

Editorial: Research to Understand Change

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In a rapidly changing world, researchers must continually seek out the frontiers of knowledge while simultaneously examining the causes, pathways, and implications of change on society. This issue of the *Journal of Mason Graduate Research, Volume VI*, brings together graduate researchers from multiple disciplines who examine change at the individual, technological, cultural, and global level. Together, these articles provide a window to understand the complex interactions between perceptions and actions that mitigate or intensify change as well as the implications of change on our individual and collective future.

Adam T. Carpenter leads off the issue with an examination of a change that is increasingly dire and difficult to avoid – sea level rise. Using the concept of community sea level rise planning, Carpenter surveyed individuals living in coastal communities on the eastern seaboard to understand how they believed communities should plan for and pay for rising sea levels that threaten homes and local businesses. Carpenter found that, in addition to broad support for increasing taxes to improve infrastructure and changing regulations, the respondents emphasized the role of community engagement and sharing information resources to support planning. Understanding local perceptions and beliefs about sea level rise, as Carpenter’s research does, gives policymakers new avenues to explore local solutions to complex global change.

The preservation of identity despite a changing society is a topic explored in Claudine Kurdasenge-McLeod’s piece on Afro-Brazilian culture. Through interviews with dozens of Black Brazilians, Kurdasenge-McLeod demonstrates that through cultural expressions, religious rituals, and a rising Black consciousness in private and public spheres, Afro-Brazilians fight to preserve their identities in a racially complex society. Exploring the meaning participants made

of their often-marginalized place in society “shed[s] light on . . . what makes them hold onto these vestiges of a faraway past that is nonetheless still present in their skin color and in their racial and social identities” (p. 58). In particular, this research shows how preserving a cultural identity can change how individuals and societies recognize race and racism.

Changes in identity are also explored in Greer Manusco’s research on participation in study abroad. Through an open-ended survey of individuals who studied abroad during their undergraduate education, Manusco uncovers connections participants made between study abroad and their academic and career choices after the experience. Participants also credited their study abroad experience with personality changes, including being more confident and culturally aware, as well as changes to their perceptions about diversity and cultural difference throughout the world. Manusco argues that shifts in identity from study abroad can create opportunities for individuals to be better prepared for a changing, globalizing world.

Finally, technological change and its implications for higher education is the topic of Maimoona Al Abri and Nada Dabbaugh’s research on open education resources (OER). Analyzing the literature, Al Abri and Dabbaugh uncover that the adoption and use of OER in higher education is in its early stages and that significant barriers exist to continue its implementation. Their review of the literature also discovered that while OER does not change pedagogical practices among faculty, it does offer a personalized learning experience for student often at a lower cost. Because OER is both a series of tools as well as a larger movement within education, it has broad implications for how individuals and institutions may change approaches to teaching and learning.

As individuals, our perceptions and actions influence how we accept or reject change, whether it is in the form of new technologies, personal experiences, cultural identities, or our global environment. On behalf of the 2018-2019 Editorial Board, and with the support of our volunteer peer reviewers and section editors, I am pleased to invite you to uncover how our authors research the problem and promise of change in all its forms. I hope that through this research to understand change JMGR provides an opportunity for you imagine the possibilities change may bring now and in the future.