

# I, Alex, from the *Guarani* Ethnic Group: the indigenous student's testimony of an administration undergraduate program and his double belonging

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## Abstract

The Indigenous students' attendance in Brazilian public universities has been a recent phenomenon, dating back to 2002, due to their original experience of the university entry and endurance in Parana, Brazil. Students' passages through various undergraduate programs reflect the reality of a double belonging: being both an Indigenous and an academic student. This study brings forward the testimonial dialogue of a *Guarani* student of the Administration Undergraduate Program and as an author, as well, based in the strategy of the life history approach. The narrative reveals challenges, limitations and possibilities of the academic pathway taken by Indigenous students in Administration Bachelor's Degree, showing three main aspects: the statement of their ethnic and community belonging within the academic education context, whose intent is preparing Indigenous students as interlocutors between their community, the State and other institutions and the entrepreneurial intent of an academic student.

**Keywords:** Native Higher Education. Double Belonging. Testimony.

## *Eu, Alex, da Etnia Guarani: o testemunho de um estudante indígena de administração e seu duplo pertencimento*

### Resumo

A presença de indígenas nas universidades públicas brasileiras é um fenômeno recente, datado de 2002, com a inédita experiência de ingresso e permanência desses sujeitos nas universidades do Paraná. A trajetória dos estudantes de diferentes cursos de graduação reflete a existência de um duplo pertencimento: ser indígena e ser acadêmico simultaneamente. Este estudo apresenta o testemunho como estratégia do método de história de vida, fazendo uso do diálogo testemunhal e tendo como um dos autores um estudante Guarani do curso de Administração. A narrativa revela desafios, limites e possibilidades do percurso acadêmico de estudantes indígenas nos cursos de Administração, apresentando três aspectos principais decorrentes do testemunho: a afirmação de seu pertencimento étnico-comunitário no interior da universidade, a formação universitária, cujo intuito é preparar os estudantes indígenas como interlocutores entre sua comunidade, o Estado e outras instituições e a intenção empreendedora do acadêmico.

**Palavras-chave:** Ensino Superior Indígena. Duplo Pertencimento. Testemunho.

## *Yo, Alex, de la Etnia Guarani: el testimonio de un estudiante indígena de administración y de su doble pertenencia*

### Resumen

La presencia de indígenas en las universidades públicas brasileñas es un fenómeno reciente, datado en el 2002, con la inédita experiencia de ingreso y permanencia de estos sujetos en las universidades de Paraná. La trayectoria de los estudiantes de diferentes carreras de grado refleja la existencia de una doble pertenencia: ser indígena y ser simultáneamente académico. Este estudio presenta el testimonio como estrategia del método de historia de vida, haciendo uso del diálogo testimonial y teniendo como uno de los autores un estudiante Guarani de la carrera de Administración. La narrativa revela desafíos, límites y posibilidades del recorrido académico de estudiantes indígenas en la carrera de Administración, presentando tres principales aspectos resultantes del testimonio: la afirmación de su pertenencia étnico-comunitaria en el interior de la universidad, la formación universitaria, cuyo propósito es preparar a los estudiantes indígenas como interlocutores entre su comunidad, el Estado y otras instituciones y la intención empreendedora del académico.

**Palabras clave:** Educación Superior Indígena. Doble pertenencia. Testimonio.

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## INTRODUCTION

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This paper is the result of a collective work carried out by two non-Indigenous researchers and one *Guarani* academic student of the Administration Undergraduate Program. Thus, the article was written by several hands, showing the originality of this authorship in the Administration field and in a public Higher Education Institution (HEI) of Parana. Consequently, the testimony is reported in the first person, formulated by the Indigenous student himself.

A literature review was done in the main journals of the Administration field, as an attempt to locate other possible kindred productions. In fact, no paper was found in the search system of the Scientific Periodicals Electronic Library (SPELL). However, one paper regarding the impact of Roraima indigenous communities on social, economic, cultural and environmental tourism was found in the Annals of the *Encontro Nacional da Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Administração* (EnANPAD – National Meeting) in 2013 (BRANDÃO, BARBIERI and REYES JÚNIOR, 2013).

The work is related to the finding that the Indigenous students' attendance in Brazilian public universities has been as recent as the public affirmative policy for the indigenous higher education in the country. Indigenous' academic passages in public universities since 2002 have been a challenge in Parana higher education public policy field, considering that the Indigenous' presence in the academic context is new and provoking of significant reflections and possibilities.

The experience of the indigenous higher education policy management in the state of Parana, also recent in Brazil, is an original and most articulated reference in institutional terms, although still fragile (AMARAL, 2010). We understand that such experience contains the Indigenous' academic paths and the public HEI's in Parana as central. Thus, their passages should be

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understood and analyzed as important references in order to problematize, propose and evaluate the implemented actions and the forthcoming actions.

It is relevant to discuss that the Indigenous' academic obstinated efforts supported by their families and community to belong to other spaces – village and university – have resulted in a construction of an Indigenous work circuit focused in occupying institutional spaces in public organs managing social policies. Therefore, we can glimpse the emergency of a new indigenous subject constitution with professional and intelectual *status*. This subject gets a bachelor's degree by the public HEI and s/he is challenged to keep his/her double belonging (academic and Indigenous) with the task of managing public policies.

