

May 2023

Creating a Web Resource on Sense of Belonging for Underrepresented Occupational Therapy Students in Graduate Programs

Owen Uyiosa Lawani

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.34917/36114751>

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CREATING A WEB RESOURCE ON SENSE OF BELONGING FOR
UNDERREPRESENTED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENTS
IN GRADUATE PROGRAMS

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A doctoral project submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Occupational Therapy Doctorate

Department of Brain Health
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University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 2023



Doctoral Project Approval

The Graduate College
The University of Nevada, Las Vegas

April 28, 2023

This doctoral project prepared by

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entitled

Creating a Web Resource on Sense of Belonging for Underrepresented Occupational
Therapy Students in Graduate Programs

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Occupational Therapy Doctorate
Department of Brain Health

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Abstract

Underrepresented students (URS) in graduate occupational therapy (OT) programs often struggle with a sense of not belonging due to a lack of representation in their cohort and curriculum. This has been evident among students who are from racial/ethnic backgrounds, first-generation college students (FGCS), and have had low-income experiences. Research has shown that a sense of belonging (SB) is important for URS' ability to cope with everyday stressors in higher education.

This capstone project focused on developing a web-based resource addressing the perceived SB among URS in graduate OT programs. Data was collected from participants at the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) to understand the effectiveness of the web resource and gather quality improvement using a 7-point Likert Scale. The study involved 22 participants who provided insights on the behaviors, perceptions, and knowledge of information identified from the web-based resource. The findings indicated that the web resource improved perceived SB among OT URS, helping with everyday stressors in their program.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to thank and express gratitude to Dr. Wendy Lucas Wood, MA Ph.D., Dr. Sheama Krishnagiri Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA, Dr. Arameh Anvarizadeh OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA, Dr. Adam Cisroe Pearson OTD, OTR/L, and Dr. Karen McCarthy OTD, OTR/L.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgment.....	iv
Section One: Introduction.....	1
PIO Question	2
Definitions	3
Section Two: Overview of Problem	5
Proposed Solution.....	6
Significance of the Project to Occupational Therapy	7
Statement of the Problem	8
Section Three: Literature Review	10
Underrepresented Students	10
Ethnic Groups in Higher Education	11
Sense of Belonging Perspective of Black/African American Students	12
Sense of Belonging Perspective of Asian American Pacific Islander Students.....	13
Sense of Belonging Perspective of Latinx Students.....	14
First Generation College Students.....	15
Low Socioeconomic Status Students.....	16
Web Content Material.....	18
Why Belonging Matters	19
Stories of Belonging.....	20
Podcasts	21

Affirmations/Reflections	22
Mindfulness Practice	24
Related Links Belonging	26
Section Four: Statement of Purpose	30
Section Five: Theoretical Framework	31
Occupational Adaptation	31
Section Six: Methodology	33
Agency Description	33
Target Population.....	34
Methods and Procedures.....	34
Section Seven: Ethical and Legal Considerations	39
Section Eight: Results.....	40
Participant Characteristics	40
Post Workshop Survey Questions.....	41
Perception and Behavioral Questions.....	42
Section Nine: Discussion.....	44
Section Ten: Limitations.....	46
Section Eleven: Conclusion.....	47
Implications for Research.....	47
Recommendations	48
Implications for Practice.....	48
Future Implications.....	48

Appendix A.....	50
Appendix B.....	52
Appendix C.....	70
Appendix D	81
Appendix E.....	82
References	93
Curriculum Vitae	104

Section One: Introduction

Registered occupational therapists (OT) are well-versed in health promotion, prevention, and environmental change to serve clients effectively (AOTA, 2020). An OT helps individuals of all ages accomplish tasks they need and desire to live healthy and meaningful lives, promoting participation in activities that impact their daily routines. In the case of a graduate college student, OT may assist with interventions for life transitions in higher education and maintaining appropriate academic performance. During a student's advancements in higher education, academic, social, and financial challenges have resulted in unforeseen psychological imbalances, compromising health, and poor belongingness (Miller & Orsillo, 2020). Although some students struggle with the transition to higher education, there are more unresolved barriers among racial/ethnic minorities, FGCS, and students from low-income families, collectively known as URS (Miller & Orsillo et al., 2020). Students from this population may also face challenges in the academic setting with occupational engagement or social participation leading to poor belongingness (Hammel, 2014). Due to these potential difficulties with occupational engagement and social participation, integrating research strategies and education focused on belonging into a web-based resource may positively impact underrepresented graduate college students' perceived SB. Through this capstone, a created web-based resource was explored to understand and promote belonging among OT URS.

A web resource concentrating on belonging for URS OT coincides with the objectives of what the profession would like to emulate. According to the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), self-identified racial or ethnic minority graduate OT students comprised only 16.5% of graduate OT programs in 2015. AOTA predicts that by 2025, approximately 17% of OT graduate students will be from diverse backgrounds (AOTA, 2019). This lack of

representation among URS in the profession raises concerns about marginalization and oppression that can make the academic environment even more stressful (Clark et al., 2012). Perception of these variables has led to students' decreased SB among their peers, contributing to stress, anxiety, and depression.

Belonging is primarily characterized by feeling valued, needed, accepted, and fitting in a particular system or environment (Miller & Orsillo, 2020). It is a critical factor in student progress (Allen et al., 2021). Microaggressions, or unintended but offensive comments geared toward minority groups that reinforce prejudices (Sue et al., 2019), can also contribute to a lack of SB among URS, as 98.8 percent of graduate students have reported experiencing microaggressions while in their doctoral programs (Miller & Orsillo, 2020). The American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF) is striving to create a SB for everyone within the OT community and to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion at every level, recognizing that those with previously underserved identities have much to offer the profession (Taff & Blash, 2017). A targeted universalism approach, with support focused on the daily functioning and adaptation of URS in graduate school, such as a web-based resource, could be helpful (Farmer et al., 2022)

PIO Question

Will a web-based resource improve an underrepresented occupational therapy student's perceived sense of belonging in a graduate-level program?

Definitions

Sense of Belonging

Conceptual definition: The subjective feeling of deep connection with social groups, physical places, and individual and collective experiences is a fundamental human need that predicts numerous mental, physical, social, economic, and behavioral outcomes (Allen et al., 2021).

Operational definition: A state of mind where students feel welcome and at ease in their setting, leading to higher levels of concentration/achievement through engagement. SB will be measured by the student's ability to answer a survey on belonging.

Graduate Level Program

Conceptual definition: Program leading to, or creditable towards, a master's or entry-level clinical doctoral degree (Law Insider, 2014).

Operational Definition: Students from graduate-level programs will be separated by year of experience in their current graduate occupational therapy program.

Web Resource

Conceptual definition: An online item that can be watched, read, listened to, or interacted with, such as videos, fact sheets, and online quizzes (McMaster University, 2015).

Operational Definition: An online source that offers multimodal data on information for URS that promotes education on belonging, reflection, mindfulness, and self-affirmation to increase perceived SB among OT URS. The web resource was measured through behavioral, knowledge, perception, and quality improvement questions.

Underrepresented Students

These are members of racial, ethnic, or gender groups that have been disproportionately underrepresented for more than ten years (Goforth, 2021).

Operational Definition: Individuals traditionally underrepresented in education, such as racial/ethnic minorities, FGCS, students with disabilities, and students from lower socioeconomic households. URS was measured through student demographics and survey questions to complete study inclusion criteria and further justify the study's significance on perceived SB for the population.

Section Two: Overview of Problem

Belonging in education plays a role in promoting academic success as it creates a sense of acceptance and respect among peers and faculty members in the academic environment (Goodenow, 1993). Conversely, URS face unique challenges in achieving higher education goals due to their less-than-optimal psychosocial functioning and struggle to develop a SB (Miller & Orsillo, 2020). URS may have difficulty in academic settings due to their interdependent worldview, which emphasizes the importance of connecting with others and being part of a community (Stephen et al., 2012). This can lead to URS feeling like they do not fit in with the dominant culture in their programs, which can negatively impact their academic performance and overall well-being.

Several studies suggest that URS face trials in proving their position in academic programs and may question whether the profession fits them (Ford et al., 2021). Furthermore, the lack of representation from URS in academic programs can significantly hinder their performance and SB (Colaianne et al., 2022). A recent qualitative study of URS participating in fieldwork and in-class experience found that the lack of representation from their cultural and ethnic backgrounds was a significant barrier to their performance (Colaianne et al., 2022). The study's themes indicated that 91.7% of URS identified having to prove their qualifications for their position in the programs. Additionally, URS may believe that their communities or values need to be reflected in the profession, further emphasizing the importance of representation and a sense of belonging in academic settings (Salvant et al., 2021).

Inadequate academic preparation, a lack of diversity in peer groups, and financial concerns are additional factors that contribute to URS' struggles in graduate education (Hepworth & Schafer, 2016). Nevertheless, URS can overcome these obstacles by implementing

effective coping mechanisms (Miller & Orsillo, 2020). Pursuing complementary coping approaches may enhance success and improve academic performance and psychosocial functioning among URS. By promoting involvement in the OT community and implementing targeted support measures, URS could develop a SB that facilitates their academic and professional progress.

Proposed Solution

Research has shown that implementing coping mechanisms that enhance the perceived SB of URS can aid in addressing academic disparities (Farrell & Langrehr, 2014; Govender et al., 2015; Keptner, 2019; Miller & Orsillo, 2020; Salvant et al., 2021; Spencer et al., 2017). Encouraging URS doctoral students to adopt an accepting attitude towards challenging internal experiences and participate more actively in academic activities can also improve their overall well-being (Billingsley & Hurd, 2019). Positive academic engagement has been linked to the use of belonging strategies (Miller & Orsillo, 2020).

Given the fast-paced nature of college environments, URS OT students may struggle to find the time for reflection, connection, and education that could validate and enhance their feelings about their status in their program. This is where web-based resources can provide an obligation. By delivering an accessible online platform for learning and connecting, a web resource can offer strategies to enhance a perceived sense of independence and confidence that can be brought into the educational environment. With content tailored to their specific needs, URS OT students can access valuable resources to support their academic success and promote their overall well-being, thus contributing to positive sensations about their future as an OT professional. The web resource's convenience and ease of use are critical factors in ensuring that URS OT students can benefit fully from its contents.

Significance of the Project to Occupational Therapy

In the wake of the George Floyd and Asian hate crimes of 2020, there has been increased awareness of the need to improve communication with URS populations in various fields, including OT. A prompt in self-reflection and self-evaluation within the profession focuses on providing opportunities for students from underrepresented backgrounds to cope positively with stress and other challenges (Brown, 2021; Taff & Blash, 2017).

This capstone project aims to address inequity in OT education using a quality improvement design to discuss all cases related to belonging. By acknowledging individual student differences and identifying shared interests, the project's aspirations was to improve the perceived SB and negate identity threats for these future OTs.

Developing a web resource specifically for this population is one step in achieving these goals of increasing perceived SB. The web resource indicates to URS that the profession cares about their personal experiences and is dedicated to supporting their enculturation to the career. Through this project, students can self-appraise and critique educational gaps, which may then assist them in hopes of an equitable trajectory. Additionally, the resource can facilitate courageous conversations necessary for growth and encourage participation in learning experiences.

Statement of the Problem

In the field of OT, many new programs are opening across the country to endorse the profession that influences expertise in occupation-related knowledge and theory. As the century-old career evolves in practice, maximizing the field's diversity is necessary (Hinojosa, 2017; Taff & Blash, 2017). However, OT programs are disproportionately comprised of non-Hispanic white students. AOTA reports that approximately 77% of entry-level doctoral students identify as White and 91% as non-Hispanic (Brown et al., 2021). These statistics highlight the need for more diversity. Ideally, these numbers should reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the U.S. population, as it is stated that more than 50% of individuals will be a minority or from underrepresented groups in the next few decades (Brown et al., 2021). For the students who are enrolled in higher education programs and are recognized as underrepresented, it was found that there is a lower perceived SB (Miller & Orsillo, 2020).

Graduate students of color and URS are frequently marginalized and oppressed, creating an even more stressful environment and a lower SB (Miller & Orsillo, 2020). There are numerous ways to define the notion of belonging within Western cultures, collectively describing the connectedness or barriers an individual may encounter (Cook et al., 2017). SB is influenced by various factors, including cultural relevance and responsiveness to one's (educational) environment. For example, economists, political scientists, and sociologists have recognized that belonging to a social fabric is a prerequisite for quality of life (Hammel, 2014). Cook et al. (2017) agrees that belonging is positively correlated with human well-being, is valued by most of the world's people, and informs the meanings attributed to and derived from the occupations of culturally diverse people. The gap in knowledge on SB has been indicated in the OT discipline

(Hammel, 2014), and students who have an absence of SB should have useful resources to increase it.

Section Three: Literature Review

This literature review considers the challenges that underrepresented OT students in higher education may face and identifies strategies for fostering a SB to facilitate occupational engagement and improve academic achievement. The review focuses on four areas: trends of belonging based on a student's ethnic background, their unique challenges, the concepts of belonging, and the different strategies implemented in the web content. The review sought to label effective belonging strategies utilized by URS in higher education to validate the content and the need for the web resource. Most importantly, the literature review will discuss whether the content can improve a SB among these students. The following articles reviewed demonstrated quality and descriptive studies or opinion-based data that lowers the level of evidence.

