



STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

Psychology MA Students
2026 - 2027





Emily (Em) Anderson

Texas Christian University,
2026
Psychology (Minor in
Kinesiology)

Previous experience: At TCU, I worked under Dr. Uma Tauber in the Aging and Memory lab. During this time, I used SONA, collected and scored data, engaged in grant writing, and presented my research. I was awarded two research grants, one to travel to SWPA to present our findings for our work with dementia caregivers and one to fund further research in the lab. I have presented my research at two research symposiums and one regional conference. I also attended many community events to recruit participants and make connections in the community. I served as an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant for Fundamentals of Learning in Psychology.

Research interests and career goals: I am interested in the bidirectional relationship between mental and physical health and how different health behaviors, such as eating or exercise, impact one's development and functioning of mental illness. I am interested in how these behaviors and habits can improve individuals' functioning and daily life living with disorders such as Bipolar and Major Depressive Disorder. I hope to pursue my PhD in Clinical Health Psychology and gain experience in research and in clinical settings (e.g., hospital, in-patient settings). In my future career, I hope to engage in clinical work, research, and academic teaching.

Research keywords: Health behaviors; Mood disorders; Personalized intervention



Aliyah Batista

The City College of New York
(CCNY), 2026
Psychology (Minor in
Philosophy)

Previous experience: As an undergraduate at City College, I conducted independent research under the mentorship of Professor Kai Gilchrist on "The Cognitive Impact of Captioning on Information Retention in Social Media Content," for which I designed and implemented a research protocol, collected and analyzed data, and presented my findings. I also interned as a research assistant at NYU's Grossman School of Medicine where I translated participant screenings into data sheets to prepare for statistical analysis. In addition to my research experiences, I worked as a tutor and mentor for undergraduate students, implementing teaching strategies to attend to diverse learning needs.

Research interests and career goals: My research interests include social development, social cognition, social-emotional learning, child and adolescent development, and brain-behavior relationships, particularly within ethnically diverse and economically disadvantaged communities. I am curious investigate the relationship between parents/caregivers and adolescents with cognitive and motor disabilities, and their ability to succeed academically based upon their socioeconomic status. My long-term goal is to pursue a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology with a specialization in Neuropsychology, conducting research with adolescents with autism and other neurological disorders to provide innovative strategies for their individualized needs. I would also like to become a professor and teach courses like neuroanatomy.

Research keywords: Adolescent development; Social cognition; Brain-behavior relationships



Donna Dean

Stony Brook University, 2025
Psychology (Minor in
Philosophy)

Previous experience: As an undergraduate research assistant at Stony Brook University, I gained insight into the field of psychological science by working in Dr. Gregory Zelinsky’s Eye Cog Lab. During my time at the lab, I collected eye tracking data to explore how individual psychological differences, such as depressive and anxiety-like traits, correlate with gaze behavior. I presented a poster with my findings at the Vision Sciences Society annual conference. Currently, I work as a Direct Support Professional at Maryhaven, where I aid residents who have neurodevelopmental disabilities and mental health issues in a group home setting.

Research interests and career goals: I am interested in exploring various types of personalized treatments and interventions tailored to individuals’ neurological differences. I hope to obtain a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology so that I can achieve my long-term career goal of becoming a licensed Clinical Psychologist. With my license, I aim to offer a range of evidence-based therapy and counseling services in both hospital and private settings. I wish to create an environment where diverse clients, especially those from neurologically underrepresented communities, can access the mental health care that truly takes their differences into consideration.

Research keywords: Personalized intervention; Treatment resistant mood disorders; Autism Spectrum Disorder



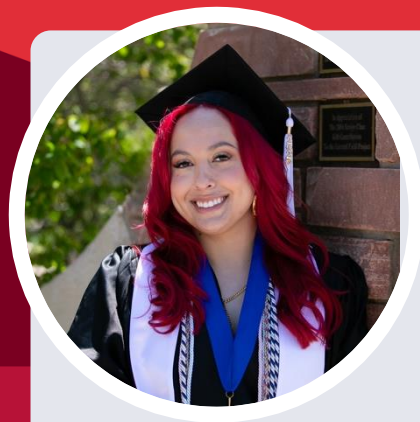
Julianne Digiorgio

SUNY Plattsburgh, 2026
Psychology (Minor in Social
Justice)

Previous experience: At SUNY Plattsburgh, I worked under Dr. Renee Bator with the goal of increasing student involvement in the fitness center through the use of public commitment. I found that encouraging students to use the fitness center was a unique way to support the well-being of college students. My involvement in this study included researching various persuasion tactics that would increase commitment, designing and conducting an experiment, using SPSS to analyze our data, and presenting our results at events on campus, as well as the 2026 EPA Conference. This experience has ignited my enthusiasm for supporting children’s mental health.

