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A Narrative Review of Student Evaluations of Teaching in Decolonial Praxis: Implications for Occupational Therapy Higher Education

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A Narrative Review of Student Evaluations of Teaching in Decolonial Praxis: Implications for Occupational Therapy Higher Education

Abstract

Student evaluations of teaching (SETs) are the primary source for evaluating teaching effectiveness and are used for deciding tenure and promotion. However, as efforts to engage in a decolonial critique of higher education amplify, the use of SETs in teaching and learning requires scrutiny. A narrative review was used to address the research question of SET biases in decolonial praxis and what insights may be useful for OT decolonial praxis. We identify and describe two content areas: (a) SET biases and (b) recommendations for alternatives promoting OT decolonial praxis. A total of 92 articles were sourced from five databases. Of the 92 articles, 44 met the inclusion criteria: peer-reviewed across disciplines, written in English, research conducted in the US, and published between 2011–2021. SETs scores are affected by factors beyond the influence of the instructor. Twenty-nine factors contributing to SETs biases were grouped into three main categories: SETs biases against instructors, other biases from students, and SETs biases in processes. Alternative methodological approaches are highlighted that may mitigate the identified biases for application in decolonial praxis in OT higher education.

Comments

The authors declare that they have no competing financial, professional, or personal interest that might have influenced the performance or presentation of the work described in this manuscript.

Keywords

student evaluations of teaching (SET), SET biases, decolonial education, decolonial occupational therapy, decolonial praxis, critical occupational therapy

Credentials Display

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In universities worldwide, student evaluations of teaching (SETs) are an important source for evaluating teaching effectiveness and inform high-stakes decision-making on tenure and promotion packages in the ecology of higher education. Although significant issues questioning the validity (Serdyukova et al., 2010; Spooren et al., 2013) and effectiveness of SETs in measuring teaching and learning have been highlighted in the literature (Uttl et al., 2017), little attention has been paid to SETs through occupational therapy (OT) decolonial praxis in higher education.

SETs are important to understanding decolonial work as we engage in reflection on the epistemic mechanisms of colonial and neo-colonization in westernized higher education. SETs are a small part of a larger systemic issue of colonial education where coloniality is defined as “spaciality (expansionist control of lands), ontoepistemic racism (elimination and subjugation of differences), and geopolitics of knowledge production (epistemic violence) that are constitutive of modernity” (De Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2015, p. 23). Settler-colonialism is defined as a distinct form “of colonialism in which the colonizer comes to stay, making himself the sovereign, and the arbiter of citizenship, civility, and knowing” (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013, p. 73) displacing the indigenous people. Hence, the colonizer seizes indigenous people’s lands, and the occupiers subsequently oppress and marginalize the people (Simaan, 2020). Decoloniality is, therefore, the ways of thinking, knowing, being, doing, becoming, and belonging that precede and untangle colonization and settler-colonialism in all its manifestations (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2014).

SETs may be used as an illustrative example to examine how bias, stereotypes, and discrimination might permeate student perceptions of teacher effectiveness (Kreitzer & Sweet-Cushman, 2021), reproducing colonial knowledge systems and power relations. Our paper is anchored in decolonial transdisciplinarity and the decolonial turn in education (Maldonado-Torres, 2011), which transcends disciplines and intends to draw lessons from across disciplines for reflexivity in OT higher education.

The following definitions are used in SETs discussions. The purpose of defining these terms is to provide an understanding of the information presented in the literature review.

- Student Evaluations of Teaching (SETs): Feedback on the performance of teaching staff, usually undertaken at the course or module level, with limited engagement with students’ own evaluation of their learning (Bhatti, 2018).
- Bias: Disproportionate weight in favor of or against an idea that may be deemed unfair or prejudicial (Steinbock, 1978).
- Decolonial Praxis: Reflexive world interventions that seek to target and dismantle the colonial matrix of power. Praxis requires a continuous learning/unlearning and critical examination of our thinking and actions in order to decentralize western rationalities and center other ways of knowing, being and relating (Saúde et al., 2021).

This article draws on transdisciplinary sources to examine SETs, with a particular interest in the relevance and potential application of reflections for OT higher education.

Background

Historically, the university is constructed for and by white, cis-male, heterosexual, protestant men (Arday et al., 2020). SETs arose in this context. Arguments abound on the “incommensurability of the university and decolonization” (Mayorga et al., 2019). A key reflection is how SETs arising from the colonial context continuously and consistently are used as a mechanism for the evaluation of instructors and engaging the students asked to populate them, who are both objects of inquiry in a system never designed for them, and, in some cases, diametrically opposed to their success. Therefore, examining the

historical and continued role of the university in perpetuating settler-colonial violence is important in situating decolonial efforts. Settler-colonial violence is not solely the invasion and seizure of space and resources but the continued reassertion of colonial occupation through structures (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013).