Underrepresented Students

URS have been identified as individuals who may account for the lack of representation based on race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status. Several studies have investigated URS, particularly emphasizing the need to support students during their time in OT higher education. Qualitative studies have highlighted themes of poor belonging tied to imposter syndrome, psychological distress, exposure to insensitivities, posing a risk to their physical and mental health (Colaianne et al., 2022; Kitchens et al., 2021; Miller & Orsillo, 2020; Salvant et al., 2021). URS may even be at a higher risk of developing psychological difficulties due to added challenges, including discrimination and microaggressions. Factors beyond racial stressors can also affect students' psychosocial functioning, including work-life balance, mentorship, and cultural values not fully aligned with the academic structures of higher education programs (Hepworth & Schafer, 2016).

While many studies have investigated URS in OT higher education and highlighted the need for support during their time in these programs, several factors still contribute to their poor SB. Articles have suggested that most URS OT students may have had late exposure to the profession, having previously pursued other careers (Colaianne et al., 2022; Hepworth & Schafer, 2016). This absence of early OT exposure may contribute to poor SB. The findings also indicate that some URS applied to other healthcare programs instead of OT, potentially lowering the desire and motivation to be in the career due to not having their original choice (Colaianne et al., 2022). Reviewing the articles, it was noticed that generalizing URS into a broader categories can be an ineffective way to truly find what permits issues relating to SB. A deeper understanding of URS should be reflected by specific ethnic background that discuss diverse issue of belonging.

Ethnic Groups in Higher Education

For decades, African American, Asian American, and Latinx communities have sought education as a pathway to economic progress, social transformation, and increased political power (Raab, 2022). Nevertheless, student demographics indicate that race remains an obstacle in achieving educational parity across racial lines (Miller & Orsillo 2020; Sue et al., 2019). Unfortunately, the effects of this disparity are far-reaching, with some attributing it to subtle yet powerful systemic inequalities taking place within school systems (Howard & Navarro 2016). Some argue that the causes of performance disparities include structural inequality, poor teacher quality, and a lack of cultural relevance in educational instruction (Howard & Navarro, 2016). African American, Asian American, and Latinx perspectives on the SB should be considered separately to comprehend their limitations in an academic setting (Garcia, 2017).

Sense of Belonging Perspective of Black/African American Students

African American or Black graduate students (BGS) have highlighted the pressure of working harder than their peers to prove they belong. These feelings are mainly due to inconsistent academic systems, which result in lower self-esteem and a sense of disconnection (Chakraverty, 2020; Booker, 2016; Jones & Okun, 2001). In their perception, perfectionism, a sense of urgency, and a focus on quantity over quality are features of institutions that hinder their success (Jones & Okun, 2001). Despite this disadvantageous reality for BGS, these variables give them an inherent connection among other Black students and shared values. Transitioning to higher education can be complicated for BGS, as they face the challenges of adjusting to new expectations and finding their identity. Wright (2016) found that many BGS shifted towards disengagement from the majority culture in favor of literature and involvement, which directly reflects their background.

There have been many articles discussing the experience of BGS while attending OT school. A qualitative study among students who identify as BGS states that students often spoke about marginalization, bias, and discrimination despite university initiatives at their school (Lucas, 2017). Student support among these ethnic backgrounds remains a constant variable. The lack of support has led students to experience unwarranted stress in their academic environment (Kitchens et al., 2021; Miller & Orsillo, 2020). Conversations around race-related stress were a common theme among BGS, as students understand that their past learning experiences did not allow them to reach their optimal potential (Farrell & Langrehr, 2014; Lucas, 2017).

Studies discussing occupational performance and coping strategies to reduce stress were conducted among OT students identifying as BGS, but participation was limited. The lack of participation creates a gap in understanding whether not enough BGS OT students are enrolled in

programs or whether peers influence if and how they behave during research. More studies introducing BGS students to coping strategies associated with SB should be done to discover if what could be effective among the community.

Sense of Belonging Perspective of Asian American Pacific Islander Students

The Asian American community is a diverse group comprising at least 30 ethnic subgroups, each with a unique history of immigration and specific needs (Nguyen, 2018). Despite this diversity, the community is often treated as a homogeneous entity, which can have negative consequences (Gin, 2019). For example, there is a common assumption that Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) students are already successful academically and do not require support. The idea that all AAPI students are successful without needing support has been linked to adverse outcomes (Gin, 2019). A study describing the stress and social support of AAPI states that most students from the community report a greater level of academic distress than other ethnicities (Farrell & Langrehr, 2014). AAPI are often subjected to high expectations in education that can result in psychological issues exacerbated by racial harassment (Nguyen, 2018). These assumptions have harmful effects, including reducing SB correlated with goals and approval of loved ones in their culture (Hammel, 2014).

Additionally, the underrepresentation of Asian Americans in faculty and administration can exacerbate this issue. Faculty and others in academic power may not fully understand the support systems needed for AAPI graduate students to succeed. A study by Nguyen (2018) found that AAPI had lower levels of satisfaction with their opportunities to form mentor relationships and were less likely to report having a current mentor of the same race.

The existing research about the SB within OT students from AAPI backgrounds is limited, as most studies have been conducted in other disciplines or during undergraduate

studies. Most of the research uncovered was carried out primarily in the western regions of the United States. Conversely, an article about AAPI college students revealed that online anonymity and forum communication are related to an individual's social and psychological development processes in college (Gin, 2019). On a platform such as a web resource, using technology that simulates a social environment can serve as a strategy to facilitate SB, appreciation, value, and respect for AAPI students.

Sense of Belonging Perspective of Latinx Students

The term Latinx will be used to describe Latino/Latina heritage throughout this paper, and it is acknowledged that it is not a universal term used by all. Referring to people of Latin American origin or descent, Latinx has been trending as a demographic categorization or for research purposes. Latinx represents 18% of the U.S. population (Raab, 2022). The community includes individuals of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and many other Hispanic descents, as identified by the U.S. Census Bureau (Raab, 2022). The gender-neutral word recognizes and respects the various gender identities and expressions present within this community (Ketover, 2021).

Latinx students face unique challenges in higher education due to their SB. When compared to their peers from other racial and ethnic backgrounds, Latinx students have historically had the lowest educational achievement and degree attainment (Raab, 2022). Furthermore, Latinx students frequently experience lower levels of SB and develop an SB differently because of their educational history (Ketover, 2021).

Several themes, including cultural dissonance, cultural fit, and unwelcoming climates for diversity, represent some of the most significant obstacles Latinx students may face during their transition to higher education (Garcia, 2017). According to studies, institutional, faculty, and peer

support have a significant impact on the success of Latinx students in higher education (Raab, 2022).

Latinx students' SB has yet to be displayed predominantly in OT program studies. Most articles reviewed have focused on the belongingness of Latinx students across various educational levels, including high school, junior college, and 4-year programs. In the undergraduate ranks, it was observed that Latinx students employed stress management techniques that could improve their SB. These techniques included positive reframing, acceptance, self-talk, self-reflection, and seeking support (Cavazos et al., 2010). Drawing from the recurring patterns identified in these studies, employing a web-based resource that aligns with the observed trends may be advisable to use reinforcement for the population. This web intervention could enhance the SB and coping mechanisms of Latinx students who are sometimes FGCS pursuing OT school.

First Generation College Students

The exclusive challenges that FGCS face is the limited perspective of the college environment. Gillen-O'neel (2019) states that overall, FGCS struggle academically in higher education compared with continuing-generation students with at least one parent with a college degree. The explanation of these dynamics' stresses that FGCS are susceptible to lower grades. Correspondingly, this community generally has higher dropout rates than students from subsequent generations (Gillen-Oneel, 2019). For FGCS who are struggling to attain a good education standing, they fall into comparison to their counterparts, facing feelings of imposter syndrome. Students with imposter syndrome may have shared perceptions of incompetency and fraudulence in their academic environments (McCarthy, 2023). A continuation from McCarthy (2023) suggests that based on their backgrounds, students with imposter syndrome typically

report feeling unworthiness or lack of preparation to attend higher education. They are also less likely to participate in extracurricular activities and develop close relationships with their peers and faculty (Billingsley & Hurd, 2019).

A study by Stephens et al. (2012) suggests that first- and continuing-generation students do not differ in their average SB or engagement levels. Yet, their reactivity to daily changes in SB fluctuates, indicating that FGCS do not graduate at the same matriculation rate as others (Gillen-O'neel, 2019). The daily connection between belonging and engagement is robust for FGCS. Investigating how FGCS can attain SB may be an occupational justice concern. If doing, being, becoming, and belonging are essential to well-being and belonging cannot be achieved by the FGCS community, they need to be involved in determining how to get there (McCarthy, 2023).

Low Socioeconomic Status Students

All articles on the topic of low socioeconomic status related back to the possibility of a student being a FGCS. Research has consistently indicated that financial strain is a significant hurdle for FGCS, predominately from low socio-economic backgrounds (Blackwell et al. 2014). Overwhelmingly, this stressor can lead to poor academic and social adjustment and longer time spent working toward degree completion. Unmet financial needs may require FGCSs to take on hefty part-time jobs to assist their families at the risk of compromising their university experience (Tate, 2014). Navigating college as an FGCS presents unique challenges, from financial and family obligations that can conflict with extra-curricular activities, leaving students feeling isolated. Socioeconomic issues, inadequate academic preparation, and lack of available information or peer counseling compound difficulties for the population (Wittrup & Hurd 2021).

Belonging

Understanding one's SB is ingrained in social constructs and admired globally for human well-being. The influence of belonging across cultures has shown an increase in connectedness, contribution, and social support, positively assisting with mental and physical health longevity (Allen et al., 2021). Globally, belonging is interpreted in various ways that contribute to an individual's daily activities (Glass et al., 2015). According to Hammel (2014), dominant Western theories assert that occupations are chosen to satisfy self-centered needs, but this perspective is culturally specific. Other cultures, such as African, Asian, Pacific Islander, Southern European, Indigenous, and Middle Eastern, recognize the significance of community interconnectedness (Hammel, 2014). The known similarities between these cultures include an emphasis on interdependence or relationships (Stephens et al., 2012). From the perspective of various global cultures, recognizing what motivates an individual is essential for connecting and contributing to the daily occupations demanded and needed by students who identify with these values (Schaber et al., 2015)

Due to the evolutionary roots of humans' need to belong, studies across cultures indicate that social exclusion is a barrier in the classroom (Allen et al., 2021). When social exclusion happens, students may experience decreased emotional well-being leading to self-defeating behavior patterns (Miller & Orsillo, 2020; Allen et al., 2021). Some Western psychologists believe that social connection is crucial to mental health and should be regarded as a "vaccine" for depression (Hammel, 2014). Nonetheless, students seeking belonging may have minimal attention to academic demands, highlighting the need for a balanced approach.

The field of OT offers the opportunity to recognize the protective function of belonging and create meaningful education methods that are not excessively broad nor excessively narrow. Through the lens of OT, belonging research has broad implications for consumers such as college students who may have difficulty finding their place and feeling accepted in their college environment (Hinojosa, 2017; Keptner, 2019). OT theories and practices can help students develop a SB by identifying and addressing barriers to significant occupations as a student (Keptner, 2019). Despite efforts to promote belonging, equity, and inclusion in schools, many voices remain unheard (Allen et al., 2021). These voices must be bolstered and amplified to facilitate positive shifts in healthcare professions like OT.

Web Content Material

Creating a web resource that focuses on belonging content for URS OT students hinges on the resource's accessibility and usability. The fast-paced college environment inhibits students from taking time for reflection, connection, and education that could validate their perceptions of their OT program status. Including web content in everyday activities allows students to access valuable resources to improve their academic progress and general well-being. By providing a platform for students to learn and connect online, the web resource can provide strategies to gain a sense of perceived independence and confidence in their academic environment. Through web content focusing on their specific needs, URS OT students can gain SB and confidence they might not otherwise have, ultimately contributing to their success as future OT professionals. The impact of web resource content assisted in investigating the SB within URS OT students. Specific headers of the web resource content are Why Belonging Matters, Stories of Belonging, Podcasts, Mindfulness, Forum Reflection, Related Links to Belonging, and Affirmations.

Why Belonging Matters

The need for belonging connects one with others and provides a sense of cultural identity and security. Findings indicate that loneliness, social isolation, and lack of connection are significant components with implications for motivation, stress, anxiety, academic achievement, and career readiness (Allen et al., 2021; Clark et al., 2012; Glass et al., 2015; McCarthy et al., 2023; Miller & Orsillo, 2020; Walton & Cohen, 2011). Belongingness is also a critical component of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which theorizes that safety is a prerequisite for fulfilling esteem and motivation (Wright, 2016). Safety is important for URS students since the initial transition into an OT program may be intimidating, given the low numbers of POC in the setting. Safety can sometimes be assisted by student organizations, mentors, and faculty; however, limited representation in the perception of URS may counteract their feelings of security (Brown et al., 2021; Wright, 2016). An instance of poor safety in the academic environment is a student subjected to microaggression.

The educational and mental health benefits of belonging, community, and connection can also enhance the learning experience (Allen et al., 2021; Miller & Orsillo, 2020). Students who feel a SB are more likely to participate in class discussions and engage with their peers and faculty. This engagement can lead to deeper learning, increased creativity, and improved critical thinking skills (Allen et al., 2021). Additionally, a SB can help students feel supported and valued, increasing their motivation and resilience when facing challenges. OT students face unique complications, such as navigating complex healthcare systems and working with individuals with diverse needs and backgrounds (Lucas, 2017). Creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment may help students develop the skills and confidence to navigate these challenges successfully.

