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Inaugural Editorial: Help on the Way

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There can be little doubt that we are living in interesting times. Life in the United States has a bit of an apocalyptic feel these days, as we recover from multiple natural disasters, contend with political and social turmoil, witness the rise of government by social media, and face an increasing possibility of war in Asia. Yet, through all of this calamity, every day, people get up and go to work. In fact, for most of people, across most of their lives, work is the activity they spend more time on than any other activity except sleep. Work is central to how many people define themselves as individuals, not to mention being an important source of both material (pay, benefits, etc.) and symbolic (pride, emotional support, etc.) resources. However, work-related hazards also continue to present important threats to workers' safety, health, and well-being.

As a research scientist focusing on occupational health issues, my overarching career goal is to conduct scientific research that makes a meaningful contribution toward protecting and promoting worker safety, health, and well-being. Like most readers of this editorial, I am a member of a community of scholars, spanning multiple scientific disciplines, who share my dedication to addressing occupational health concerns. Over the years, I have been fortunate to work with and learn from so many of you, including (1) working as a graduate student under Lois Tetrick's supervision at Wayne State University, (2) writing the initial Occupational Health Psychology Training Grants at Portland State University with Leslie Hammer, (3) being involved with the development of the Society of Occupational Health Psychology (SOHP) and eventually serving as SOHP president, (4) serving as a member of the conference planning committee for the American Psychological Association/National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (APA/NIOSH) Work Stress and Health conference, (5) serving as a member of the NIOSH study section, and (6) co-editing several books on occupational health-related topics. At these and other stops along the way I have encountered so many incredible scientists who genuinely care about making the world a better place for workers and their families. As founding editor of this journal, I have a strong sense of

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obligation to this community that motivates my goal of establishing *Occupational Health Science* as an important journal in our field. With that obligation in mind, I would like to tell you a little about the history of the journal, where the journal is today, including our first issue, and where I would like to see the journal go in the future.

The Development of *Occupational Health Science*

Occupational Health Science arose as a discussion among four members of SOHP: Mo Wang, Paul Spector, Lois Tetrick, and me. Although some of us had discussed the journal idea informally prior to this, Lois, Mo, Paul, and I had a series of semi-formal group discussions in 2013 that culminated in a full journal proposal in 2014. I remember Paul Spector as being the person who really pushed us to consider developing the journal at the outset and Mo Wang deserves the credit for doing the hard work of shopping the proposal around to publishers and actually getting us to the point where we had a publication agreement between our publisher, Springer, and SOHP. Paul also deserves credit for convincing me to become the inaugural editor, even though I thought he would be a better choice (Thanks Paul!). Later, SOHP officers such as Tammy Allen and Lisa Kath were instrumental in finalizing the details of our publication contract with Springer. All of these people played important roles in helping to move the journal from being a loose idea to an actual functioning journal that accepted its first submission on July 5, 2016.

As Editor-in-Chief, I am pleased to be supported by an incredible team. At the editorial level, I am joined by Associate Editors Sharon Toker, Mindy Bergman, and Mike Ford. They are all very strong scholars who are smart, opinionated, and passionate about workers' health. I anticipate adding a fourth Associate Editor in the relatively near future, once we have a better sense of what type of AE expertise would be most useful. We also are supported by an advisory board composed of Paul Spector, Kevin Kelloway, Lois Tetrick, Leslie Hammer, Mo Wang, and Laura Punnett, all of whom have made constructive suggestions about the journal. I am particularly excited by the strength of our editorial board which contains many top scholars from around the world. In my first year of this effort, I have come to very clearly see how the strength of a journal stems directly from the quality of the editorial board that supports the journal, and I am grateful to have such a strong group of scholars involved with *Occupational Health Science*. We also have been supported by several Ad Hoc reviewers; the journal would not be where it is today without their participation. I encourage anyone reading this who is willing to get involved with the review process to contact me about reviewing for the journal. I also want to express how pleased I have been with the experience of working with our managing editor Stefan Einarson and everyone else at Springer; everyone involved has been both pleasant and professional to work with and have made my job much easier. Finally, I want to express my gratitude for the opportunity to work with Steven Rogelberg as an Associate Editor of the *Journal of Business and Psychology* under his leadership. Steven is my prototype of what a good editor should be and if I can be 50% as effective as he has been over time, the journal will be in great shape.