According to the *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process* (OTPF; 2020), education is defined as “activities needed for learning and participating in the educational environment” (AOTA, 2020, p. 33). While this definition seems to encompass a multitude of learning contexts, it categorizes education by breaking education into binaries: formal and informal. Formal education participation is defined as “participating in academic (e.g., math, reading, degree coursework), nonacademic (e.g., recess, lunchroom, hallway), extracurricular (e.g., sports, band, cheerleading, dances), technological (e.g., online assignment completion, distance learning), and vocational (including prevocational) educational activities” (AOTA, 2020, p. 33). In contrast, informal education is defined as “participating in classes, programs, and activities that provide instruction or training outside of a structured curriculum in identified areas of interest” (AOTA, 2020, p. 33).

Outside of the AOTA taxonomy, the definitions for non-formal education and informal education are reversed. Non-formal education is defined as occurring “in a planned but highly adaptable manner in institutions, organizations, and situations beyond the spheres of formal or informal education” (Eshach, 2007, p. 173). Informal education “applies to situations in life that come about spontaneously; for example, within the family circle, the neighborhood, and so on” (Eshach, 2007, p. 173). Regardless of the reversal of meanings, only two forms of education are present in the current AOTA taxonomy, and a definition for non-formal education is absent from the taxonomy.

The taxonomy of education in the OTPF (AOTA, 2020), therefore, is limited because education may proliferate through individuals in communities rather than institutions, over a period of time, with intergenerational learning. The SETs examined in this paper refer specifically to formal education and, within this, higher education learning in the US.

Purpose

This narrative review focuses on SETs biases to address the following guiding questions:

Primary Question

What are the main biases in using SETs at higher education institutions, and how are these biases entangled in the learning journey?

Sub-Questions

1. What types of biases influence SETs?
2. What is the nature of the entanglement between SETs processes and epistemic colonial violence?
3. What alternatives to SETs offer possibilities in gesturing toward the work of resistance and repair?
4. What are the implications for OT decolonial praxis?

Method

A narrative review was implemented according to the procedures described by Depoy and Gitlin (2019). This narrative review used the following process: articulation of the problem, a literature search, evaluation of the quality of data, analysis of the data, and presentation of conclusions. We summarize research from mixed methodologies for thought leadership in emerging decolonial praxis (Torraco, 2016), building off a scholarly annotated bibliography (SAB) previously developed by the first author on

exploring SET biases in higher education from across the globe, drawing on transdisciplinary sources beyond the parameters of OT. Ninety-two articles were sourced from various databases described in the search strategy section for the SAB. Of the 92 articles, 66 were selected when professional publications, conference proceedings, books, and articles not explicitly related to SETs were excluded. Then, all articles that were non-US based were excluded based on the inclusion criteria, resulting in 44 articles that met our inclusion criteria. Our inclusion criteria included articles that were published in English, researched in the US, peer-reviewed, and published between 2011–2021.

Search Strategy

Literature searches were conducted on education and OT databases as outlined by the Gwendolyn Brooks Library, including Public/Publisher MEDLINE (Pubmed), Taylor and Francis online, Sagepub, Researchgate, Proquest Education, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCO), Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), and Google Scholar. Ninety-two articles were extracted from these databases. The appendix contains a summary of the most relevant search results and strategies. Two co-authors conducted the same search on each database. The selected literature is limited to references published no earlier than 2010, allowing for a 10-year review period from 2011–2021. The emphasis is on identifying biases in SETs in higher education, focusing on implications for decolonial transformation. Key search terms were derived from keywords from peer-reviewed publications, including terms like student evaluations of teaching, SET, teaching evaluations, decolonial SET, SET biases, course evaluation SETs, teaching quality, and student biases SETs.

Selection Criteria

Literature collection is limited to scholarly peer-reviewed materials available online, specifically journal articles. The articles included quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies that examined SETs in higher education in the US. Professional publications, conference proceedings, and book publications were excluded from the analysis. Only English, peer-reviewed articles published between 2011 and 2021 were included. All authors agreed on decisions regarding the inclusion and exclusion of articles.

Analysis

Inductive thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2019) was conducted on the articles. Coding and theme development were based on the content of the articles. This was done by identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns of themes. All of the articles initially were reviewed across the data set search results (i.e., a range of texts to find repeated patterns of meaning). The co-authors coded the texts by identifying SETs biases and organizing the articles into themes. The coding and themes were reviewed collectively by all the authors comparing the articles to the original coding. Finally, each theme was defined explicitly to ensure its distinctiveness.