Following Indigenous students' passages in the Administration undergraduate program, observing their passages through two public universities of Parana and through their villages leads us to reflect upon the challenge in building opportunities, so that their passages may be traced by their ethnic group's affirmative acknowledgment and by their collective memorable knowledge which follows the construction of those intelectual young adults in their relationship with the "Univer-city" (AMARAL, 2010).

For that, the testimonial method as life history strategy was approached as an attempt to help the academic community to understand the Indigenous students attending several HEIs in the country, although they are not always visible or accepted. Inspired by the testimony as a life history strategy, this work goes forward methodolically while composing what is called testimonial dialogues, considering the academic Indigenous' passages under authorship condition, mediated by two researchers' dialogue who are working in the indigenous field research.

Despite the word testimony may be more commonly associated with ways of legal testimony in trials and courts or in religious contexts in which individuals provide the audience their testimony, this research strategy has already been adopted by the Brazilian Organizational Studies. Two papers on the subject-matter have already been published in the Annals of EnANPAD. The first one deals with a worker's experience in a building company by a personal theory (ALBANDES-MOREIRA and BATISTA-DOS-SANTOS, 2004). The second one presents a manager worker's testimony and his experience in quality system (BATISTA-DOS-SANTOS, NEPOMUCENO and REYES JÚNIOR, 2006). Both papers do not distinguish the relation between life history and testimony, which means that they do not characterize the testimony as life history strategy, but they open the testimony up as a research tool.

This paper discusses in its two parts, aspects of the academic Indigenous' passage in the Higher Education and their challenges to double belonging, as well as the construction of circuits of Indigenous work. The testimony is brought up ahead as a research strategy whose intention is an important means of externalizing a little addressed strategy in the universities. Next, the academic Indigenous student's testimony is introduced and after we come up with the final considerations.

## **THE AFFIRMATIVE INDIGENOUS ATTENDANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE DOBLE BELONGING**

The Indigenous' entry, endurance and conclusion of studies in Higher Education have been recently dated for little longer than ten years in Brazil. A few studies about the phenomenon were carried out in the country, but the references try to comprehend how the academic indigenous' passage has been since their entry, but mainly, their endurance and their bachelor's degree conclusion at the universities. Even less reflection upon their pathways, expectations and professional needs during and after their Higher Education period has been done institutionally.

The Indigenous attendance in Higher Education is emblematic and brings many thoughts. One of them is to highlight and simultaneously to try to overcome the limited thought that Indigenous are just forest residents, living in the bush, in villages, according to what mass media and textbooks have reported (LUCIANO, 2006). The Indigenous' attendance reveals the possibility of their affirmation as actors and subjects, hence its affirmative dimension (AMARAL, 2010).

Thus, Higher Education public indigenous policy arised as those people's need and political organizations inserted in capitalist and globalized society, which by the advance of the country urban and agroindustry borders, started to offend and invade

the territories historically inhabited by different Indigenous ethnic groups, devouring part of those peoples and influencing their cultural identity and their way of life (PACHECO DE OLIVEIRA and FREIRE, 2006). In current conjuncture, such offensive of capitalist production has gone beyond the indigenous territory borders in a more subtle, fragmented and abstract way, that is, those people's new generations have acquired more and more references, symbols and values of modern world each day (LUCIANO, 2006). The ethnic and social borders (BARTH, 1998) become their rituals of change and interchange between Indigenos and non-Indigenous, violently sometimes or consensually other times.

Since colonial times, cultural, ideological, political and economical obligation actions have created and recreated new ways of subsistence in native territories which, by imposing a model of school, leading to a process of adulteration of life in the vilages. In response, the native movements have been growing and intend for school and academic spaces warranted rightfully nowadays. This new resignification of the indigenous territory which resulted from capitalist mechanisms has now become part of that space, meaning that they have become part of their needs lived in their territory, although trying to keep part of their ethnic and cultural belonging:

It is not related to the universalization of schooling, but the Indigenous' highly qualification and education committed with the defense of their rights, promotion of their origin communities' life quality, management of their territories and empowerment of their organizations. The affirmative actions of social inclusion in that field should conjugate a pluricultural perspective respecting diversity and different Indigenous citizenship's demands (PERES, 2007, p. 67).

In Parana, the Higher Education indigenous policy is guided by the Act n. 13.134/2001, altered by the Act n. 14.995/2006, which predicts that indigenous people living in Parana territory have the right to attend a HEI, by means of additional vacants and specific entry exams. The Act was originally approved on the eighteenth of April, 2001, reading initially three vancancies for each one of the Parana state universities, becoming a new fact in the country. In 2006, the Act was altered to six additional vancancies for each Parana university. Therefore, the first institutional design of native Higher Education public policy arised in the country, followed by other formats in different universities. The law also ensured academic Indigenous students the right for a scholarship whose amount has been updated throughout the decade, although it is not been enough to assure their conditions of survival.

