

Editorial/Éditorial

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December perpetually reminds us to look back, to remember, to chart our experiences. This year, the world has turned in unexpected directions. Some say it has become unhinged. Deep lines were drawn in sands political, social, economic, cultural, and intellectual. The British departure from the European Union. Clinton v. Trump. The rise, perceived or real, of alt-right campaigns. Controversial responses from across the globe to Syrian refugees. Across these events, we've witness polarizing rhetoric reflective of extremist ideologies. Hardline decisions often made through narrow victory margins.

Many have argued that in this time of unprecedented access to information and knowledge, in this age of 'big data,' that democratic processes have become ironically overrun by a disregard for facts and neglect of research. Politics, post-truth, where facts and figures are wielded like a stick on a battered piñata. Emotional campaigns lobbying promises of hope through discourses of fear prove more powerful than scientific arguments and scholarly counsel. Facts are silenced. These are early days in a new era of academic work. This is a critical point to reflect on the impact, influence, and reach of our work in the social sciences and humanities. For us as education researchers, this is a moment to consider how our scholarship shapes the education of those who participate in

democratic institutions and who exercise the rights and responsibilities of a democratic life. How does education support and hinder our social consciousness, and the decisions it makes?

In the most recent US presidential election, one of the most stable indicators of voter support was level of education, arguably more than gender, culture, or income. The presidency could be predicted by the division between those who had a post-secondary degree and those who did not. Clearly, education matters. Education not only influences the outcomes of democratic processes and the ways we make sense of them, but more importantly, to our participation within democracies and the roles we play as engaged citizens. If John Dewey was correct, citizenship is a way of life, not a set of ideas or policies. Citizenship is larger than. It is more than voting. It supersedes knowledge of electoral systems and familiarity with particular political platforms. By the time one casts a ballot, or does not, it is too late. It is through education that authentic citizenship is possible.

In the 1930s, when Social Studies was born as a Canadian school subject, its *raison d'être* was the purposeful engagement of students with the world around them, a world that was rapidly trying to transform traditional Victorian beliefs about economics, government, technology, social life, and industry. Progressivist ideas sought to align schools more closely with contemporary life and were marshalled into a project intended to dismantle the “grand, old fortifying curriculum.” This curriculum, further, served as a simulacrum for the conviction that as the world turned and transformed, there were seminal ideas, texts, disciplines, and methods that represented an educated person. Yet contemporary Social Studies aims to dismantle these curricular conceptions to create an integrated approach to educating for life. If students are to face the world of the future, which is absolutely unknowable, and perhaps even terrifying, they should be educated to face the complex and rapidly-evolving world of the present intelligently. Students must look at the world around them and endeavour to make it a better place within which existence could unfold.

As we look ahead, to 2017 and the years to come, we pause to ask how our schooling systems prepare students to shape a better world. We reflect on the relationship between schools and citizenship within a democratic state. How can we eliminate the education divide, between those with higher education and not, to ensure all citizens participate with equal capacity in democracy? And, critical for our roles as education scholars,

what influence can our scholarship have in a democratic space of division, contested truths, and partial participation in the life of the body politic? As 2016 wanes, the way we address these questions and the way we use education to face the challenges before us move increasingly into the spotlight.