The web resource section lays a foundation of education to broaden the audience's understanding of belonging, along with statistics of students of color enrolled in OT programs in 2020 (Appendix B). The page also discusses the issues of the absence of belonging in a person's academic journey, which also found by the connection of storytelling.

Stories of Belonging

The power of storytelling cannot be understated, especially for URS in OT. Hearing stories of individuals who have overcome similar obstacles can provide these students with a sense of validation, encouragement, and practical advice for navigating the difficulties they may encounter in their academic and professional endeavors (Salvant et al., 2021; Wood & Mazur, 2016). Research has shown that stories of belonging can serve as social support, reducing the adverse effects of psychosocial outcomes such as stereotype threats, social exclusion, or discrimination (Allen et al., 2021; Wittrup & Hurd, 2021; Vogtmann & Provident, 2021).

It can be inferred that by sharing stories of belonging, students can learn from the experiences of others and gain a deeper understanding of the nuances of navigating a system that may not have been designed to support them (Stephens et al., 2012). Hearing about the struggles and successes of individuals from similar backgrounds can also provide a sense of community and connection and create a space for students to share their stories and experiences (Museus et al., 2018; Hammel, 2014).

On the Stories of Belonging page (Appendix B) students can listen to practitioners' and peers' experiences. As the author of one's life, URS can connect with and listen to questions concerning their knowledge, self, and relationships. URS can strive to grasp the knowledge of their discipline, knowledge of themselves, and past expertise that can be shared and heard from stories who have similar backgrounds (Museus et al., 2018).

Podcasts

Podcasts are digital audio or video files that can be downloaded or streamed online through mobile devices or desktops (Maher-Palenque, 2016). They cover a wide range of topics, from news and current affairs, that are beneficial in higher learning. Educational audio can be helpful for students due to the categories of teaching, service, marketing, and technology (Maher-Palenque, 2016). The qualities of a compelling podcast can also include a representation of a single idea that can be explained verbally through a series of episodes that can be played back at any time. Most importantly, podcasts are helpful because they offer a sense of inclusivity and belonging to a graduate student community (Maher-Palenque, 2016). In this way, podcasts can be a valuable tool for students looking to enhance their academic and personal growth.

It can be gathered that the media, such as podcasts, can offer shared experiences, and emotions, allowing for a substitution for social interaction. The connection may allow for a correlation between belonging by increasing the motivation of a student to perform the best way they can. The importance of podcasts is the shared experiences offered on an individualistic basis, as students all have different needs of belonging dependent on their cultural upbringing (Schafer & Eerola, 2018). From this, it is hoped that URS will engage more socially with their peers outside of their cultural upbringing (Allen et al., 2021; Billingsley & Hurd, 2019; Hammel, 2014). Doing so can be a start to involvement inside and outside the classroom, improving psychological and mental health and positive outcomes (Billingsley & Hurd, 2019).

Tobin & Guadagno (2022) state that podcasts should be used based on preference. Studies have shown that students who tend to be sensitive or anxious are less likely to listen to podcasts and can benefit from other media, such as television or music. Additionally, individuals

with more informational needs may use podcasts more than students seeking social and emotional needs (Tobin & Guadagno, 2022).

Numerous podcasts on the web resource offer relatability based on an individual's background. The podcasts are organized according to the needs or connections of Latinx, Black/African American, and AAPI OT students (Appendix B). Each category allows students to listen to a professional from a race and culture-specific background discussing personal barriers related to belonging. There is a section based on the web resource about OT interventions provided by practitioners of diverse ethnic backgrounds. A supplementary podcast can also be found that discusses current global events in the OT field. This page allows students to learn from experts and professionals in their respective professions. Several podcasts feature interviews with industry leaders, researchers, and academics, giving students access to insights and perspectives they might not have otherwise.

Affirmations/Reflections

Self-affirmations are utterances that assert the truth of something, or statements people repeat to themselves to express how they wish to be (Philip & Philip, 2022). They are intended to challenge and eliminate harmful, internal, or external beliefs. Self-affirmations are especially important for graduate students who may experience anxiety, low self-efficacy, and maladaptive perfectionism when writing term papers, studying for exams, or keeping up with weekly readings (Hect et al., 2021). Stress and anxiety can significantly impact working memory and academic performance among college students, and it is important to find effective coping strategies to deal with these issues (Cohen, 2014; Gillen-Oneel, 2019). Using affirmations effectively, which has been shown to improve self-esteem and academic performance, is beneficial for belonging (Hect et al., 2021).

However, it is essential to note that affirmations alone will not work unless they are accompanied by action and are repeated frequently to train the mind to respond to future circumstances (Cohen, 2014; Hect et al., 2021). To facilitate this process, the web resource will provide weekly self-affirmation statements (Appendix B) that students can use to boost their confidence and cope with stress and anxiety. Each week an update of the website with three different statements for students to use will be shown. The previous week's affirmation will also be available for those who may want to reuse them. Students are encouraged to recite the affirmations throughout the week or day as a coping strategy for high-stress situations. The goal is to help students develop resilience and a growth mindset, which can promote well-being and academic success. For some URS students, affirmation may not be enough. Therefore, a forum was included to support students as an alternative.

Forums offer a space for students to connect with peers who share similar experiences and to seek support from a community that understands the unique challenges they may face. Students having the option to reflect on a situation during their academic day or week may be a positive coping strategy. Examples of the daily stressors that URS encounters may include microaggressions, trauma, stress, fatigue, and other recurring topics in OT schooling (Salvant et al., 2021). Although it is important to address these feelings with faculty, some URS have stated they have been fearful of the repercussions that may happen (Wing et al., 2019; Briscoe et al., 2022). The online forums can provide a platform for advocacy and social justice initiatives, allowing URS to raise awareness about issues, such as microaggressions, that impact their communities. The forum can also mobilize others to act. Students undertook using this platform anonymously and respectfully, with each post checked by the runner of the web resource. Current topics on the web resource include reflections on isolation, microaggressions, personal

recognition, and coping strategies to assist esteem after a goal is not attained academically (Appendix B).

Mindfulness Practice

In preparation for the academic environment, mindfulness practice can entail seeing things as they are, directly and immediately seeing what is present and authentic for oneself (Sebastian & Slaten, 2022). Understanding oneself allows for a connection to one's place in the world. Individuals who pay attention to the present moment can respond to their thoughts in a nonreactive manner, fostering a more skillful response to mental processes that may contribute to emotional distress and maladaptive behaviors (Wood & Mazur, 2016). Mindfulness users can ignore the direct influence of unfavorable external circumstances on internal processes, allowing room for positivity.

As previously mentioned, mindfulness is a potent tool that can improve one's SB by promoting greater awareness and acceptance of one's internal and external experiences. Being a student is one of many everyday occupations that mindfulness seamlessly fits into as a self-regulation technique based on lived experiences (Dean et al., 2017; Vogtmann & Provident, 2021). Regular mindfulness practice equips people to use these coping mechanisms during stressful situations, improving their ability to handle challenging circumstances (Daya & Hearn, 2017; Vogtmann & Provident, 2021). By enabling students to remain present, mindfulness has been shown to help moderate stress brought on by racist events and anxious arousal (Miller & Orsillo, 2020; Ramos et al., 2022). Students in URS can respond proactively rather than reactively by becoming aware of their thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations (Dean et al., 2017; Miller & Orsillo, 2020; Ramos et al., 2022).

Students can develop the knowledge and skills necessary for effective self-regulation through mindfulness strategy training. Mindfulness was further validated in a qualitative study with OT students partaking in a seven-week study implementing mindfulness into their daily routine. The group experienced a statistically significant reduction in perceived stress because of the mindfulness intervention. Students in the study also noted improvement in their emotional intelligence, stating they had a more robust understanding of their peers and the “bigger picture” (Vogtmann & Provident, 2021).

The web resource has a page dedicated to mindfulness that offers significant guidance, practical implementations, and comprehensive information regarding the advantages of mindfulness. The page emphasizes that by practicing, individuals can develop various positive qualities such as authenticity, effective communication, mindfulness, compassion, love, and equanimity (Wood & Mazur, 2016). The advantages of engaging in mindfulness practice are clearly stated, as it can have positive outcomes such as enhanced psychosocial functioning, alleviation of stress, and reduced depression. More specifically, it can exhibit favorable effects on the perceived well-being of an individual's SB. The webpage additionally details mobile applications tailored to meet users' preferences and provides an assorted selection of features. The applications mentioned provide students with coping strategies to handle the stressors they are accustomed to in higher education and facilitate acquiring skills crucial for academic and personal growth. These applications include Calm, Headspace, Insight Timer, Balance, Smiling Mind, Liberate, Ten Percent Happier, Loona, Better Sleep, and 1 Second Every Day (Appendix B).

Related Links Belonging

Belonging is a multifaceted concept relevant to students who identify as URS. By recognizing the various themes associated with belonging, there may be effective solutions to control potential insecurities in the academic environment. For URS, the concept of occupations related to epigenetics or ancestry directly correlates with motivation and behaviors, making it important to discuss. By exploring ancestry, we can better understand how URS relate to their academic environment.

URS who enters OT school may be unaware of how their ancestry may influence their cognitive processing and overall SB. For these students, education on racial literacy, cultural mismatch theory, racial microaggressions, and conflict transformation is relevant to understanding emotions and behaviors (Appendix B). Offering an introduction of information to these topics may equip URS with the tools to comprehend their feelings of isolation and absence of belonging. Ultimately this process can influence their adaptation to the school environment. While this approach may not be a universal solution, it can be a valuable stepping stone towards promoting a SB among URS in OT school.

Exploring one's ancestry can provide insights into their ethnicity, race, and family traditions and values. By researching ancestral information, individuals may better understand their family's history and behavior, thus improving their literacy. Racial literacy is a skill that involves analyzing racism in the world and developing effective problem-solving strategies (Chávez-Moreno, 2022). Understanding why there is potential racism and reflecting on ways to improve the situation can aid in underlying matters contributing to poor SB. Incorporating education on racial literacy can help reduce intrinsic bias while increasing the use of logic and reason (Chávez-Moreno, 2022). For instance, in an OT graduate program, racial literacy can help

students navigate academic spaces, build connections, and find resources that support their academic and personal goals (Salvant et al., 2021). It also enables the development of a lens through which URS can analyze societal issues from a racial perspective, which is especially important in fields such as OT, where racial disparities in access to resources and outcomes exist (Salvant et al., 2021). While it is encouraged that faculty practice diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives application is commonly not seen. A phenomenological study conducted by Briscoe et al. (2022) investigated how graduate students of color felt unease when discussing racial issues nationally due to the nonpractice of faculty. Graduate students believed that the faculty did not initiate these limiting ways to understand and critique ways of diverse thoughts in the institution (Chávez-Moreno, 2022). Therefore, students should engage in racial literacy because it can help cultivate feelings of empowerment and confidence to discuss and challenge racial inequities and biases they may encounter in their studies and future careers.

Developing racial literacy can aid in the recognition and addressing of racial microaggressions. As Clark et al. (2012) noted, addressing microaggressions can foster greater awareness and understanding of racial issues. Racial literacy comprehension can also help individuals communicate effectively after experiencing racially intended or unintended acts (Taff & Blash, 2017). However, URS may experience negative emotions related to generational trauma within their family, potentially perceiving such incidents as threatening their environment (Gamba & Nichols, 2021).

Social scientists in research state that many individuals fail to act on microaggressions due to various reasons, including the difficulty in recognizing modern forms of bias, dismissing the incident's importance, a lack of personal accountability, fear of repercussions, or not knowing what to do (Sue et al., 2019). URS can utilize microinterventions to approach their peers or

faculty. Microinterventions refer to everyday words used to validate the target's reality, their value as a person, affirmation of their racial or group identity, and support and reassurance that the person is not alone, which can increase psychological well-being and self-efficacy (Sue et al., 2019). These interventions can help mitigate the effects of emotional distress and lower the perception of belongingness (Appendix B).

URS's who fear addressing microaggressions with microinterventions can follow the Behavior, Emotion, and Need Model (BEN), developed by Dr. Wendy Lucas Wood. The BEN model operates within a conflict framework (Appendix B), empowering individuals to effectively address issues by allowing decision-making based on physical and psychological needs (Wood & Mazur, 2016). The model recognizes that emotions are universal and shaped by individual temperament and experience, and unmet basic needs can lead to negative emotions, whereas satisfied needs can elicit positive emotions (Border, 2021; Wood & Mazur, 2016). The BEN model encourages users to follow an outline that provokes a metacognitive way to reflect. Under the guidelines of the BEN model, individuals should pay attention to behaviors witnessed, identify emotions, determine what needs are not met, and discuss whether there is a way to meet those needs. This model can work well in conjunction with microinterventions.

The Cultural Mismatch Theory (CMMT) has implications for URS. This theory suggests that institutions in the United States tend to promote mainstream, independent cultural norms while excluding interdependent cultural norms common among underrepresented groups, fueling inequality by creating barriers to URS's academic performance (Hect et al. 2021). This condition is comparable to what URS may encounter when transitioning to new institutions and encountering cultural mismatches between their background norms and the norms of the new setting.