Research interests and career goals: My research interests include developmental psychopathology; the environmental, social, and emotional factors that contribute to children’s mental health; adverse childhood experiences; child psychopathology and abnormal behaviors; and treatment and intervention options tailored toward understanding and improving children’s mental health. My professional career plans consist of becoming a child therapist, and one day obtaining my PhD in Psychology. I am eager to gain the practical experience needed to make a real difference in children’s lives by providing them with the necessary support and treatment.

Research keywords: Developmental psychopathology; Adverse childhood experiences; Abnormal behavior



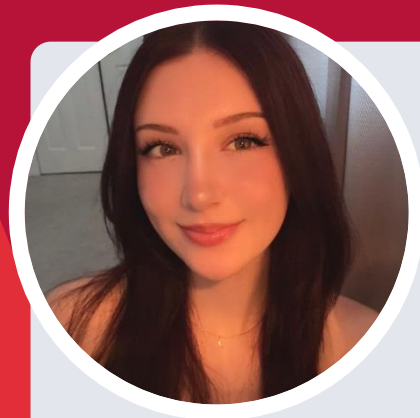
Tatum Hendrick

University of Colorado,
Boulder, 2025
Psychology (Minor in Business)

Previous experience: At CU, I did an independent study with Dr. Michael Stallings where I conducted a quasi-experiment to analyze the relationship between the use of modern cannabis and adverse effects in individuals diagnosed with Cannabis Use Disorder. I am currently working on publishing this research as well as two related papers. I also worked as a research assistant in the Growth, Identity, and Sexual Trauma lab for Dr. Chelsea Kilminik. Here, I worked on the *Also Our Campus* project, which analyzes belonging, identity, and sexual harm at CU and will be used to create prevention and intervention programs.

Research interests and career goals: My research interests focus on the treatment of substance use disorders along with commonly co-occurring disorders in minority populations. I am particularly interested in how individual differences in psychopathology and identity affected the response to substance use treatment. Answering these questions will help treatments for substance use disorder become more effective and in turn allow me to treat my patients more effectively. My overall goal is to pursue a PhD in Clinical Psychology so that I can continue my research over the course of my counseling career.

Research keywords: Substance use disorders; Co-occurring disorders; Minority mental health



Gianna Jaworski

Stony Brook University, 2025
Psychology

Previous experience: During my senior year of undergraduate study and the year that followed, I worked as a Research Support Specialist in the Multi-Modal Translational Imaging (MMTI) Lab at Stony Brook University Hospital. I worked on several studies focused on mental health disorders including OCD, schizophrenia, and autism. My responsibilities included recruiting and screening participants, administering cognitive assessments, coordinating PET and fMRI scans, supporting rTMS procedures, and ensuring studies follow IRB guidelines. Working on these studies gave me valuable experience in clinical research and strengthened my ability to communicate, stay organized, and adapt in fast-paced research settings.

Research interests and career goals: My research interests center on understanding how the brain influences mental health and behavior. I am particularly interested in using neuroimaging to better understand disorders and explore ways to improve treatment outcomes. In the future, I hope to pursue doctoral training in clinical psychology and contribute to research that connects brain function with clinical symptoms and treatment response. I also hope to continue developing my skills in research design, data analysis, and independent research while contributing to more effective and individualized mental health care.

Research keywords: Clinical psychology; Neuroimaging; Psychopathology



Victoria Kapassakis

Hofstra University, 2026
Psychology (Minor in Human Services)

Previous experience: As an undergraduate research assistant, I worked within Lab CARES under the mentorship of Dr. Mun Yee Kwan. The research focus of Lab CARES is the risk factors of eating disorders and suicidality. My experience within the lab consisted of data collection, detailed study record keeping, participant recruitment, literature review, and participation in journal clubs. I completed my Honors Thesis under the supervision of Dr. Sarah A. Novak. My research proposes a longitudinal intervention to reduce OCD stigma. I presented a poster at an undergraduate student research event and will be defending my thesis within the last week of May.