Aims and Scope

Occupational Health Science is a peer-reviewed journal dedicated to publishing leading edge scholarship on behavioral, social, and psychological aspects of occupational health. *Occupational Health Science* will interest academics as well as professionals in the fields of applied psychology, public health, occupational medicine, nursing, occupational safety, epidemiology, ergonomics, human resource management, organizational behavior, sociology, and economics. The distinctive features of this journal include a multidisciplinary approach, an international perspective, a translational/evidence-based practice focus, and a flexible approach that allows for both deductive and inductive articles. Seeking to integrate these attributes in the specific domain of occupational health science, published papers will build upon the subject area with important empirical and theoretical investigations that enhance understanding of phenomena related to worker safety, health, and well-being.

Occupational Health Science will be open to a diverse array of submissions. Examples of these include:

- Intervention studies (including both successful and unsuccessful interventions).
- Measure development studies focused on occupational health measures.
- Qualitative studies.
- Evidence-based recommendations for professional practice such as the description of an intervention program in practice.
- Dialogues/Debates over contemporary theoretical/practical/methodological issues.
- Brief research notes (e.g., with less emphasis on theory).
- Replication studies aimed at accumulating evidence on previously studied topics.
- Papers using an inductive approach that does not test theoretically-derived hypotheses.
- Articles that are more descriptive in nature, for example those that might illustrate current usage patterns of various stress-management techniques or family supportive programs.

Table 1 shows a representative list of potential topics (in no particular order of importance) derived from the call for papers for the biannual Work Stress and Health conference sponsored by The American Psychological Association, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and the Society for Occupational Health Psychology (http://www.apa.org/wsh/). Papers that do not fit clearly into one or more of these categories may be considered; authors are encouraged to contact the current Editor-In-Chief with any questions prior to submitting.

Many people have asked me questions about how I envision the journal fitting with other journals that publish occupational health work. When we developed the initial proposal for the journal, we acknowledged that there are other journals currently publishing occupational health science. Most of those journals have rejection rates approaching or exceeding 90%, suggesting that there is plenty of existing scientific content that can be developed into publishable papers. I also see the journal as a "blank slate" of sorts; it affords an opportunity to create an interesting new journal that complements the other very strong journals we already have in this field by adopting innovative new approaches. This might be through articles that address topics that

Table 1 Representative topics for articles submitted to *Occupational Health Science*

1. **Occupational Stress**. Environmental and individual factors that contribute to the stress process; moderators of stress-outcome relationships.

2. **Economic Factors and Occupational Health** (e.g., job insecurity, unemployment, income disparity, and financial stress).

3. **Occupational Health Interventions:** Organizational, individual, social policy level, and multilevel interventions; health promotion; integrated safety & health programs, cost-benefit analyses of occupational health interventions.

4. **Workplace Diversity and Discrimination:** Minority and Immigrant Workers, Age/Gender/Race/Ethnicity/Disability Discrimination, Occupational Health Disparities.

5. **Workplace Aggression:** prevalence, antecedents, and consequences of physical/verbal violence, harassment, bullying, incivility – prevalence, antecedents.

6. **The Employment Relationship:** Contract and temporary work; Self-employment; Seasonal Work; Under- and over-employment; unemployment; job insecurity.

7. **Work Schedules:** Part-time work; Night/evening work; Weekend schedules; irregular schedules; overtime; long work hours; flexible schedules; telecommuting.

8. **Human Resource Management and Benefits:** Health, pension, and other benefits; FMLA issues, Pay equity; Workers' compensation program issues; job accommodations.

9. **Work, Life, and Family:** Work-life balance; Work-family conflict; Child and dependent care; Formal and informal family supports; Positive spillover.

10. **Organizational Practices:** Lean production; Downsizing and resizing; Globalization; Outsourcing; Continuous improvement; Process reengineering; Emerging technologies.

11. **Job and Task Design:** Worker control; Work pace and work overload; Emotional labor; Physical demands.

12. **Social and Organizational Context:** Organizational climate and culture; Social support; Supervision and leadership; Group dynamics; Communication.

13. **High Risk Jobs and Populations:** Younger and older workers; Hazardous work environments; High-risk occupations.

14. **Traumatic Stress and Resilience:** Assessment, prevention, mitigation, and treatment of traumatic stress; Resilience; PTSD; Treatment seeking.

