President’s Welcome to the Special Issue

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When I first approached Psi Chi Journal Editor Dr. Debi Brannan with the idea of a special issue highlighting the role of psychological science in the workplace and life, the first case of coronavirus in Wuhan, China, was still nearly a world away. Now, as I write this during the summer of 2020, we inhabit a brand new world. In many ways our daily lives are more akin to something from a science fiction book. Some aspects of today remind me of the post plague existence in Ursula K. Le Guin’s The Lathe of Heaven, set in a Portland, Oregon. Her lead character’s dreams can change reality. Wishing there was an easier way to change reality? Psychological science is one of those ways.

During my 2019–2020 year as Psi Chi President, I have worked to highlight the great work done by psychological science as it applies to life. One of the major aspects of life is the workplace. During the pandemic, for many of us, the workplace and the home merged into one. In many ways this forced us to examine what makes the workplace conducive to success as we modified how work is done. Meanwhile, for the millions of health care workers, food industry employees, and essential service workers, work as they knew it went on, albeit under new stressful situations.

Regardless of pandemics, work is essential, and factors that can make work effective, productive, and satisfying are important to study. Thankfully, psychological research has been on it. From early studies showing how lack of definition and role ambiguity, boredom, and unpredictability can cause work stress, to recent work examining group dynamics in the workplace and translating basic research into applied settings, psychological research has shown its worth. Although a factor not acknowledged readily by all, nearly every work setting informs some form of psychology, whether it concerns leadership and management, recruiting and human resources, group processes, or motivation and effectiveness. Indeed, psychology is everywhere (#PsychEverywhere).

I am pleased to be able to welcome you to this 2020 Special Issue on “Psychological Science in the Workplace and Life.” Upon learning about the upcoming issue, Dr. Jennifer L. Hughes (Agnes Scott College, GA) volunteered to become the special invited editor. After numerous calls went out on social media, email, and word of mouth, we received 20 abstracts in December 2019 for potential publication. Ten of these were invited to be submitted as full manuscripts, of which eight articles were ultimately accepted for publication. Topics chosen to represent the diverse applications of psychology in this special issue include the effects of supervisors’ gratitude toward employees, sorting fact from fiction in the media, effects of parenthood on academic and work-related factors, socioeconomic influences on worker involvement in labor union activities, the feasibility of training Spanish-speaking Latinx adults in Mental Health First Aid, Chapman’s five love languages theory on predicting love and relationship satisfaction, how goals affect the search for happiness, and effects of app-delivered cognitive behavioral therapy.

Leveraging the contributions of psychology to the workplace and life, and fostering the application of psychology will benefit us all. Kudos to the contributors featured in this issue who exemplify the strong work taking place in this domain. May their exemplary work catalyze more of such research in the future.

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