The CMMT theory corresponds to the term self-construal (Appendix C) which refers to how people perceive themselves fundamentally, whether they are primarily separate from or integrally connected to others (Jordan & Giacomini, 2017). Interdependent students view community and social roles as central to their sense of self (Jordan & Giacomini, 2017; Stephens et al., 2012). Although URS may experience initial difficulty adjusting to new mainstream norms, the theory indicates that they will eventually adapt to the new environment to find success (Stephens et al., 2012). Nonetheless, URS require practical interventions to cope with the new environment during the transition period. While longitudinal research on the validity of CMMT is still needed, it provides valuable insights into potential barriers URS may face.

Although the literature review reveals that each article used evidence from reports or single descriptive qualitative studies, the data offers an opportunity to assist URS. There's limited information in OT literature regarding SB and approaches concerning students, but it shows corresponding themes related to a SB based on their backgrounds. The articles highlighted that occupations promote social participation and occupational engagement, thus making SB possible among students from diverse backgrounds. Research suggests various ethnicities and cultures find belonging through traditional occupations, influencing their identities. Therefore, it's necessary to identify how students find SB and provide them with the support needed to navigate the academic surrounding effectively. Mindfulness practices, self-reflection, affirmations, connectedness from a community, and addressing social issues related to their backgrounds validate that students can find belonging despite their diverse backgrounds in OT programs.

Section Four: Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project is to develop a web-based resource focused on enhancing the SB of URS OT students. Using a quality improvement approach for continuous development, the resource will address barriers to belonging faced by these students, including issues related to the absence of belonging. The experiences of individuals from diverse ethnic/racial backgrounds, FGCS, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were all explored through literature. The resource provided information and strategies for promoting a SB in education, including mindfulness practice, affirmations, forums, and education. The Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (COTAD) was offered the web resource to facilitate access for students from these diverse backgrounds.

Section Five: Theoretical Framework

Occupational Adaptation

Occupational Adaptation (OA) results from engaging in an occupation, responding to change, situations, and life transitions, and forming an identity, which all involve a transaction with the environment (Walder et al., 2019). The three essential elements of the OA process are the person, the occupational environment, and the process itself (Gajo et al., 2018). These components interact, resulting in a press for mastery. The person's desire for mastery in occupational situations creates an occupational challenge. In contrast, the demand for mastery from the person in these situations is a constant within the occupational environment element (Schkade & Schultz, 1992).

The OA theoretical lens can help URS graduate students meet the demands of their academic environment. The model consists of three biological components critical for human function: the sensorimotor, cognitive, and psychosocial systems. OA can help college students identify areas of focus and achieve mastery by being proficient and willing to perform a given task. In order to achieve mastery, students must have access to resources and opportunities to contest the response to the occupational challenge (Schkade & Schultz, 1992).

By using OA, URS students can effectively manage the demands of college coursework, extracurricular activities, and personal life with proper support. This model can also help students with self-awareness, goal setting, planning, implementation, and evaluation of themselves and their clientele. The self-awareness component allows students to understand their strengths and weaknesses, identifying realistic goals in the short and long term. Creating a step-by-step plan to achieve those goals leads to the planning component. The implementation

component involves making necessary life changes to achieve the desired goals, and reflection on progress leads to the evaluation component.

Section Six: Methodology

Agency Description

The Karuna Center for Mindful Engagement is a site that engages with various individuals and organizations while teaching, presenting, and advising on mindful engagement in diverse contexts across cultures, disciplines, and religious and spiritual traditions worldwide. The center also supports communities and healthcare systems in the practice of mindfulness engagement (Wood & Mazur, 2016). The facility follows a research-based practice that implements the shared wisdom of people who work internationally in social and environmental justice, peace and reconciliation, healthcare, and education. With these aspects, URS can form a sense of leadership that may lead to a SB. The agency offers two experts in the practice, Dr. Wendy Lucas Wood and Dr. Thais Mazur. Dr. Wood has expertise in resolving and transforming complicated high-conflict multi-party disputes, challenging discourse, facilitation, strategic systems assessment and design, conflict counseling, mediation, and trauma-informed techniques. Mazur is an occupational therapist with experience in education, worldwide consultation for communities, and integrative health support.

Mindful Engagement Transforming Action

Mindful Engagement Transforming Action (META) is an innovative experiential learning program that empowers participants to cultivate a mindful and compassionate attitude toward their work. Research studies strongly support the practice, demonstrating its significant benefits for personal development (Wood & Mazur, 2016). These include gains in resilience and effective conflict transformation strategies, which have had a positive global impact on social justice advocacy, healthcare advancement, environmental protection initiatives, and the preservation of indigenous rights (Wood & Mazur, 2016). META has the potential to affect meaningful change

without harming others, allowing individuals to gain insight into themselves while providing them with invaluable practical skills along the way.

Target Population

The COTAD is a national network of students, practitioners, educators, and allies committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in OT. In 2012, the group was founded on the need for more diverse voices in OT (COTAD National, 2015). COTAD chapters are student-led clubs that advocate for diversity and inclusion on their campuses and surrounding communities. The chapters educate their colleagues on the significance of diversity and inclusion in the profession and offer assistance and resources to students from underrepresented groups. In addition, the chapters advocate for policies and practices that will make the profession more diverse and inclusive (COTAD National, 2015). By working together, COTAD chapters positively impact the profession and ensure that OT is available to all (Taff & Blash, 2017).

COTAD can be used to promote the growth of the profession in support of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The rationale for utilizing COTAD is that it facilitates recruitment due to the diverse backgrounds and interdependent values of most COTAD members. A goal of using COTAD as a platform is to advance future recruitment of URS so that the profession can adapt a diverse student population who may be exposed to cohorts of abundant representation in the field.

Methods and Procedures

Several procedures were followed to create a consumer-friendly web resource with applicable information, which was the first step of this capstone project. The section provides insight into the project design, approach to the project, pilot study, and recruitment process.

Project Design

Quality improvement projects are an effective method for improving services in a specific population, making them an appropriate design for this project, providing a web resource for OT URS. Quality improvement can lead to increased efficiency of intervention use and better outcomes for these students by identifying and correcting errors in the current product (Faiman, 2021). Making a web resource allows participants to appraise the content while collaborating with students, ensures that it meets their needs, and encourages continued use. Using questionnaires and surveys to make data-driven decisions can improve the web resource and address areas for expansion. This method provides a structured and evidence-based problem-solving approach congruent with the project's timeframe. While quality improvement may not be the most rigorous method, it does provide a continuous process for future researchers to build on and improve the web resource for underrepresented OT students.

Approach to Project

This capstone project aimed to improve graduate-level URS OT students' perceived sense of belonging from underrepresented backgrounds by implementing a web-based resource. One intent was to determine the most beneficial characteristics of a resource to attend to the needs of URS as it pertains to belonging. An extensive literature review was conducted on belonging and its relevance to the audience of the study. Additionally, the information provided by The Karuna Center for Mindful Engagement increased insight into META and conflict transformation techniques. The information aided in identifying the necessary elements for the web resource, named Fostering the OT. The next stage was to outline the web resource's structure, content, layout, design, and functionality. Wix, a web development company, was used as a content

source, requiring a monthly account to purchase. The website underwent several pilot testing stages to refine content and meet the target audience's needs.

Pilot Study

The sample size included ten people, 9 women of different ages, and 1 middle-aged male. The process of the pilot study included understanding the research question and how to approach the population regarding the focus. Close family members, friends, and students who did not meet the study's inclusion criteria provided critical feedback on the content. These critical feedback deliberations contributed to the final form of the content and website. Data collection included a method of having people from different education levels use web resource to gain a higher perspective of what must be attained with limited bias. The most re-occurring themes of the website were references to the content, fixing grammatical errors, and more content about belonging instead of research strategies regarding belonging. The limitation of the pilot study was that some individuals needed more time to review the web resource due to time constraints. An expert researcher also reviewed survey questions for relevance and clarity to the audience.

Recruitment Process

The study used a convenience sampling design with approximately ninety-three students' response from the UNLV entry-level doctoral OT program. Specifically, students who identified as underrepresented due to their diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, FGCS, or experience living in low socioeconomic conditions were recruited. The present program's students were all members of the UNLV COTAD chapter. A condition for participation in the study was attending a workshop (Appendix C) led by the student researcher and Capstone project mentor, Dr. Wendy Lucas Wood, where the survey was administered. An incentive for attending the workshop and participating in the study was a raffle of Disneyland tickets. Participants were

also encouraged and given several reminders to go on the website at least five minutes a day during the three weeks.

Twenty-six of the approximately ninety-three students notified via email (Appendix A) chose to participate and met the inclusion criteria. Participants were given three weeks to respond to the email and were reminded once a week to sign using the Google Document sign-in sheet. After the recruitment, a total of twenty-two students chose to participate in the study, with four dropouts due to time conflicts.

Sense of Belonging at Imperial College London Scale

Several instruments were explored for the capstone project that has been evaluated in the past to measure belonging. There is evidence through literature that there is no gold standard to accurately measure the variable of belonging. According to (Allen et al., 2021), the distinction between state and trait belongingness has complicated the definition and measurement of belonging. For this reason, it was crucial to have a scale that had undergone a rigorous, research-based development process to improve its reliability (Gehlbach & Brinckworth, 2011). The Sense of Belonging Scale created by Imperial College in London (Appendix D) was modified to answer questions about the participants' SB. The Likert Scale was modified into a 7-point scale to assess students' post-study values. The measure underwent peer review and multiple pilot studies to determine the questions' applicability. Additionally, it allowed the participants' insights on the quality improvement of the intervention to be collected for future use by URS OT students.

The modified survey assessed the following: website quality improvement perceived SB among participants before and after using the web resource, perception, and behavioral questions about the intervention experience. Students were allowed to explore the website for an additional thirty minutes during their time at the workshop to provide more valuable feedback on quality

improvement. The survey's 7-point Likert scale collected ordinal and nominal data for analysis using inferential statistics adapted from the original.

Section Seven: Ethical and Legal Considerations

The study intervention took both ethical and legal considerations into account. The web resource and workshop were designed to protect the rights of participants while adhering to all applicable procedures pertaining to non-institutional review board (IRB) approval. Moreover, the intervention was designed to foster a SB and improve participant outcomes. The web resource and workshop were evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that they were achieving the desired outcomes of anonymity. Experts in the field were consulted to ensure that the intervention was ethical, legal, and effective.

Section Eight: Results

Participant Characteristics

The characteristics of the participants in this study were diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, and age. Information on whether the students fell into the category of FGCS, or previous low socioeconomic standing was not recorded because all students met the criteria of having a diverse ethnic background. During the workshop, participants verbally dialogued whether they were FGCS or from low socioeconomic standing, but the survey did not record information. Of the 22 participants, 16 were female, and 5 were male. Most participants fell within the 25-34 age range, and 16 participants were in their third year of graduate school.

Table 1: Participant Characteristics

	Male	Female	Prefer not to answer
Age			
18-24	0	2	0
25-34	4	13	1
35-44	1	1	0
Year in OTD Program			
First	0	4	0
Second	0	2	0
Third	5	10	1
Ethnicity			
Latinx	0	3	0
Black/African American	0	5	0
Asian American/Pacific Islander	4	12	1
Multiple Races	1	1	0
Other	0	0	0

Note: N=22

Post Workshop Survey Questions

Twenty-two URS OT graduate student participants completed the post workshop survey. One set of questions were related to whether using the web resource assisted in their perceived SB in the program after three-week use (Appendix E). Descriptive statistics showed mean averages of the participants and standard deviations. Table 2 illustration displays mean score before utilizing the web resource was $M = 4.0$ ($SD = 1.3$), and the mean after using the web

resource was $M = 5.7$ ($SD = .85$), demonstrating an increase in perceived SB after use of the web resource.

Table 2: Pre and Post (Web-Resource) Scores of Sense of Belonging in Graduate Program

	Mean	SD
Pre	4.05	1.3
Post	5.73	.85

Note: $t = -5.961$

Perception and Behavioral Questions

The tables below display data gathered in the survey using perception and behavior questions. Perception questions assessed the participant's experiences during their OT education. Behavior questions were designed to provide insights into the participants' behavior and attitude toward the web resource by determining their likelihood of using and recommending it.

Table 3.1: Perception Survey Questions

	M (SD)
I understand the strategies that can foster a sense of belonging in academia.	6.00 (.76)
My OT program offers support and strategies for sense of belonging.	3.55 (1.5)
Classmates and faculty understand me as a person.	4.55 (1.1)
I feel a sense of belonging within my cohort and program.	4.77 (1.7)
Sense of belonging in my school compares well to my personal life.	4.59 (1.7)
I have a strong sense of acceptance and value in my cohort.	5.14 (1.2)

Note: Questions based on 7-point Likert Scale from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Disagree (3), Neither Agree nor Disagree (4), Somewhat Agree (5), Agree (6), Strongly Agree (7). N=22

Table 3.2: Behavioral Survey Questions

	M (SD)
I will likely use Fostering the OT to help with stress and anxiety in your program.	6.05 (.79)
I will likely recommend Fostering the OT	6.27 (.77)
I will likely use the Fostering the OT as a primary source of information on the topic	6.05 (.79)

Note: Questions based on 7-point Likert Scale from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Disagree (3), Neither Agree nor Disagree (4), Somewhat Agree (5), Agree (6), Strongly Agree (7). N=22

Section Nine: Discussion

OT is a field that values individuality and compassion, focusing on promoting SB. The capstone project highlights the potential of a web resource to support students from marginalized backgrounds in achieving academic success and building a sense of community. The findings suggest that underrepresented OT students may benefit from using the belonging the web resource.