15. **Mental and Physical Health consequences of Job Stress:** Depression, Obesity, Substance abuse, Musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, and immune system function; Suicide.

16. **Sleep, Fatigue, and Work:** Effects of work schedules on sleep; Sleep disorders and medications; Health and productivity implications of sleep disruptions.

17. **Aging and Work Stress:** Job design for aging workers, Attitudes toward aging workers; Disability management and accommodations; Health benefit implications.

18. **Health Services and Health and Productivity Management:** Employee Assistance Programs; Vocational rehabilitation & counseling; Disability management.

19. **Organizational Climate, Management & Training:** Safety communication motivation and leadership, hazard identification and elimination, safety climate and culture, other specific aspects of climate related to occupational health (e.g., psychosocial safety, violence prevention, diversity, justice, family support).

20. **Professional and Educational Development:** Graduate/Undergraduate/Employee training in Occupational Health disciplines; Career development programs.

21. **Research Methodology:** Innovations in occupational health research design, measurement, methodology.

22. **Prevention / Intervention Methods and Processes:** Field intervention design, barriers, and challenges; Intervention evaluation/implementation methods and standards.

23. **Positive Aspects of Well-being.** Job satisfaction, work engagement, job involvement, positive work experiences, benefit finding.

24. **Individual Differences in Occupational Health:** personality, coping skills, demographic factors affecting occupational health outcomes.

Table 1 (continued)

25. **Occupational health and employee retention:** Health influences on turnover; Presenteeism; Absenteeism; Commitment; Organizational citizenship behaviors.

26. **Rehabilitation and accommodation for disabilities**: re-entry to the workplace after injury and illness; accommodation for workers with disabilities, especially those disabilities that were work-related.

27. **Accidents and injuries:** Environmental and individual factors related to workplace accidents and injuries.

28. **Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD):** Environmental and individual factors related to development of MSD.

29. **Health promotion:** The effectiveness of health promotion by organizations, for example, offering health programs for exercise or smoking cessation.

30. **Dissemination and Implementation Science:** Research approaches for translation of knowledge into practice, including identification of factors or methods affecting intervention adoption, scale up and sustainability.

might not fit neatly into one particular sub-discipline of occupational health research, through articles that use non-traditional methods, through special issues, and point-counterpoint type debates. I would encourage readers who have other creative ideas for submissions to please contact me as I am very open to your suggestions.

For example, one of the conversations we had during the process of developing the journal was around creating opportunities for shorter articles that might have less emphasis on theoretical development. When I invited people to join the editorial board, I mentioned the idea of being open to shorter papers as one we were considering, and everyone who commented about it strongly supported the idea. I think many of us experience a level of frustration with reading papers where it is clear that the lengthy theoretical rationale was a post hoc exercise to justify a particular set of analyses with a previously-existing set of data. I, like others, feel the that organizational science is compromised by practices that "place too little emphasis on cumulative theory building and testing and by contrast place too much emphasis on empirical studies having to test novel theory" and "encourage authors to produce results sections that are flattering to introduction sections (cf. Grote, 2016: 1)."

A good example of articles that might include less theory are those devoted to studying the prevalence of a phenomenon. Jex (2014) discussed this issue in an editorial for *Work & Stress*. Jex noted that in the absence of prevalence research, it is possible that researchers could be studying outdated concerns. I agree with Jex and note that well-executed and justified prevalence studies certainly can be included in *Occupational Health Science*. This is just an example of course, and other types of inductive studies also may be appropriate.

This does not mean that there is no need for theoretical development in occupational health psychology. Indeed, there is a strong need for studies that directly test proposed theoretical mechanisms as well as studies with research designs sufficient to capture those mechanisms. One example is research testing Conservation of Resources theory (e.g., Hobfoll, 1989) – an oft-cited theoretical model of stress-related occupational health phenomena. Despite widespread interest in COR, it is interesting to note that major portions of the theory are infrequently tested (cf. Halbesleben et al., 2014). So, I think there is room for more research that advances understanding of COR by directly testing its propositions and perhaps somewhat less of a need for research that simply cites COR as a justification for analyses.

