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## **Introduction to the Anti-Racism Virtual Issue of the Journal of Occupational Science**

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The anti-racism virtual issue of the *Journal of Occupational Science* (JOS) came about after the Editorial Board expressed its commitment to anti-racist work, publishing the position statement ‘*A Pledge to Mobilize Against Racism*’ (Stanley et al., 2020). In this statement, the Board promised to republish a collection of articles to stimulate critical reflection on the contribution occupational scientists can make to exposing and countering racism in everyday doing. To prompt a more nuanced discussion, the authors of the selected articles were invited to submit an updated commentary explicitly positioning their work in relation to anti-racism, which will be added to the ‘supplementary material’ of each article as they are finalized. The intent of this collection is to call attention to racism and its impact on individuals’ doing and society by making these reflections and knowledge freely downloadable for everyone, from <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rocc20/27/s1?nav=toCList>.

The virtual issue also brings together scholars involved in anti-racist activism who have been asked to write a commentary about the ‘*A Pledge to Mobilize Against Racism*’ (2020) and some the articles republished in this virtual issue, providing critical reflections and ways to move forward about cultivating anti-racist practices (see for example Kronenberg’s contribution to this issue titled ‘*Commentary on JOS Editorial Team’s Position Statement*’). As such, the anti-racism virtual issue helps meet a pressing need to recognize the power of occupation in shaping and reproducing social ideologies, attitudes, and behaviors. We, the authors, urge all occupational scientists to build on this knowledge and continue learning about racism to better

understand and address how its different dimensions manifest through occupation and everyday life.

To contextualize the virtual issue, we first provide a definition of racism connected to two powerful Western ideologies; individualism and objectivity. This positioning is intended to promote a broader understanding of racism as more than individual prejudice, but as a system of oppression deeply embedded in all realms of life. Secondly, we provide a brief description of how the articles collected for this virtual issue were selected and the rationale behind this process. Thirdly, we briefly present the articles included in this issue and how we have interpreted the texts as related to issues of anti-racism, such as decolonization/decoloniality, and occupational justice. Finally, we situate ourselves as scholars from the Global South, engaged in decolonial work at Western institutions, and provide some final reflections on our role as occupational scientists within a broader anti-racist agenda within academia and our communities.

Racism is a system of oppression into which we all are socialized from birth (Di Angelo, 2018), given that the power of socialization, occupations, everyday life, and perceptions of what is good/bad/healthy/unhealthy are (re)produced by the groups into which we are collectively socialized. Thus, racism is not something that is 'outside' us, but a system that is supported by ideology conveyed through, for example, policies and the media, and enacted in services and everyday practices that shape people's engagement in certain occupations and possibilities to engage in occupations in particular ways. These ideas are often internalized and unquestioned since they are continually reinforced by normalized practices, as well as the texts we read in school, political speeches, movies, stories, and advertising. Although social messages may contain relevant information, they tend to privilege certain forms of knowledge and what it means to be good/healthy, creating desirable occupations that position individuals in particular ways (e.g., responsible/irresponsible, active/passive) (Farias, 2020). In this way, racism enhances its power as it becomes the 'normal' way society functions, being implemented by legal authorities and other institutions, such as healthcare settings and academic institutions, that control and exert power. This power goes beyond individual intentions, as it is collectively reproduced as the 'normal' doing or common sense of society.

Occupational scientists are increasingly paying attention to the shaping of occupation linked to issues of injustice, including recent attention to the construction and dissemination of racism through everyday living in countries such as the United States of America (USA) (Lavalley & Robinson Johnson, 2020). This acknowledgement is seen as necessary and urgent due to latest and past events including police that has ended with the murder of unarmed Black people (see Black Lives Matter website for details: <https://blacklivesmatter.com/>). Supporting this increased awareness of the links between occupation and systems of oppression such as racism and colonialism, this virtual issue builds on theoretical understandings of Western ideologies such as individualism and objectivity as barriers to examining the political and social transformative nature of occupation (Farias & Laliberte Rudman, 2019; Laliberte Rudman, 2013). Such ideologies, as well as others embedded in Western societies, make us believe that choice resides within the individual and that it is possible to be objective and free of all bias, obscuring the cultural, historical, institutional,

