

TOWARD EQUITY

A qualitative study exploring the injustices experienced at work by Black occupational and physical therapists

Cindy Louis-Delsoin,

Martine Nayide Morel, Shaun Cleaver, Anne Hudon, Quan Nha Hong



1915



Applicants:

Must be at least twenty-three years of age
Must have college education or equivalent
Must be native or allied born
Must possess suitable personality

The School reserves the right to grant admission only upon probation.



<https://beckerexhibits.wustl.edu/legacy-exhibits/mowihsp/health/OTst1.htm>

<https://beckerexhibits.wustl.edu/legacy-exhibits/mowihsp/win/OTst1.htm>

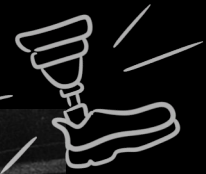
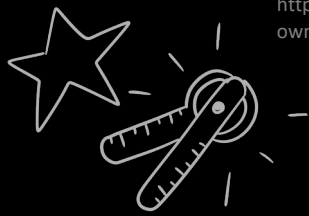


<https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounder/brown-v-board-education>

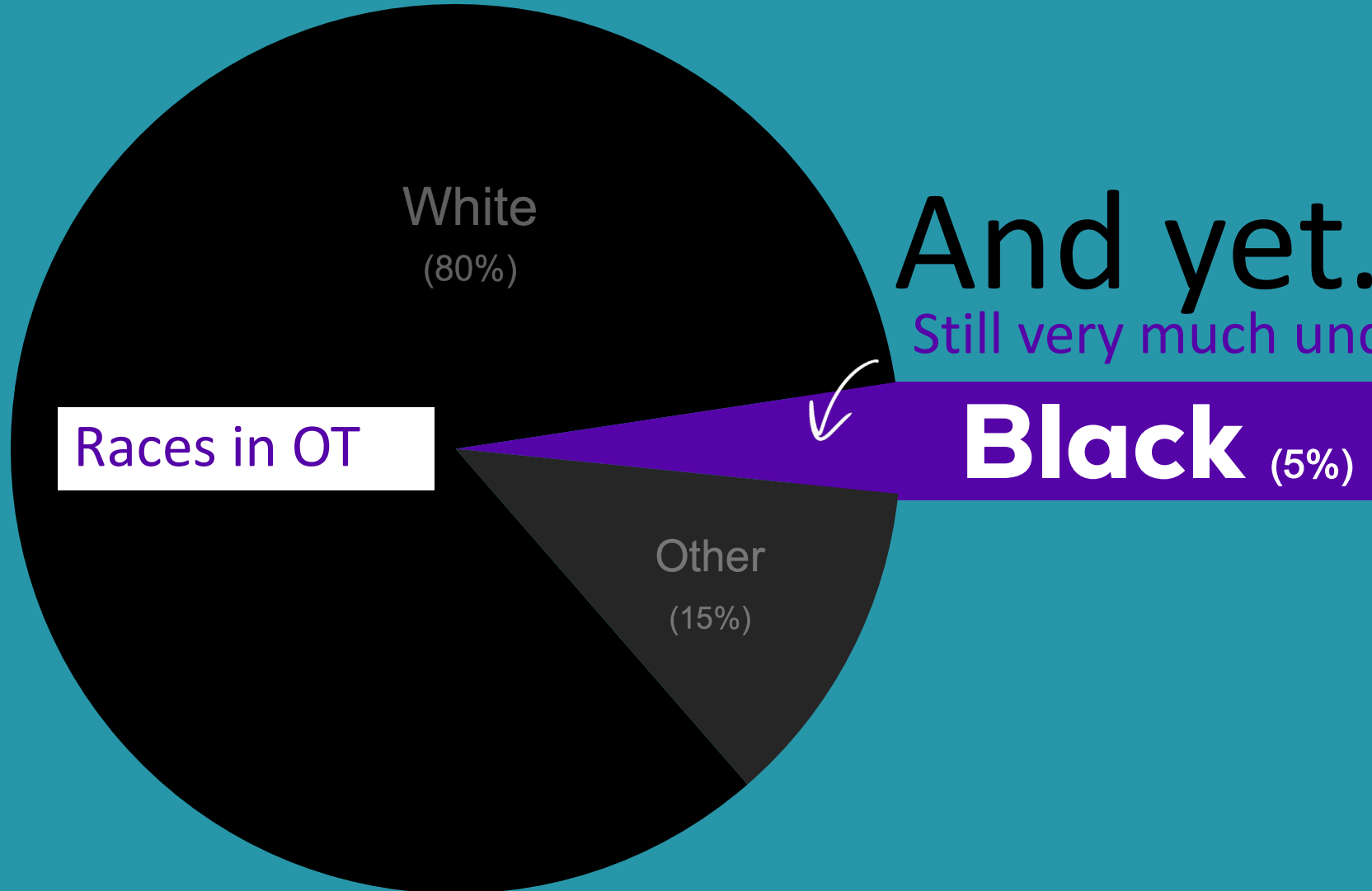
1915
1920
1950s



<https://www.facebook.com/mostate.ot/posts/in-honor-of-black-history-month-we-will-be-highlighting-the-history-of-black-ot-/1167267525404199/>



It took **40** years.



And yet...

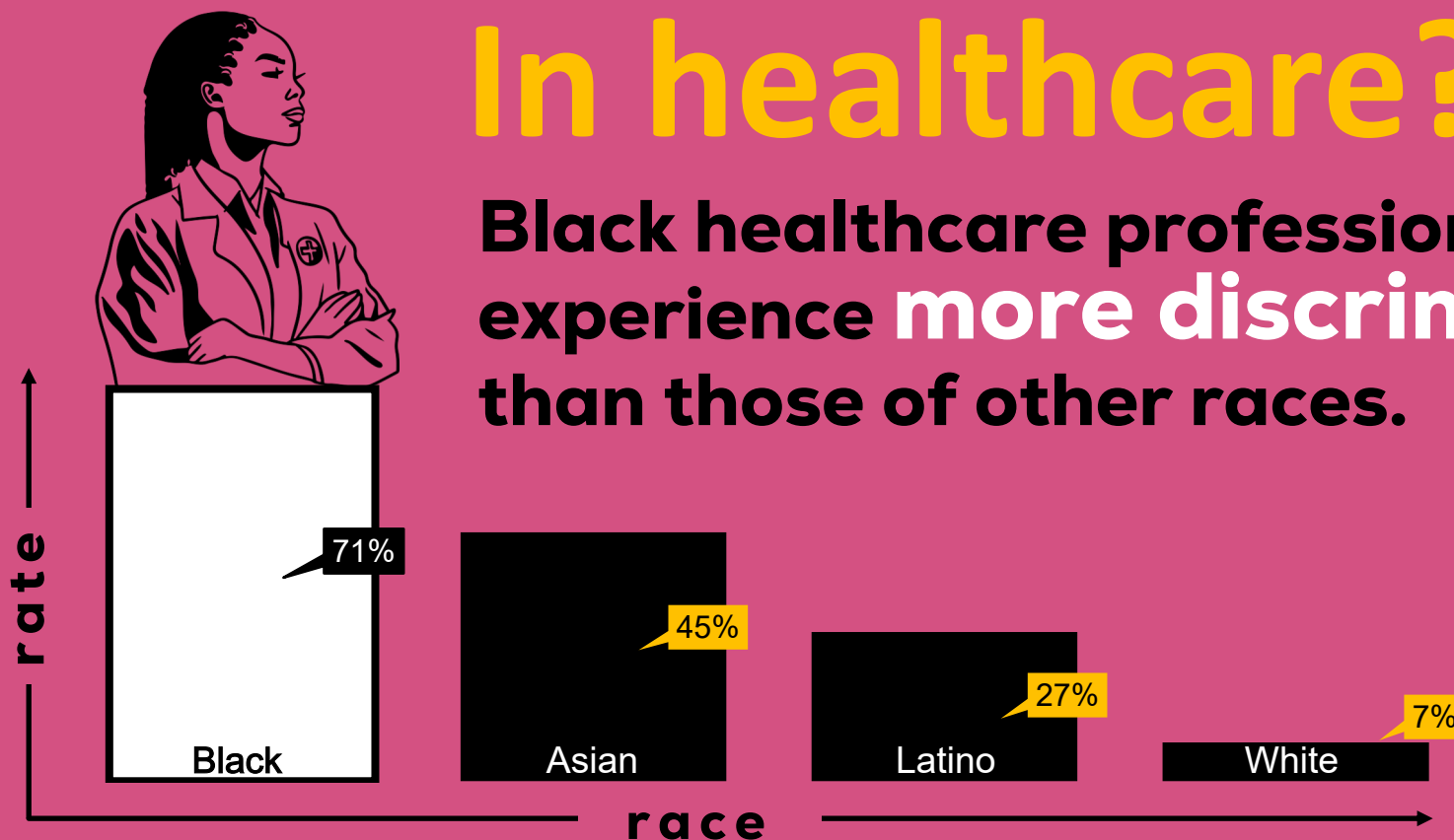
Still very much underrepresented in OT.