Another important need in occupational health science research is efforts to find more parsimonious explanations for occupational health phenomena. A good recent example from organizational psychology is a recent paper by Gottfredson and Aguinis (2016), which investigated multiple mediating mechanisms proposed to account for the relationship of several types of leader behaviors (initiating structure, consideration, transformational leadership, contingent rewards) with followers' task performance and organizational citizenship behavior. This issue is important because numerous mediating mechanisms have been investigated in the prior leadership literature with little attempt to compare or integrate them. The authors showed that when multiple mediating mechanisms were considered, Leader-Member Exchange appeared to have the strongest mediating effects, suggesting its primacy in explaining the leader behavior follower outcome relationship. Thus, a literature with many competing explanations was reduced to a much more parsimonious model by directly comparing the various proposed mechanisms. Although Gottfredson and Aguinis (2016) relied on meta-analytic findings for their research, other scholars have developed additional methods for testing the relative contribution of variables to a predictive model (e.g., Tonidandel and LeBreton, 2011). I think such methods need to be used more frequently in occupational health work such as in research that compares multiple competing conceptual explanations for occupational health phenomena.

I also hope the journal can serve as an important outlet for organization-level intervention research. Interventions are obviously an important end-point for occupational health science. In particular, I think occupational health science is guided by an assumption that organizational-level interventions are needed but as many scholars have acknowledged, intervention research is messy and difficult and progress in scientific understanding comes at a slow pace. According to Cox et al. (2010)

"Unfortunately, research has shown that such organization-level interventions often fail to achieve the desired results. Indeed, one could maintain that at present little real progress is being made in intervention research. Whereas new interventions are continually being designed, their appeal and success does not seem to be on a par with the societal need for practically useful and effective interventions. It would appear that we do not need "more of the same"; rather, we should examine how the success of existing organization-level interventions can be enhanced, as well as focus on truly innovative approaches to improving worker health and well-being."

As Cox et al. note, truly innovative approaches are needed. I look forward to *Occupational Health Science* serving as an outlet where some of that innovative research can be published.

Finally, there has been a lot of attention in the literature in the recent past about issues related to replication (Open Science Collaboration, 2015) and questionable research practices (John et al., 2012), both of which require more attention in occupational health scholarship. Replication in particular has been on my mind for some time. First, I think the heavy emphasis on newness in research can be counterproductive; I think it is especially important that occupational health science continue to build a solid evidence base focused on findings shown to replicate across multiple studies. Second, it seems to me that research sometimes places too much emphasis on testing elaborate

statistical models with comparatively less attention to building incrementally on models supported in past research. My concern is not with modeling per se. but rather that studies sometimes seem to report tests of relationships among variables that are largely driven by their availability in a particular data set. Third, I think we need more systematic attention to issues related to how context affects findings (cf. Johns, 2006). Although I think it is well-recognized that occupations have distinct sets of demands and resources, I think our literature could be improved by more systematic attention to understanding how occupational context might affect which findings we should expect to replicate across which contexts. One example might be how the work-family concerns faced by lower income hourly workers may differ considerably from those of professional and managerial samples that dominate work-family research Sinclair et al. (2013).

The First Issue and Beyond

I think that our first issue demonstrates some examples of how we might respond to the challenges I raised above. We have 3 invited papers, all of which help move the literature forward in my view. Readers can also expect another round of invited papers in upcoming issues, all of which will address important issues to move the field forward.

In the very first paper accepted by the journal, Spector (2017) discusses the distinctions between inductive, abductive, and deductive methods and in particular highlights the need for more inductive research in occupational health science. Spector joins an increasingly large body of scholars who question the business-as-usual emphasis on deductive methods. For example, according to Locke (2017)

"Theories need to be the end result rather than the starting point of a research program. But our journals force people to do the opposite. You need a theory (or to pretend you have a theory) or theories to begin with. Then if it comes out, the implication is that you are done. The theory is proved; end of theory building. If you try any form of replication, you may be told that you have found nothing new. At the same time, everyone is demanding replication studies, but exact replication does not build theories (Locke, 2007).

Lots of bad things can happen under the deductive model. People have to start with theories that are not yet validated. They are pushed to stretch for models. As a long time reviewer I have seen authors come up with two or three or more different (unrelated to each other) theories to justify the same hypothesis; they probably think this raises the odds for them. It probably does. When you use the deductive method, the prediction has to come out or you are doomed. As everyone knows, negative results are not wanted. No wonder people are tempted to push the moral envelope. When you have a system that is not totally rational, do not expect everyone to act rationally."

