rich legacy of potent, creative, and resilient peoples.

As we conceive of it as a possibility, Indigenous Psychology constitutes a space where new relationships are established between different epistemic universes – namely, Psychological knowledge produced by science as a product of Western modernity and Indigenous cosmologies. Therefore, the use of audiovisual media, as presented and advocated here, is not intended to contribute to the development of Indigenous Psychology as a product or specialty among those already existing within the field of psychology. Approaching Indigenous Psychology as a product or specialty would constitute, in our view, an epistemological domination favoring the knowledge of the colonizer. Instead, we view Indigenous Psychology as a locus of mediation or a platform for

encounters, maintaining a mode of relationship that precludes overlap or domination. Similarly, it avoids erasures or silences. When dealing with dialogues between worlds and their differences, dialogue encompasses the constructions of these universes. Audiovisual media, as one such aspect, has the potential to enrich the multiple constructions emerging from this dialogic field, particularly by transcending the known limitations of methods that favor records clearly tied to academic knowledge, which, in fact, would tend to reinforce epistemological domination.

We emphasize that we are discussing intercultural dialogue between different worlds, each with its own distinct aspects that integrate. We propose audiovisual media as a locus of communication and mediation, which implies a fluid strategy – an encounter (or encounters, in the plural) – that facilitates new perspectives, interpretations, meetings, and re-encounters. It serves as a locus of communication that does not confine audiovisual media to Indigenous peoples alone. Instead, it represents a possible path – a starting point, not a dependency on the method – for the meeting and recognition of diverse perspectives, using audiovisual language that transcends, questions, and expands actions beyond the traditional Euro-American model of doing science. In this encounter, and through this language, different realities, viewpoints, meanings, aesthetics, and other aspects present perspectives and interpretations, raising the demands and interests involved to amplify the visibility of Indigenous communities in their specificities and singularities in a critical, reflective, horizontal, democratic, and collective manner. This is a language capable of recognizing the knowledge and practices of Indigenous communities, engaging in dialogue, and re-signifying the epistemological boundaries between psychological science and Indigenous cosmology without ignoring the limits and ideological components of the scientific tradition inherited from colonialism.

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