So, I focus on Black people in Canada.
Because **most of them** experience racism in the workplace.

80%

That's **4 out of 5**





In healthcare?

Black healthcare professionals experience more discrimination than those of other races.



- Racial
- Epistemic
- Systemic

<https://www.shutterstock.com/fr/image-vector/continuous-linear-drawing-african-american-man-2633625945?trackingId=3497847f-6048-446e-a5f5-f9d303625e25&listId=searchResults>

Relevance

- >> real issues
- >> real consequences

✘ therapists' well-being

✘ quality of care

✘ retention

✘ equity



Objective

To explore in depth the experiences of **injustice and discrimination** in the workplace faced by **Black OT and PT professionals** in Quebec (Canada)

Afroemancipatory approaches



- Critical theories ◆
Intersectionality
- Qualitative ◆
Interpretative description
- Photo-elicitation ◆
Focus groups and interviews



Example...

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Total sample: n=19

- ✓ 12 OTs (63%), 6 PTs (32%), 1 PT technologist (5%)
- ✓ 5 focus groups and 5 interviews

About the participants

- Mostly **women**
- Professionals in their **mid-30s**
- Averaging **8 years of experience**
- Mainly **Caribbean**
- Majority **Canada-born**



INJUSTICE

VS

DISCRIMINATION

Loneliness
Heaviness
Invalidation



Microaggression
Macroaggression

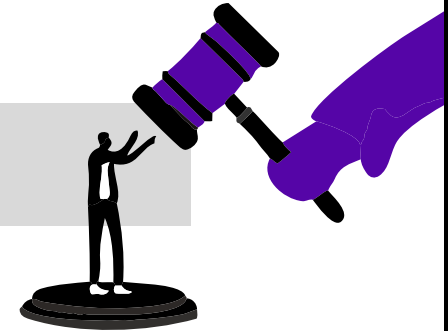
INJUSTICE

VS

DISCRIMINATION

Loneliness

Feeling left out



Heaviness

Being on their guard
Racial burden



INJUSTICE

VS

DISCRIMINATION

Loneliness
Feeling left out



Heaviness

social burden

And that can be very mentally exhausting, because you're always saying to yourself: "I have to fit in, because I have to prove that I'm an occupational therapist, that I have the skills (...)"

Alexis, OT, group #3

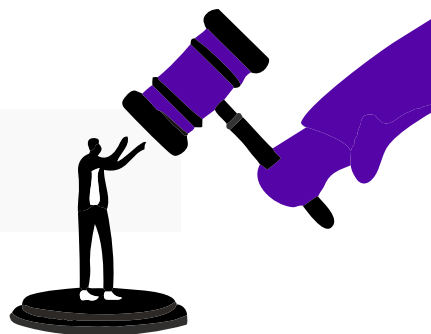
INJUSTICE

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Invalidation

Nonchalance from others



INJUSTICE

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Heaviness

Being on their guard

Racial burden

Invalidation

Without asking me any questions, without getting my opinion, she said, “At least we talked about it, and at least we're lucky here that you've never experienced [discrimination], right?” It was as if I didn't even have the space to express myself. A decision had been made for me.

Mirla, OT, interview #1

INJUSTICE

VS

DISCRIMINATION

Loneliness

Feeling left out



Heaviness

Being on their guard
Racial burden

Invalidation

Nonchalance from others



Microaggression

Pejorative stereotypes
Awkward remarks or gestures
Intrusive curiosity

INJUSTICE

VS

DISCRIMINATION

Loneliness
Feeling left out

Heaviness
Being on their guard
Racial burden

Invalidation
Nonchalance from others

Microaggression

I arrive, I'm black, I'm tall, and he goes, "What's he doing here?" There's also the aspect of how a Black man can be perceived. Is it threatening? Perhaps.

