

Antisocial behavior can be a destructive force in society, both in the harm that antisocial acts may inflict on others and the economic burden that antisocial individuals place on the legal and correctional systems. Thus, understanding and preventing such behavior is a priority for our society. Despite the recent gains that researchers have made, there is still much to accomplish in terms of understanding the bidirectional and multifaceted relations between cultural and family determinants of antisocial behavior. I am interested in attending a research-oriented clinical psychology program so that I can begin to explore the environmental and genetic factors associated with externalizing behavior. Specifically, I am interested in examining the relative importance of nature, nurture, and their interaction in the development and maintenance of antisociality and related problems among children. My goal is to identify methods of intervening with those who are prone to such behavior before these behavior patterns become entrenched.

My interest in the externalizing behavior spectrum developed over time through my diverse educational and training experiences. My first glimpse at the complexity of human behavior came from my experience in a cognitive psychology lab at Vanderbilt University, under the supervision of Dr. Laura Novick. I was responsible for much of the day-to-day execution of the several problem-solving studies, which gave me an appreciation for the rigorous nature of well-conducted psychological research. Later, I joined the Honors psychology program to pursue this interest in social development under the supervision of Dr. William Smith. I designed a study that used a new integrative bargaining paradigm to examine the effect of physical attractiveness on equitable sharing in mixed-sex pairs of college students. I conducted the study, directed research assistants in data collection, ran the analyses using SPSS, and completed a manuscript with my findings. The culmination of this project was a thesis that was awarded High Honors by the faculty review committee, and currently Dr. Smith is directing a follow-up study to this work. This experience taught me how to be flexible and innovative in conducting an experiment, and to take a project from beginning to end. My experience in cognitive and social psychology taught me to approach research creatively, and set the stage for my continued research in human development. I found the scientific process to be exceptionally rewarding, cementing my fascination with psychological research.

Following these initial research experiences I had acquired several perspectives on development and I used these perspectives to perform targeted research on problem behaviors. Vanderbilt University funded my application to conduct directed research on a project investigating the incidence, prevalence, and comorbidity among individuals with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) within a Medicaid sample. I chose to study individuals with externalizing disorders, particularly ODD, because this disorder is associated with a complex diathesis-stress model. With my advisor, Dr. Craig Anne Heflinger, I investigated the risk factors for the development of ODD, how individuals with this disorder were being treated, and importantly, how treatments changed over time. The manuscript describing this study was recently accepted for publication in *Psychological Services*.

In addition to my desire to understand developmental psychopathology, I found it increasingly important to identify possible modes of intervention. I enrolled in the Risk and Prevention Masters program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, a program that emphasized the identification of risk and resilience factors within the context of a prevention or intervention framework. My work in Dr. Robert Selman's lab focused on the promotion of social, ethical, and moral development during youth. I began to understand how theory, research, and practice all inform and build upon each other. The program also reinforced my desire to study children and adolescents, as this age group is particularly malleable for positive change. In this graduate program, I felt very intellectually challenged; I learned new skills such as qualitative research methods as well as advanced my quantitative skills.

Most recently, I have worked as a research assistant for Dr. Brian Marx at the National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (NCPTSD) within the VA Boston Healthcare System. My involvement in trauma-related research has led to my greater understanding of the strong link between trauma and externalizing psychopathology. Dr. Marx and I have worked together on several projects, including the creation of a statistical prediction instrument to detect PTSD that is now in press. I recently presented an examination of the causal relations among PTSD, antisociality, and substance use in Vietnam veterans, and I am the lead author on a manuscript investigating peritraumatic reactions in the development of PTSD symptomatology. Through my time at the NCPTSD, I have been given a great deal of intellectual

autonomy, which has allowed me to co-author several manuscripts, book chapters, and conference presentations. Additionally, I have had the opportunity to explore advanced statistical programs, including HLM and MPlus, for use in new projects. Administratively, I constantly interface with the IRB and R&D committees and have organized and assisted with grant writing for multiple Department of Defense and internal VA funding proposals.

My experiences working in a variety of labs has led me to a multidimensional approach to psychology, and as a student I believe I will provide a unique perspective in coursework and in research projects. My own research interests have continually inspired me to seek out experiences to help me learn and engage in the research process, and I believe the clinical psychology program at the University of California, Los Angeles is the ideal place for me to receive my graduate training. The program is an excellent fit for me as it emphasizes the importance of research. I am particularly interested in working with Dr. Steve Lee. His research on disruptive behavior disorders is an excellent match, and I am interested in learning how to use and interpret genetics in the development of psychopathology. I believe his work parsing apart the underlying mechanisms in risk and resilience will be extremely important in identifying targets for intervention in antisocial and aggressive behavior. Combining multiple assessment methods is important for the field of developmental psychopathology, and I think working with Dr. Lee on his various projects would be an excellent opportunity to learn new research approaches in my area of interest. Given the skills I have amassed throughout the past five years I believe I will be an asset in his projects. Attending the University of California, Los Angeles will provide me with the training I need to reach my long-term professional goal of conducting research that will be used to inform prevention and intervention programs targeted at decreasing externalizing behavior.