

MBB Application Statement (from a SOPHOMORE APPLICANT, so less developed research idea is ok)

I am attracted to psychology and the mind/brain/behavior program because I feel that it tackles some of the most fascinating and important questions that exist and are not confined to just one way of approaching issues of the mind. I have been fortunate enough to have had a very hands-on exposure to psychology by working in Joshua Greene's Moral Cognition Lab this fall and last spring, and Susan Carey's Developmental lab last fall. Working in the Greene lab has been especially rewarding and has spurred my interest in the MBB program because the lab merges psychology with philosophy and neuroscience, which is precisely what I hope to accomplish through my concentration (I am planning on doing a secondary field in philosophy as well). I am interested in both the evolution of moral (and perhaps also economic) judgments, the neural substrates underlying our decision-making, and the ways in which psychological research contributes to our understanding of more normative moral philosophy. As a member of the lab, I have been helping to design and conduct behavioral studies on moral judgment and I am also being trained on how to use MRI technology to conduct neuroimaging studies.

I hope to supplement this lab work with more classroom instruction on neurobiology, social neuroscience, and courses that are at the intersection of psychology and philosophy. In addition to judgment and decision-making, another area of psychology that I plan on exploring is that of consciousness and perception, particularly perception of other minds (theory of mind), and how it is related to our notions of the

self, god, computers, etc. A further topic in social psychology related to beliefs and behaviors that interests me is cognitive dissonance.

The psychology track of the MBB program seems best suited to these intellectual goals, and will allow me to comprehensively examine my psychological interests by answering questions on level of the individual's brain & genes, the social/interpersonal level, and the more ultimate, evolutionary level. I am also excited about the opportunity to draw insights from courses of other departments, particularly philosophy and evolutionary biology.