In exploring the impact of the web resource on the perceived SB of OT students from underrepresented backgrounds, several key findings emerged that could inform future research. It is worth noting that most participants in this study were AAPI students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other URS populations. Additionally, as discussed in the literature review, SB is influenced by traditional occupations of specific cultures, which may only partially capture the participants data from one historical perspective.

Participants in this study were third-year students, suggesting that they had more extensive experience in their program, which could have influenced their perceptions of SB in education. The age range of students in the study was also like that of other studies of OT students in different programs, ranging from 25-34. Understanding the age range is vital in identifying lifespan theories pertaining to belonging and education. Results also indicated that many participants felt their OT program needed to offer more resources to support their SB. This data also aligns with the literature on qualitative studies that identified limited support from faculty and peers as a contributing factor to poor SB.

Utilized as a form of recruitment, the researcher did not record whether FGCS students with a low socioeconomic status participated in the study. During the workshop, participants from the two backgrounds shared their knowledge and experiences of coming from both

backgrounds; however, the common themes could not be repeated as descriptive statistics in the project.

Another significant finding was the positive reception of the web resource by participants indicating that they would recommend it to others. These results suggest that web-based education resources could be a valuable and accessible way to support URS students in their graduate programs, addressing some of the challenges and barriers they face regarding belonging and occupational engagement.

Section Ten: Limitations

The quality improvement design of the project had several limitations. Since the project aimed to develop further the web-based educational resource for perceived belonging of OT URS, a randomized controlled trial would have been preferred to reduce bias and increase the resource's replicability for future students. In addition, survey questions should have been centered on improving the quality of web resources and student perceptions. It is also possible that participants' behavior changed, resulting in sampling and recall bias. Other extraneous variables, such as increased participation with program cohorts or use of campus psychological services, may have also affected their perception. In addition, the small convenience sample may not represent all underrepresented students in OT programs, as students who identify as URS have a strong SB in their academic environment may have been recruited. A scale to measure participants' SB before the study should have been included in the criteria. Lastly, the duration of the capstone project did not allow for comprehensive student feedback, as many participants were preoccupied during the intervention period.

Section Eleven: Conclusion

A SB benefits URS students' academic success in OT programs. While some students now have access to supplemental resources on campus, there is still a need for support for underrepresented OT students. The possible solution of using the web resource "Fostering the OT" provides the familiar theoretical lens of occupational adaptation and education on improving a student's perceived SB. Current and future underrepresented OT students can work to make the profession more multicultural by reflecting on their perceived SB using the web resource. The project has significant potential outcomes, as a more diverse OT workforce would better serve the needs of all patients, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status.

Implications for Research

The research results indicate that using web resource on belonging can enhance the perceived SB among graduate-level OT students who are part of an underrepresented group. Consequently, potential ramifications for future studies can involve the efficacy of the web resource. It may be beneficial to investigate the specific features of the web-based resource that were most helpful for underrepresented OT students, to optimize the design of similar resources for other underrepresented student groups. Future research could also examine a larger sample size and the long-term effects of using web-based resources due to responses coming from more AAPI OT students in the study. Rigorous instrumentation and study design should be done to measure better academic outcomes and overall success for underrepresented graduate students with occupational engagement and a SB within their cohort.

Recommendations

Students from marginalized groups can take control of their academic success and sense of community by using a website specifically designed to meet their needs, complete with relevant applications and orientation mechanisms. Most students need more time to determine how to meet their own needs. Making this a priority would benefit students of all backgrounds and cultures by fostering educational equity and facilitating occupational adaptation.

Implications for Practice

As URS prepare to work with members of other communities and cultures, they must develop skills to maintain their sense of self-worth in the OT field. Increasing the diversity of students enrolled in OT programs can help them better reflect the demographics of the communities they serve. In addition to making the classroom more inclusive for all students, diversity reduces the need for students to seek out outside materials such as web resources or toolkits. Furthermore, having people from various backgrounds and experiences in the room can spark creative ideas and solutions to problems (Taff & Blash, 2017). The capstone project can also be a requirement for programs to address during the orientation process as a prevention strategy for any possible absence of belonging during the transition into OT school.

Future Implications

This capstone project provides URS students with an interactive catalog of web-based resources. The goal was to enhance their SB, psychosocial functioning, and academic achievement in OT programs. However, the study did not have OT students identifying as Native Americans, which can offer a broader perspective of belonging. Future research can also be done for students in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities to increase inclusivity.

The project also had no accountability standards to make participants log the times they used the web resource within three weeks. Due to this, it was unclear whether the students had an increased perceived SB because of the education given at the workshop or using the intervention. Furthermore, the project lays the foundation to expand upon in future capstone projects for students. It can also promote web resources for OT programs during orientation week. Lastly, future studies should indicate measures of occupational engagement, FGCS, and low socioeconomic standing as variables.

Appendix A

Initial Email and Flyer

Good morning, everyone,

My name is Owen Lawani from cohort one I am seeking dedicated students to participate in reviewing a web-based resource designed to foster a sense of belonging in higher education for OT students. Students eligible for this project must identify as having a diverse ethnographic background; be a first-generation college student; or previously living in a low socioeconomic area. This is an exciting opportunity for those who identify as underrepresented in OT academia to review and use a web resource to increase the perceived sense of belonging. Students will take a questionnaire based on their perceived sense of belonging in their graduate program.

Participants will be asked to use the website 5-10 times per week over a month while taking part in pre- and post-questionnaires on how the website impacted them.

You will also be asked to attend a 5-hour hybrid workshop Saturday, March 25th, 2023, where we will learn about and discuss the challenges faced as underrepresented graduate students and how we might continue to gain a sense of belonging in our academic environment. The guest speaker, Dr. Wendy Lucas Wood, will offer supplementary methods from the web resource, such as mindful engagement and transformative action (META), that can lead individuals toward the resolution of belonging. Lunch and raffle opportunities for prizes, such as Disneyland tickets, will be provided! This unique opportunity will take place on-site at the Science and Engineering Building.

If interested, please reply using my email address or the QR Code below. Details will follow if you are interested in the opportunity! Thank you and have a great start to the semester.

Belonging Workshop

A Capstone Project by Owen Lawani



Presented by
Owen Lawani
with



**DR. WENDY LUCAS
WOOD PH.D.**



March 25th, 2023 **UNLV Science and
Engineering Building**
10 PM - 4 PM



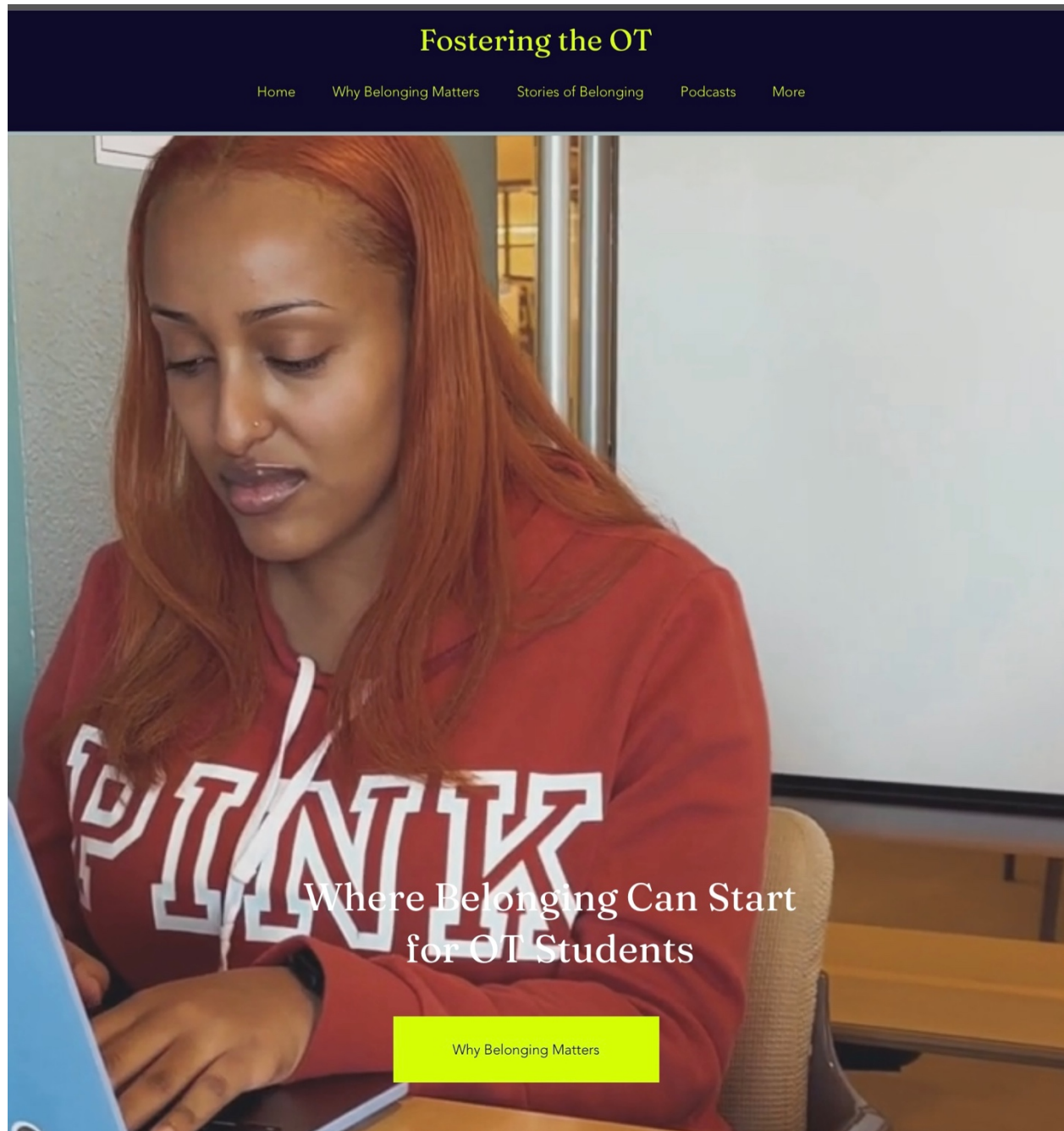
**Scan this code to
book your seat!**

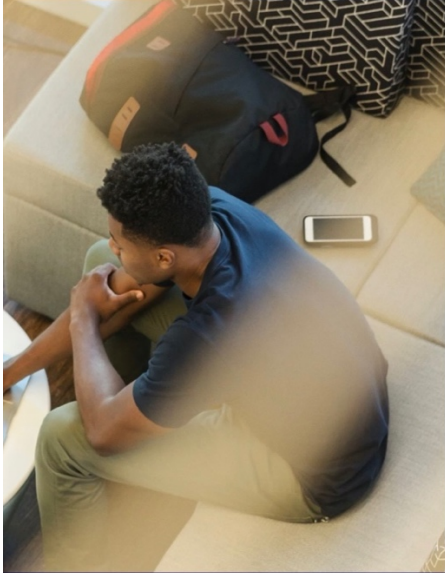
Join our special event and get to
know more about overcoming the
challenges of belonging as a
student.

More details ahead!

Appendix B

Fostering the OT





Purpose of Fostering the OT

Belonging is an essential part of the human experience. It is a basic need that we all have and can provide us with comfort in our environment, contributing to self-actualization.

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) identifies Vision 2025 as promoting well-being, quality of life, and inclusivity. The aim? Establishing workplace environments where occupational therapists with various viewpoints can collaborate and be heard.

However, to strive for this, the profession must take care of their enrolled students such as individuals of underrepresentation in their programs. Although some institutions help with supplementary resources for inclusivity, such as belonging, offering other options to advance the profession forward is important.

"Belonging is positively correlated with human well-being, is valued by the majority of the world's people, and informs the meanings attributed to and derived from the occupations of culturally diverse people."

Karen R. Whaley Hammell

What Belonging Offers

When exploring Fostering the OT, one must understand how ideas and solutions are mapped together by different foundations of belonging. Knowing this will help users unlock an understanding of each section.

Read Definitions Below



Acceptance

Approval for who one is, without judgment or rejection.



Connection

Affiliation to a certain group, community, or individual.



Inclusion

Being included and valued as a part of a group or community.



Value

Purpose and meaning through one's connections and involvement in a particular group or community.



Emotional Safety

A feeling of safety, security, and support within a particular group or community.



Identity

A sense of uniqueness and self that is connected to one's involvement in a particular group or community.



Belonging is an important feeling that a lot of people strive for, whether it be belonging to an organization or simply forming a connection with someone else. It is the foundation of confidence and comfort; when individuals have this, they are more likely to progress in the things that matter most. Belonging also helps break down walls and allows different cultures to merge together to feel they have a place in unfamiliar areas. Belonging is something that students and everyone deserves.