Results

From the 92 articles drawn from databases, 44 met our final inclusion criteria. Our revised inclusion criteria included published in English, research conducted in the US, peer-reviewed, and published between 2011–2021. These articles were categorized and stored in one of four folders in Zotero: (a) bias toward instructors; (b) bias features of students, “other biases;” (c) bias in SETs processes; and (d) alternatives to SETs. These are featured in the Appendix.

Critiques of SETs

Several types of biases by students about the instructor’s characteristics are described in Table 1, Column 1, such as first impressions, gender, and appearance. Column 2 describes “other biases” students may hold, such as perceptions of good teaching and non-response biases. Column 3 lists the biases in processes, such as class size, use of incentives, and methodological issues.

Table 1
Critiques of SETs

Biases of students about the instructor	“Other” biases by students	Biases in processes
Accent (Subtirelu, 2015)	Grade expectations (Carter, 2016)	Class size (Balam & Shannon, 2010; Dewar, 2011; Galbraith et al., 2012; Miles & House, 2015)
First impressions during the first class persist until the end of the semester (Clayson, 2013; Laws et al., 2010)	Perception of “good teaching” (Culver et al., 2021; Galbraith et al., 2012)	Incentives e.g., cookies, extra credit, individual-class-wide, point and nonpoint based (Brownback & Sadoff, 2019; Goodman et al., 2015; Jaquett et al., 2016)
Racial bias toward non-white instructors (Reid, 2010; Smith & Hawkins, 2011; Subtirelu, 2015)	Higher the costs of attending the university, the lower the SETs (Carter, 2016; Esarey & Valdes, 2020).	SET format (online/hard copy) (Carlos et al., 2020; Nowell et al., 2010; Stowell et al., 2012; Zipser & Mincieli, 2018)
Age – older received lower ratings (Joye & Wilson, 2015; Sohr-Preston et al., 2016)	Nonresponse biases and response rate (Adams & Umbach, 2012; Bacon et al., 2016; Stark, & Freishtat, 2014).	Class subject (Royal & Stockdale, 2015)
Gender biased against female instructors in statistically significant ways (Chávez & Mitchell, 2020; Kreitzer & Sweet-Cushman, 2021; Miles & House, 2015)	Honesty/Falsified evaluations (Clayson & Haley, 2011; McClain et al., 2018; Uijtdehaage & O’Neal, 2015)	Methodological (Annan et al., 2013; Borch et al., 2020; Boysen, 2015; James et al., 2015; Keeley et al., 2013; Ray et al., 2018; Stark & Freishtat, 2014)
Appearance/Dress (Aruguete et al., 2017; Chatelain, 2015; Gonyea et al., 2018; Sohr-Preston et al., 2016)		Timing of the evaluations (Estelami, 2015; McClain et al., 2018)
Personality (Lazos, 2012; Wallace et al., 2019)		Class time (Marbouti et al., 2018; Tobin, 2017)
Teaching position, tenure, academic discipline (Carter, 2016; Miller & Pearson, 2013)		Email tone (Dickenson, 2017; Winans, 2020)
Pedagogy and teaching style (Miller & Pearson, 2013; Padgett, 2021).		Physical environment (Hill & Epps, 2010).

As can be seen, the breadth of ontologic-epistemic biases is symptomatic of wider issues as expressed further in three examples: pedagogy, instructor trauma, and intersectionality, and engages in the nature of the entanglements in epistemic violence.

Pedagogy

As can be seen, critiques of SETs are substantial in the amount of literature published on the topic. SETs fail to account for sites of contestation and critical learning engagements and position students as recipients or objects of teaching, described by Freire (2014) as “banking.” Importantly, SETs deepen the transactional nature of the learning process through views of the student as a consumer and faculty as suppliers against a backdrop of education primarily for economic development. Hence, the challenge is

that SETs fail to question educational relationships established within white, male, colonial power, privilege, and knowledge.

SETs fail to recognize the interconnections between courses and that the ideas produced are not ideas from individual reflection but collective conversations, co-constructions, and cumulative learning experiences. Colonial frames encourage the fragmentation of time and place, disconnecting people from each other, their collective histories, geographies, and contexts, and reframe time as the here and now (Said, 1994). The transiency or temporality of SETs reinforces the extraction and disconnection in the learning experience of what was previously studied and what will follow, dislocating the learning continuum into discrete parts devoid of the whole, failing to connect learning over time within the context of a learning journey. SET instruments lack sufficient items to measure the dimensions of engagement, learning skills, relevance, critical thinking and communication skills, and the question of teaching and learning quality in terms of construct validity (Oon et al., 2017; Padgett, 2021). In addition, Padgett (2021) found that SETs were mediums through which students complained about feelings of unpreparedness for standardized tests rather than mediums for disclosing their perceptions of teacher effectiveness and classroom engagement.

