

## Not just a 2018 phenomena: The 'war on truth' continues

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Time Magazine has named its 2018 person of the year as the 'guardians of truth', namely four journalists who were slain or detained for their efforts in getting to 'the truth' of the story (Vick, 2018). Although much of the media focus and discussions on the 'war on truth' are attributed to President Trump's penchant for deriding journalists and their journalism as 'fake news', the 'war on truth' is not a unique or recent phenomenon, but rather, one that has raged throughout time - in particular for less powerful groups. However, the overt nature of recent attacks on the media and a constant stream of alternative facts have made the 'war on truth' more visible, and the global community more conscious of these issues. Concordantly, it is not only minorities whose experiences have taught them to question whose truth is being privileged and why, but a broader phenomenon with more and more people now questioning what is the truth, or whose truth is being pushed and for what purpose?

In a historical sense, social institutions, lawmakers and mainstream commentators were rarely challenged when producing and re-producing socio-cultural theories, norms and structures that ensured the on-going dominance and power of western, middle class, 'truths' over time. Indeed, this has been the case in academia until more recent times too. Incursions into this space that disrupt the dominance of previous 'truths' was heralded by the emergence of critical race and feminist studies and we have since witnessed the evolution of an increasingly sophisticated tradition of critical 'truth telling'. In this sense the 'war on truth' has been a consistent theme among a range of social scientists, activists and political commentators over the years. This edition of the *Journal of Social Inclusion* takes up this theme by drawing our attention to hidden truths and complexities behind some of the dominant narratives surrounding a number of groups in society with a particular focus on women, people with disabilities, migration and refugees.

Our first article by Martin, Watchorn and Grant present a confronting 'truth' that despite Australia's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability, access to Changing Places facilities even across metropolitan areas of Australia remains limited and requires further development and expansion, consistent with our agreed human rights obligations. In furthering insights into how built environments enable or hinder social inclusion, in particular for people with disabilities, the findings of this small Australian study are derived from semi-structured interviews exploring participants' experiences of using Changing Places facilities in Melbourne, Australia. That these issues have been highlighted in the context of living in one of Australia's most developed and progressive cities, underscores the need for more widespread research, including with people who live in 'less accessible' locations of Australia to determine and address the shortfalls, and ultimately, ensure people with disabilities have access to essential facilities such as Changing Places.

In the article by Graham the hidden impact upon social connectedness for women who do not mother is explored. Drawing upon data collected from 683 Australian women within the broader "Negotiating the life course" study Graham seeks to compare the impact upon social support and subsequent health and wellbeing among women with and without children. She concludes that not mothering has negative health impacts for women and argue that these

impacts are heightened for women living in highly pronatalist societies. Furthermore, Graham argues that these hidden impacts upon the health of women who do not mother are particularly worthy of further investigation as the number of women who remain childfree either by choice or circumstance is on the rise with potential future health and social policy implications.

Oudshoorn, Forchuck, Hall, Smith-Carrier and Berkum present an evaluation of the *Homes 4 Women* (H4W) program developed to better respond to the needs of chronically homeless women in Ontario, Canada. The program, arising out of the *Housing First* model of responding to homelessness, centred on improving responsiveness to the gendered nature of homelessness. The authors apply a feminist lens to the evaluation of the program utilising a trauma informed, participatory qualitative design to collect data via semi-structured interviews and focus groups with key informants and women who participated in the program. While concluding that the *H4W* program achieves many of its stated aims in addressing the unique needs of the women included in the study the authors highlight the need for further integration with mental health and drug and alcohol service and better awareness and responsiveness to the experiences of trauma and grief and loss in relation to women's interaction with child protection systems.

Adding to the growing literature regarding the need to improve support and outcomes for young Pacific Islander Australians, a small study by Paulsen, based on semi-structured interviews with students, parents and teachers in Victoria, further demonstrates the impact of a migrant background, family financial stress and the costs of education on educational attainment and post-school outcomes. Although findings regarding the importance of family ties as strengths but also a potential source of tension when personal goals are in conflict or may need to be forgone for the benefit of the family are not unique, the results have been used to inform the discussion of practical ways forward and lessons for the future which need to be actioned. This includes the trailing and evaluation of programs seeking to offer early detection and improved supports, targeted scholarships, and at a whole of community level, improved transition support and social participation and inclusion of Pacific Islander migrants in society.

In furthering our understanding of the difficulties associated with refugees' resettlement in Australia, our final paper by Whitaker, Hughes and Rugendkye presents the findings of an action research project associated with a pilot program to support women from refugee backgrounds to navigate employment pathways. The results demonstrate the significant function of social capital in providing a network of friends and informal supports as well as professional pathways to employment. More broadly, social connections, cultural engagement and a connection to local geography or place were found to be key to fostering women's sense of security and ultimately their pathway into employment.

From 2019, future editions of the *Journal of Social Inclusion* will be published under an agreement with Ubiquity Press which will enable to us increase our flexibility and longer-term impact. Our previous issues will also be available via the new platform and a DOI or digital object identifier allocated to each of our archived articles. In further news, and in response to the inaugural ChangeFest (conference) held in Logan, Australia in November 2018, the *Journal of Social Inclusion* has agreed to dedicate a future special edition on place and place-based approaches. This reflects the need to better understand our connection to place, how important place is in relation to both individual and societal outcomes, and how 'place-based' and 'collective impact' approaches are increasingly mobilised to address complex social issues such as poverty, health, unemployment, crime and urban renewal. This also extends

to the need to better understand the opportunities and complexities associated with these collective, place-based ways of working. We are therefore calling for papers which report the results of research studies, program evaluations, case studies, literature reviews, relevant book reviews and/or commentaries relating to collective impact processes or place-based outcomes by 1 June 2019. We look forward to further opportunities to provide more special issues and focussed discussion on emerging social inclusion issues in the future.

**Angella Duvnjak PhD**  
*Co-Editor*

**Paul Harris PhD**  
*Co-Editor*

*School of Human Services and Social Work*  
*Griffith University*  
*Australia*

## **References**

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