

Editorial

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As this special issue of the *Journal of Occupational Science* goes to press, the timing seems particularly pertinent to consider the intersection between how society and the rise of social problems impact upon and are influenced by the occupational lives that people, as individuals and collectives, lead. We begin this editorial by drawing readers' attention to two significant social problems that are currently being felt worldwide. The first is that of 'racism'; a long-standing, pervasive social harm that has, once again, been brought to the fore of our minds in recent weeks. In this special issue, the JOS editorial board release their statement on racism—A pledge to mobilize against racism—delineating what we are doing to raise awareness to and address this social problem.

Secondly, globally, we are in the midst of a global social issue—the COVID19 pandemic. For many of us, never before have we experienced such disruption to our everyday occupations. It seems that in all domains of life—work, school, home, leisure, and others—people are having to navigate the challenges of adapting their current occupations or adapting to new occupations as they seek to maintain the health and well-being of themselves and those around them. It is in times of such uncertainty that the complexity of occupation, as central to social life, becomes more visible to a range of societal actors.

Beyond individual occupational beings, global, national, and local institutions and governments around the world are handling this public health crisis in diverse and unequal ways that determine restrictions on, and enablers to, daily lives. Such forces, as well as other intersecting social determinants of inequality between and within nations, such as race, income, age, ethnicity, and ability/disability, are continually implicated in the production and perpetuation of inter-related social and occupational issues. The inspiration for this issue stemmed from the annual meeting of The Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP), held in New York in August 2019 (SSSP, 2020). This gathering of scholars sought to ‘illuminate the social in social problems’, and the editorial team of the *Journal of Occupational Science* contributed by introducing the concept of ‘occupation’ which, the meeting heard, is a socio-political phenomenon through which social problems (e.g., land colonisation, inequities associated with migration) can be studied and transformed (Laliberte Rudman et al., 2019; Simaan & Nayar, 2019).

Occupational scientists are increasingly engaging in research regarding occupation as centred in and arising from social problems—be they economic, political, and/or cultural. In seeking to understand how occupations are defined, valued, and supported differently in diverse contexts, occupational scientists are committed to supporting social justice for all. This current issue of the *Journal*, therefore, goes to the heart of concerns regarding deprivation and marginalisation in daily occupations (i.e., occupational injustice and threats to occupational rights) impacting what people actually do in everyday life, and how daily life occupations are shaped by and shape social conditions. Comprising a collection of eight feature articles; an occupational terminology piece; and an article, along with commentaries, for the ‘learning and knowing occupation’ section; from across the globe, this issue addresses social topics of poverty, migration, technology, economics, gender, decolonization, and health across the lifespan, from children to adults and older adults.

The first two articles discuss the social problem of poverty and its impact on the younger generation. The first of the articles comes from Aotearoa New Zealand. Leadley et al. (2020) argue that a complex transactional relationship exists between poverty, health, and occupation; and while the effects of persistent poverty on health is well known, how poverty affects children’s participation in and patterns of occupation has not been sufficiently considered. Using a qualitative case study research methodology, the findings of this paper reveal the ways in which poverty infuses all aspects of a child’s life; disrupting habits, roles, and family routines. Leadley et al. offer a compelling argument for considering child poverty to be occupationally unjust, which can lead to occupational deprivation.

Continuing the exploration of poverty among youth, the second article by Gonçalves and Malfitano (2020) critically highlights the implications of poverty as a social marker for youth living in a Brazilian *favela*, particularly in relation to urban mobility and the restriction of social rights, inclusive of a right to the city. Embracing the imaginary intent and potential of critical qualitative methodologies, these authors innovatively engaged youth living in a favela in participatory workshops to creatively produce their ideal city for youth. Analyzing the process and outcomes of these workshops, attending to historical, political, and discursive features, this paper highlights the complex, contradictory viewpoints the youth held about favelas and favela dwellers, and reveals how the stigma associated with favelas came to be reproduced by the youth. In highlighting the complex ways stigma is perpetuated and its implications for the everyday lives and urban mobility of the youth, Gonçalves and Malfitano convincingly argue for the importance of open participatory dialogue as a first step in

“creating a new culture that seeks to overcome such stigmas in favor of diversity and conditions of more justice and access to rights for all” (p. 322)

Poverty is the focus of a third paper authored by Peter and Polgar (2020), who present accounts of the lived experiences of people on social assistance programme in Ontario, Canada. The authors utilise a critical narrative analysis to discuss the influence of social and policy drivers on the occupational possibilities of people receiving social assistance. Their findings, interpreted within a governmentality frame, reveal how participants’ experiences were influenced by the social system, the community, and personal factors. Peter and Polgar concluded that, within a broader neoliberal context, those who receive social assistance faced boundaries upon access to opportunities and resources to make choices about their daily lives and their participation in occupations. The authors argue that to understand and ameliorate occupational injustices related to poverty, occupational scientists should explore social and political processes and their expression, in the lived experiences of people living in poverty.

The next two articles are concerned with the topic of migration. Previous special issues of the *Journal of Occupational Science* have been dedicated to furthering understandings of occupation among immigrants and refugees; however, the work by Mayne-Davis et al. (2020) and Delaisse and Huot (2020) challenge researchers to consider ‘how’ choice of methodology can shed new light on better understanding this social issue. Mayne-Davis et al. undertook a critical discourse analysis of Australian newspapers with the aim of exposing and challenging discourses that construct and shape the occupational possibilities for refugees and asylum seekers within the Australian context. Their findings reveal that contemporary discourses actually serve to disempower this population and the scope of occupational possibilities available to them; ultimately, justifying refugees and asylum seekers’ exclusion from society. The authors argue that these discourses “should be and can be challenged” (p. 342) for the purpose of creating more equitable experiences of health and well-being for all people.