However, even if Federal Act n. 12.416/2011 has recently promoted the modification of the Act of Guidelines and Bases for National Education (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional - LDBEN*) concerning offer and student assistance, as well as research incentive and the development of special programs for indigenous Higher Education, the challenge is significant in terms of building a public policy of Higher Education organically articulated by federal government, considering the country ethnic diversity as well as the Indigenous people's demands, realities and expectations in national territory.

From 2002 to 2008, the public HEIs from Parana provided 189 vancancies for Indigenous; 173 Indigenous applicants were approved and 139 Indigenous students were enrolled. Out of the 139 anrolled students only 76 Indigenous were attending the courses in 2008. About 56.6% were filled by members of the *Kaingang* villages, considering that this ethnic group of indigenous inhabitants in Parana territory is demographically bigger, being followed by the *Guarani* Indigenous people.

In 2008, fourteen native students concluded their academic studies, representing 29.4% of the newcomers during the period from 2002 to 2004<sup>1</sup>. In 2013 the amount of academic Indigenouss out of 139 enrolled Indigenous (43.9%) left the university for many reasons (AMARAL, 2010). Such data reveal the disappointing attempts to open academic room to Indigenous people, once ensuring the access without consolidating endurance or continuity makes the democratization process weaker. It is important to remember that our academic context is still the European monocultural, homogeneous and prejudiced kind, although it may also have room for the protagonism and recognition of Indigenous students' potentialities.

Since their entry the university, Indigenous students have started to live their training process in transit between their origin village and the city. Since the Indigenous lands are geographically located far from the cities, most of the time in difficult

<sup>1</sup> This period of 4 years (2002 a 2004) represents the average time available for an Indigenous student to enter and conclude the academic studies (AMARAL, 2010).

access sites, Indigenous students need to occupy not only the academic site but they also feel the need to move into town. In order to analyze their daily students' passages, it is essential to comprehend them as subjects of a double belonging: the academic and the ethnic-communitary. Amaral (2010) assumes that the double belonging is capital for the Indigenous students' attendance and endurance in the university, since they find the possibility of identifying themselves sometimes as natives and other times as university students, occupying a new and unacknowledged territory.

The double belonging carries the logic of endurance possibility from and by the Indigenous student at the university, before the constant tension and dialogue among the distinct and, at the same time, relational subjects. They begin to define a new field of limits among the different ethnic existing groups (and some survivors) in the university; among the latter ones the different non Indigenous subjects who participate and constitute the academic environment (AMARAL, 2010, p. 278).

In this perspective, academic Indigenous students have to face up a new social and cultural border between the village and the city, reason why they need to exercise transit and circulation constantly, for it is fundamental that they identify themselves as Indigenous with established bonds within their origin communities. But yet, occupying the university site and establishing relationships which may make their endurance in the academic site easier.

Even if as newcomers in the university, in an identifying, occupying and establishing relationship process, Indigenous students should not lose sight of their ethnic-communitary sense of belonging in that new social context, that is, their Indigenous identity<sup>2</sup>. They need to identify themselves as Indigenous – *Kaingang*, *Guarani* or from other ethnic group – for belonging to a community is essential so that those subjects who begin to carry possibilities, expectations, needs and factional power relations – depending on the family group who they are linked to – existing in their origin community. This belonging starts with the Indigenous applicants to the annual university entrance examination called *Vestibular dos Povos Indígenas do Paraná*<sup>3</sup>, who need to deliver the university examination board a special declaration from their indigenous land chief so that the application may be approved.

One of the perspectives to understand the place and meaning assigned by the Indigenous students to the university is related to the possibility of those subjects to take jobs traditionally occupied by non-Indigenous professionals, especially in public organs, managers and doers of social policies in the villages and their surroundings. Therefore, the worry in educating physicians, dentists, nurses, social workers, lawyers, educationalists, teachers, administrators, among other professionals emerge to perform in their occupational sites in Indigenous lands, villages or their surroundings. By that, Indigenous may acknowledge and conquer their academic new places and jobs which are offered, occupying them through an ethnic perspective, as history protagonists and not as mere pupil anymore.

## THE PATHWAYS TO BUILD INDIGENOUS JOB CIRCUITS

Indigenous students' professional options (on the occasion of *Vestibular dos Povos Indígenas do Paraná*) edition, or the transference of HEIs courses -, as well as the relations back to the community built during or after conclusion of the studies -, are linked to the constitution of that new Indigenous job circuit. It is observed that the circuit is centralized in the emergency of new Indigenous professionals newly graduated by the university, also, in the internal political and communitary reception and in their linking to occupy sites and job posts in their communities.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to highlight that the category "Indigenous" was generically created by the Europeans who first came to our country nominating the people who lived here as though. By the constitution of some organizations and movements for indigenous people in Brazil from 1960 and 1970 on, in spite of its genericity, the concept "Indigenous" was appropriated by them as a category of unit for their fights and claims, considering the ethnic different existing groups in the country (LUCIANO, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> The Indigenous' public university entry in Paraná has been done since 2002 through interinstitutional entrance examinations called "vestibular", a specific exam for Indigenous student, coordinated by the University Board for Indigenous (*Comissão Universidade para os Índios – CUIA*) attached to Higher Education Secretary's Office for Science and Technology of Parana State.

