

My interest in psychology began during my senior year of high school when I took an Advanced Placement course in general psychology. My interest continued at Texas Tech University (TTU), and my career interests solidified after completing a research methods course where I was introduced to the research enterprise. During this course I learned of research opportunities in the department and was fortunate to be accepted into Dr. Robert Morgan's Forensic and Correctional Psychology Research Laboratory in August of 2009.

In Dr. Morgan's lab, I assisted on several research projects and was exposed to all aspects of his research including data collection (including data collection for a federally funded project which incorporated semi-structured interviews, data collection in three prisons in the Kansas Department of Corrections, and data collection in an acute inpatient psychiatric unit), data entry, and data analysis. The opportunities presented to me provided me a wealth of learning experiences. For example, I developed skills in: engaging interpersonally difficult participants, collaborating with professionals in different fields (e.g., nurses, mental health specialists, parole officers, etc.), and conversing with inmates about their concerns with limited mental health systems in correctional settings.

Of particular value to my professional development was a requirement in Dr. Morgan's lab that all undergraduate research assistants develop and present a formal research proposal. This involved a literature review, development of research questions and hypotheses, development of an experimental design, and a data analytic plan. For this project, I proposed a study to examine the relationship between antisocial attitudes, depression, and suicidal ideation in offenders recently released from prison. After successfully proposing my intended study, Dr. Morgan offered me the opportunity to modify my research proposal and conduct a study examining the role of antisocial attitudes and mood disorders in offenders engaging in self-

injurious behaviors. I eagerly accepted this opportunity and utilized an existing dataset to explore my research questions. The results of this study were presented at the American Psychological Association's (APA) annual conference in 2011 and a manuscript is being developed for publication following institutional delays for publication approval.

In line with this area of research, I sought an additional research assistantship in August 2010 in Dr. Kelly Cukrowicz Suicide and Depression Research Laboratory to expand on my knowledge of suicide theory and research methodology. After demonstrating my work ethic and research competence, I was again extended the opportunity to develop my own research project. I chose to explore the relationship between acquired capability for suicide in college students and illegal self-destructive behaviors (e.g., drug use, alcohol use, dangerous driving, risky sex behaviors, etc.). I am still in the process of data collection on this project.

In addition to my experiences at TTU, I applied for and was accepted into the APA's Summer Science Fellowship, a competitive research program hosted at George Mason University. In the spring of 2011, I was selected as one of twelve students from across the United States out of an applicant pool of more than 300 students. During my fellowship I was employed in Dr. June Tangney's Human Emotions Research Laboratory. While there, I worked on two grant funded studies. These studies examined offenders' reentry into the community and evaluated a new restorative justice intervention and I assisted the project by collecting data at the Fairfax Adult Detention Center. Additionally, I developed an independent study (from an existing dataset of Dr. Tangney's) examining suicidal ideation across offender's period of incarceration, and the relationship between proneness to shame and suicide ideation in a sample of jail inmates. This fellowship also provided training on the policy implications of research and the influence of APA on public policy.

Aside from my research development, I have actively sought opportunities to develop preliminary clinical skills. I completed a course on introduction to counseling and psychotherapy, which gave me a basic understanding of theoretical orientations and basic helping skills. Subsequently, I sought psychology-related volunteer opportunities in the community. I am currently an Adult Mental Health Activities Volunteer at The Community Living Center (CLC), which is a recreation facility within LRMHMR. In this role, I interact regularly with persons who are developmentally delayed or suffering from a mental illness, and I have the opportunity to communicate and engage with them in games and activities.

Upon earning my Ph.D., I would like to pursue a research career to explore specific risk factors in offender suicide in hopes that my research would influence correctional assessment, therapy, and correctional policy. In addition, I would like to conduct forensic and treatment-related assessments within the criminal justice system. The clinical program at George Mason University has an excellent reputation in forensic and correctional research training. Under the mentorship of Dr. June Tangney, I believe I will be an asset to the department as I further develop my research and clinical skills. Working alongside graduate students as a research assistant, as well as the research projects that I have independently taken on, I believe that I fully understand the commitment and hard work that is required to succeed in a doctoral program, and I am well equipped to overcome the challenges.