Faculty Trauma

Descriptions of the impact of SETs on the lives of faculty are emotive, with descriptions of “The Tail Wagging the Dog” (Miles & House, 2015), “12 Years a Servant” (Mowatt, 2019), and “Walking on Eggshells” (Carmack & LeFebvre, 2019), to name a few. Suffice it to say that the toll on faculty is reflected through essays such as the reflexive essay where Mowatt (2019) highlights a form of racialized intellectual violence that is “heaped upon faculty of color based on a content analysis of the author’s negative and potentially racially motivated SETs over the span of a 12-year career” (2019, p. 109). Mowatt problematizes some derogatory notions presented by students in SETs and how these comments shaped his experience in academia.

Lindahl and Unger (2010) point out that cruel comments reflect the collection process and the persistence of the student-as-consumer metaphor. Vaillancourt (2013) shows that students aggress against professors through poor teaching evaluations, with threatened egotism among individuals with high self-esteem being associated with more aggression, especially when coupled with high narcissism. In reflecting on the impact of the cruelty of student comments, Carmack and LeFebvre (2019) propose support for faculty dealing with the hurtful comments and to help faculty devise plans about how to proactively engage in meaning-making processes that are not paralyzing. However, this proposal does not consider the underlying flaws with SETs in the biases toward instructors they reproduce in the first place.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), was created initially to address the issues plaguing intersecting discriminatory issues, such as those against black women where both gender and race were discriminatory factors. The purpose of intersectionality is to increase advocacy efforts and promote change toward a more egalitarian system (Coaston, 2019). The concept centers around multiple identifying factors, including but not limited to gender, race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, playing a role in the identity and, ultimately, the discrimination of people.

Gender is a significant category in terms of SETs biases (Chávez & Mitchell, 2020; Kreitzer & Sweet-Cushman, 2021; Miles & House, 2015). Specifically, SETs are more sensitive to students’ gender bias and grade expectations than they are to teaching effectiveness, with the resultant effect that gender biases can be large enough to cause more effective instructors to get lower SETs scores than less effective

instructors (Boring, 2017; Chávez & Mitchell, 2020; Joye & Wilson, 2015; Kreitzer & Sweet-Cushman, 2021; Miles & House, 2015). Rodriguez et al. (2018) argue that SETs are a key tactic for justifying and maintaining white male dominance in US higher education through the deployment of technologies of power, for example, in the decisions on what questions to include, when students are requested to fill out the SETs, and the analyses and interpretations colleagues produce during tenure decisions. This may be especially true in fields that are perceived as “male” or are male-dominated. For example, a meta-analysis by Felkey and Batz-Barbarich (2021) found that SETs disproportionately and negatively impact female professors in economics versus other social sciences.

Gender intersections with age and race are prominent in the literature (Boring, 2017; Chávez & Mitchell, 2020; Kreitzer & Sweet-Cushman, 2021; Wilson et al., 2014). Female professors appear to be more negatively affected by SETs than male faculty, with lower ratings (Chávez & Mitchell, 2020; Kogan et al., 2010; MacNell et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2014) that are unrelated to the instructor’s ability, demeanor, or attitudes, such as non-instructor-specific categories of instructor/course, course, and technology, in identical online courses with almost no opportunity for variation (Mitchell & Martin, 2018).

Further scrutiny in the literature search reveals a gap in the study of SETs biases in relation to religion. Fan et al. (2019) found statistically significant bias effects attributable to both gender and culture and their interactions. The results show a statistically significant bias against women and faculty with non-English language backgrounds. However, no specific data were reported on religious background. Gaps in the research in terms of SETs biases are in the areas of (a) disability, (b) nonverbal behaviors, (c) political beliefs, (d) religion, (e) year of degree/study, and (f) sexuality.

Discussion of Alternatives to SETs from the Literature

Recognizing the limitations of SETs (Annan et al., 2013; Borch et al., 2020; Boysen, 2015; James et al., 2015; Keeley et al., 2013; Ray et al., 2018; Stark & Freishtat, 2014), several scholars have suggested alternatives to SETs (Knol et al., 2013; Martin, 2016; Spooren et al., 2013; Vaughan, 2020; Wibbecke et al., 2015). Alternatives to SETs are presented in Table 2, together with recommendations for improving SETs extracted from the articles.

