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## A Mind for the Times

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## A Mind for the Times

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In our January 2020 volume 1 editorial, we made a case for the importance of graduate student experience in producing and consuming research in the context of career-preparedness. Little did we know that knowledgeable consumption of research would become increasingly vital over the next few months. With COVID-19 running rampant in the United States, even highly-educated and research-minded individuals are having a hard time discriminating between real and false information. Social unrest in the United States has also prompted a more objective view of racial discrimination, and because it is a highly triggering topic, we need to be able to determine who are the best sources from whom to seek information. It has never been more important to be able to distinguish whether empirical reports are trustworthy or not, and, in this current time, this ability could very well mean life or death for our loved ones and ourselves.

Infectious disease and epidemiological researchers around the world are rushing to provide society with information about the transmission of COVID-19, and how we can best avoid it. The beginning of the spread of COVID-19 brought confusion and fear with it, but more information about effective preventative measures has emerged as time has passed. Though there is still an abundance of anxiety about the unpredictable nature of the virus, research is relatively clear about how the viral particles are transmitted and measures that can be taken to reduce the spread. We can do our part in preventing the spread of COVID-19 by reading the science,

judging its legitimacy if we are qualified to do so, and sharing science-based evidence with our loved ones.

Simultaneous to the emergence of COVID-19, social unrest has heightened to highlight the treatment of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in the United States. We can argue over the related political issues, but a review of social science empirical literature clearly demonstrates that racial discrimination and disparities exist on a systemic level, as well as an individual level, and affect the life experiences of people in BIPOC communities. Racism still exists, and it is the responsibility of the privileged to speak up, learn more, and join with our fellow humans to make an observable change. By keeping an eye on the relevant research, we can glean ways to go about life with a multicultural perspective. We can learn how to avoid individual racism and microaggressions and how to fight for a larger-scale systemic change. We just have to be open to learning and be willing to pursue that knowledge.

If individuals desire to expand their knowledge, this desire should motivate them to approach all situations with critical thinking. To attempt to learn is to make the active choice of placing oneself in a position of humility. Such a conscious decision lays the foundation for how we choose to encounter our self-awareness and the external environment. Thinking critically requires us to differentiate and process not only facts and personal biases, but inflammatory information and opinion disguised as fact. Therefore, individuals should bear in mind the importance of considering the meaning and intention behind the various information we are consuming, and we should frequently reflect on the personal impact of given pieces of information on our cognition, emotion, and behavior. With these ideas in mind, we can responsibly consume information.

As the editorial team of JGER, we leave you with this challenge. We invite you to keep reading and keep learning. Critically and carefully consider the information out there on topics of current importance. Gaining familiarity with the process of consuming academic writing is no easy feat, but you are on the right path. It has never been more important to read with a skeptical, scientifically-minded eye.