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## Black Occupational Therapists' Experiences on the Occupational Impacts of Racism

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# Black Occupational Therapists' Experiences on the Occupational Impacts of Racism

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## BACKGROUND

Occupational therapy is rooted in the belief that all people deserve the right to engage positively in personal and meaningful occupations (Townsend & Wilcock, 2009).

- Impacts of racism can be detrimental to an individual's identity and can interrupt purposeful activities (Townsend & Wilcock, 2009).
- Minimal research regarding occupational impacts of racism.

## PURPOSE

- Provide a voice and platform for Black OTs to identify occupational impacts of racism, drawn from personal experiences.
- Understanding these impacts will allow for the profession to support and promote occupational justice within the Black community.

## METHODS

This study utilized a mixed methods design to gather information regarding occupational impacts of racism.

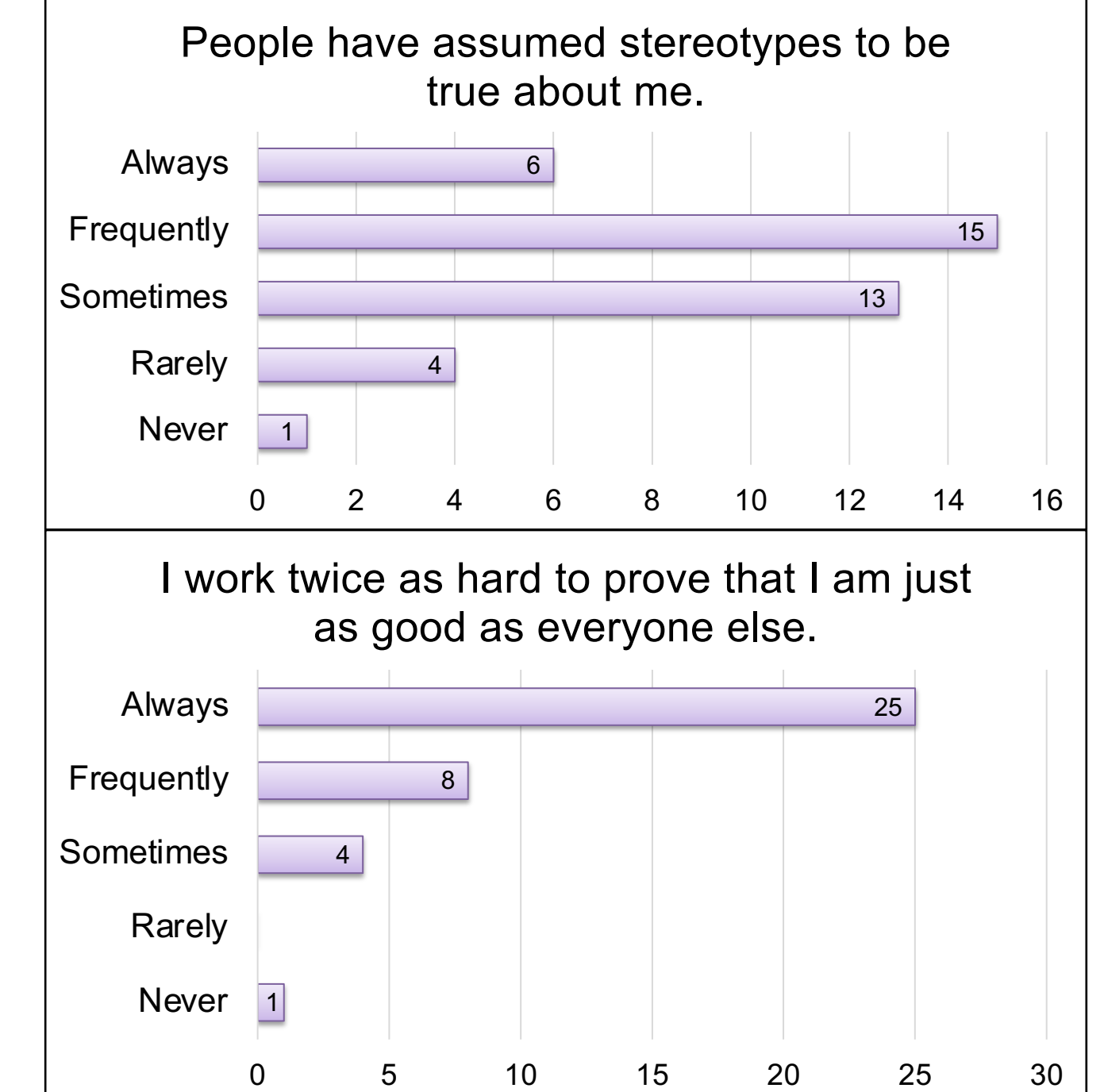
- Quantitative data was collected through the Racial Impact Questionnaire (n=39): a Likert scale-based assessment tool to capture the frequency in which individuals are faced with and how they respond to certain race-based situations (McConnell, 2022).
- Qualitative data was collected through open-ended survey questions and individual interviews (n=5).

## RESULTS

### Qualitative Outcomes and Themes

Themes & Subthemes	Quotes
Decreased Quality of Engagement in Occupations: "Being Black is Just So Thought Out"	"Being Black, and then on top of that being a Black woman, it really affects majority of decisions that I make and how I make them. It affects how I go about my life, from the smallest things of just driving, to going to the store, to how I wear my hair out, if I go one place or another. Like, it affects everything I do."
Avoiding Occupations: Anticipatory Stress	"I live in a very White neighborhood, and after Ahmaud [Arbery] was murdered walking, I stopped walking in my neighborhood, because I was too scared that someone would think I didn't belong here. I won't even walk to my mailbox, I drive."
Avoiding Occupations: Fear of Affirming Stereotypes	"I have an issue with speaking up for myself because I don't want to be seen as aggressive." "I also avoid eating certain foods in front of other races (anything that resembles fried chicken and watermelon)."
Adapting Occupations: Anticipatory Stress	"I live in a pretty rural area and have always thought about safety especially when considering doing home health and the positions I may be put in. It's a very conservative area with old school values so I worry about my safety and decided to work at a hospital instead just for my own sanity and limiting my anxiety when driving and providing OT services."
Adapting Occupations: Fear of Affirming Stereotypes	"I feel like I have to go above and beyond. I feel like I have to work overtime and always be in a positive mood. I feel like I have to try hard at all times or I will be seen as lazy." "Initially, I wanted to play the banjo when I was younger, but it was associated so much with slavery and minstrel playing that I chose the guitar instead."

### Quantitative Outcomes



## CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

Occupational impacts of racism often lead to decreased quality of engagement, avoidance, and adaptation of occupations as a result of race-related stress and stereotypes.

- OT profession needs to be aware of these impacts and engage in an open discussion regarding systemic racism.
- Advocacy and coping skills are increasingly important when promoting occupational justice within the Black community.



Deliverable



References