

Psychological and Behavioural Sciences, Queens' College, 2016

When we're in love, or arguing, or just having a conversation, what kind of cognitive processes are involved? In the past few years, I came to be interested in such questions about everyday situations. I started consciously thinking about the causes of different human reactions, and how one's personality affects everyday life - decision making, for example - and this enhanced my curiosity for psychology. Experiencing the subject in an educational environment made me realize the countless human functions that it covers, from memory to affect regulation, and confirmed my choice to study psychology. My first encounter with psychology occurred through Atkinson & Hilgard's 'Introduction to Psychology', which I found on our shelf at home. Initially, I read about personality and emotions, and found the personality shaping circumstances especially interesting: how nurture, evolution, development and social networks affect someone's character. Since then, the number of chapters I studied increased in parallel to my new experiences, for example as one of the organisers of my school's fresher's camp. Counselling the younger students while they got to know each other, I was able to observe the development of a community. After this experience, my readings turned to stereotypes, research about physical attraction and other aspects of social cognition, such as cultural differences. This was a highly relevant aspect as the students came from all over the country, and the differences were apparent. Later I joined an English-language talent programme where I had the opportunity to take advanced courses. I experienced psychology from a more professional perspective, and with the help of teachers who specialize in the field I could deepen and develop my interest. I became fascinated by developmental psychology, especially the social abilities of the neonatal period. I read the chapter on human development in Zimbardo's 'Psychology: Core Concepts', and in connection with this interest, I am participating in a research internship on developmental neuropsychology at Eötvös Lóránd University in Budapest. The project involves the observation of the executive functions of nine-year olds who were born prematurely. The experimental methods include using eye-tracker and administering different types of IQ tests, which made me eager to gain more insights into research methodologies and designs. Since deciding to study psychology, I have focused on my studies in biology, as it is the basic foundation of this field, and started taking extra lessons to prepare thoroughly for the Matura exam. As I have enjoyed studying languages since I was young, I attended a bilingual elementary school where I fell in love with Italian. In 10th grade I achieved first place at the Festival d'Italiano national competition in the conversation category, and in the following year third place in the literacy category with a team of four. During my years of language study I have explored how second-language learning differs from first-language acquisition, for example in how affective variables, such as motivation and self-confidence, play a facilitative role in the process. I have also read Patricia K. Kuhl's review 'Early language acquisition: cracking the speech code', because it explains language learning in different age groups and demonstrates the effects of social circumstances on infants' language acquisition.

In high school I have been an active part of the community since my first year. As member of the student council I organized a number of programs, such as the prom-queen election and mentoring for the new freshman classes. I am also involved in sports, having danced for 8 years and playing tennis for 5 years. The reason I want to study in the UK is my passion for new experiences and self-development. My aim is to experience a new educational system and pursue an internationally acknowledged degree in psychology, as a first step towards a career in the field.