

## APA AWARD

# Award for Distinguished Scientific Contributions: Henry L. Roediger III



### Citation

“For outstanding contributions to understanding human memory and cognition, and his leadership in advancing experimental psychology. Through careful experimentation and scholarship, Henry L. Roediger has consistently identified and driven major areas of research that have important theoretical implications and inform our understanding of the human condition. He elucidated the surprising fallibility of human memory, revealed powerful implicit influences on memory, and showed that memory tests do more than evaluate—they facilitate future retrieval.”

### Biography

Henry L. Roediger, III was born in Roanoke, VA, and nicknamed Roddy in the hospital, thanks to a nurse who mispronounced his last name. The family moved to Danville, VA, where he was raised, with his father and grandfather partnering in the Roediger Cotton Company. A brother, James, arrived 3.5 years later. Roddy’s life was upended when his mother, May, died shortly after his fifth birthday.

He traces his interest in memory to that event, because he discovered he could keep her memory alive by mentally reliving events (retrieval practice we would now call it). He wondered how and why that worked so well.

Roediger’s father married Louise Temple from Roanoke 2 years later, and he suddenly acquired two older sisters, Betsy and Ellen. This event was a great blessing, as the four children grew up together. All the children were inspired to do well in school and continue to higher education. When he was 13, Roediger somehow decided to go to Riverside Military Academy in Gainesville, GA, a decision based mostly on a colorful catalog. Showing up just after his 14th birthday, he immediately wondered what he had been thinking. After a rough start, he eventually thrived and graduated as the battalion commander, the top cadet officer.

Roediger went on to Washington & Lee University in 1965, where he enjoyed the beautiful campus, the small classes, great friends, and inspiring professors. He majored in psychology, under the primary tutelage of David Elmes. The department had three faculty and, his senior year, six majors. Because he had taken many anthropology and sociology classes, he decided to apply to graduate school in social psychology. He somehow got in, despite a lack of experience in social research.

Arriving at Yale in the fall of 1969, Roediger took a class in human memory. That was a pivotal decision, because he found his interests gravitating in that direction, and he hit it off well with the instructor, Robert Crowder. Crowder actively recruited him to his memory lab, and none of the social psychologists seemed to notice. That year, 1970, was also when Endel Tulving arrived at Yale. Roediger took classes from him and learned to have intellectual battles. Thus began a long relationship that continues to this day. Roediger took courses and learned much from Richard Nisbett, Alan Wagner (reading about the Rescorla-Wagner model from a mimeographed draft), and Irving Janis (reading *Victims of Groupthink* also in draft form), among others. The students at Yale were interesting companions, and Roediger has remained close to Jim Pomerantz, Jim Neely, Reid Hastie, and Jim Bartlett over the years.

In 1973 Roediger accepted a position at Purdue University, where he inaugurated a new course on cognitive psychology. After several good years at Purdue, Roediger was

invited to spend 2 years on leave at the University of Toronto at the invitation of Endel Tulving (who had become chair); here he initiated a cognitive psychology course and became immersed in the memory culture. Toronto was *the* center for the study of human memory in the 1970s, and he learned from Gus Craik, Bob Lockhart, Norm Slamecka, Paul Kolers, Morris Moscovitch, Ben Murdock and, of course, Endel Tulving. He also became friends with graduate students there at the time, including Dan Schacter and Eric Eich. In a 1981–1982 sabbatical visit to Toronto, he collaborated with Paul Kolers on a paper, *Procedures of Mind*, that helped to set his research agenda for the next decade (Kolers & Roediger, 1984).

In the 1970s to early 1980s, Roediger's research centered on inhibitory effects in memory from certain types of cues (ones that were supposed to be helpful) and the phenomenon of hypermnnesia (i.e., why recall sometimes improves across repeated tests). In the 1980s, he became interested in exploring new measures of memory involving priming, which reflects prior learning without intent to remember. He developed a transfer-appropriate processing theory of why performance on such implicit or indirect measures of memory differs from that on explicit or direct measures (Weldon & Roediger, 1987; Roediger, 1990).

Back at Purdue, Roediger enjoyed collaborations with Jim Neely, who joined the faculty in 1978. He also enjoyed the good fortune of working with excellent graduate students, including Steve Schmidt, Teresa Blaxton, David Payne, Mary Sue Weldon, Mike Stadler, and Brad Challis.