Table 2
Recommendations for Alternatives to SETs or for Improving SETs

Recommendations	Contributing authors	Corresponding articles
Feedback cycles/multiple SETs/multimodal	Berk, 2005; Byrne & Donlan, 2020; Dewar, 2011; Wright & Jenkins-Guarnieri, 2012	Presenting a validated mid-semester evaluation of college teaching to improve online teaching; student evaluations of teaching: combining the meta-analyses and demonstrating further evidence for effective use; survey of 12 strategies to measure teaching effectiveness; helping stakeholders understand the limitations of SET data: Are we doing enough?
Omnidirectional consultative feedback (self/peer/instructor)	Knol et al., 2013; Martin, 2016; Spooren et al., 2013; Vaughan, 2020; Wibbecke et al., 2015	Clinical educator self-efficacy, self-evaluation and its relationship with student evaluations of clinical teaching; gender, teaching evaluations, and professional success in political science; experimental effects of student evaluations coupled with collaborative consultation on college professors’ instructional skills; on the validity of student evaluation of teaching: the state of the art; improving teaching on the basis of student evaluation: integrative teaching consultation
Portfolios	James et al., 2015; Shah et al., 2020; Stark & Freishtat, 2014; Stewart et al., 2018	Summative and formative evaluations of marketing teaching portfolios: a pedagogical competence-based rubric; Using the sampling margin of error to assess the interpretative validity of student evaluations of teaching; an evaluation of course evaluations; influence of improved teaching practices on student satisfaction ratings for two undergraduate units at an Australian University

STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF TEACHING IN DECOLONIAL PRAXIS

Recommendations	Contributing authors	Corresponding articles
Narrative or qualitative feedback	Asare & Daniel, 2018; Darwin, 2012; Gomes & Ma, 2020; Lazos 2012	Engaging expectations: measuring helpfulness as an alternative to student evaluations of teaching; gender, ethnicity and teaching evaluations: evidence from mixed teaching teams; are student teaching evaluations holding back women and minorities?: The perils of “doing” gender and race in the classroom; factors influencing response rates in online student evaluation systems: A systematic review approach; moving beyond face value: re-envisioning higher education evaluation as a generator of professional knowledge
Online content-analysis methods that can read and detect bias	Buskist & Hogan, 2010; Wallace et al., 2019	She needs a haircut and a new pair of shoes: handling those pesky course evaluations; the state of the literature on student evaluations of teaching and an exploratory analysis of written comments: who benefits most?
Real-time or weekly evaluations	Winchester & Winchester, 2012	If you build it will they come?: Exploring the student perspective of weekly student evaluations of teaching
First day of class activities – covering the syllabus in a welcoming manner, ending class early, avoiding first day of class homework improved first impressions of professors	Joye & Wilson, 2015	Professor age and gender affect student perceptions and grades
Gender-balanced teaching teams to reduce gender stereotyping with teaching efforts, bias training and anti-bias SET language	Boring, 2017; Fan et al., 2019; Peterson et al., 2019	Gender biases in student evaluations of teaching; gender and cultural bias in student evaluations: why representation matters; mitigating gender bias in student evaluations of teaching; interventions designed to reduce implicit prejudices and implicit stereotypes in real world contexts: a systematic review
Universities to provide affirmative evidence that SETs do not have a disparate impact on women, underrepresented minorities, or other protected groups and in the absence of such specific evidence, SET should not be used for personnel decisions	Rodriguez et al., 2018	Student evaluations of teaching (mostly) do not measure teaching effectiveness; student evaluations of teaching are an inadequate assessment tool for evaluating faculty performance; student evaluations of teaching: Phrenology in the 21st century?
Universities should deter from telling women to lean in and to perform better in the current system and toward developing better metrics of teaching effectiveness	Martin, 2016	Gender, teaching evaluations, and professional success in political science
Close the feedback loop to students improving learning	Stowell et al., 2012	Comparison of online and classroom-based student evaluations of instruction; whose feedback? A multilevel analysis of student completion of end-of-term teaching evaluations
Change SETs from anonymous to confidential	Kogan et al., 2010	Student evaluations of teaching: perceptions of faculty based on gender, position, and rank
Reinforce student responsibility and accountability in providing feedback	Lindahl & Unger, 2010; Wallace et al., 2019	Cruelty in student teaching evaluations; the state of the literature on student evaluations of teaching and an exploratory analysis of written comments: who benefits most?
Use of grade targets to limit grade inflation	Love & Kotchen, 2010	Grades, course evaluations, and academic incentives
Peer-prediction SETs	Tomes et al., 2019; Schönrock-Adema et al., 2013	Prediction-based student evaluations of teaching as an alternative to traditional opinion-based evaluations; “What would my classmates say?” An international study of the prediction-based method of course evaluation
Policy makers should clarify SETs primary purpose i.e., course improvement or faculty promotion and tenure	Chapman & Joines, 2017	Strategies for increasing response rates for online end-of-course evaluations
SETs should be conducted on aspects of teaching that can be changed versus aspects of teaching and course content that cannot be changed	Sohr-Preston et al., 2016	Professor gender, age, and “hotness” in influencing college students’ generation and interpretation of professor ratings
Norming of student evaluations to establish non-instructional factors impacting student evaluations such that the professor can then be compared to an appropriate reference group (e.g., black male professors)	Nargundkar & Shrikhande, 2014	Norming of student evaluations of instruction: impact of non-instructional factors