Research interests and career goals: My current research interests focus on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and other risk factors for the development of psychiatric disorders. I am also interested in research on resilience and protective factors in the face of ACEs and other traumas later in life. Most of my undergraduate research has focused on OCD, though I am open to expanding to other areas. My goal is to pursue a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology and ultimately practice as a clinical psychologist, potentially specializing in OCD. Along with practicing clinically, I hope to conduct research evaluating the effectiveness of treatment modalities across various psychiatric disorders.

Research keywords: Adverse childhood experiences; Resilience; Obsessive-compulsive disorder



Yaqi (Vicky) Liang

Stony Brook University, 2025
Psychology (Minor in Women's Studies)

Previous experience: As an undergraduate research assistant, I volunteered in Dr. Kristin Bernard's Developmental Stress and Prevention Lab. I contributed to research examining caregiving systems and young children's development. My responsibilities included participant recruitment and communication, survey data collection, home visits, and supporting observational video interaction data collection. I also conducted participant interviews, cleaned interview transcripts, and used NVivo for qualitative coding and data analysis. This experience strengthened my research, communication, and organizational skills while deepening my passion for developmental research. Through this work, I developed strong interests in early childhood emotional regulation, multi-caregiver systems, and culturally responsive developmental research.

Research interests and career goals: My research interests focus on child development, caregiving systems, and parenting practices, with a particular emphasis on how early caregiving environments shape children's emotional regulation and developmental outcomes. I am especially interested in diverse caregiving structures and culturally responsive approaches to developmental research and intervention. My long-term goal is to pursue a PhD in Clinical Psychology to further investigate early childhood developmental processes across different cultural contexts and contribute to evidence-based early intervention services that support children and families facing developmental or emotional challenges.

Research keywords: Child development; Caregiving; Cross-Culture



Natalie Mohabir

Queens College, City
University of New York, 2026
Psychology (Minor in Data
Analytics)

Previous experience: In Fall 2024, I began my work as an undergraduate research assistant in the Autism Origins Lab where I've contributed to a birth cohort study that tracks the role of sleep on later sensorimotor and cognitive development in infants at high familial risk for autism. My responsibilities include participant screening, assisting with home visits involving sleep polysomnography and EEG data collection, synthesizing relevant literature, and supporting administration of standardized assessments such as the Mullen Scales of Early Learning (MSEL). Through this hands-on experience, I've developed a strong foundation in the role of sleep in atypical development.

Research interests and career goals: My goal is to obtain a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology to contribute to the ongoing research and creation of intervention programs that support children at risk for developmental cascades. More specifically, my research interests center on how sleep problems act as a barrier to early social-emotional milestones, such as joint attention and mirroring, and lead to long-term social impairment. I believe that addressing sleep issues early on can remove this hurdle and give children a better chance to develop healthy social and emotional skills. For example, how does sleep disruption affect aggression amongst children with neurodevelopmental disorders?

Research keywords: Neurodevelopmental Disorders; Sleep; Intervention



Koosha Sadjadi

Stony Brook University, 2026
Master's, Neuroscience

Medical University, 2018
Biomedical Sciences

Previous experience: I completed a Master's degree in Neuroscience at Stony Brook University, where my research focused on depression, neuroinflammation, and neuroimaging approaches to mental health research. Before coming to Stony Brook, I worked for several years in psychiatric research, contributing to clinical studies involving depression, psychotic-spectrum disorders, inflammatory and neuroendocrine markers, and psychological assessment. This work included experience with human-subjects research, clinical coordination, structured psychiatric assessment, and the use of validated symptom measures. My undergraduate training in biomedical sciences first exposed me to biological research, though my interests increasingly shifted toward the psychological processes underlying mental disorders.

Research interests and career goals: My research interests center on how symptoms are defined, measured, and expressed across different forms of psychopathology, especially depression, anxiety, and related internalizing conditions. I am also interested in how psychological symptoms relate to emotion regulation, stress responsivity, and broader patterns of behavior across individuals. More broadly, I am interested in understanding why individuals with similar diagnoses can vary widely in emotional experience, symptom presentation, and treatment response. I hope to continue using clinically and biologically informed research methods to study how symptoms develop and persist across individuals, with the goal of pursuing a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology and contributing to research in psychopathology and clinical science.

