

The reasons i choose to pursue a psychology degree

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What is the human condition? This is a question that has fascinated mankind for thousands of years. Similarly, in search for a better understanding of the self, I often find myself questioning why I behave the way I do: why did I reject the notion of calling my family when I first begin further education abroad? What are the factors that shaped my personality, and can it be changed later in life? Knowing the breadth and depth of topics covered in psychology, I would love to learn more and explore the limits of the human mind and behaviour offered in a psychology degree - in pursuit for a more comprehensive understanding of myself, and for a psychological answer as to what exactly is the human condition.

One of the fields in psychology I find most fascinating is emotions. We frequently encounter scenes where people respond differently towards the same situation on an emotional level. I once found myself walking out of a haunted house unfazed, yet my friends left the place terrified and in tears. So how can a same situation lead to such a wide spectrum of differing responses and behaviour? This led me to read the book ' How Emotions Are Made', which gave neural, social and evolutionary explanations of how our emotions come to being. I am most intrigued by the detailed analysis of the cultural variations in emotions - something I have long assumed to be innate and universal. The proposal that our emotional responses towards different situations are products of a series of probability predictions made by our body was perhaps the most enlightening part of the book for me. It amazes me to know that there are such complex mechanisms and such a wide range of factors that contribute to every little snippet of joy, sadness and surprise we experience all the time.

Owing to my curiosity about the biological factors that influence human behaviour, I decided to attend an interactive brain session conducted by my college, which significantly challenged my perception of the capability of the neural system and the brain - systems that function in a far more complex yet exciting manner than I had thought prior to the workshop. The lecture made evident the power of the plasticity of the human brain, which allows compensation of its damaged components. Looking at fMRI scans of the human mind in action once again leaves me in awe as I wondered how this small portion of our body is capable of such a wide variety of functions and control over our daily life.

To explore potential career prospects, I also attended a forensic psychology conference. Surprisingly, what impacted me the most was a lecture given by two former inmates, one sharing his beliefs and thoughts that drove his actions as a psychopathic offender, the other describing the conditions of prison and psychological aid offered to prisoners for rehabilitation. It shocks me to realise how much room for improvement exists in the current management methods in prisons, especially re-integration aids for anti-social offenders. In particular, this conference reminded me of why I long to pursue a degree in psychology: to contribute to society by making positive changes to areas such as this through attempting to understand the human mind and condition.

Outside my academics, I participate in activities that challenge my limits. Though being a shy person, I often help at a local church as an altar server and during the past year I tutored maths at a local secondary school. I also

took up several leadership roles, from running clubs and societies in secondary school to tutoring maths in my current college - all of which involved a great amount of communication skills and patience. Perhaps my life is one of the things that exemplifies what makes the human condition mysterious: a paradox that often trails beyond our expectation of its capability. Pursuing for a degree in psychology is the ultimate proof that I can, like the human condition, exceed my own expectations as to what I can achieve.