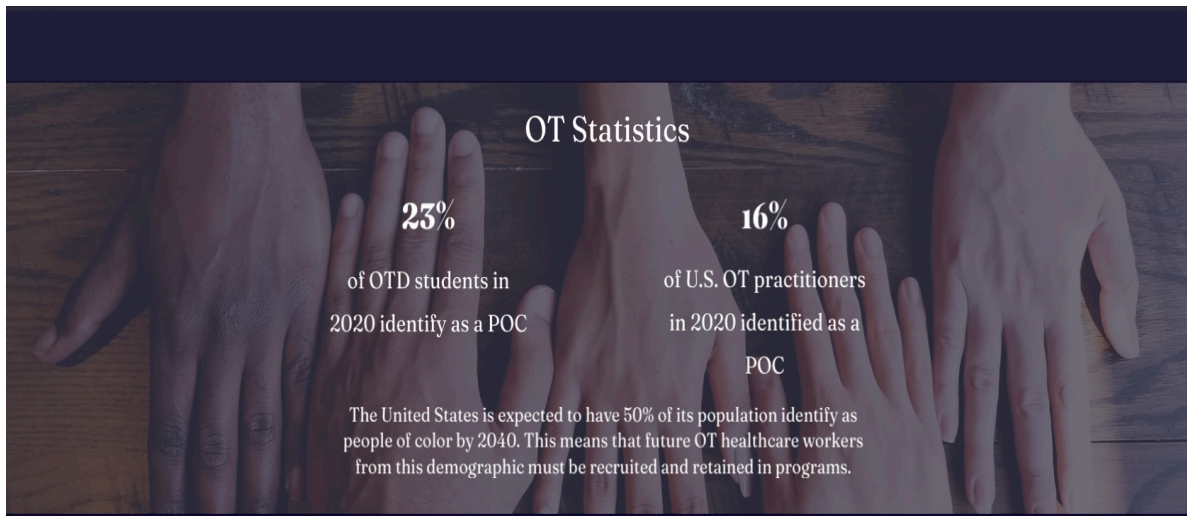


Finding Belonging in Occupational Therapy school

As we know today, occupational therapy lacks representation of students from diverse **ethnic backgrounds, first-generation college students, and students from lower socioeconomic standing.**

A recent study discovered that unfamiliarity with the field and affordability are two underlying issues that contribute to a lack of cultural diversity in occupational therapy schools. However, it was also discovered that underrepresented students enrolled in OT programs felt disconnected from their peers and faculty due to the number of students who did not match their demographic.

The goal of this platform is to provide opportunities to improve an OT student's perceived sense of belonging by letting them know they are not alone on their journey and that they chose the right profession.



Absence of belonging in an academic setting can result in..

- Decrease motivation
- Increase Stress and Anxiety
- Reduced Academic Achievement
- Impacts Career Readiness

Stories of Belonging

Stories can influence generations and create a strong sense of belonging for people in need of motivation and inspiration.

It has been used throughout history by cultures worldwide to teach lessons and share values. By discussing our graduate and professional experience, individuals can build stronger **connections** and feel like they're part of something bigger in the field of occupational therapy.

The **images below reveal stories** of understanding, community, and belonging from students, and practitioners, around the country.



Fostering the OT

[Home](#)[Why Belonging Matters](#)[Stories of Belonging](#)[Podcasts](#)[More](#)

Podcast

Listening to podcasts can be invaluable to foster a sense of belonging. Research indicates that podcasting provides social surrogacy (substitution for social interaction), allowing users access to information and the opportunity to form healthy **parasocial relationships**, which can be ideal if social support is limited due to your institutional makeup.

Podcast Directed Towards Latinx Occupational Therapy Students

[Hyphenated](#)

[Brown Enough](#)

[Tamarindo](#)

[Quien are We](#)

Podcast cover for '¿QUIÉN ARE WE?' featuring colorful illustrations of food, a butterfly, and a person.


Quien are We

The amusing and informative ¿Quién Are We? Podcast promotes Latinx voices in media. The May Otraga-hosted podcast covers fashion, art, music, job choices, and entrepreneur success stories. Every episode celebrates Latinx culture and teaches listeners about it.



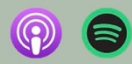
Podcast Directed Towards Black Occupational Therapy Students

Black on Black Education	Therapy for Black Girls	Code Switch	Trials to Triumph	Bl
--------------------------	-------------------------	-------------	-------------------	----



Therapy for Black Girls

This podcast focuses on the mental health and well-being of Black women. The podcast is hosted by clinical psychologist Dr. Joy Harden Bradford, who provides resources and support for Black women seeking to improve their mental health.



Podcast Directed Towards AAPI Occupational Therapy Students

Asian Enough	Bamboo & Glass	Autherthnic	Skypodcast	Thrive Spice
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Bamboo & Glass

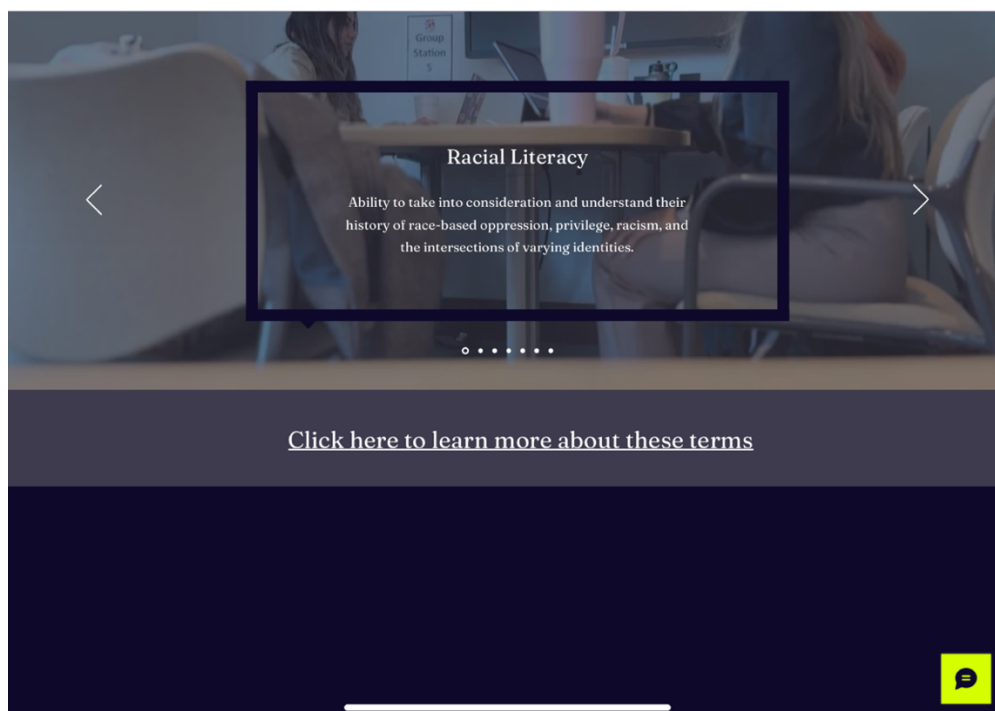
An enlightening podcast that shares Da Eun Kim and Sophia's common experience with society and culture. In each episode, they discover the many possibilities of who they can be, demonstrating the power of a different perspective with guest.





KEY TERMS

The following key terms may be helpful for underrepresented OT students to self-identify and assist with meaningful solutions.



Fostering the OT

[Home](#) [Why Belonging Matters](#) [Stories of Belonging](#) [Podcasts](#) [More](#)

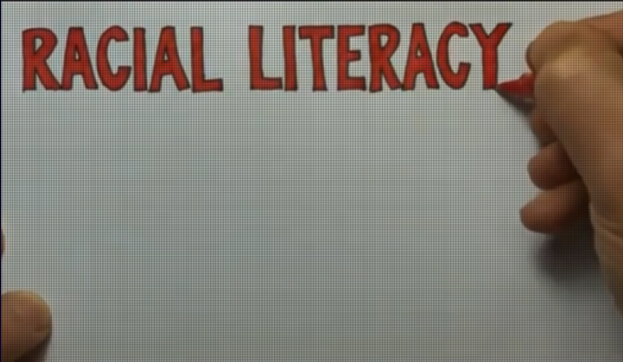
Racial Literacy & Microaggression



Racial Literacy

Unveiling the **complexity of race** is a necessary step toward understanding one's feelings and safely expressing them in **educational settings**. Developing such knowledge should not be a one-time activity, but rather a continuous path of exploring connections and **increasing self-awareness**.

[View Ted Talk on Racial Literacy](#)



Racial Microaggression

Racial literacy has been identified as a means of addressing **microaggressions**. It provides the context, insight, and knowledge to **comprehend why** an interaction was **perceived** as hurtful or offensive due to possible **unhealed generational trauma**.

Microaggressions are said to be common as **underrepresented students** try to





Racial Microaggression

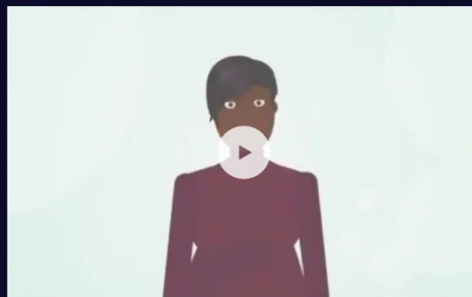
Racial literacy has been identified as a means of addressing microaggressions. It provides the context, insight, and knowledge to **comprehend why** an interaction was **perceived** as hurtful or offensive due to possible **unhealed generational trauma**.

Microaggressions are said to be common as **underrepresented students** try to adjust to the program environment. According to research, graduate students of color, including those underrepresented in doctoral programs, face an **even more stressful environment** due to microaggression. A 2020 study states that nearly all of the underrepresented graduate students in their sample (98.8%) reported having recently experienced microaggressions.

"After months or years, **unhealed trauma** can appear to become part of someone's personality. Over even longer periods of time, as it is passed on and gets compounded through other bodies in a household, it can become a family norm. And if it gets transmitted and compounded through multiple families and generations, it can **start to look like culture**."

Resmaa Menakem Author of "[My Grandmother's Hand](#)"

The following videos discuss mental health issues due to acts of racism, such as microaggressions.



Fostering the OT

[Home](#)[Why Belonging Matters](#)[Stories of Belonging](#)[Podcasts](#)[More](#)

Cultural Mismatch Theory & Occupational Adaptation



U.S. educational institutions tend to promote mainstream, **independent cultural norms**, and exclude standards **that reflect interdependent cultures** that many **underrepresented groups** may be part of.

When institutions promote only mainstream, **independent cultural norms**, they inadvertently fuel **inequality** by creating barriers to underrepresented and marginalized students.

Independent norms promoted by educational institutions: **Autonomy** and **Self-Expression**.

Interdependent norms not promoted by educational institutions: **Community** and **Concentration of the Needs of Others**.

The occupational adaptation (OA) model serves as a reminder to **press for mastery** in efforts to become acclimated in an environment taking into account the **physical, social, and cultural, aspects** that may contribute to occupational performance.

For students who face challenges in the classroom and have experienced occupational challenges in the form of racism **such as microaggressions**, it is important to learn positive strategies to promote their **sense of belonging**.

To learn more about ways to combat maladaptive responses click on the links below

[Racial Literacy and Racial](#)
[Microaggression](#)
[Conflict Transformation](#)

What is Conflict Transformation?

Helps us understand the nature of conflict, learn how to respond, and build skills and steps needed to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts with individuals and systems that support them. Make conflicts generative and less harmful.



Model

Behavior Emotion Needs Model

Created by Dr. Wendy Lucas Wood

First: **Pay attention** to the behavior or set of **behaviors** that you are witnessing.

Second: **Identify the emotion(s)/feeling(s)** that may be behind the **behavior(s)**.

Third: Try to determine what **need(s)** you think are **being met** or **NOT being met**.

Fourth: **Ask yourself - Can I/We** meet these needs? If so, how? **If not, why not?**

Fifth: **Acknowledge** to yourself and/or between the parties that there may be needs that are not being met. **Discuss** if there is a way to meet those needs, and if so, how? If not, why not?

For more information on the model visit thekarunacenter.org

[Back to Related Links](#)

1:54 PM Wed Apr 12

fosteringtheot.blog

100%

Forum

Welcome! Have a look around and join the discussions.

Sort by: Recent Activity

Follow All Categories


Create New Post

Owen Lawani

Dealing with Isolation

in Questions & Answers

Despite the camaraderie and support often found in graduate programs, sometimes it can feel like no one truly comprehends your experience. When this happens, it's easy to become overwhelmed by feeling...



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Mar 25

Like

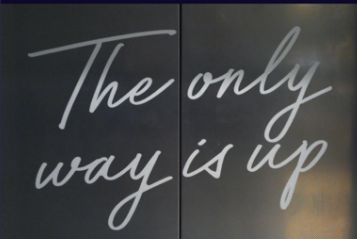
Comment

Owen Lawani

When a Goal is Not Attained

in Questions & Answers

Everyone experiences moments of personal and professional challenge that can be discouraging in occupational therapy school. Despite the hurdles that may be encountered in our pursuit of goals, it is...



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Mar 02

Like


Comment

Owen Lawani

Facing Microaggressions

in Questions & Answers

Discrimination has many forms; some are more difficult to identify than others. Microaggressions are a subtle form of bias that is often overlooked or unacknowledged yet still impacts individuals from...



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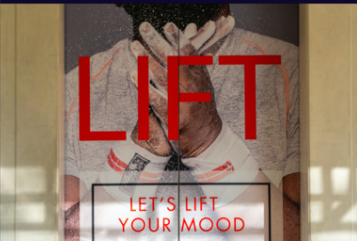
Comment

Owen Lawani

Personal Recognition

in Questions & Answers

Graduate school is similar to working full-time, with many ups and downs that affect your mood. Celebrate yourself whenever you complete a task or take a risk during the week. Writing a gratitude letter to yourself,...