Research keywords: Psychopathology; Psychological assessment; Internalizing disorders



Breanna (Bree) Shifrin

St. John's University, 2026
Psychology (Minor in Music)

Previous experience: During my undergraduate career, I was a Research Fellow in Dr. Brondolo's CHIRP lab, which focused on reducing health disparities. Within that lab, I worked on a project that set out to establish hematological ranges for transgender individuals undergoing gender-affirming hormone therapy, as well as collaborating with JHMC on a systematic review of the culture of safety within in-patient psychiatric units. I also volunteered as a research assistant for Dr. Navarro's SCHEMA Lab investigating cognitive test performance in individuals with ADHD versus without. I have also previously interned at a private psychiatric practice as a Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation Coordinator.

Research interests and career goals: I am most interested in the field of Neuropsychology, focusing specifically on neurodevelopmental disorders, and how to best assess and treat them. I am also passionate about investigating health disparities within minority groups in the United States, and how to bridge the gaps in care and knowledge. My ultimate goal is to become a Psychiatrist with a neuropsychological concentration, as well as to continue participating in research to advance the field.

Research keywords: Neuropsychology; Psychopharmacology; Health disparities



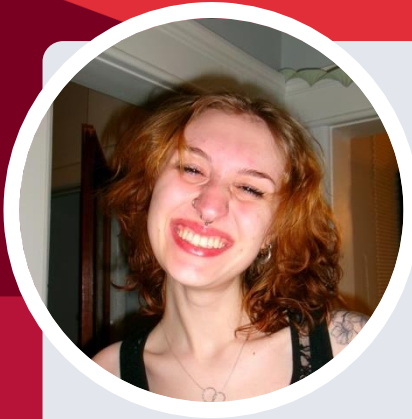
Justyna Tyburczy

Stony Brook University, 2025
Psychology (Minor in Women's
Studies)

Previous experience: As an undergraduate research assistant at the Cognitive Aging & Memory lab at Stony Brook University, I was responsible for working on cognitive offloading studies and looking for patterns in our results. This furthered my interest in neurodegeneration, especially, in illnesses such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's. Through the coursework I took, I also learned a lot about neuropsychopharmacology and studies on how we can better treat patients with anxiety and depression, as well as addictive behaviors.

Research interests and career goals: I am largely interested in studying neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's and seeing how we can improve the lives of those who suffer from them. I am also curious about neuropsychopharmacology and enhancing treatment options for patients with anxiety and depression as well as studies on addiction and its role in changing people's brain chemistry. I am really interested in hands-on experience so I am especially eager to learn wet lab techniques and imaging techniques to aid these studies. I hope to pursue a PhD in a related field and work in a research lab studying my interests.

Research keywords: Neuropsychopharmacology; Neuropsychology; Neurodegeneration



Kara Vagts

SUNY Oneonta, 2026
Psychology (Minor in
Women's and Gender Studies)

Previous experience: During my time at Oneonta, I worked as a research assistant under Dr. Katherine Lau at the DAPPER Lab. This work focused on the moderating effect that different parenting styles may have on behavioral health and ADHD. This provided me with experience in literature review and formal write-ups. I presented this research at the EPA conference this past February. I worked with Dr. James Zians on community concern research with local residents, surveying attitudes, beliefs, and concerns on community risks. This gave me experience in SPSS, as well as inputting, managing, analyzing, and interpreting data. Our findings were presented to the Board of Directors of the Community Foundation of Otsego County.

Research interests and career goals: I am especially interested in studying brain structures in relation to psychopathology to gain a better understanding of brain-behavior relationships. I am also interested in studying how environmental and genetic factors affect neurological functioning in later life. I would also like to study the role of consciousness and sleep on brain activity and plasticity. My goal is to earn a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology to study neuropsychology and how brain systems communicate with each other and the rest of the body.

Research keywords: Neuropsychology; Personality development; Psychopathology



Benjamin (Ben) Varnas

University of Massachusetts,
Amherst, 2020
Neuroscience/Psychology

Previous experience: I have been a Research Coordinator at Stony Brook's Multi-Modal Translational Imaging (MMTI) Lab for the last 4 years working under Dr. Scott J. Moeller. Our research focuses on using imaging to track differences in the brains of people with opioid use disorder/nicotine use disorder and control populations. I am a co-author on two publications and have previously presented interim data on how stress affects craving in people with opioid use disorder at ACNP 2026.

Research interests and career goals: I am deeply interested in examining how large-scale brain networks emerge and evolve, how their relationships shape one another's development through system interactions, and exploring novel therapeutic interventions like repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS), transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS), and psychedelic-based treatments that can remediate disruptions in network functioning.

Research keywords: Addiction; Neuromodulation; Imaging