



OT Pathways Kit: Increasing Early Awareness of Occupational Therapy

BACKGROUND

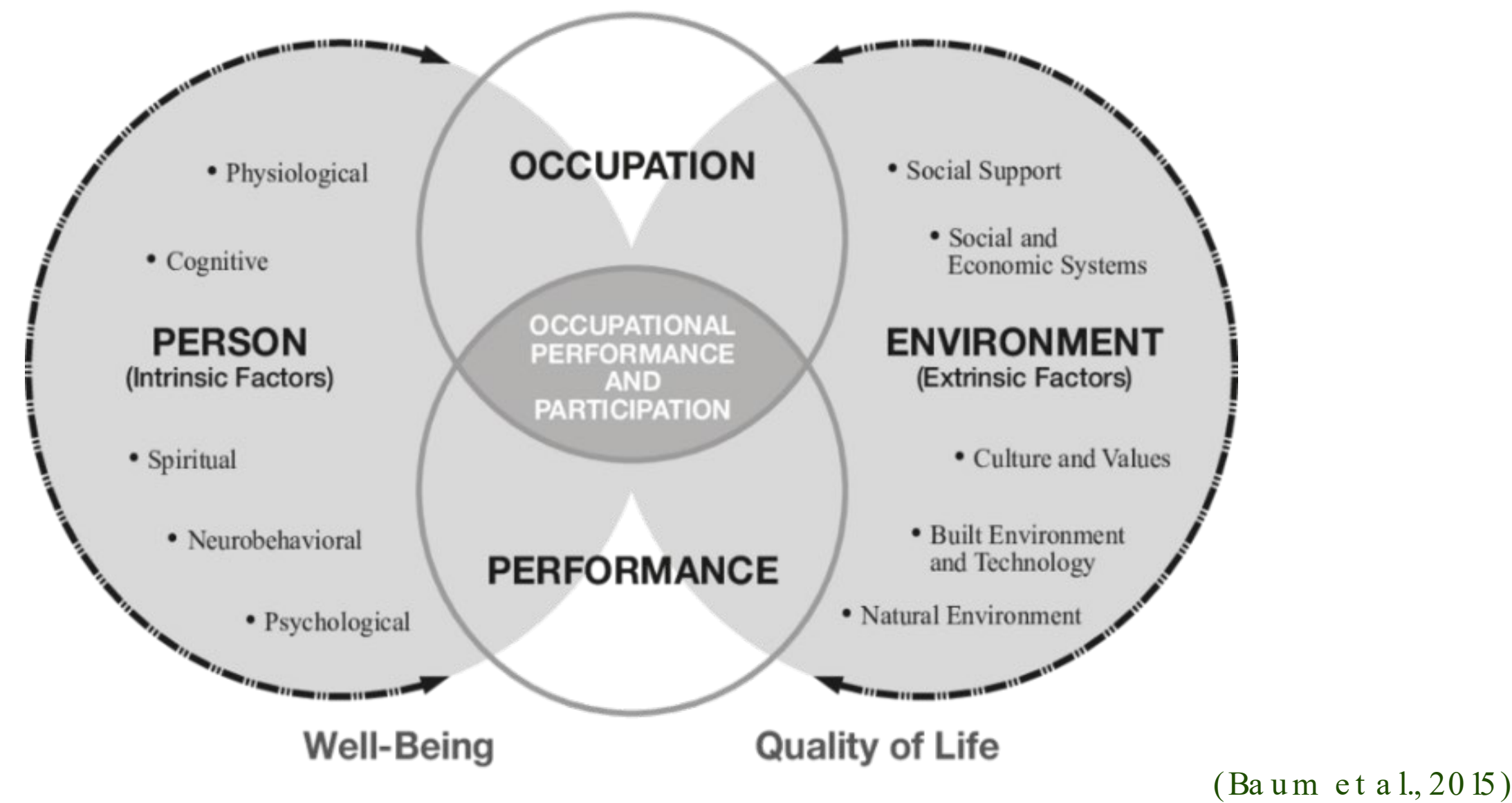
- Occupational therapy (OT) continues to experience **growing workforce demand, yet many students do not learn about OT as a career until late in their educational journeys**, limiting opportunities for early exploration and entry into the profession.
- The OT profession also continues to face a lack of diversity, influenced by systemic barriers including limited mentorship, reduced access to career information, financial constraints, and limited exposure to healthcare careers.
- Research suggests that Generation Z learners benefit most from interactive, visually engaging, and learner-centered educational approaches connected to meaningful real-world experiences.

In response to these challenges, the OT Pathways Kit was developed as a career exploration toolkit to increase awareness of OT among high school and undergraduate students. The toolkit provides career exploration materials **designed to support early exposure, improve access to information, and promote participation in educational and career exploration occupations.**

(Fort et al., 2021; Colaianni et al., 2022; U.S. Census Bureau, 2023; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023)

THEORETICAL GROUNDING

Figure 1. Person-Environment-Occupation-Performance (PEOP) Model



(Baum et al., 2015)

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal: Develop a comprehensive OT Pathways Kit that equips educators, advisors, and students with practical tools and information to support exploration of occupational therapy as a career.

Objectives:

- Conduct interviews with OT professionals experienced in career outreach, advisors, and incoming OT students with non-health majors to gather stakeholder perspectives.
- Develop a visually engaging OT career presentation for CSU-OT faculty, students, and graduate assistants to introduce high school students to OT.
- Develop an OT outreach resource package for educators, advisors, and students that supports career exploration, observation opportunities, and graduate program preparation.
- Develop a user-friendly training manual to support consistent and sustainable implementation of the OT Pathways Kit.