The majority of the recommendations do little to extricate SETs from notions of “whiteness” and “maleness” as the norm and westernized hegemonies of education for primarily economic development. Scholars (Boring, 2017; Vaughan, 2020; Winchester & Winchester, 2012) encourage alternatives to SETs that re-imagine the dynamic inter-relationships between students and each other, students and instructors, and students and the content where student learning is assessed as part of an iterative process of praxis (Freire, 2014), such as reflection and construction of shared meaning at a program level. As can be seen from the literature, SETs may enact colonial violence in ideological, knowledge, and sociocultural homogenization.

Implications for OT

Decolonial and transformative efforts in education are focused on unsettling the westernized hegemony of the canon and academy in ways that attempt to “actively transform knowledge rather than consume it” (Giroux, 2011). These efforts run counter to neoliberal notions of the commoditization of education for extractive economic development. Located at the bend of the decolonial turn (Maldonado-Torres, 2011) is decolonial praxis that serves to open up discussions through decolonial epistemic perspectives that depart from reproducing and re-inscribing hegemonies. Hence, we see that SETs are located in notions of teaching where learning and teaching are reduced to pre-given ways of transmitting knowledge rather than to a relational process in which subjects “talk” (Mastrella-de-Andrade & Pessoa, 2019) and find out ways to discover, practice, choose, learn, and grow. The deployment of SETs raises questions about the relationships between the knower, those who supposedly “know not,” and the known in the ultimate question of education.

In terms of OT decolonial praxis, critical reflexivity is situated in critical OT (Giroux, 2011; Guajardo et al., 2015; Hammell & Iwama, 2012) as examining the dynamism and contradictions in the production and reproduction of knowledge. It alerts us to the implicit and explicit pitfalls, contradictions, tensions, values, and assumptions of OT theorizing, research, and practices through diverse historical, political, economic, and sociocultural perspective-making for critical OT praxis. Critical OT, as defined by Hammell and Iwama (2012), is a form of practice that requires diligent reflexivity and recognizes the impact of social, political, and economic inequities. Guajardo et al. (2015) express that to employ critical occupational therapy, therapists must question methods of thinking and the construction of knowledge. “Critical here means questioning the method of thinking as the main aspect of knowledge construction. To be critical is to interrogate the assumptions of occupational therapy, questioning that which is considered the obvious and the natural” (Guajardo et al., 2015, p. 7). Critical OT does not solely interrogate the pervasive inequities in society and the subsequent impact on the individual but also “involves questioning from where, which and how knowledge emerges, i.e., the critical itself becomes a form of knowledge” (Guajardo et al., 2015, pp. 7–8).

Therefore, therapists and educators in occupational therapy are called to engage in reflexivity: critically reflecting on the institution of education and reexamining the hierarchies of education, teaching practices, and the evaluations thereof. “Only the privileged can indulge in theory that minimizes oppressive economic, cultural, religious, social, political, legal, and policy constraints in peoples’ lives” (Hammell & Iwama, 2012, p. 388). To this end, we must engage in decolonial praxis in OT, working toward actively dismantling colonial matrices of power and oppression, decentralizing westernized ideologies, and creating space for other ways of knowing and doing (Saúde et al., 2021). According to Serman et al. (2022), decoloniality or anti-racism must be engaged at every level of education: as

educators, researchers, and institutionally. Decolonizing institutions of higher education includes how we evaluate teaching and learning as well as how we propagate knowing, being, and relating (Mignolo, 2014).