According to Amaral (2010), the most wanted professional fields among Indigenous are: education (about 46.6%) and health (26.6%). Other professional fields are also essential for the indigenous lands development, urging the likely creation of job posts inside and outside de villages. The job posts would absorb new workforce.

It is important to report that the new Indigenous job circuit shows the influences that the academic education, after the Indigenous HEIs' entry, has had for the circuit already existing in the indigenous lands or outside them. In that sense, its emergency is contextualized before historical enterprises accomplished by the Brazilian State (since colonial times and mainly from the 20th Century to current days) by the Service for Indigenous' Protection (*Serviço de Proteção aos Índios - SPI*) and the National Foundation for Indigenous (*Fundação Nacional dos Índios - FUNAI*), while regimenting, hiring and training Indigenous to occupy job positions in thoses institutions and to work in indigenous lands.

Far from hiding work relationships involving the Indigenous for decades in and outside the indigenous lands, that concept intends to reveal and problematize the potential implications and transformations which may follow the formative perspectives developed by the universities. It is highlighted, in that sense, that the innovative adjectivation denotaded in the related concept instigates discussions not only about the historical existance of the indigenous lands circuit involving the Indigenous, but it also questions about whether it becomes renovated by the presence of new professionals.

In that sense, the Indigenous job circuit which has recently been built through the Indigenous' training and professionalization in the public HE may establish a new moment in the history of the Brazilian Indigenous people's social, cultural, political, territorial and economic development, depending on the direction, intentionality and quality of the training process, as well as of the level of changes in the present oficial agencies organizational culture, to be starred by the new Indigenous professionals. Thus, the debate about the new relationship between Indigenous people and the Brazilian State has emerged in Brazil (after FEDERAL CONSTITUTION, 1988) and about what kind of indigeneous policy should be developed, in view of assuring the effective Indigenous people's participation (LIMA, 2002).

Yet, it is fundamental to contextualize that the Indigenous higher education processes of training, qualification and professionalization are anchored and beaconed by the Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO), ratified by the Brazilian federal government in 2004 and that while acknowledging authonomy to different people and tribal communities, it also establishes assumptions and legal guarantees about job hiring and relations involving Indigenous and tribal peoples.

In that context, a new circuit of professional relationships which are likely characterized especifically in each of the *Kaingang* and *Guarani* communities (considering real historical power relations) has government current institutions acting in Indigenous lands as initial references, especially: *Funai* (National Foundation for Indigenous), Sanitary Indigenous Districts (*Distritos Sanitários Indígenas*) State Office for Education (*Secretarias de Estado da Educação*) and city halls.

Based in the survey carried out among Indigenous students enrolled in Parana public universities, Amaral (2010) finds that those subjects' interests to occupy job posts, mainly in the public sector, with incipient intention of getting jobs in private companies, industries in the primary service sector such as: agriculture, livestock, to name a few, characterizing their intentionality to form or train public Indigenous servants, despite the results of their interest have not been discussed enough. According to Capelo & Tommasino (2004, p. 24),

The Indigenous young adults postulate the university entry for their extreme necessity of getting into the job market in better conditions in order to compete with professionals who pay service to their native communities nowadays. It deals with a job market which includes paying health services, educational, agriculture, among others which have been done by non Indigenous within the communities so far. [...] more and more Indigenous young adults plan for life to work for FUNAI (as agriculture technician, native culture supporters, drivers); for FUNASA [Fundação Nacional de Saúde] (health agent, nurse, dentist, physician) or teachers in the villages schools [...] Therefore, the great young Indigenous' inspiration is getting a permanent job and some of them have already got it and motivate their partners to look for schooling and professionalization.

The offensive and expectation for the occupation of job posts in such institutions by new native professional may bring new conflicts, consensus and local competition, resulting in a need for reorganization in spheres of power relations of the communities. In the logic of the constitution of a job circuit, specifically in Indigenous villages, one of the aspects observed was the expectations and the relationship between native and community people with *Funai*<sup>4</sup>.

The new Indigenous professional emergency and formation seem to renovate the previous professional profile, where many Indigenous leaderships tended to be linked to *Funai* as civil servants, without necessarily getting a professional degree in public contests, being that a strategy of the Brazilian State (since the foundation of the SPI and later on the so called *Funai*) by kidnapping those individuals culturally and socially to serve national integration policy and as a means of controlling and legitimating government policies<sup>5</sup>. It is also discussed that this kind of implication, although complex, may be dialectically understood as a strategy means Indigenous have to occupy and resist to institutional sites without any deeper or critical thought or implication on the matter.

The new Indigenous professional bring in the training or formative luggage the systematized academic knowledge, acquired in the university and put forward to the communities' service, possibly characterizing the Indigenous civil servant's profile for future acting or agency. The new Indigenous' attendance and agency occupying important posts at *Funai* and other government institutions, may alter the organizational culture and public characteristics of their attendance or treatment.

