

At the outset of my undergraduate studies, I was determined to learn as much as I could about biological, physiological, and social factors contributing to the development of adaptive and maladaptive behaviors. To achieve this, I initially enrolled in the pre-medical program at Hofstra University with the goal of becoming a psychiatrist, and supplemented my pre-medical curriculum with elective psychology courses. Realizing my strong interest in understanding *how* and *why* psychopathology emerges, I decided to focus on psychology research to identify risk factors for psychopathological disorders, with the goal of using clinical research to design and inform intervention efforts. Since this realization, I have focused my studies and research endeavors on the biological, physiological, and social contexts contributing to healthy and clinical development across the lifespan, with the goals of studying psychology at the doctoral level and pursuing a career as a research clinical psychologist thereafter. The knowledge and research experience I have accrued as an undergraduate, as well as my current role as a post-baccalaureate research assistant at the University of Maryland Child Development Lab, have solidified my interest in pursuing clinical research and will collectively contribute to my success in the PhD program at Stonybrook University.

My first involvement in clinical psychology research was at the Center for Addiction Services and Personalized Interventions Research (CASPIR) lab. As a research assistant under the supervision of Dr. Fred Muench, I contributed to a project that examined the use of an adaptive mobile messaging intervention to assist problem drinkers. Working with a team of clinical researchers, I observed initial video assessments of participants and developed mindfulness-based intervention messages to encourage problem drinkers to reduce alcohol consumption and curb cravings. This study design, namely the use of technology-based interventions, afforded individuals the opportunity to receive treatment in the comfort and privacy of their own home at times when cravings were most severe and traditional care is often unavailable. While working on this project helping problem drinkers through this adaptive intervention, I became motivated to explore how individuals learn and develop maladaptive behaviors. By studying different behavioral trajectories, we are able to identify *when* and *how* maladaptive behaviors develop in the first place, and inform intervention strategies and policy initiatives to prevent the onset of psychopathological disorders before they emerge.

Excited by innovative interventions to solve real-world problems, I became driven to pursue research with the potential to impact policy and improve intervention resources. I continued to work with my internship advisor, Dr. Fred Muench, managing a project focused on developing messaging content based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Mindfulness therapy, as well as messages to encourage healthy communication styles, parenting, and adolescent social media use. Through collaboration and mentorship from clinical researchers, I gained insight into the intersection of clinical work and research to inform and drive treatment, and became motivated to pursue research that can have real-world applications to create a positive impact on individual mental health.

In addition to my experience with clinical interventions, I worked in four additional labs as a research assistant where I continued to develop my skills in study management. For example, as a research assistant for Dr. Amy Masnick and Dr. Kristen Weingartner in Hofstra's psychology department, we examined whether text restructuring could help individuals overcome commonly held scientific misconceptions. We explored the use of refutation text, which refers to a three step process: stating the misconception, explicitly refuting the inaccurate

belief, and providing the correct explanation. By restructuring how a topic is presented, individuals are able to revise prior, incorrect knowledge and learn correct information through a simple intervention. I not only learned more about knowledge revision and conceptual change through conducting extensive literature review, but also I experienced firsthand the importance of quality data collection, careful data entry, thoughtful recruitment strategies, as well as the importance of building rapport with participants.