epistemological, and structural dynamics in which racism occurs (Di Angelo, 2018). This implies that individuals are portrayed as disconnected from social relations of power and inherently capable of improving their health and social status, while marginalizing those who cannot afford (or refuse) to adopt the 'right' practices for staying healthy/productive/active (Farias, 2020; Kiepek et al., 2019). This virtual issue, therefore, encompasses the influence of colonization and Western ideologies on occupation, and issues of occupational justice and marginalization from all continents, bringing to light issues of systemic racism across the lifespan, from children, youth, to older adults.

We searched for published articles from 2010-2020 in the *Journal of Occupational Science* that connected racism to issues such as occupational justice and (de)colonization by showing awareness about the ways Western, white, middle-class perspectives perpetuate oppression and hierarchies of superiority/inferiority by taking up a broad range of perspectives about occupation and promoting critical thinking. We were also interested in collecting articles from diverse locations that could reflect how different colonial histories have constructed difference or otherness, superiority/inferiority, and racism in different ways, for example, by drawing lines between groups based on, for example, color, ethnicity, culture, religion, and/or language. The locations of the selected 22 articles represent countries located in Africa, Asia, South America, Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. The articles describe situations of injustice and oppression experienced by diverse populations, such as immigrant and refugee populations, African Nova Scotian women, Palestinian refugees, Palestinian olive farmers, marginalized young adolescents, Indigenous populations, African women, Māori people, and Black American youth. We are aware that this selection does not illustrate all issues that concern the shaping of human doing by systems of oppression such as racism, and that several articles do not explicitly forward a conceptualization of racism as described in this introduction, yet they have the potential to open up spaces for discussion, further research, and learning. Above all, these articles have the potential to shift from individual-centred understandings of racism as prejudice converted to action towards an understanding of the historical, cultural, and economic structures that support racism as a system connected to everyday doing.

The first six articles discuss racism and colonialism produced by the 17th and 18th century slave trade to the Americas (Beagan et al., 2011), migration (Adrian, 2013), deculturalization among Palestinian refugees (El-Qasem, 2019), and treatment of Indigenous families in Canada (Gerlach et al., 2014), Māori people in Aotearoa New Zealand (McNeill, 2017), and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia (Ryan et al., 2020). These articles collectively demonstrate how colonialism and enslavement forced individuals and communities to resist extinction of their cultural practices and spiritual occupations, deemed inferior or illegitimate from a Western perspective, and to survive systemic racism, discrimination, and economic and political marginalization.

Continuing the focus on resistive cultural occupations, Pyatak and Muccitelli (2011) reinterpret the term 'culture' through a postcolonial lens and young Black American's consumption and performance of rap music as a way to challenge the status quo. Reflecting on culture as an internalized system that may obscure discrimination, Stenersen et al. (2016)

describe how inherent racism does not surface, neither discussions regarding Norwegian culture or occupations, when constructing the ‘problem’ of the educational gap between Norwegian and immigrant children. Nicholls and Elliot (2018) reflect on how internalized racism can be expressed unconsciously against those whose lives are represented in research. Gibson and Farias’ (2020) commentary discusses the need for creating safe places in occupational science curricula to support understanding and affirmative action on all forms of oppression, including racism.