Decolonizing education in the pursuit of critical OT requires that pedagogy facilitate perspective-taking and drawing parallels between knowledge generated by Westernized and non-Westernized communities (Simaan, 2020). Therefore, we need to:

educate students to be critical agents, to learn how to take risks, engage in thoughtful dialogue and address what it means to be socially responsible. Pedagogy is not about training; it is about educating people to be self-reflective, critical, and self-conscious about their relationship with others and to know something about their relationship with the larger world. (Giroux, 2011)

As our findings suggest, SETs, as evaluations, are ill-designed as a mechanism in decolonial education and critical OT and are counterintuitive to decolonial praxis. It must be acknowledged that while SETs are ill-designed and inaccurately measure learning, they are a small piece of the larger systemic issue of coloniality in institutions of higher education.

Conclusion

This narrative review examines SETs by drawing on 44 articles that met the inclusion criteria. Myriad biases were found in the literature, as shown in the Appendix and Table 1. Table 2 makes recommendations for alternatives to SETs or for improving SETs as a mechanism of teacher evaluation.

As OT educators, we are challenged to examine transformative pedagogy for learning and interrogate power and equity in the classroom. SETs are juxtaposed with the ideals of transformative pedagogy in arguments of education in neoliberal economies and encourage the re-imagining of an ecological university (Barnett, 2017) that is responsive to the ideals of the context where learning communities can flourish with creativity, curiosity, risk-taking, and innovation for the well-being of society.

The challenge of further work is to interrogate critical issues related to SETs as a structural and institutionalized mechanism that may perpetuate asymmetries and biases in entrenching relations of westernized hegemonies. Efforts need to be galvanized to unsettle and explore possible alternatives to SETs in critical decolonial efforts for the transformational work of resistance, restoration, and repair in OT educational efforts, and steer away from replicating faulty mechanisms like SETs. SETs have become venues for student opinions and complaints rather than reflecting on the learning process and student learning (Padgett, 2021).

In conclusion, the purpose of this narrative review is to use SETs as an example to explore the entrenching of westernized hegemonies in higher education and subsequent ontological-epistemic violence on the learning journey. We encourage OT communities of practice to re-examine the continued use of SETs through a lens of OT decolonial praxis in the hope that change can be actualized through the making of voice as part of liberatory efforts by scholars, scholar-practitioners, activists, and community knowledge bearers.

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Appendix

Articles Identifying Biases in SETs

Authors	Article Title	Year	Category	Theme
Adams, M., & Umbach, P.	Nonresponse and online student evaluations of teaching: understanding the influence of salience, fatigue, and academic environments	2012	Other biases by students	Nonresponse biases and response rate
Annan et. al	An integrative review of student evaluations of teaching: implications for evaluation of nursing faculty	2013	SET biases in processes	Methodological
Aruguete et al.	The effects of professors' race and clothing style on student evaluations	2017	Bias against instructors	Appearance/Dress
Bacon et al.	Nonresponse bias in student evaluations of teaching	2016	Other biases by students	Nonresponse biases and response rate
Balam, E. M., & Shannon, D. M.	Student ratings of college teaching: a comparison of faculty and their students	2010	SET biases in processes	Class size
Boysen, G. A.	Uses and misuses of student evaluations of teaching: the interpretation of differences in teaching evaluation means irrespective of statistical information	2015	SET biases in processes	Methodological
Carter, R. E.	Faculty scholarship has a profound positive association with student evaluations of teaching—except when it doesn't	2016	Bias against instructors, Other biases by students	Teaching position, Grade expectations, Tuition costs
Chatelain, A. M.	The effect of academics' dress and gender on student perceptions of instructor approachability and likeability	2015	Bias against instructors	Appearance/Dress
Chávez, K., & Mitchell, K.	Exploring bias in student evaluations: gender, race, and ethnicity	2020	Bias against instructors	Bias against females
Clayson, D. E.	Initial impressions and the student evaluation of teaching	2013	Bias against instructors	Lasting first impressions
Clayson, D. E., & Haley, D. A.	Are students telling us the truth? A critical look at the student evaluation of teaching	2011	Other biases by students	Honesty/falsified evaluations
Culver et al.	How students' intellectual orientations and cognitive reasoning abilities and may shape their perceptions of good teaching practices	2021	Other biases by students	Perception of "good teaching"
Dewar, J. M.	Helping stakeholders understand the limitations of SRT data: Are we doing enough?	2011	SET biases in processes	Class size
Dickenson, A.	Communicating with the online student: The impact of e-mail tone on student performance and teacher evaluations	2017	SET biases in processes	Email tone
Esarey, J., & Valdes, N.	Unbiased, reliable, and valid student evaluations can still be unfair	2020	Other biases by students	Tuition costs
Estelami, H.	The effects of survey timing on student evaluation of teaching measures obtained using online surveys	2015	SET biases in processes	Timing of evaluations
Galbraith et. al	Are student evaluations of teaching effectiveness valid for measuring student	2012	SET biases in processes, Other	Class size, Perception of "good teaching"