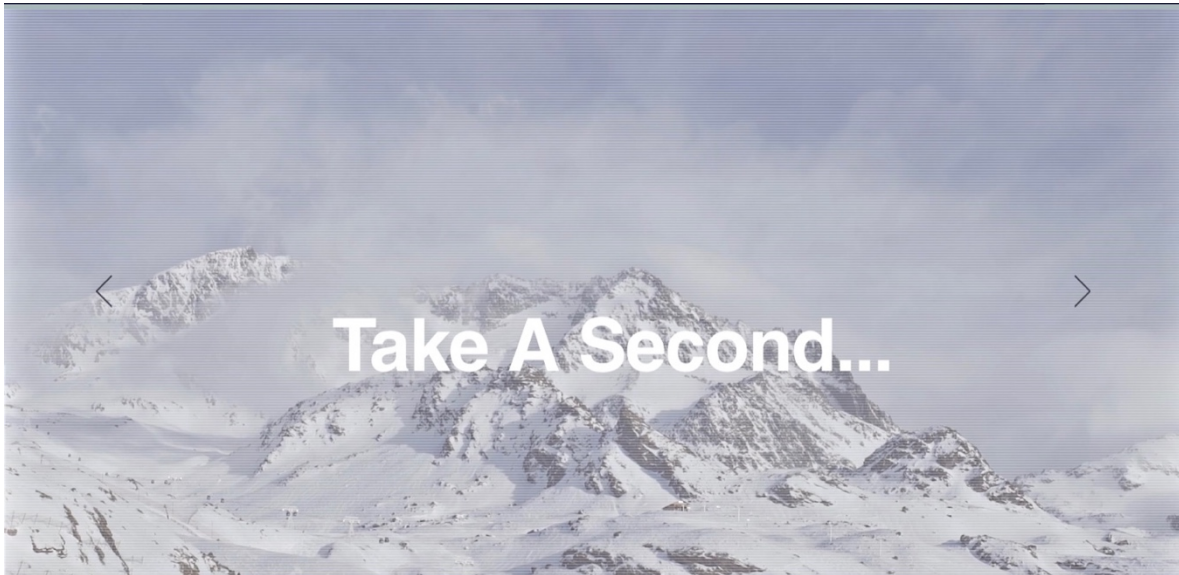
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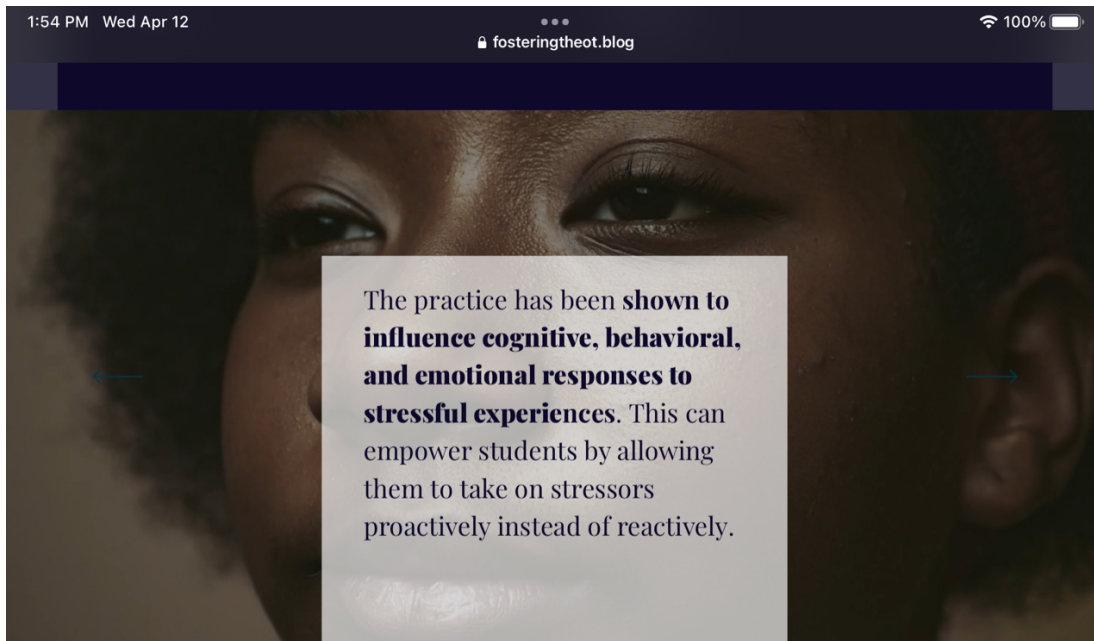


Take A Second...



Mindfulness in OT School

We can benefit from employing adaptive coping strategies, such as mindfulness. Mindfulness encourages full attention and awareness of the present moment without judgment or distraction, ultimately promoting successful academic achievement.



Mindfulness

As we learn to trust our innermost thoughts, we come to trust that **we are capable of belonging**, whether it is among peers, faculty members, or during our fieldwork experience. **Practicing mindfulness** allows us to acknowledge our individual perspectives and appreciate that others may have different viewpoints than our own.

Research suggests that a poor sense of belongingness has been associated **with poorer psychosocial functioning**, including a lower sense of **self-adequacy and self-integrity**, **greater perceived stress**, and **symptoms of depression**.


Mindfulness offers a powerful means to help students struggling with stress and depression associated with academic life. Utilizing this tool can improve studies and perceived belonging.

A quick **mindfulness** tip to practice

@Karen M. Allen
Growth **Mindset** Speaker

For those short on time or unfamiliar with mindfulness, try this tip.

rewire their brain so you can experience more joy



Instagram Facebook Twitter LinkedIn YouTube TikTok

Also, think about trying Mindful Engagement

Coined by Dr. Wendy Lucas Wood and OT Dr. Thais Mazur, the concept includes foundations of

- **Authenticity** — Know Yourself
- **Skillful Communication** — Open & receptive, without bias or judgement
- **Mindfulness** — Balanced awareness of thoughts & emotions
- **Compassion** — Engaging with the best interest of others in mind
- **Love** — Ushers in the hope that anything is possible
- **Equanimity** — Doing no harm with equal regard for all people
- **Responsibility** — What happens to me happens to you, and what happens to you happens to me.

[Click for M... >](#)

Mobile Apps with Mindfulness

As unique individuals, we all have different preferences for our development of mindfulness. Various mobile device applications allow students to practice mindfulness daily in the hopes of improving their perceived sense of belonging. The following are all apps that can be useful in during an OT school educational journey.

Click the images to be directed to the sites



Calm App helps users relax, sleep well, and breathe mindfully. It includes stories from world-renowned meditation, wellness, and relaxation experts and guided meditations for all ages and skill levels. The App can customize a meditation program to your needs and is easy to use for first-time users. The Calm app's trial run is seven days free, with an annual fee of 69.99 for premium.



Headspace lets newcomers to meditation and mindfulness start slowly. The app's user-friendly interface offers a variety of guided or unguided meditations that can be customized to your time and mood. Professional instructors voice Headspace audio recordings to help users connect with their mental and emotional health. Headspace also offers articles, videos, and stress, anger, and anxiety management tips. Offers a 14-day free trial and a 69.99 annual fee.



Insight Timer is an innovative app that provides a comprehensive way to practice mindfulness. Insight Timer offers customized programs for stress reduction, relaxation, sleep quality, and overall wellness. It has an extensive library of guided meditations, soothing music, and tracking tools to monitor your progress. The app is free however, it requires a 69.99 premium subscription.



Appendix C

PowerPoint

BELONGING WORKSHOP

Owen Lawani OTD/S

Dr. Wendy Lucas Wood PHD

UNLV



UNLV

10:00 am – 11:15 am Introduction to Belonging

11:15 am - 11:20 am Short Break

11:20 am – 12:15 pm Discussion of Web Resource

12:15 pm – 1:00 pm Lunch Time/Take Time Yourself

1:00 pm – 2:25 pm Discussions led by Dr. Wendy Lucas Wood (Virtual)

2:30 pm - 3:00 pm Survey and Raffle

3:10 pm – Closing

Objectives

AGENDA



LET'S CREATE A SAFE SPACE

Open Dialogue is Encouraged

Confidentiality

Avoid Making Hurtful Assumptions

Be Respectful

Rules

Food for Thought- sense of belonging means to feel accepted, appreciated and understood by others. It does not mean everyone **must agree** with to what you say or **that you cannot be challenged**.

ICE BREAKER

1. Say your name
2. What year of occupational therapy school are you in?
3. What drives you to become an occupational therapist?



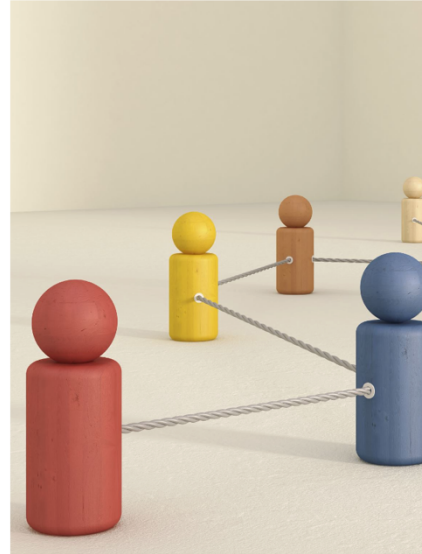
FORMS OF BELONGING

Belonging takes different forms for different people as it varies from **person to person**.

- cultural
- social
- sensory
- spatial material
- temporal

Each of these needs to be given consideration.

(Franklin & Tranter),



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DEFINING BELONGING IN EDUCATION

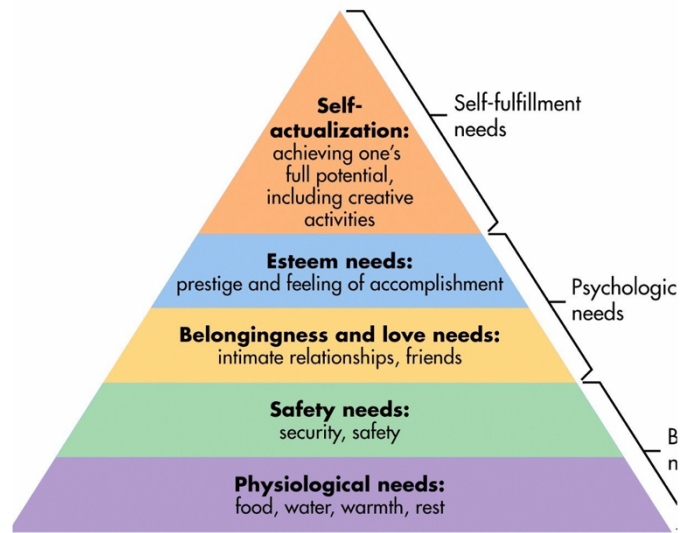
A person's sense of being accepted, valued, included and encouraged by others (teacher and peers) in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the class. It also involves support and respect for personal autonomy and for the student as an individual"

Goodenow (1993)

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEED

(Wright, 2016)

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HIGHER STRESS FOR UNDERREPRESENTED GRADUATE STUDENTS

- In a recent study states that underrepresented graduate level students **have more stress than their peers due the academic environment.**
- 65 % of these student nationally, worry about their physical or mental health due to stress.
- Perceived **high stress can be is stated to be** related to poor sense belonging leading to depression and thoughts of self adequacy.

(Miller & Orsillo, 2020)

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WALK IN SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES

Get in groups of three with a person from a different cultural or ethnic background.

Think and talk about distinct challenges of belonging that your background may face in higher education.

Share and discuss this within your group and choose one person to discuss out loud in the general group.



RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS



- A brief, subtle, and often unintentional actions or verbal comments that communicate derogatory or negative messages about people of color. These actions or comments can be expressed through language, behavior, or other forms of communication.
- Graduate students of color, including those underrepresented in doctoral programs, exist in an even **more stressful environment due to the exposure of microaggressions.**

(Clark, 2012)



INTERFERENCE OF BELONGING

Issues with belonging can result in problematic issues within the prefrontal cortex;

- Executive Functioning
 - Working Memory
 - Psychosocial Functioning
- Executive functioning refers to a set of cognitive processes that allow us to **plan, organize, problem-solve, regulate emotions,** and initiate and inhibit actions.

(Oneal, 2017; Miller & Orsillo, 2020)

CULTURAL MISMATCH THEORY

Individuals from underrepresented cultures may experience a sense of uneasiness when they are required to adapt to cultural norms in college that conflict with their own background. This can result in feelings of, isolation, marginalization, **and a lack of belonging.**

(Stephens et al., 2012)



SELF CONSTRUAL THEORY

Self-construal theory proposes that individuals have different ways of defining themselves and their relationship to others, which is influenced by their cultural background.