It is, therefore, not only the constitution of a new circuit of native job, but mainly, the possibility of building, acknowledge and make it visible the new logics of public and social policies management, mediated by subjects belonging to other ethnic groups and that once mediated by their double belonging, they may transit through distinct cosmologies and specificities of social and political organizations of their communities. It matters to reveal the emergency of a new kind of professionals who identifies themselves as Indigenous and who may assume the condition of organic intellectual of their own communities and ethnic groups (PAULINO, 2008), understanding themselves and recognizing their conflicting spaces which were not shaped to answer the Indigenous people's interest, but spaces which can be occupied and recreated.

## METHODOLOGY

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Taking into account the importance to understand the situations related to Indigenous students attending the universities, mainly by public invisibility these subjects have always had in current society (COSTA, 2004), regarding the development of public policies on specific education for these communities, the methodologic proposal used in this paper aimed at privileging the epistemologic authority denoted to the presence and authorship represented by one of the members.

For that, the testimony was regarded as life history strategic approach (TIERNEY, 2000; BEVERLEY, 2000), as a means of instrumentalizing a subject's individual experience – the Indigenous student, so that the comprehension of his life may help to understand his cultural traces, either in terms of the *Guarani* community, or of his student's conditions in a non Indigenous Higher Education system. For Queiroz (1991) life history represents a narrator's existence report throughout time, in a moment when that subject rebuilds his/her life facts while transmitting that acquired experience.

Considering that life is composed by various projects along years, constituting the individual's past, present and future, in the life history and in the analysis of relationship between individual praxis, collective praxis and the socio historical change, the aim is to comprehend how lives "as biographical properties are possessed, reunited, changed, surpassed,

<sup>4</sup> Despite *Funai*, throughout its institutional history, has regimented, hired and enabled various Indigenous to occupy strategic job posts within their structure as a way to reproduce and legitimate its objectives, we observe that a new Indigenous public server's profile has been constituted in Brazil as a result of the Indigenous young adults university entry. It is important to highlight the incipient reflection upon that phenomenon and also the lack of literature in the matter, as well as the result as for the implications of the kind of hiring process, mainly by means of specific public contests, considering the nature of linking the career plans and the civil servants' stability. We understand that this debate is fundamental, mainly due to the need of adequation to Indigenous servers hiring, clearance and transference processes between counties and states when there are local or state conflicting ethnic or interethnic situations.

<sup>5</sup> For a deeper theoretical study of practice and control on the part of the organizations, as well as the concept about the institutional kidnap of subjectivity, go to Faria (2007).

discharged, remembered, memorized, discredited, studied, told, managed, controlled, manipulated, destroyed and wasted" (DENZIN, 1984, p. 32).

For Tierney (2000), life history is an approach composed of interviews and observations from Hermeneutic to Phenomenology, influenced by Psychology, Anthropology and Sociology.

Tierney (2000) thinks about the existence of different formats of life history, but his defense is that the testimony is clearly an author's least intrusive way of life history in post modern projects to describe histories, that is, Tierney makes a very important distinction on the testimony as one of the narrative techniques of life history. For him, the researchers' challenge is to ensure that individuals do not become objects of researchers' discourse but, mainly, agents of complex, partial and conflicting identities who help to change the world they live in.

The origin of the testimony is related to colonial chronicals and war journals by Simón Bolívar or José Martí, that's how it started initially in Latin America. Throughout last generation, the main testimony focus has been silenced, excluded and marginalized by society (TIERNEY, 2000).

Beverley (2000) comments that life history is not measurable by testimony. For him, in life history, the interlocutor (ethnographer or journalist) is sovereign and that it does not occur in the testimony whose narrator/ethnographer's aim is to call the reader's attention about situations of the public sphere which he or she would not have access to, due to their own conditions of subalternity, being that the testimony enables those manifestations. The fact that the researcher/ethnographer does not always have the same condition of marginality and/or subalternity which the narrative describes. It gives rise the expressive difference from the one who writes about the other's subaltern and marginal situation to the author's him/herself who lives those conditions.

For Tierney (2000), the testimony is the most aboriginal form derived from qualitative techniques when compared to biography, autobiography, autoethnography and oral report. For him, the questions that should rule the current historiographer's choices, which were not taken into account in the last century, are: a) What is the objective of the social change proposed by the text author? What is the author trying to create and why? b) What is the truth created by the individual's event narrative? How to deal with the proposed truth? c) Is the text author the witness or the researcher?

According to Beverley (2000), testimony is a printed first person narrative in which the real protagonist or the witness is the one who retells the facts. Despite the native student knowing the formal way of writing, the other researchers' coparticipation to elaborate this paper was provided due to his recent beginning in academic life.

Because in many cases, the direct narrator is someone who is a functional illiterate, or, a non-professional writer. The production of a testimony generally involves recording and after transcription and editing of the oral report by an interlocutor who may be a journalist, an ethnographer or a literary writer (BEVERLEY, 2000, p. 555).

Beverley (1992) considers that the testimony represents the affirmation of an individual issue, but in connection with a group or class marked by situations of marginality, oppression and fight, the actor being an activist directly linked to that fight.