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	learning outcomes in business related classes? A neural network and Bayesian analyses		biases by students	
Gonyea et al.	An evaluation of the relationship between instructor appearance and college Student Evaluations of Teaching	2018	Bias against instructors	Appearance/Dress
Goodman et al.,	The effect of incentives and other instructor-driven strategies to increase online student evaluation response rates	2015	SET biases in processes	Incentives
Hill, M. C., & Epps, K. K.	The impact of physical classroom environment on student satisfaction and Student Evaluation of Teaching in the university environment	2010	SET biases in processes	Physical environment
James et al.	Using the sampling margin of error to assess the interpretative validity of student evaluations of teaching	2015	SET biases in processes	Methodological
Jaquett et al.	The effect of extra-credit incentives on student submission of end-of-course evaluations	2016	SET biases in processes	Incentives
Joye, S. W., & Wilson, J. H.	Professor age and gender affect student perceptions and grades	2015	Bias against instructors	Age
Keeley et al.	Investigating halo and ceiling effects in student evaluations of instruction	2013	SET biases in processes	Methodological
Kreitzer, R. J., Sweet-Cushman, J.	Evaluating Student Evaluations of Teaching: a review of measurement and equity bias in SETs and recommendations for ethical reform	2021	Bias against instructors	Bias against females
Laws et al.	Student evaluations of instruction: when are enduring first impressions formed?	2010	Bias against instructors	Lasting first impressions
Lazos, S. R.	Are student teaching evaluations holding back women and minorities?: The perils of “doing” gender and race in the classroom	2012	Bias against instructors	Personality
McClain et al.	Honesty on Student Evaluations of Teaching: effectiveness, purpose, and timing matter!	2018	Other biases by students	Honesty/falsified evaluations
Miles, P., & House, D.	The tail wagging the dog; An overdue examination of student teaching evaluations	2015	Bias against instructors, Other biases in processes	Bias against females, Class size
Miller, A., & Pearson, J.	Can I talk to you? The effects of instructor position, nationality, and teaching style on students’ perceived willingness to communicate and on teacher evaluations	2013	Bias against instructors	Teaching position, Pedagogy and teaching style
Nowell et al.	Assessing faculty performance using student evaluations of teaching in an uncontrolled setting	2010	SET biases in processes	SET format (online/hard copy)
Padgett, S. M.	“He just teaches whatever he thinks is important”: Analysis of comments in student evaluations of teaching	2021	Bias against instructors	Pedagogy and teaching style
Ray et al.	Rethinking SETs: Returning Student Evaluations of Teaching for student agency	2018	SET biases in processes	Methodological
Reid, L. D.	The role of perceived race and gender in the evaluation of college teaching on RateMyProfessors.Com	2010	Bias against instructors	Racial bias

Royal, K. D., & Stockdale, M. R.	Are teacher course evaluations biased against faculty that teach quantitative methods courses?	2015	SET biases in processes	Class subject
Smith, B. P., & Hawkins, B.	Examining student evaluations of black college faculty: Does race matter?	2011	Bias against instructors	Racial bias
Sohr-Preston et al.	Professor gender, age, and “hotness” in influencing college students’ generation and interpretation of professor ratings	2016	Bias against instructors	Age, Appearance/Dress
Stark, P., & Freishtat, R.	An evaluation of course evaluations	2014	SET biases in processes, Other biases by students	Methodological, Nonresponse biases and response rate
Stowell et al.	Comparison of online and classroom-based student evaluations of instruction	2012	SET biases in processes	SET format (online/hard copy)
Subtirelu, N. C.	“She does have an accent but...”: Race and language ideology in students’ evaluations of mathematics instructors on RateMyProfessors.com	2015	Bias against instructors	Accent, Racial bias
Tobin, R. G.	Too early for physics? Effect of class meeting time on student evaluations of teaching in introductory physics	2017	SET biases in processes	Class time
Uijtdehaage, S., & O’Neal, C.	A curious case of the phantom professor: Mindless teaching evaluations by medical students	2015	Further biases by students	Honesty/falsified Evaluations
Wallace et al.	The state of the literature on student evaluations of teaching and an exploratory analysis of written comments: Who benefits most?	2019	Bias against instructors	Personality
Zipser, N., & Mincieli, L.	Administrative and structural changes in student evaluation of teaching and their effects on overall instructor scores	2018	SET biases in processes	SET format (online/hard copy)