Guest Editorial—"Reflecting on Research"

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What determines what we will remember from a specific situation? Why is my memory for an event different from those who experienced the event with me? How do our memories change with time? Those were some of the burning questions that inspired me to get involved in research as an undergraduate and are questions that still motivate me today.

I learned a number of important lessons from my time as an undergraduate researcher. The research process can be both incredibly exciting and equally frustrating. Few things compare to the excitement you feel when you make a new discovery, but the process of getting there inevitably involves a number of wrong turns. Those wrong turns are often glossed over in textbooks or research articles, and thus, it came as a surprise to me when my first research project on memory yielded uninteresting and uninformative results. It was also true that the more I learned about memory, the more I realized how much I didn't know. My undergraduate honors thesis project demonstrated that the act of retelling an event changes your memory for event details, but it left me with many questions about *why* this was the case. I also started to grasp that knowledge is not as black and white as it is often presented, and I began to appreciate some of the nuances. For example, memory research has traditionally focused on what is true on average for people's memories, ignoring individual differences, but those differences became salient to me when I was collecting and analyzing my own data. Overall, my years as an undergraduate researcher taught me about the importance of being persistent, keeping an open and curious mind, and being accepting of shades of gray.

As a Psychology instructor, one of my favorite classes to teach is Scientific Thinking in Psychology because it focuses on the fundamentals of the research process. Many students come into the course with little or no experience with scientific research. Even those who are Psychology majors are often apprehensive about research. I try to change their minds, to show them the value of conducting research and the value in critically evaluating research. One of the concepts I emphasize in the course is the importance of evidence. In an era of "fake news," we all need to know how to assess the information that is out there and be educated consumers of research. In my opinion, every student has the responsibility to be an informed citizen, and to achieve this, you need to have the skills to evaluate claims that you encounter in the media.

The best way to truly understand the research process is through hands-on involvement. I would love to see even more undergraduate students becoming involved in research, as I believe completing a research project is a key component of a liberal arts education. Some students think that research is only for those who want to go to graduate school, but research is for everyone! Just as the products of research have the potential to benefit all communities, the research process itself is valuable to all. Learning first-hand about how knowledge is built in your chosen field makes you a better-educated and more informed student and citizen.