One example of a testimonial narrative introduced by Tierney (2000) and Beverley (2000), although inconsistent and questionable, is the famous testimony of torture and massacre suffered by the Guatemalan Indigenous woman Rigoberta Menchú, whose report represents the situations lived by her family descendent from Maya civilization, during her struggle to survive before her people's death.

In order to guarantee conditions of free and autonomous manifestation on the native author's part of his text, we called testimonial dialogue the moments in which the other researchers discussed the elements of the student's life related to his passage in the Administration Program. In the testimonial dialogue, we tried to organize the facts and circumstances of present, past and future regarding the following events: i) why he chose Administration Bachelor's Degree; ii) his difficulties along the courses; iii) the importance of this field knowledge for the indigenous organizations and Indigenous; iv) his expectations during and after the degree; v) the relationships established with his family and community of belonging during his academic studies.



Twelve native students were identified as belonging to *Kaingang* and *Guarani* ethnic groups enrolled in the Administration undergraduate program in five state universities of Parana in 2014. From 2002 to 2013 only one native student concluded his studies and got the Administration Bachelor's Degree (CUIA, 2014).

That dialogue was recorded, transcribed and afterwards revised by the authors, compounding collectively the production of this text. We decided to decharacterize the HEIs involved in the Indigenous students' passages because we understand that the most important content to be analyzed refers to the student's passage and not, necessarily, to the related institution.

## THE INDIGENOUS STUDENT'S TRAJECTORY IN THE ADMINISTRATION UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

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I, Alex<sup>6</sup>, from *Guarani*<sup>7</sup> ethnic group, was born in an Indigenous village inland Parana, at 26 years old now. I am married with a *Guarani* student of the Medicine Undergraduate Program of the same university where I am studying nowadays.

I was enrolled for the Administration Bachelor's Degree of this university on February 14th, 2008. This was my first choice for the bachelor's degree when I decided to apply for the university entrance examination.

Firstly I went to live with my sister who was already studying Language and Literature Studies at the University 1. Later on I moved to an Indigenous cultural center located in the county of my first university. I decided to transfer to Administration Program at University 2, because my wife had already been transferred to that institution.

My father is the *txamói* (shaman or witch doctor) of the village, a politic and religious leadership in my community. I have thirteen brothers, three of them are also academic students and another is getting ready to take my father's religious role.

I cannot return to the village frequently because it is far away and because of some financial difficulties I have faced here.

I met and married my wife at the university. Our union was motivated by our desire to hold on our *Guarani* costumes and also because we think it is safer to have a partner from our culture than from a different one.

I took the elementary school in my own village and continued my studies in a public community school of the county where our indigenous lands belong to. At the end of the elementary school, I also attended the school for young adults, called EJA (*Escola para Jovens e Adultos* – School for Young and Adults) because I was lagged age and I concluded the Middle School in the regular basis system of the same school.

My trajectory in the village school was highlighted by freedom among *Guarani* children, friends and relatives, meaning a very familiar environment for me, since I felt comfortable with the jokes and my community way of life. My life experience in the city was always followed by my brother. However, the village schooling was limited and I did not feel ready to follow the city school studies, for I think the Middle School in the village is not solid enough compared to the schools outside the village.

I passed the second call of the university entrance examinations for Indigenous (*Vestibular dos Povos Indígenas do Paraná*) I tried and Administration Bachelor's Degree was my first choice.

Portuguese language is the mother tongue of my community; in the village school we also learned *Guarani* once a week. So, the few words I know in *Guarani* I learned from my family, my parents and grandparents spoke it fluently. I think that parents and school should teach *Guarani* to children since when they are little kids, like *Kaingang* villages have done to their kids.

Teachers were the people I really identified with in the city schools cause they were accessible and taught us well. The school-mates, on the other hand, were the ones I was not very connected with due to their prejudice against Indigenous students,

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<sup>6</sup> Alex was a fictitious name chosen for the Indigenous student in order to avoid authorship identification..

<sup>7</sup> That phrase also identified in the title of this paper was used as an analogy with the way Rigoberta Menchú starts her testimony in her book entitled "I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indigenous Woman in Guatemala" (MENCHÚ, 1984).

questioning our presences there and telling us to go back to our village, but that kind of behaviour has never made me to give up studying and I kept on.

I believe that the village school is very limited compared to the city school. Nowadays, I also realize that the city school does not prepare students to face Higher Education either.

I made my decision to get the Administration Bachelor's Degree when I attended a lecture about Marketing and Business Planning at the end of the Middle School. Besides finding it interesting, I was not sure what it really meant, but I thought at that moment that the knowledge would be useful for my village.

I thought I could use Business Planning in order to disclose to society who the natives are, and what our culture is, contributing for our handicraft commercialization.

My decision to enter the university was motivated by the challenge to show that the Indigenous are capable to get a bachelor's degree and conquer the things they dream, although I see it is not really like that. My trajectory was not the way I had thought of. I had many difficulties once the subjects are too complex for my reality. My main difficulties were to connect with the academic context for I did not have enough information to seek for resources to follow the activities, such as computer and internet which were resources I had never had accessed to. I had to learn and get adapted to the non indigenous practices, as the internet access, for example. Furthermore, I had no idea of what the course was, differently from my colleagues who already knew about the study field and the university operation.