In 1988 Roediger joined the department at Rice University, with excellent colleagues in Randi Martin and Jim Pomerantz, among others. He continued to work on issues of implicit memory and other topics with his students Suparna Rajaram and Kavitha Srinivas and later, Kathleen McDermott, Todd Jones, Mark Wheeler, and Chris Scharer. In the 1990s, Roediger and McDermott began work on a paradigm for studying false memories, based on original work by James Deese. Their 1995 paper began the surge of research using what came to be called the Deese-Roediger-McDermott (DRM) false memory paradigm (Roediger & McDermott, 1995).

In 1996 Roediger was recruited to chair the department at Washington University in St. Louis. The university had decided to invest in psychology with a new building that was half shell space, so new faculty could create their own labs. Roediger was the 15th member of the department, and when his term as chair ended 8 years later, the faculty had grown to 30. Roediger has enjoyed conversations and collaborations with many faculty there over the years, including Dave Balota, Mark McDaniel, Larry Jacoby, Jeff Zacks, and Ian Dobbins, as well as continued collaborations with Kathleen McDermott. Endel Tulving was a visiting professor for several months a year for 8 years, providing further inspiration.

Roediger's research continued to focus largely on false memory during his time as chair (e.g., Roediger et al., 2001). With Lyn Goff, he developed an experimental paradigm to study imagination inflation, or the false memory for having performed an event when one has only imagined it (Goff & Roediger, 1998). In addition, he and collaborators developed a paradigm for studying the contaminating effects of hearing false information from others, a phenomenon described as the social contagion of memory (Roediger et al., 2001). Dave Gallo, a graduate student, collaborated and led much research on the DRM paradigm, and Michelle Meade, another student, primarily worked on the social contagion paradigm during these years.

Around 2005 Roediger turned his attention to methods of improving memory and applying the results to education. He began by showing the power of retrieval practice with Jeff Karpicke, a graduate student, in several papers (Roediger & Karpicke, 2006; Karpicke & Roediger, 2008). Next, in collaboration with Mark McDaniel and Kathleen McDermott, he embarked on a series of experiments in Columbia (IL) Middle School to see if retrieval practice would improve academic performance of students. Pooja Agarwal was a graduate student overseeing the project. The results were quite positive, and a number of publications ensued showing the power of retrieval practice in classroom settings (Roediger et al., 2011).

In 2004 the James S. McDonnell Foundation provided funds for a large collaborative project on "Applying Cognitive Psychology to Enhance Educational Performance." Roediger was principal investigator, but funds were distributed both to him and to 10 collaborators over a 10-year period. The group met twice yearly, and the grant sponsored research, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. The collaborative adventure was one of the highlights of Roediger's professional life. It eventuated in his writing, with Peter Brown and Mark McDaniel, *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*, a book that has had wide impact in education. Andrew Butler and Franklin Zaromb were graduate students who conducted relevant research during this time. John Bulevich was also a student then, though working on different issues. Postdoctoral fellows were Erik Bergmann, Beth Marsh, Lisa Geraci, Dave McCabe, Yana Weinstein, Keith Lyle, and Mary Pyc. Later, John Nestojko, Jason Finley, Magdalena Abel, and Adam Putnam, a graduate student, fostered further research.

Roediger developed an interest in collective memory around 2008, inspired by conversations with his colleague Jim Wertsch. They collaborated on several projects (Roediger et al., 2019) and received a grant from the McDonnell Foundation in 2021 to develop another collaborative group to spur research on this topic. Andy DeSoto (Roediger & DeSoto, 2014) helped carry out some of this research as a graduate student, and Jeremy Yamashiro did so as a postdoc (Yamashiro & Roediger, 2021).

Roediger's final three PhD students, Wenbo Lin, Eylul Tekin, and Oyku Uner are finishing as this biography is being written, and they are working on a variety of topics—eyewitness identification, metacognition, and retrieval practice in learning from texts, respectively.

Roediger has been fortunate to receive awards and to be elected to honorific societies during his career. Awards include the Howard Crosby Warren Medal from the Society of Experimental Psychology, the John P. McGovern Award from the American Association of the Advancement of Science, the William James Fellow Award from the Association for Psychological Science, and the Clifford T. Morgan Leadership Award from the Psychonomic Society. He also received a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship and received an honorary doctorate from Purdue University. Roediger has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences.

Roediger has also been elected as president or chief officer of several psychology organizations. He served as President of APS, and was the chair of the Governing Board of the Psychonomic Society and of the Society of Experimental Psychologists, among others.

Endel Tulving has been a mentor and a constant source of inspiration since 1970. Bob Crowder was a mentor and friend until his untimely death. Roediger thanks all his students, postdocs, colleagues, and mentors for their wonderful collaborations over the years. They have made it all possible.

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