Jacob, OT, interview #2

INJUSTICE

VS

DISCRIMINATION

Loneliness

Feeling left out



Heaviness

Being on their guard

Racial burden

Invalidation

Nonchalance from others



Microaggression

Pejorative stereotypes

Awkward remarks or gestures

Intrusive curiosity

Macroaggression

Stricter monitoring

Assimilation pressure

INJUSTICE

VS

DISCRIMINATION



Loneliness

Feeling left out

Heaviness

Being on their guard

Racial burden

Invalidation

Nonchalance from others

Exactly! Not having the responsibility of having to be...
I don't know, the spokesperson for rights. We also have the right to just exist. (...) The flip side is that if we don't do it, who will?
Lydia, OT, group #2

Microaggression

Pejorative stereotypes

Awkward remarks or gestures

Intrusive curiosity

Macroaggression

Stricter monitoring

Macroaggression

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

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WFOT
Congress 2026
9-12 FEBRUARY BANGKOK, THAILAND

Invalidation

Heaviness

Microaggression

Loneliness

Macroaggression

My PhD



THE RISE PROJECT

The year 2020 was trying to bring them to the table to support and love each other through difficult times, so we were surprised to see the gifts of words and help to help members in a time of such pain. The Rise Project focuses the hopes of our members using the art to share our stories of resilience, healing and the impact of the world of pandemic, grief and loss. Together we, such as words and encouraged us to tell our own story and share. We hope that these images help you.





WHAT'S NEXT?

This is the first phase of my doctoral project.
It will be followed by a co-creation component.
The goal is to develop awareness-raising initiatives.

CONCLUSION

- The specific **injustices** faced by Black rehabilitation professionals often remain **invisible** in clinical practice and research.
- **Action is essential** to promote equity and quality of care.
- These reflections enable us to move toward **sustainable inclusion**.

Thank you!

Cindy Louis-Delsoin, OT, PhD(c)

Occupational therapist, illustrator and PhD candidate

- ✓ Research in rehabilitation
- ✓ Afro-emancipatory reflections
- ✓ Illustration and audiovisual communication
- ✓ Health equity

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Looking forward to networking!



REFERENCE LIST



MAIN SCHOLARSHIPS

Additional information

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC

	Total n=19	OTs n=12 (63.2%)
Gender		
Women	15 (78.9%)	11 (91.7%)
Men	4 (21.1%)	1 (8.3%)
Other	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Years of practice		
mean (SD)	8.6 (6.2)	7.1 (4.6)
Age		
mean (SD)	35.3 (9.3)	32.8 (4.5)
Ethnicity		
Caribbean	15 (78.9%)	10 (83.3%)
African	3 (15.8%)	2 (16.7%)
Afro-Latin	1 (5.3%)	0 (0%)
Mixed-race	2 (10.5%)	1 (8.3%)
Place of birth		
Canada	13 (68.4%)	8 (66.7%)
Foreign	6 (31.6%)	4 (33.3%)

photo-elicitation...

whats is it?

Uses photos to help participants talk about their experiences and feelings

what does it add?

- ✓ Individual perspectives
- ✓ Sense of empowerment
- ✓ Contextualization
- ✓ Narrative



APPROACH

1



- Qualitative interpretive description
- Participatory approach

POPULATION

2



- Black OTs, PTs and PT technologists



- Quebec province (Canada)

METHODOLOGY

METHODS

3



- Photo-elicitation
 - Photos or images evoking own experiences used to fuel discussions
- Semi-structured focus groups and interviews
 - 1-2 hours on Zoom

ANALYSIS

4



- Verbatim transcription
- Inductive thematic analysis
- NVivo software

BIOGRAPHY

CINDY LOUIS-DELSOIN OT, PhD(c)

is an occupational therapist and doctoral student in rehabilitation sciences at the University of Montreal.

Using critical and afro-emancipatory approaches, she studies injustices affecting Black rehabilitation professionals to promote equity in healthcare.