Moving from Australia to Canada, Delaisse and Huot’s (2020) paper reviews the global migration research that has been published in the *Journal of Occupational Science*. While previous reviews of the migration literature have focussed on the findings of those papers, this current review set out to examine the theories that have been used in the discipline to study migration and found inconsistencies in the selection, or application, of theory. In response, the authors argue that research does not occur in a theoretical vacuum and, therefore, posit the use of Lefebvre’s theory of ‘production of space’ as a framework for studying occupation in a migration framework. While the current global pandemic has temporarily curtailed the mass movement of people across international borders, migration is one social topic that will endure in research. Thus, as the authors argue, developing a strong theoretical base for future migration studies within occupational science would serve to further deepen the knowledge base, as well as the relevance of this knowledge to other disciplines and to the transformation of relevant social practices, systems, and policies.

One field that has seen tremendous changes, and continues to develop, is that of technology. Technology can have a profound influence on how people engage in occupations and their social environment; although sometimes keeping up with changes in technology can be a challenge. Holthe et al. (2020), however, found the opposite. These researchers employed a critical occupational perspective on assisted living older adults’ user engagement in technology research. The study was carried out in Norway and findings revealed that older adults actively participated in offering their opinions regarding their requirement for technology to support their living needs. The authors argue that “Older adults in assisted

living are important stakeholders in research concerning them as a user group” (p. 387) and challenge ageist stereotypes that emerge from a space of sociocultural assumptions about older adults in assisted living as frail and unable to participate.

Gender inequity is a long-standing social issue, the implications of which can be both revealed, and reproduced, through various dimensions of occupation. Davis and Greenstein (2020), from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at George Mason University, engage with occupational science scholarship in their analysis of data addressing housework performance and gender from the American Time Use Study. Using the Great Recession as a time point marked by significant economic and labour force participation shifts, they address how economic conditions were associated within changes in time allocated to housework by both genders and also explored whether changes were associated with state level differences in employment opportunities and social policies. In addition to finding changes in time allocated to housework by both genders, their analysis suggests that gender ideologies have a significant impact on time invested in housework. Overall, this paper provides an illustration of the importance of placing individual-level and gender variations in occupational performance within socio-cultural and economic determinants, as a means to understand social processes through which occupational inequities are reproduced.

Addressing another long-standing, pervasive social issue, specifically that of inequities endured by Indigenous peoples, Ryan et al. (2020) draw upon Indigenous Standpoint Theory and cultural interface to enact a decolonising methodological approach to documentary analysis that privileges Indigenous knowledge and culture. With a focus on revealing and deepening understanding of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enact advocacy in an on-line platform, this documentary analysis of eight Facebook pages provides insights into advocacy as an occupation. In particular, Ryan et al. examine how advocacy was enacted as a decolonizing occupation to address systemic issues and power relations, particularly in relation to institutional, social, and interpersonal racism, and also created a space for participation in cultural occupations in ways that promoted collective health and well-being.

In further exploring the use of occupational terminology, Drolet et al. (2002) offer a critical review of the current climate crisis through the lens of intergenerational occupational justice. Climate change is an issue impacting society and, in this paper, Drolet et al. challenge readers to question the legitimacy of their occupational desires if, indeed, these desires negatively impact the future of the ecosystem and the occupational rights and choices of future generations. The authors present their response to this question through an ethical reflection on the notion of intergenerational occupational justice and the conceptual clarification of five concepts: occupational needs, occupational desires, occupational choices, occupational rights, and occupational duties. This is a thought provoking article that calls readers to engage in an occupational revolution in tackling this global social problem.

The Learning and Knowing section profiles explicit projects and research that extend what can be learned and known from all occupational science research, including each of the papers in this Special Issue. Simaan (2020a) describes an approach to occupational science education based on Global South communities’ experience of occupational apartheid and their response to this type of occupational injustice. His paper contributes critical reflections for decolonizing occupational science education, given its roots in Northern and Western perspectives. Drawing on liberatory pedagogical theory in occupation-based learning, Simaan illuminates a classroom activity using his research on occupations associated with olive growing in Palestine. The innovative and experiential activity engaged students to develop

insights into olive picking and processing where these trees grow in Britain. The experience was a powerful way for Western-based learning and knowing how occupational justice, occupational injustice, and related concepts may be understood and developed in Global South communities. In response, Townsend (2020) and Gibson and Farias (2020) offer their commentaries on the timeliness of Simaan's contribution and offer suggestions for further developing his ideas for education.

Rounding out this issue, Simaan (2020b) offers a review of the book *Research, political engagement and dispossession: Indigenous, peasant and urban poor activism in the Americas and Asia* (Kappor & Jordan, 2019). The book discusses innovative and cooperative empirical approaches linking knowledge construction with activism, and social and political transformation. Simaan contends that the need for more truly collaborative empirical methodologies and methods in occupational science, which lead to social and political change for marginalised communities around the world, makes this book a must read.

Within current socio-political conditions marked by persistent social inequities, it is imperative to move forward in enacting calls to develop occupational science as a socially responsive discipline, committed to raising awareness of and responding to occupational injustices and threats to occupation as a human right (Farias & Laliberte Rudman, 2016; Hocking & Whiteford, 2012). Attending to social problems is a key aspect of moving forward.

We would like to close this editorial by extending our thanks to all those involved in helping to get this issue to print—the authors, reviewers, editorial, and production staff. We recognise that many industries and businesses have been impacted by COVID19 and we are grateful to all those who have worked with us to bring this issue to you, the JOS readers.

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