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## Diversity, Equity, Justice, and Inclusion in Occupational Therapy Education

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### Keywords

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# JOTE

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**The Editors' Perspective:  
Diversity, Equity, Justice, and Inclusion in Occupational Therapy Education**

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The Editors and Board of *JOTE* are pleased to offer this Special Issue on topics related to diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion in occupational therapy education. Over the past year, as manuscripts were submitted, it became apparent these issues were heavy on the hearts, minds, and scholarly agendas of our occupational therapy colleagues. Our profession, like many others, continues to grapple with complex and painful issues, such as how to recruit a diverse workforce; how to ensure all students in occupational therapy programs feel a sense of belonging, inclusion, and safety; how to be anti-racist and to intentionally teach anti-racism and cultural humility to students; how to understand the influence of Western values and colonialism on occupational therapy concepts and education; and how to better understand the role of systemic injustice and power dynamics in teaching and learning practices.

Given the continued, pervasive national and worldwide events displaying racism and brutality toward minoritized populations, groups, and individuals, it is essential that occupational therapy educators serve as leaders to combat negative biases, stereotypes, and ethnocentrism in education. We are optimistic this Special Issue will provide guidance for faculty, programs, and institutions seeking action plans for positive change and increase awareness for faculty who are not fully conscious of the many negative experiences that routinely impact students and faculty of diverse backgrounds in educational settings.

The thirteen articles in this issue are a starting point, not a destination. Not all diverse and minority groups are represented; not all issues are confronted. However, much of the knowledge compiled here will be transferrable. The Discussion sections highlight the research that is yet to be done and the essential concepts that need to be learned. The Implications for Occupational Therapy Education sections provide concrete ideas for implementation. The reference lists provide a pathway to other central documents and scholarly works.

An excellent initiation to the issue is *Generative Disruptive Questions: Operationalizing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility in Occupational Therapy Education*, by Muñoz et al. This article provides a series of thought-provoking, reflective questions for faculty, programs, and institutions to examine systemic and personal practices and beliefs that may be preventing or limiting equity and inclusion. The journey of reflection may be difficult, but the outcome could be transformative programmatic changes that are highly impactful for diverse students and faculty, ultimately improving the entire profession.

Other articles in this issue provide a window into the student experience, offering perspectives about what it is like to experience racism, discrimination, and lack of belonging while a student in an occupational therapy program (see Luong et al., Ramirez & Kiraly-Alvarez, and Aldridge et al.). Tyminski et al. further explore the concept of belonging with a scoping review. Readers of Hahn et al. will learn how the admissions process may impact decisions related to diversity. Giannitsopoulou et al. describe a workshop to combat racist pedagogy and microaggressions, while Tilstra et al. describe an interprofessional learning activity designed to teach cultural competence with humility. Bekmuratova et al. show the impact of a panel presentation about human trafficking in changing students' self-efficacy to support and assist survivors of trafficking. Two articles provide international perspectives that are relevant to occupational therapy education in the United States and other countries as well. One of these explores the impact of colonialism on occupation-based education in Ghana (see Akrofi et al.) and the other examines the lived experiences of male occupational therapy students in the Philippines (see Macabagdal et al.). The discussion of gender continues with VanPuymbrouck and Friedman, who studied gender career stereotypes and implicit bias. Finally, see Bolding et al. for a greater understanding of the relationship between civility and positive leadership models.

Readers might also consider reviewing other previous publications from *JOTE* on related topics, such as those listed below, that can be further used to guide more inclusive occupational therapy education:

- Bolding, D. J., Rodriguez, V., Nguyen, H., & Drabble, L. A. (2020). Survey of occupational therapy students' attitudes, knowledge and preparedness for treating LGBT clients. *Journal of Occupational Therapy Education*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.26681/jote.2020.040203>
- Clifton, M., & Taff, S. D. (2021). The FOCUUS Model—Facilitating Occupational Performance on Campus: Uplifting Underrepresented Students. *Journal of Occupational Therapy Education*, 5(3). <https://doi.org/10.26681/jote.2021.050314>

- Colaianni, D., Tovar, G., Wilson, D., & Zapanta, H. (2022). Factors influencing the diversity of occupational therapy students. *Journal of Occupational Therapy Education*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.26681/jote.2022.060102>
- Kitchens, R. F., Armstead, A. B., Mani, K., Ghulmi, L., & Collins, D. M. (2022). Exploring the experiences of Black/African American students in entry level occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant programs: A survey study. *Journal of Occupational Therapy Education*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.26681/jote.2022.060202>
- Naber, A., Adamson, A., Berg-Poppe, P., Ikiugu, M., Tao, H., & Zimney, K. (2021). Using embedded encounters to promote cultural humility in occupational therapy and physical therapy education. *Journal of Occupational Therapy Education*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.26681/jote.2021.050113>
- Sanchez, A. M., Burns, I. W., DeAngelis, T. M., Capron, M., Mills, A., & Kligerman, T. (2023). Moving forward together: Reflections of a national survey of OT/OTA students' perceptions of culturally aware educational content delivery. *Journal of Occupational Therapy Education*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.26681/jote.2023.070102>
- Sterman, J., Njelesani, J., & Carr, S. (2022). Anti-racism and occupational therapy education: Beyond diversity and inclusion. *Journal of Occupational Therapy Education*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.26681/jote.2022.060103>
- Trentham, B. L., Langlois, S., Sangrar, R., Stier, J., Cockburn, L., Cameron, D., Renwick, R., & DSouza, C. (2020). Student engagement in peer dialogue about diversity and inclusion. *Journal of Occupational Therapy Education*, 4(3). <https://doi.org/10.26681/jote.2020.040304>
- Zelin, A. I., Melhorn, E., Black, K. J., & Harty, N. (2022). Not just women's work: Recruiting men to occupational therapy. *Journal of Occupational Therapy Education*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.26681/jote.2022.060301>

Our greatest thanks to the contributing authors and the many talented peer reviewers who provided feedback, without whom this Special Issue would not have happened. We challenge readers of this issue to use the information to make substantive changes to curriculum and policies; to increase recognition of unjust and exclusionary practices; and to create positive change in occupational therapy education through a lens of empathy and cultural humility.

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