The point of including Locke's comments is not to criticize deductive approaches but rather to highlight how they may not always be necessary or appropriate. Spector's

paper helps alleviate those concerns by suggesting some criteria for both conducting and evaluating inductive research.

We still like theory of course! In fact, Bakker and van Woerkom (2017) provide a productive integration of flow research with self-determination theory in order, in part, to help identify strategies to promote flow at work. I have always found flow research to be fascinating. One of my first graduate research papers (in Lois Tetrick's motivation seminar) was a proposed study of flow in basketball players! Thus, I particularly appreciated Bakker and van Woerkom's contribution as a way to weave together two somewhat disparate streams of research in ways that will hopefully stimulate further research on flow at work.

Dugan and Punnett (2017) provide an overview of dissemination and implementation (D&I) research. Although interventions are one of the downstream goals of occupational health science, we arguably lack systematic knowledge on how to implement interventions or how to disseminate the findings from interventions. Both of these gaps represent potentially sizable barriers to creating successful occupational health interventions. As Dugan and Punnett point out, efforts to improve D&I processes can be informed by empirical research aimed at identifying best practices that bridge the gap between research and practice. I see D&I research as a good example of a creative new topic that can be addressed in *Occupational Health Science* and the guidance provided in this article should be valuable to researchers planning large scale intervention studies.

We also have our first 2 empirical papers published in this issue. Pereira et al. (2017) examine the benefits of physical activity during vacation for school teachers and Ellis et al. (2017) examine the benefits of a supervisor focused wellness training program on supervisors' occupational health outcomes. Both of these papers exemplify the kinds of research I would like to see in *Occupational Health Science* as they examine practically important questions in contexts with clear occupational health concerns. I look forward to receiving more such submissions in the future.

Finally, Giumetti and Bulger (2017) provide a book review of a new undergraduate text by Schonfeld and Chang titled Occupational Health Psychology. I see this book as noteworthy contribution to the field of Occupational Health Psychology as it provides an important resource for both undergraduate and graduate education in occupational health psychology and in that way, is historically significant. Although I do not intend to have a regular book review section of the journal, I am definitely interested in proposals about further reviews of books that have similar kinds of significance to occupational health science.

What does the future hold for Occupational Health Science? Our first and fundamental goal is to survive. If we are still around in five years, on some level I will consider that a success. Beyond that, I hope to steadily increase the reputation of the journal over time as a journal-of-choice for occupational health-focused submissions. So far, our submission pattern seems favorable. Of the first 36 submissions with a completed disposition, 15 (42%) were desk rejected (i.e., rejected without review), 14 papers (39%) were rejected after review, 5 submissions (14%) were accepted, and 2 papers (6%) were withdrawn after a revise and resubmit decision. Some readers might be surprised by the number of desk rejections. In most cases, these were papers that clearly (and sometimes humorously) did not fit with the aims of the journal. Although I do not necessarily have good benchmarks for these figures, they seem generally

favorable to me and if we can maintain an acceptance rate somewhere around 15–20% in the next couple of years, I would consider that a success.

I hope we can move beyond surviving and toward thriving. To do that, I believe we need to engage in the following activities. First, I think we need to maintain and develop a high quality editorial board. In particular, I would like to increase the international diversity of our board and to increase membership from disciplines other than psychology. I welcome your suggestions of qualified individuals who can help us with those goals. Second, I think we need to continue working to offer high quality and timely reviews. I have been particularly impressed with our board so far, most people have accepted most of my invitations to review papers and most reviews have been completed in a timely fashion. I think we need to continue to strive toward making the review process as friendly and developmental as possible for authors and not simply serve as gatekeepers. Third, I want to continue to publish papers that will stretch the field and that challenge us to rethink old problems and that identify new understudied problems. Fourth, I intend to be open to creating special issues, particularly on topics/occupations that may not receive sufficient consideration otherwise or that might require a more multidisciplinary focus. We have a couple of great ideas in the pipeline, but can always use more, so please contact me with your thoughts. Finally, NIOSH (2015) has recognized the importance of the link between research and practice through its Research to Practice (r2p) initiative. I would like to see *Occupational Health Science* publish papers that help strengthen this link. I think this is an important step in achieving a long-term goal of disseminating science that will actually help create safer and healthier workplaces. I look forward to, with your help, striving to meet these challenges in the future.

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