ACTIVITIES & FINDINGS

Needs Assessment

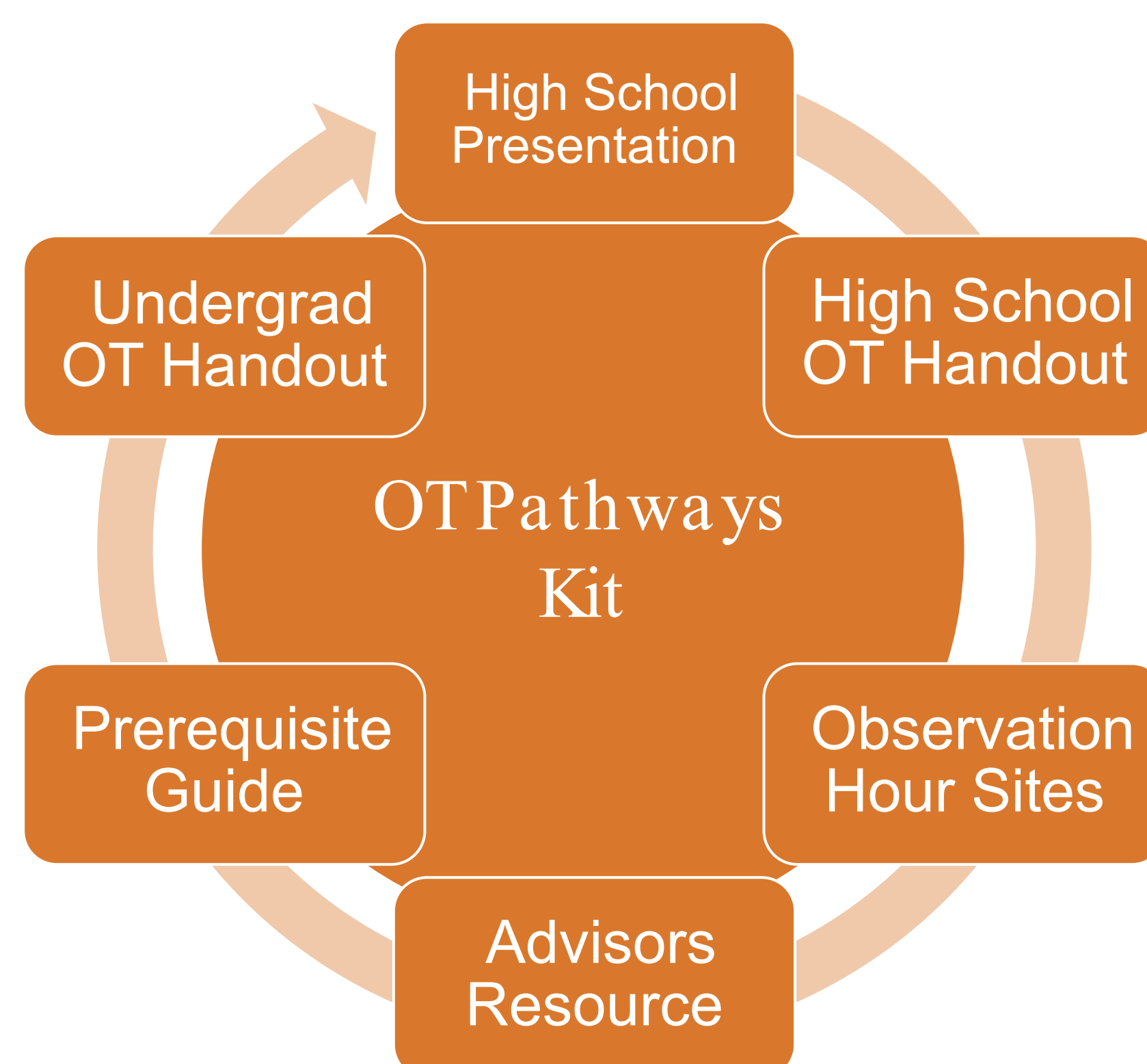
- Data informed by surveys, stakeholder interviews, career fairs, admissions work, and review of existing resources.
 - Faculty highlighted need to emphasize non-traditional pathways.
 - Students expressed interest in holistic, relationship-based healthcare careers.
- Gaps:** OTA pathways information, observation opportunities, and pre-OT work experiences.

Semi-Structured Interviews

- Incoming OTD students from non-health science majors
- OTA programs in Colorado
- High school teacher
- College advisors
- Why Choose OT

Key Findings

- OT awareness occurs late
- Lack of clear pathway information
- Hands-on experiences drive engagement
- Students discover OT through social media



EVALUATION METHODS

Formative Evaluation

- Progress tracking spreadsheet
- Weekly mentor meetings
- Ongoing feedback during project development
- Data collection through surveys, interviews, and career fairs

Summative Evaluation

- Pre/post surveys during short-course presentation at AOTA conference assessing resource clarity, usability, and perceived impact.

DISCUSSION

Immediate Impact

- Increased access to clear and engaging OT career information
- Improved awareness of OT and confidence discussing OT pathways

Long-Term Impact

- Supports earlier OT exposure and informed academic planning
- Contributes to a stronger and more diverse OT workforce pipeline

Sustainability

- Integrated into CSU OT admissions and outreach efforts
- GSAs and faculty will continue implementation and adaptation
- Future expansion for individuals who are Spanish-speaking and Northern Colorado communities



Scan QR code to view the OT Pathways Kit

CONCLUSION

- Increased access to OT career exploration resources
- Supported earlier awareness of OT pathways
- Improved accessibility of prerequisite and observation information
- Promoted sustainable outreach through CSU OT admissions and faculty implementation
- Contributed to future OT workforce development efforts

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REFERENCES