I realized there was not any professor ready to help me out, for they think that everybody is alike. Being a native and pass through the university entrance exams is peculiar but after that, all are treated equally in the university and our differences are not recognized anymore.

The first subject I took was related to an essay whose topic was about how an enterprise could make his Strategic Plan. At the beginning I was scared for even the professor explaining the class the subject, I was not able to grasp what he was trying to say, differently from the others more used to that language and terminology.

I realized that the treatment the program offered was that all students were at the same level. Although that is not my opinion because non Indigenous students are more prepared to speak, express their ideas, showing that they had gone through a different education.

When I began the course, I was quickly identified as an Indigenous by one of the students. He became my friend later and helped me with all the difficulties I had in the classroom, including with financial aid. For a Psychology test, this fellow provided me all the text copies I needed to study. All the classmates thought I was a foreigner: Peruvian, Boliviano or Paraguayan, but they did not think I was a Brazilian citizen and that I lived in the same country. I never hid from anyone I was an Indigenous, though.

Despite the professor offered help to solve my doubts, I did not look for him, for I was unsecure about what to ask or argue. Then, I noticed that things are not like that in the university. You cannot cheat by copying and paste from internet because it is plagiarism. I did not feel any prejudice because of that, but my wife did. She heard from a professor that we Indigenous got the scholarships but we were "poker faces" because we failed the university subjects.

Only one of my professors helped me by having a dialogue with one CUIA member.

I never took part in any research group. I just attended academic monitoring.

Ford was a significant personality for me because he was known around the world for his great ideas for the Administration Field thought.

Psychology was the subject I was mostly identified with and Methods and Measures (Financial Administration) was the subject I liked least, mainly because of the need to use of software.

If I could propose changes for the course or program, I would suggest that professor were more open-minded to deal with Indigenous students, with the ones who are different, being more human like.

I think that I could open my own business nearby the village. I thought of setting up a packing plant or a butcher shop, since during my undergraduation I had to work as butcher thanks too a classmate's job offer. At that moment I started to keep

myself financially, I did not look like an indigenous and I did not feel like an Indigenous because we are not attached to. I had the scholarship and the salary and so I thought: I need money enough to live and not live for money. On the other hand, I did not feel ashamed because I was helping out my family.

If I set up a butcher shop one day, I do not think of being the only beneficiary, but I do think of helping people around me, people who are in need.

I would have to plan in order to know if I were able to set up a business, even if it is in a small place; if it works out, I could improve it later. I believe that my family could not work in this packing plant or butcher shop because they do not understand the business field, but I would invite people who helped me out throughout my life to take part of the business. I think that neither me nor anyone who gets the bachelor's degree is ready to manage his/her own business. It is important to plan carefully before giving the first step, finding the resources and making plans first of all.

I feel that there is a certain expectation on my community and family's side as to my return: my father is very proud of me because I am taking the university and my family hope that I remember them and I would never abandon them as a way to make it up for them for everything they have done for me.

If I had the chance to work for a public institution, such as a city hall, I would accept it.

I have never had the chance to take part in an academic circuit, besides I have thought of that. Being an intellectual in the academic context is a very large step for a native, showing his/her ability to be a researcher as well.

One important topic I am interested in is to know how the Indigenous villages will bear all these future bachelor students, since nowadays there are many graduated ones unemployed. Even if a native gets a job in the village, he or she cannot bring deep changes to the village public services, for the professional who assists the community needs to answer to an institution or to a boss. For example, some nurses are in charge of the cars, but at some emergency moments, they prefer not to assist the community interests due to some rules which cannot be broken. In my opinion, that professional should know how to articulate better superior forces and the Indigenous' need. The village is far beyond that issue and just sitting or staying there will not help much. It is necessary to have politicians representing the people, such as: mayors, city councilmen and congressmen in order to improve life in the village.

In the village, we can see that there are some people who are born to be politicians, as a born leader. Politics never appealed to me, I would not be that "cold blood tough guy" to make things happen, but I think that politics is supposed to help the others.

If we look at the real native world today, some things need to be changed. We are not supposed to change the village, but to change "up there", being present and showing that you are "up there". If we just sit and stay in the village we are disconnected with the politicians who could improve our village. I have heard my community say that it is necessary that we always have a politician representing the Indigenous, giving directions on how and when to do things. We have to find a way to keep someone "up there" (in the spheres of the Legislative, Judicial and Executive Powers) and to keep the community on, but we should not forget that we are Indigenous, a vicarious people who need help.

Now, in this new university, I have good expectations because the environment seems to be more pleasant and simpler than the previous one.

## SIGNALING THE NARRATED PASSAGE

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The target testimony reveals the permanent transit between the village and the university Alex has gone through, signaling three important aspects to be considered.

The first aspect is related to the affirmation of his ethnic-communitary belonging within the university. That affirmation reflects upon his choice in establishing a marital relationship with another *Guarani* Indigenous student who belongs to a nearby village, keeping historical kinship relations. Even displaced by a urban and academic territory, the brand identity rises through the marital link accomplished by both. Establishing a matrimonial relationship immersed in the city and in an academic environment is a way to reassure his ethnic-communitary belonging.