This research experience with Dr. Masnick and Dr. Weingartner, combined with my psychology coursework, prompted the research that ultimately comprised my senior honors thesis. Under the supervision of Dr. Amy Masnick, I examined the effects of using refutation text, feedback, and the combination of the two approaches to help to reduce college students' misconceptions about climate change. To better understand how individuals learn information, I explored and compared various theoretical explanations of conceptual change to explain how individuals overcome old, incorrect information and replace it with new, accurate information. My findings suggest that the use of refutation text helped individuals overcome misconceptions about climate change, while the use of feedback had no significant impact on participant knowledge. Upon completion of my thesis defense, I received high departmental honors in psychology and co-authored a poster on broader findings from the refutation text study, which was presented at the Psychonomic Society Conference in 2016. Following graduation, I worked with Dr. Pineño from Hofstra University to submit a single-author chapter on habituation to Springer's *Encyclopedia of Animal Cognition and Behavior* in 2017. Through my undergraduate research experiences, I developed a strong desire to explore how psychopathology develops over time in relation to physiological predispositions, learned behaviors, and varying social contexts. I am interested in examining how physiological differences predict the onset of psychopathology, and how symptoms are enhanced or inhibited as a function of social context, to identify effective intervention strategies, policy suggestions, and educational services that can be employed as early as possible to promote positive changes in mental health. With this in mind, I decided to focus my research on child developmental psychopathology. With major cognitive, social, and developmental changes occurring in infancy and early childhood through adolescence and early adulthood, I knew that I wanted to involve myself in research examining early risk factors predicting the development of psychopathological disorders.

After completing my bachelor's degree at Hofstra, I joined Dr. Nathan Fox's Child Development Lab at the University of Maryland as a post-baccalaureate research assistant. Here, I am an integral part of the team working on the Temperament Over Time Study (TOTS), a longitudinal study exploring the impact of child temperament on social development and trajectories of anxiety through the use of self- and other-report, physiological measures, and behavioral observation. I am primarily involved with study management for the 15-year phase of the TOTS study, coordinating and monitoring four adolescent participants at each lab visit. I also work closely with our team's clinical psychologist and alert her when any indication of abuse, self-harm, or suicidal ideation becomes evident during the study. In the lab, I am responsible for interviewing, hiring, and supervising undergraduate interns each semester. I train undergraduates to assist with study visits, enter data, and code and transcribe videos, among other lab-related tasks. To enrich the research experience of these interns, I also developed a series of weekly discussions for our undergraduate interns to learn more about our lab's research, providing connections between the roles they play in the lab and the findings being produced.

Since joining the Child Development Lab, I have acquired extensive knowledge and experience in developmental cognitive neuroscience methods. For example, I collect both electroencephalography (EEG) and autonomic data (e.g., PEP and Heart Rate). I also assist with data collection for infant studies investigating the relations between the mirror neuron system and communicative gestures. Overall, my work in this lab has shaped my interest in studying the risk and moderating factors predicting the development of psychopathological disorders. Moreover, I am interested in exploring how differences in early temperament relate to maladaptive behaviors and lead to clinical diagnoses.

My interest in pursuing a PhD in clinical psychology is driven by my goal to pursue a scientific research career aimed at promoting effective treatment and intervention strategies; knowing that the intersection of clinical training and research can inform and drive treatment efforts has consistently motivated my interest in this area. I take particular interest in Dr. Daniel Klein's work on child temperament and the development and treatment of mood disorders. Through Dr. Klein's longitudinal work, as well as the longitudinal work of my current supervisor, Dr. Nathan Fox, we are able to explore the developmental trajectories of psychopathology across development, identify risk factors related to the development of various disorders, and explore how child temperament (among other factors evident in early childhood) can predict behavioral and physiological changes later in life. In addition to Dr. Klein's work, I am also interested in Dr. Johanna Jarcho's work exploring how early temperament and differences in attentional patterns relate to healthy and clinical development. I am excited to receive mentorship from the clinical faculty at Stonybrook and to develop new skills and expertise in statistical methods, as well as learn more about the process of applying for research funding.

Upon completion of my graduate degree, I plan to continue refining my research skills in a post-doctoral research position before pursuing a career in academia focused on research and teaching in clinical psychology. Joining the clinical psychology program at Stonybrook would further my skills and knowledge to succeed in clinical research, and provide me with the tools to succeed as a clinician and researcher. If offered a position, I know that my drive, research experience, critical thinking skills, and work ethic will collectively contribute to my future success as a graduate student in the clinical psychology program at Stonybrook University.