

BA STUDENT, PSYCHOLOGY, CANADA

I have had a broad survey of psychological research in my undergraduate years. Beginning in the Learning Laboratory at Temple University, I have been working with _____, designing behavior analytic experiments using pigeons as subjects. The in's and out's of single-subject design, data analysis, and confounding variables are some of the methodological issues about which I have learned in this lab. I added to this experience with a Developmental Psychology Research Methods course, which stressed proper procedure and good technique. For my final project, I composed a study analyzing whether a child uses intention when reasoning about moral issues, specifically in the domain of retributive justice. In the Psychology Honors Research Problems courses, I, along with my peers, designed and implemented two social psychology experiments, looking at the interaction among attitude similarity, interpersonal attraction, and group conformity. Building upon my previous coursework, I am currently taking a graduate core course in developmental psychology.

My research interests lie in the development of social cognition. Within this framework, I am concerned with issues surrounding moral reasoning. With _____, my faculty advisor for the Temple University Psychology Honors Program, I am working on my senior thesis, which investigates the interaction between the deontic and the aretaic domains of moral reasoning--simply stated, how a child's sense of praiseworthiness affects how he or she understands rules and obligations. I am looking to see how this cultural component relates to children's cognitive skills.

I am proposing to study at the University of British Columbia with the developmental psychologist Dr. _____. Here I will remain in the arena of social cognition, and continue to focus on the relationship between culture and cognitive processes. Dr. _____, a leader in the field of social cognition, investigates the issue of identity development using Canada's First People as a population. Working with Dr. _____ would allow me to explore two new areas: cultural variation and the relationship between the development of moral thought and the development of personal identity. Working with the First People by examining the connection between their individual culture and their concept of identity would give me knowledge and insight on a level that I would not be able to attain anywhere else. Because this aboriginal group largely has not been affected by Western culture, I could have the unique opportunity of cross-culturally studying an adolescent's sense of identity in the Western and non-Western contexts, looking at similarities and differences within and between the two groups. This fascinating research would strengthen ties between the U.S. and Canada by increasing awareness scientifically and politically, and contribute to developmental theory on an international level. I hope to expand upon Dr. _____'s 1998 paper.

"Surviving Time: The Persistence of Identity", by adding an analysis of self-conception, cultural factors, and logical reasoning. I would test about fifty adolescents from both the First People and cultural mainstream Canada, ultimately assessing the association between an adolescent's self-understanding and his or her cognitive abilities from a cross-cultural perspective, using the Wason reduced array selection task as an assessment tool. A major reason why I am interested in this project stems from the unique demands of studying the aboriginal community located on an island off the extreme of Canada's West Coast with which Dr. _____ has obtained a cooperative working relationship. These indigenous people belong to the Coastal Salish group, a division of the Northwest Coastal aboriginal population. Coming from a Western perspective, one needs to consider delicately the idea of representation--how can an outsider fairly represent the information conveyed from these First People? Who am I to convey the information about the identity of these people? I am eager to be trained to handle this sensitive issue. In order to guard against skewing the data collected from the First Nations adolescents, he adopts procedural tools which incorporate native films and stories into an assessment device. I will be entering the situation from a Western frame of reference, and I am most interested in learning from Dr. _____ how to see outside of my Western paradigm in order to avoid any imposition of Western views of identity and its developmental process. I also plan on spending the bulk of my time taking graduate coursework at the University of British Columbia. The developmental division of the psychology department of UBC has a solid foundation in developmental theory and research methodology, as does Temple University. Students are encouraged to undertake an independent research project when they enter the program. My proposed study would filter into this process smoothly. Courses like Psychology 587 (Developmental Psychology II), 521B (Psycholinguistics), and 544A (Patterns of Child Rearing) would contribute to this wonderful educational experience by meeting my needs and building upon what I have already learned.