



Perceptions of the Academic Experience of Occupational Therapists of Color in the United States

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OBJECTIVES/ BACKGROUND

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- ▶ To understand the facilitators and barriers to participation and completion of an OT education program in the USA.
- ▶ To promote the facilitation of educational diversity, and attainment of equity and social justice for marginalized populations in both the educational and healthcare settings

BACKGROUND

- ▶ Fewer than 2% of students of color enroll in health profession majors in the United States
- ▶ Due to high demand and above average salary, enrollment of White students has continued to increase
- ▶ Enrollment of students of color continues to lag behind making up an average of 20% of the total population of students in the USA.

(AOTA, 2016; Gabard, 2007; US Department of Health and Human Services, 2015; Sullivan, 2004; Valentine, Wynn, & McLean, 2016).

METHODS

5 Phase Qualitative Constructionist Study

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

PARTICIPANTS

- ▶ Phase I, II, III: OT's of color from multiple ethnic groups, races and geographic locations throughout the USA (N=14)
- ▶ Phase IV: OT elite participants from academia with 25-30 years experience working in field of diversity (N=4)

DATA ANALYSIS

Colaizzi's 7-Step Method of Analysis

(Colaizzi, 1978).

DATA COLLECTION

- ▶ Phase I: *Online Survey of Demographic Information* (N=25)
- ▶ Phase II: *Reflective Open Ended Questionnaires* (N=14)
- ▶ Phase III: *Semi-Structured Interviews with OT professionals* (N=14)
- ▶ Phase IV: *Semi-Structured Interviews with elite informants* (N=4)
- ▶ Phase V: *Document Analysis of AOTA documents of diversity and inclusion initiatives* (N=10)

INTEGRATED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995)

- ▶ CRT is a framework of analysis for examining and acknowledging the traditional, dominant, White- majority, interests, values, and culture of the United States which limits the educational opportunities of persons of color

Bridging Multiple Worlds Theory (Cooper, 2011)

- ▶ BMW theory focuses on the simultaneous presence between the facilitators and barriers as well as the gatekeepers and cultural brokers within the cultural worlds of students of color.
- ▶ Students are able to overcome institutional barriers through the assistance of cultural brokers while gatekeepers limit the educational opportunities for college enrollment and undermine student self efficacy for completion.

