

Editorial: The Power of Voice in Research

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After a record number of submissions, this second issue of the *Journal of Mason Graduate Research, Volume V*, brings together graduate researchers from across disciplines who demonstrate the power of voice. Each of these articles examines the complex ways in which finding and hearing the voices of others can bring about individual or social change. Through their distinct explorations, the authors ask us to consider whose voices are the most meaningful in our lives, how voices are obscured or silenced in society, and the power of the voiceless to be heard.

The voices of others are powerful forces that shape and guide individual decision-making, as Aubrey Whitehead's research on family, friend, and educator influence on college major selection reveals. Building on previous work related to major selection, Whitehead shares the voices of freshman STEM majors who describe the ways in which family, friends, high school teachers, and college professors, among others, influenced their decision to pursue a STEM major. This research, in particular, provides new insights into the relative importance each group has on students' decision-making at different points in time. The myriad of voices encouraging, warning, challenging, and supporting freshman STEM majors were heard and acted upon throughout their academic careers.

Brian Sandberg's work on anonymous communication networks provides a mechanism to find voices that are purposefully hidden. Aggregating and mapping data of Tor usage with data on conflicts in nine African countries, Sandberg reveals a connection between the use of anonymous communication tools and periods of political or civil unrest, particularly in countries with less democratic freedoms. The connection between the use of anonymity-granting tools such as Tor and political conflict has broad implications both for how researchers choose to approach the study of

political conflict and for how researchers approach the purposeful censorship of protesters' and others' voices.

Voice is also a specific object of study, as Rachael Graham Lussos and Lourdes Hernandez uncover in their work on media reports of sexual assault. Utilizing a database of media reports of sexual assault and campus sexual assault, Lussos and Hernandez examine the frequency in which active and passive voice are used to describe assailants and accusers in stories of rape. By uncovering the common and continued use of passive voice to describe sexual assaults, Lussos and Hernandez argue that “journalism reporting practices participate in the construction of problematic narratives of sexual assault crimes” (p. 65).

Finally, Mark Eskridge's research invites us to critically examine the philosophical and religious justifications of those who may feel voiceless – Tibetan nuns and monks who engage in self-immolation as a form of protest. Through translation of sacred texts, Eskridge uncovers multiple paths for which self-immolation could be considered spiritually valid. Yet, this nuanced analysis also raises the possibility that despite the political need for self-immolations to give voice to oppression, these actions may be contrary to the spiritual goals of Buddhism.

Through these four compelling research articles, the role of voice, as motivator, hidden communication, object of study, and construction of power, is clearly worthy of study. Through the tireless efforts of our authors, peer reviewers, section editors, and the 2017-2018 Editorial Board, I am pleased to invite you to uncover, explore, and discover the voices presented here by our graduate student authors. I hope that you continue to think about whose voices you choose to hear in your work and continue to find interesting voices within the pages of JMGR in the future.