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Reflective Essay: From Curiosity to Contribution

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Embarking on my university career as a dedicated science student, the vast possibilities of engaging in research were on the horizon, albeit beyond the confines of my initial first-year level. The onset of the pandemic posed additional challenges, further complicating the realization of these future research prospects. Yet, my insatiable curiosity persisted, cultivated through experiences in biology, chemistry, and physics labs, dating back to my earliest memories where "why?" was my favourite word. I transitioned from a science student, curious about the 'how' to an active participant in multidisciplinary research endeavours, reflecting on the newfound knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness that have shaped my trajectory and continue to influence my future pursuits.

Before delving into research activities, my mindset was fueled by an ardent desire to comprehend the underlying reasons for various phenomena. While laboratory settings provided a platform for engaging with theoretical knowledge in action, the unexplored realm of research remained elusive, further compounded by the disruptions caused by the pandemic. Despite these challenges, my determination to contribute to the field persisted, driven by a passion to unravel the cause and function of the things that surround life itself.

The transition from a curious onlooker to an active participant in research marked a profound shift in my thinking, behaviour, and communication. This transformation was facilitated by a proactive approach, seeking out research opportunities and overcoming obstacles

posed by the pandemic. Engaging in research broadened my horizons, turning seemingly impossible goals into achievable milestones.

These milestones were obtained through diverse research endeavours that collectively shaped a comprehensive skill set and refined my approach to academic pursuits. Under the guidance of Dr. Heather Price, my research apprenticeship was focused on child victims of online offences, providing me insights into cybercrimes' complexities and their impact on vulnerable populations. This experience enhanced my empathy, critical thinking, and ability to navigate ethically intricate research domains. This apprenticeship seamlessly complemented my concurrent research methods course with Dr. Patricia Parker, where surveys dissected human behaviour and moral decision-making. This equipped me with skills in survey design, data collection, and analysis, enriching my understanding of factors influencing moral choices. Selected for climate change research, I applied theoretical knowledge in a practical setting, honing problem-solving skills and fostering a proactive approach to environmental crises. This experience emphasized the significance of interdisciplinary collaboration in addressing complex problems and contributing to a global perspective and cultural sensitivity. Collectively, these research pursuits honed my critical thinking, research methodology proficiency, and ethical considerations, bolstering my adaptability to navigate diverse research terrains and cultures.

Research not only fostered my skills in critical analysis and effective communication but also instilled in me an attitude of perseverance. Investigating complex issues required meticulous scrutiny of the data, the identification of patterns, and drawing meaningful conclusions. My ability to communicate findings in both scientific and psychological contexts improved significantly, reflecting a newfound proficiency in adapting to varied writing styles. Moreover, I

acquired proficiency in proper citation formats, becoming efficient in both MLA and APA styles—a versatility crucial for navigating between the concise language of scientific writing and the explanatory demands of psychology. This skill set proved invaluable not only in my academic pursuits but also in real-world applications, enhancing my performance in group projects, my vocabulary and analysis skills, and my employment in the biology department. All of these areas of my life have been assisted by the balancing game I play with the two fields.

The integration of the biological and psychological fields demanded a synthesis of knowledge from seemingly disparate areas of study, demanding a holistic perspective. This perspective has become integral as I navigate various academic materials, continuously applying insights gained from my diverse research experiences. The collaborative and holistic nature of research has not only contributed to the success of my research projects but has also permeated into other aspects of my academic and professional life. Recognizing the symbiotic relationship between different fields allowed me to approach research questions with a more comprehensive perspective. This heightened awareness extended beyond academic realms, fostering a sense of responsibility to contribute meaningfully to societal issues. Which, I personally believe should be the objective of all conducted research.

All research endeavours, including mine, hold significance in the broader context of understanding the world. The universal quest to unravel the 'why' behind various phenomena necessitates collaborative research efforts. My research, regardless of focus, contributes to the collective pursuit of knowledge. By highlighting specific issues in distinct areas of life, research becomes a catalyst for positive change, paving the way for solutions to societal challenges.

As I contemplate my future, my research experiences have laid the groundwork for pursuing a master's degree, where I aim to further amalgamate my interests in science and psychology. This interdisciplinary approach will enable me to dive deeper into my own 'why' questions, pushing the boundaries of existing knowledge. Ultimately, my aspiration is to pursue a doctorate, immersing myself in a community of inquisitive minds and contributing to the ever-expanding tapestry of human understanding. This undergraduate research certificate course has allowed me to reflect on my growth, observing notable shifts in my writing style, tone, presentation skills, and ability to communicate effectively. As well as how I have personally made an impact just by being a part of the research community and assisted in creating a vision for how I will continue to strive for change.

In conclusion, my journey from a STEM-based curiosity to active research engagement has been transformative. The challenges posed by the pandemic and the initial barriers to research intensified my determination, shaping me into a more resilient and versatile individual. Research activities not only broadened my intellectual horizons but also equipped me with practical skills and a heightened awareness of the importance of collaborative inquiry. As I envision my future, the impact of these experiences is undeniable. My research journey is not just a personal pursuit; it is a commitment to contributing meaningfully to the collective goal of understanding the world we inhabit.

## References

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