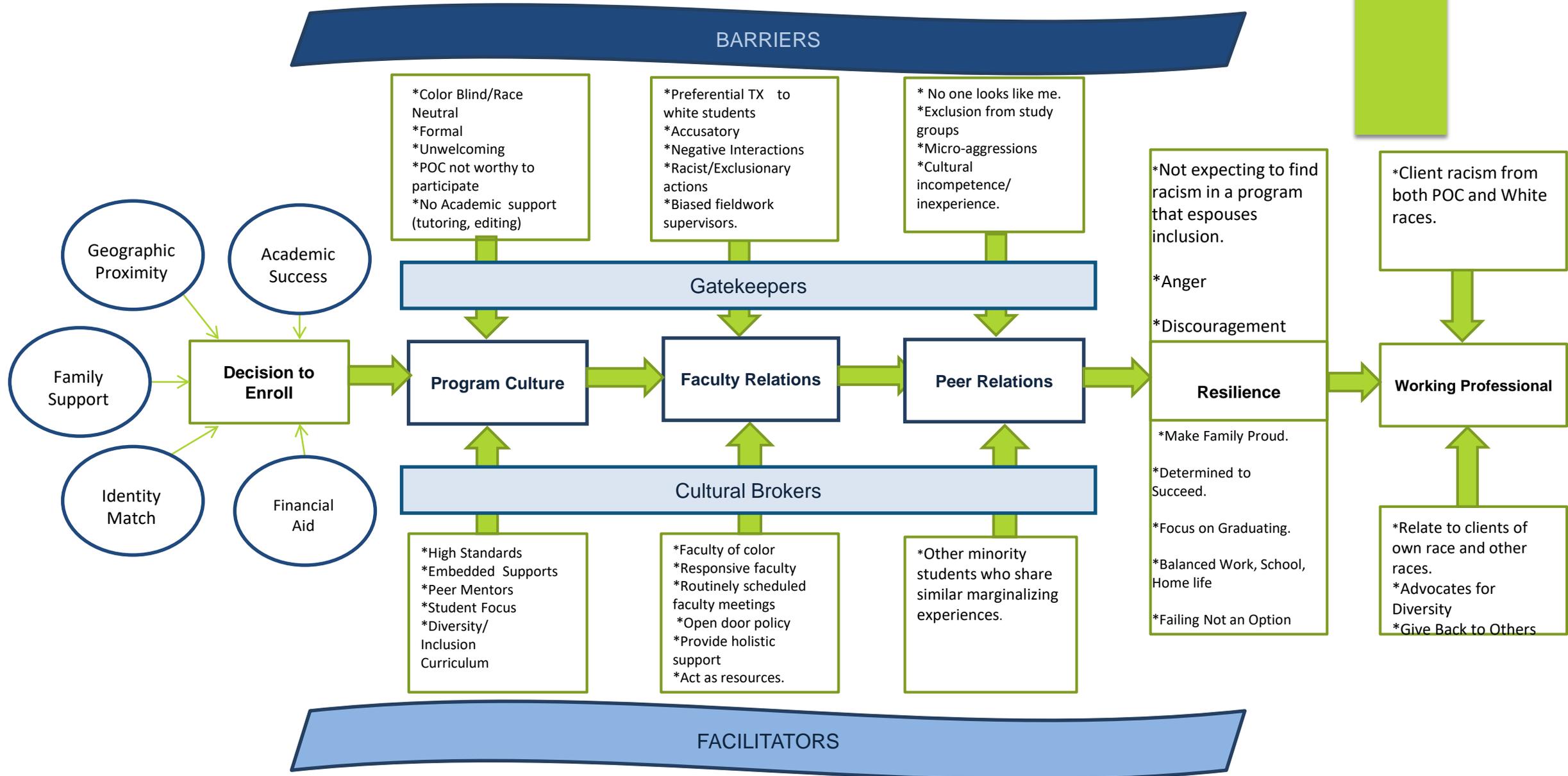


Figure 1. Intersectionality of Critical Race Theory of Education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and Bridging Multiple Worlds Theory (Cooper, 2011) in Understanding the Education Program Experiences of Occupational Therapy Professionals in Cheryl Lucas (2017): Occupational Therapy Professionals of Color: Perceptions of the Academic Experience. Copyright, 2017 Cheryl Burke Lucas.

Participant Voices

▶ Theme 1: Enrollment Decisions

▶ “I got to shadow a little bit, and I said this is what I want to do for sure. I had decided right then and there I was going to get into OT school. I started setting up how I was going to do it.”

▶ Theme 2: Education Program Culture

▶ “I think the program was super-competitive, they had a view of the student they wanted and it was pretty much ‘You will meet these demands. It will be tough. If you want it, you will do it period.’”

▶ “I remembered all of my teachers are White, all of my classmates are white and they come from very, very different socio-economic backgrounds than I do. Not knowing how to navigate certain...areas was a challenge.”

▶ Theme 3: Faculty Relationships

▶ “If anything, they would go above and beyond to make me feel comfortable. Sometimes awkwardly, but most often it was genuine interest.”

▶ “I think treating us how they teach us to treat our clients would have been a good start.”

▶ “Lots of times when it got difficult...for me working full-time, serving in the military, trying to make sure you get everything done...you feel that you don’t necessarily have a supportive faculty to turn to or you felt like you’re not supposed to complain...”

▶ “As soon as we got there [freshman year], faculty started leaving...saying we didn’t deserve to be in the program.”

▶ The lab exam went great, I got 100 percent...And I walked out and my lab partner said to me, “Did you get a notice on your grade about academic dishonesty?” And I said, ‘No.’ She said, ‘Well, I got a message on mine saying I that I needed to see the department chair because she believes that I helped you on the lab, because they have never had someone score in whatever percentile you got. We were both students of color and we were scared.’”

Participant Voices

▶ Theme 4: Peer Relationships

- ▶ “Wasn’t really close with my peers...I moved around to a lot of other countries, so I felt I understood a bigger picture.”
- ▶ “I did not get placed in the freshman dorm on campus...I was isolated from all the other students”
- ▶ “[Peers] called me an overachiever...very annoying. My weakness was language so I had to be organized and plan ahead.”
- ▶ “Being excluded from study groups...Literally saying the correct answer and everyone ignoring me. Someone says the same thing as me and everybody hears it...When I had a bad attitude about it, then I was the black girl with the attitude.”

▶ Theme 5: Student Resilience

- ▶ “I thought of quitting three times. Once before Level II fieldworks when I was second to last in the drawing and realized I would be spending 6 months away from my husband and kids.
- ▶ “We spent many times me and my other classmates in the library crying at 2AM ...as we struggled with life and the OT program.”
- ▶ “I was very motivated and inspired to be part of the program. After a while I was just over it. I was just like I am going to graduate. I just made the best of it.”

Theme 6: Working Professional

“It was very important to the mom that I am Asian. I do feel a strong connection to the child, but more important, to the mom”.

“My first day of fieldwork and I remember a patient saying he doesn’t want any dark kids treating him. I was devastated”.

“I feel like I want to do better by it. I feel like there is a need to give back and to see more people like me in treatment or providing treatment.”

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