Editorial: In what spirit is our research and practice?

Approximately five years ago, this journal published a themed issue on the topic of *Religion in the Social Studies and Social Studies Education (Volume 19, Issue 2)*. The work represented a meaningful scholarly achievement in a broad sense of the term. It contained articles that related to approaches for teaching about religion, connected teaching about religion with social studies themes and clarified teachings about religious tenets.

Since that issue's publication, the world has experienced much social and political change. This environmental shift necessitates a deep examination of social studies content and the principles for its origins. In an environment in which the dominant white, Christian, heterosexual culture distorts truth to assert an unjust claim to power, social studies researchers may expose the sources of the psychological and sociological roots for the racist, misogynistic and xenophobia dispositions that undergird threats to democracy and empathetic community. As part of their teaching, social studies practitioners may inform children and youth about these causes and examine steps towards the promotion of compassionate community.

Studies into the definitions and intersections among power, spirituality, religion and social relationships represent critical and often neglected elements of this conversation. For example, Watson's (2003) research found increasing referents to spirituality as relating to citizenship, rather than as an abstract metaphysical quality. Spiritual capital represents a concept defined differently as guided by the lens of the interpreters (Lucey, 2021; Rima, 2020; Zohar and Marshall, 2004). As the last 500 years or so have observed Western traditions becoming less mystical and more scientific in their reasoning, making sense of this diminishing mysticism, its role in the formation of community and its relationship to claims for power is essential to complete explanations of social conflicts and their resolutions. Absent research into these concepts and their applications, children and youth are at the mercy of expert specialists who can modify understandings to fit their own social agendas.

The current themed issue represents the outcome of a call for papers that included an intent to consider citizenship challenges affected by powers between/within religions. While many efforts to pursue world domination have their roots in religious justifications, organized religion at its core represents a structure designed to accomplish political power (Goldenberg, 2021). Yet when considering that the foundational elements for religious institutions often stem from beliefs and practices rooted in social justice, one realizes that the ultimate outcomes of these efforts become antithetical to the intentions of their central figures. Institutions adapt their theological understandings to justify their positions of power. While the seeds of growth in religious beliefs may originate in oppressive social climates, the toxins of their demise emerge when the beliefs serve as the basis for oppression. Thus, one may realize the dangers of faiths that promote favorite Scripture verses, redact elements of scripture from public readings, and/or prooftext to justify political and social views. The danger of these organizations lies in promoting their god in their image.

Most submissions for this issue concerned topics that related to Christianity. The growth of Christianity and its distortion of Christ's message represent one example of this phenomenon. Hauerwas and Willimon's (2014) observation that Constantine corrupted the message of Jesus would seem to be borne out by writings that describe the intimidating patterns of discussion and conversation at Nicaea and violent efforts at conversion of others afterward (e.g. Pavao, 2014; Rubenstein, 2000). The Church's institutional evolution over two millennia seemingly developed many practices, rooted in a love for wealth, that lay contrary to the teachings of egalitarian community and pacifism taught by Christ (Cloutier, 2015).

It is with this backdrop that this themed journal issue presents its two articles. In the first, Sean Carrigan writes about the ghost dances and Wounded Knee, a story of resistance to

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colonialist aggression in the late 19th century. Katherine Ward describes a lesson that concerns the social injustices of the Roman Catholic Church in its relationships with Indian boarding schools. Both articles bring attention to unjust treatment of Indigenous people and their cultures in the name of the Christian faith, which represents a seemingly stark contrast with Jesus's command to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 13: 34–35). Regarding these articles, the question arises of how an educational system can claim a democratic identity in a system that legitimizes principles of cultural erasure, which seems inconsistent with tenets of its origins.

Together, these articles serve as a reminder that teaching about religion has much sociological depth that needs to be examined in classrooms. In a changing world that witnesses increasing amounts of greed, intolerance and vengeance, social studies educators must stress the peaceful foundations for religious practice and examine the distortions of their principles by those in pursuit of worldly power.

The three monotheistic religions originated as responses to abandoned practices of corruption. Abraham heard God's call and left the land of Ur. Christianity developed in the catacombs of Rome. Islam developed in the corrupt pagan business world. Whatever social challenges you find yourself experiencing, it is my hope that these articles stir elements of awareness, purpose and hope within you.

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