(Ted Sengelis, 1994)

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WEB-RESOURCE CONTENT

- OT Stories of Belonging
 - Why Belonging Matters
 - Forum Questions
 - Affirmations
 - Podcast
 - Related Links to Belonging
 - Mindfulness
-

THEMES RELATED TO POOR SENSE OF BELONGING WITHIN ASIAN AND
PACIFIC ISLANDER STUDENTS

Anticollege Culture	Financial Constraints	Excess pressure
Unrealistic High Expectations	Racial Microaggressions	Problems going unnoticed due to lack representation



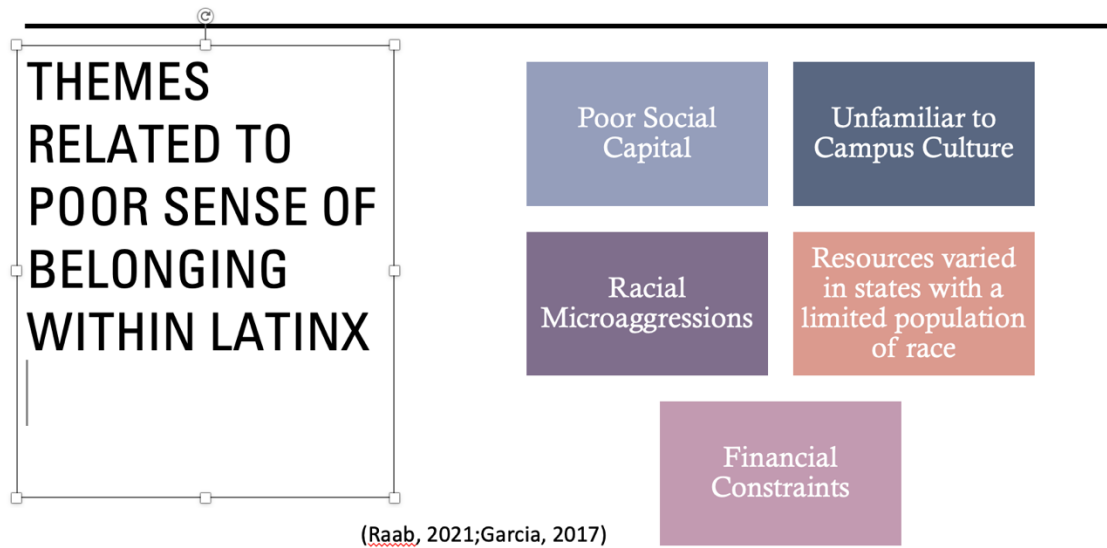
(Wright 2018; Brown; Billingsley & Hurd, 2020)

THEMES RELATED TO POOR SENSE OF BELONGING WITHIN BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICANS
STUDENTS

Imposter Syndrome	Financial Constraints	Perception of Exclusion and Intimidation
Resistance to Acculturation	Racial Microaggressions	Overall Lack of Representation



(Min, 2018;Gin, 2018)



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32

Mindful Engagement Transforming Action

Doing No Harm & Compassion in Action

UNLV

March 25, 2023

Wendy Wood, PhD

 **THE KARUNA CENTER**
For Mindful Engagement

WWood & TMazur Copyright 2018

The 7 Foundations of META...

- Authenticity – Know Yourself
- Skillful Communication – Open & Receptive, without bias or judgement
- Mindfulness – Balanced awareness of thoughts & emotions
- Compassion – Engaging with the best interest of others in mind
- Love - Ushers in the hope that anything is possible
- Equanimity – Doing no harm with equal regard for all people
- Responsibility – What happens to me happens to you, and what happens to you happens to me

WWood & TMazur Copyright 2018

Questions to Consider

- In what ways are these qualities found in your community, family, faith tradition?
- How might you use your contemplative practice(s) to cultivate these qualities?
- How will you nurture these qualities in yourself?
- How might you nurture and bring these qualities forward in all areas of life - your work, family, friends, and communities?
- Is BELONGING tied to META in any way? If so, how? If not, why not?

WWood & TMazur Copyright 2018

A Community of Practice

11

Authenticity: Do you hold onto long standing positions that might interfere with your ability to change your mind, when necessary?

Skillful Communication: What causes you to be unfocused or distracted in conversations or while listening to others speak?

Mindfulness: In what ways might your predisposed ideas or judgments affect your ability to be flexible when the need arises?

Compassion: What do you think would happen if you were to better understand the suffering of others?

Love: What does this phrase mean to you, 'work is love made visible?'

WWood & TMazur Copyright 2018

Appendix D

Sense of Belonging at Imperial College London Scale

Sense of belonging at Imperial College London scale

When you respond to the questions below, think about yourself as a student at Imperial College London.

Item 1: How well do people at Imperial College London understand you as a person?

Do not understand at all	Understand a little	Understand somewhat	Understand quite a bit	Completely understand
--------------------------	---------------------	---------------------	------------------------	-----------------------

Item 2: How connected do you feel to the university staff at Imperial College London?

Not at all Connected	Slightly connected	Somewhat connected	Quite Connected	Extremely connected
----------------------	--------------------	--------------------	-----------------	---------------------

Item 3: How welcoming have you found Imperial College London to be?

Not at all welcoming	Slightly welcoming	Somewhat welcoming	Quite welcoming	Extremely welcoming
----------------------	--------------------	--------------------	-----------------	---------------------

Item 4: How much respect do other students at Imperial College London show toward you?

No respect at all	A little bit of Respect	Some Respect	Quite a bit of Respect	A tremendous amount of respect
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Item 5: How much respect do members of staff at Imperial College London show toward you?

No respect at all	A little bit of Respect	Some Respect	Quite a bit of Respect	A tremendous amount of respect
-------------------	-------------------------	--------------	------------------------	--------------------------------

Item 6: How much do you matter to others at Imperial College London?

Do not matter at all	Matter a little bit	Matter Somewhat	Matter Quite a bit	Matter a tremendous amount
----------------------	---------------------	-----------------	--------------------	----------------------------

Item 7: How happy are you with your choice to be a student at Imperial College London?

Not at all happy	Slightly happy	Somewhat happy	Quite happy	Extremely happy
------------------	----------------	----------------	-------------	-----------------

Appendix E

Post Survey Workshop Survey

Quality Improvement Questionnaire for Fostering the OT Website

Principal Investigator: Owen Lawani Capstone

Mentor: Dr. Wendy Lucas Wood, MPA, PhD

Faculty Mentor: Sheama Krishnagiri, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA

Title of Project: Constructing a Web Resource Based on Sense of Belonging for Graduate-Level Underrepresented Occupational Therapy Students Description of

Survey: This survey seeks to understand the student experience with the website Fostering the OT to increase participants' perception of belonging and quality improvement of the site.

Participants Role: The participant will respond to a survey questionnaire that will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete regarding their experience using the website Fostering the OT.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be anonymous, results will only be shared in aggregated form, and individual information will be non-identifiable.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey! We are excited to hear from you about your experience using the website Fostering the OT, which aims to enhance perceived sense of belonging in graduate studies as an OT student. By sharing your thoughts and feedback, you can help us better understand your perceptions of the website and provide valuable insights to improve its overall quality.

Your input is critical to our efforts to develop a comprehensive web resource that supports the unique needs of occupational therapy students from underrepresented backgrounds. The survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete, and all responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. Your honest and thoughtful feedback is greatly appreciated, and we look forward to hearing your thoughts on the website's strengths and areas for improvement. Thank you for your participation.

☐ I agree to participate in this survey (1)

☐ I disagree to participate in this survey (2)

Q1 What year of your occupational therapy program are you currently in?

- ☐ One (1)
- ☐ Two (2)
- ☐ Three (3)
- ☐ Prefer not to answer (4)

Q2 What gender do identify as?

- ☐ Female (1)
- ☐ Male (2)
- ☐ Other (3)
- ☐ Prefer not to specify (4)

Q3 What is your age range?

- ☐ 18-24 (1)
- ☐ 25-34 (2)
- ☐ 35-44 (3)
- ☐ 45 and above (4)

Q4 What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ Latinx (1)
- ☐ Black or African American (2)
- ☐ Asian (3)
- ☐ Native Hawaiian (4)
- ☐ Multiple Races (5)
- ☐ White (6)
- ☐ Other (7)

Q5 I would define belonging in academia as.

Q6 I understand the strategies that can foster a sense of belonging in academia.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Click to answer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7 My occupational therapy program offers enough support and strategies to foster a sense of belonging.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Click to answer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 I think my classmates and faculty members understand me as a person.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
Click to answer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q9 I feel a sense of belonging within my cohort and program.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Click to answer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q10 My sense of belonging in my school compares well to my personal life (e.g., family, friends, community).

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Click to answer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q11 I have a strong sense of acceptance and value in my occupational therapy cohort.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Click to answer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q12 I am likely to discuss with anyone in my program a sense of belonging pertaining to occupational therapy.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat Agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
Click to answer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q13 I will likely use this web resource to help with stress, anxiety, awareness, and acceptance in your occupational therapy program.

	Strongly disagree (1)	disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither likely nor Unlikely (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Click to answer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q14 I will likely recommend this website to underrepresented occupational therapy students.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Click to answer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q15 In the future, I will likely use the web resource Fostering the OT as a primary source of information about a sense of belonging in academia.

	Strongly disagree (1)	disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
Click to answer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q16 This web resource appropriately supports my perceived sense of belonging in graduate-level occupational therapy education.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Click to answer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q17 Before using the web resource, I would rate my perceived sense of belonging during my occupational therapy graduate experience as.

	Extremely poor (1)	Poor (2)	Somewhat poor (3)	Neither good nor poor (4)	Somewhat good (5)	Good (6)	Extremely good (7)
Click to answer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q18 After using the web resource, I would rate my perceived sense of belonging during my occupational therapy graduate experience as.

	Extremely poor (1)	Poor (2)	Somewhat poor (3)	Neither good nor poor (4)	Somewhat good (5)	Good (6)	Extremely good (7)
Click to answer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q19 What do you think could be improved in this web resource?

Q20 What is the most noteworthy feature of the web resource?

Q21 Please elaborate if you have any other questions or concerns about the website.

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Curriculum Vitae

OWEN LAWANI

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SUMMARY:

A reliable individual who is professional, cares for others, well mannered, and works well within a team environment. Devoted to providing clients with comfort and care in the workplace, as well as building strong relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and management. Experienced in interpersonal communication and fulfilling daily assigned occupational tasks.

EDUCATION:

California State University, Los Angeles

Los Angeles, CA

Bachelor's in Kinesiology

Focus in Therapeutic Exercise

Graduated 2015

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE:

USC Verdugo Hills Hospital, Physical Medicine Rehabilitation

April 2014-May 2015

Volunteer

- Observed the duties of an occupational and physical therapist.
- Assisted physical therapy aide with daily duties.
- Attended a senior education program instructed by a physical therapist.

South Pasadena Senior Center

- Developed quality exercise programs for the elderly in the South Pasadena community.
- Instruct and supervise the group using appropriate biomechanics while promoting safety and monitoring positive signs of adaptation to exercise.
- Providing accurate risk factors to the aging population during exercise.
- Avoid contraindicated exercises that could advance to joint issues or illness.

California State University, Los Angeles Mobility Center

Summer 2013-Spring 2015

Kinesiology student trainer (Volunteer)

- Under the supervision of a physical therapist and teacher's assistant, provided kinesthetic education and support to individuals attending Cal State Los Angeles or living in the local community.
- Assessed general needs and goals the client's expressed as well executing daily life demands such as strength, balance work, range of motion, and functional mobility.
- Actively building relationships with clients and staff for a constructive work environment.

PREVIOUS AND PAST CERTIFICATIONS:

Basic Life Support Certification (Current)

Advanced Cardiac Life Support Certification

ECG & Pharmacology Certification

APPLICABLE OCCUPATIONS AND FIELDWORK EXPERIENCE:

USC Verdugo Hills Hospital, Physical Medicine Rehabilitation

August 2015 - April 2020

Rehabilitation Tech

- Supporting physical and occupational therapists by abiding by hospital competencies and modeling characteristics of enthusiasm, helpfulness, and problem-solving.
- Involved in four sub-divisional categories as a Physical Therapy Aide; Outpatient, Inpatient, Senior Education Coordinator, and Cardiac Rehabilitation Aide (Exercise Physiologist).
- Outpatient Aide consists of assisting and providing physical therapist and Certified Hand Therapist in a gym setting.
- Preparation of treatment of room and analysis of patient's preferences
- Application of modalities that assist in the therapeutic visit
- Maintaining a non-infectious work area for patients and therapists.
- Shaping the patient's charts after discharge of physical medicine.
- Inpatient Aide contains the involvement of orthopedic patients, acute cardiac monitored patients, intensive care patients, geropsychiatric patients, and transitional care patients.
- Safety and Infection control habits are used while caring for patients.
- Assisting the Therapist in bed mobility, transfers, and efficient body mechanic to allow the patient to walk.
- Applying Viking lifts for a patient who has limited or permanent lower body function or impairments.
- Communicating with nurses and medical doctors on how to enhance the patient's experience.
- Senior Education Program Coordinator is an occupation that allows seniors in the local community to improve their knowledge of exercise and balance.
- Cardiac Rehabilitation Aide requires assisting exercise physiologist with monitored and unmonitored with current or previous heart complications.
- The ability to read EKG recordings.

- Documentation of the patient's visit in a SOAP note format.
- Following the individual's plan of care agreement with the medical doctor.
- Contact a medical doctor if abnormal sinus rhythm occurs during exercise.

Encompass Health and Rehabilitation Hospital of Henderson

May 2021-August 2021

Fieldwork Level II Student

Adhering to the company policy and ethical procedures of the site by documenting, ensuring safety, and patient autonomy

- Remedial/Compensatory interventions that assisted in gaining independence in the patient's roles and routines.
- Assessment of psychological and physical abilities through evaluation and creating treatment applicable for 14 days.
- Discussion of the treatment plan with patient and therapy team to create collaborative discharge that meets the needs of the patient.
- Accurate depiction of intervention through documentation requirements.
- Co-treatment with a physical therapy team member to improve patient care and handling.
- Educating caregivers on patients' status and potential environmental changes required in home or work environment.
- The use of the start of the art technology to assist with patient's deficits and ongoing assessment of progress.