

## **Editorial: Pushing the Boundaries of Research**

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Compelling research advances the frontiers of knowledge in two important ways: by systematically and incrementally answering existing questions in the field and by reconsidering the questions themselves. This issue of the *Journal of Mason Graduate Research, Volume VI*, features graduate researchers who do both in order to push the boundaries of research and their represented disciplines into new frontiers.

Graham Scott leads off this issue with fresh insights into the *Troubles*, a well-studied conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland which lasted for 25 years. His work examines the relationships between militant groups and political parties and how they influenced the use of indiscriminate violence. Through this analysis, Scott finds that militant groups continue to use violence even after entering electoral politics but that relationships with political parties moderate the use of indiscriminate violence. These three components of conflict have rarely been studied together, and Scott's work breaks methodological ground that can be used to study other conflicts, such as those in Columbia in the 1980s and the continued conflict in Palestine.

The next two articles in this issue push boundaries by offering new ways to theoretically and methodologically conceptualize research. Gia Cromer asks readers to reconsider the relationship between citizens and their government when international donors have profound impacts on national policies. Using the example of educational policy in Chad, Cromer brings together classical theorists, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, with contemporary theorists, such as Nancy Fraser, to understand the role of international aid in achieving or preventing social justice in education policy. Cromer also provides a new term for countries which receive international

aid: *non-economically self-determining*. This theoretical contribution is more than semantics: it puts the questions of a country's agency and social justice of its citizens within the terminology used to describe countries long oppressed by outside influences. It also offers a way to bring issues of national control and national governance into conversations within international development research.

Similarly, Laura Buckwald's work calls for breaking new methodological ground in well-being research, a field long associated with quantitative studies. Examining the literature and using data from a small interview study of adults, Buckwald argues that qualitative investigations of well-being can illuminate new facets overlooked in quantitative studies and allow researchers to examine how well-being is operationalized in specific contexts. The relationship of well-being and time, such as how well-being changes over the course of one's life, is a particularly fruitful area for future qualitative research. In addition, Buckwald also offers specific recommendations for expanding the methods, participants, and location sites of well-being research, offering a rationale and research-based justifications for pursuing new questions in the field.

Pushing the boundaries of research within academic disciplines requires researchers to question assumptions, seek out the unknown, and share insights to further knowledge in new ways. Along with the 2018-2019 Editorial Board, and through the support of our volunteer peer reviewers and section editors, I am pleased to invite you push the boundaries of research with our graduate student authors. In my final contribution as the Editor-in-Chief of JMGR, I hope you reflect, reconsider, and reimagine the possibilities of research in your disciplines and to explore new and exciting questions to answer—now and in the future.