The next six articles represent some of the emerging work in occupational science that addresses issues of decoloniality and decolonization. Decoloniality refers to the process of liberation from structures left behind by Western imperialism after the actual colonization of lands ended (Alonso Bejarano et al., 2019). Such structures may include the ideologies of white supremacy, objectivity, and individualism, and the practice of racism and othering. In this context, white supremacy is a term that encompasses the taken-for-granted superiority of people defined and perceived as white and the practices/everyday doing based on this assumption (Di Angelo, 2018). As such, white supremacy does not refer to individuals but to the all-encompassing political, economic, and social system that privileges and assumes the ‘supremacy’ of a group over another. Decolonization refers to the process of liberating the land, resources, and institutions, such as academia and education, from the control of foreign colonizers (Alonso Bejarano et al., 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

The focus of these papers is on expanding scholarly consideration of occupation beyond the Western paradigm. Ramugondo (2015), Galvaan (2015), and Huff et al. (2018) provide new conceptualizations for challenging and transforming scholarship in occupational science founded on lived experiences and perspectives from the African continent. Magalhães et al. (2019a, 2019b) discuss the emergence of occupational science in non-English speaking countries, drawing attention to opportunities for decolonizing occupational science knowledge production to promote international dialogue. Simaan (2017) describes a decolonial ethnography to study olive-farming as an occupation within the context of settler-colonialism. Based on the olive-growing study, Simaan (2020) reflects on the need for occupational science curricula to be decolonized from the hegemony of western-centric ideas, and how occupational science education can grow and become more socially relevant by learning from Global South perspectives.

The following four articles relate to systemic racism by addressing the concept of occupational justice and occupational injustices experienced by marginalized groups in diverse settings around the world. Occupational injustice occurs when an external force beyond the individual limits participation in wanted or needed occupations (Whiteford et al., 2018a, 2018b). White supremacy and systemic racism can be examples of such forces that lead to some feeling entitled to participate in and dominate certain daily activities, such as leisure and employment, while others suffer discrimination, threats, and even violence when trying to take part in the same or equally relevant occupations. Billiard (2013) describes how Latino migrants in the USA are restricted from participating in society due to anti-migrant sentiments and discriminatory public policy. Focusing on inhabited spaces, Gonçalves and Malfitano (2020) and Pizarro et al. (2018a, 2018b) propose that Brazilian ‘favelas’ and

Chilean ‘campamentos’ can serve as social markers of poverty that hinder residents from accessing social life. Rivas-Quarneti et al. (2018) show how women’s experience of immigration in Spain can contribute to discussions about occupational justice in occupational science.

A red thread running through this social issue is the growing awareness of the links between systems of oppression such as racism and everyday life and doing. Another thread is the constant reminder that racism is a system that extends beyond individual prejudice and action, and like other forms of oppression, occurs when a group’s prejudice is assumed to be ‘normal’ and adopted by political, social, and institutional authorities. This compilation of articles also draws attention to the naturalization or internalization of racism by the oppressor and the oppressed, and its perpetuation by intergenerational patterns of occupational choices and engagement. Most of the articles also provide suggestions for how occupational scientists can challenge these occupational patterns and help others to re-examine their occupational possibilities (Laliberte, 2010) in light of historical colonialism, exploitation, oppression, and disadvantaged socioeconomic conditions. Importantly, although this compilation does not purport to be comprehensive, it is a relevant starting point for strengthening understandings of racial inequality and why this subject matters.

As scholars from the Global South (Santos, 2014), specifically from territories (Chile and Palestine) that are still suffering the consequences of colonization, we hope that the anti-racist virtual issue becomes a tool for critical reflection and discussion with colleagues and students in practice, research, and teaching settings. As racism continues to manifest in society, occupational scientists cannot dissociate or exempt themselves from historical structures such as colonialism and its western-centric ideologies. Otherwise, the field and all those associated with it will remain complicit in perpetuating the social construction of racism in occupational science. Discussing how racism is embedded in ourselves, in our discipline, teaching, and practice, and how we might be perpetuating white supremacy and colonial agendas, is essential to move forward. There are many approaches to anti-racist work and this compilation is a humble beginning; it is not comprehensive or perfect. We, therefore, invite you to read the republished articles and the updates provided by the authors, to reflect on current scholarship in occupational science, and consider how we might work together to transform the discipline and our communities into decolonized and anti-racist spaces.

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