That affirmation can still be observed while recognizing that Alex is not alone in the academic experience; his is together in his strategy to occupy the academic site, once his brothers are also academic students. Alex comes from a leadership family who, like others *Guarani* and *Kaingang* families, prepare strategically their kids to occupy the university (AMARAL, 2010). Thus, the university becomes a strategy of maintaining the leadership *status* in the Indigenous lands. Alex and his brothers are being prepared to be potential managers of public policies in and for the belonging community and for the Indigenous people as a whole.

A second aspect points out the importance of the higher education to prepare Indigenous students to be interlocutors between their community, the State and other institutions. He shows clarity on the institutional limits and the possibilities of acting as *Guarani* professional in being hired by public organs.

The academic degree can aggregate the process of the native leaderships political education so that they may understand the necessary dialogue between Indigenous communities interests and State in its different power sphere. The Indigenous academic student can improve his comprehension of the state operation, getting tools to mediate between his community needs and the Indigenous people and government spheres.

Alex's evident proof as an entrepreneur points out the third aspect to be analyzed by his testimony. While mentioning his intention to set up his own business, we observe that he borrows the knowledge acquired during the Administration Undergraduate Program reassured by the planning for the opening of a new enterprise. Likewise, the initiative is linked to a collective action of his own family (reflexion of the *Guarani* socio political organization) or some community members, mainly the ones who, according to Alex, believed in his degree. This way, we can explain that the idea of entrepreneurship takes as parameters the form of ethnic-communitary belonging. It shows that the knowledge acquired through the Administration Bachelor's Degree are mediated by Alex based in the centrality of the *Guarani* way of organization. His fragilities manifested in his basic schooling are relativized before his committed intention to pass on the apprehended knowledge as his family and community use.

The approached aspects, among many other elements explained by Alex, indicate the constitution of a subject based in some knowledge which became systematized with his passage by the Administration undergraduate Program.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

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The Indigenous academic attendance in the Administration Undergraduate Program represents an affirmative dimension of his people and community's cultural aspects. Alex brings together his ethnic group historical, cultural, social cosmologic, linguistic and political aspects of his community belonging, and his presence measures affirmatively the Indigenous issue for the Administration Program and for the university. In that context, his attendance may enquire the Administration Undergraduate Program and its practice in terms of educational and theoretical aspects, building new intercultural interchanges among colleagues, professor and academic community in that field.

The testimony reveals a passage of school education which can differ from other Administration academic students. By describing his educational passage – from the village school to public city school and this university – the narrative shows the Indigenous academic students' fragilities and probably other public school students' too. Narratives that they bring in the exercise of their rights to live or experiment the Higher Education. It reflects, thus, the lack of preparation of the universities to shelter and follow academically those subjects in their education, specially in the Administration Studies Program. We can verify the existence of standardized teaching practice and pedagogical strategies which do not take into account the different ethnic, racial and territorial belongings. Differently, some friendship, solidarity and ethnic recognition can be observed on the part of some colleagues and professors who supported his professional education.

The narrative shows a communitary and collective dimension in his intentions and Indigenous professional academic management practices, enhancing a critical analysis about the processes of education focused in capital accumulation by individual merit, commonly disseminated through the Administration Program models and tools.

This testimony also challenges the Administration Programs as to the intellectuals', researchers' and Indigenous managers' education focused in the interests and needs of different Indigenous people and communities in Brazil<sup>8</sup>.

The construction of new circuits of Indigenous job posts can bring qualitative changes for the dynamics of the public institutions which operate in Indigenous lands in fields such as: health, education and social work. This new professional entry in the institutions, affirming their double belonging – administrator and Indigenous – can rebuild the power relations, routine, tools and parameters which guide them. Alex's academic passage shows the appropriation of theoretical and technical knowledge acquired during his academic life and also mediated bases in the comprehension of his community needs and his commitment with that community and his family.

The originality of Alex's testimony in the Administration field is a reflection of the unparalleled native students' occupation of the Higher Education in Brazil, bringing the constitution of a new Indigenous subject – epistemic, intellectual, researcher and manager.

The testimony adopted as strategy of life history postulates a singularity of subjects' trajectories, although all of them may belong and reflect a capitalist society with colonial and patriarchal heritages which have caused and explained the conflicts involving indigenous lands till today and, therefore, have promoted the Indigenous fight to conquer their territories.

This paper did not aim at denouncing or exposing the situations of invisibility lived by that Indigenous student, but it aimed at, by means of a research strategy consistent with the subject, his experiences and reality, enabling the academic student to openly manifest his ability of agency before real situations he has coped with. In this way, by being one of the authors of this work, the Indigenous student shows his double belonging as an Indigenous and an academic student of the Administration Undergraduate Program. Therefore, an epistemic subject who lives the Higher Education experience and, at the same time, reflects upon it. Finally, this work brings the need and the importance to go deeper in the research of other Indigenous students' experience in university entrance, endurance and following up for the Administration Studies Program in Brazilian Universities.

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<sup>8</sup> Given that the Census of 2010 identified 305 Indigenous people who speak 280 different languages in Brazil.

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