As an undergraduate earning my psychology degree at Sam Houston State University I was immediately impressed with the passion and approachability of the faculty members in the department. With their help, I feel as if the course work I completed during that time was what enabled me to not only develop my own passion for clinical psychology, but also to hone my ability to take my goal of a career in psychology to the next level. After completing my master’s degree in forensic psychology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, I discovered that both my research and field work interests fit in the field of clinical forensic psychology. Not surprisingly, when looking for the right school to earn my doctorate degree at, I immediately knew that Sam Houston State University’s clinical psychology doctoral program was a perfect fit for my continuing education.

To start, the emphasis that Sam Houston’s program places on both field work and research is the perfect algorithm to create professionals that have experience as both practitioners and scholars. In addition, the forensic concentration that the program offers fits perfectly into both the field work and research that I have participated in, and the opportunity to learn more about forensic assessments as well as forensic psychology’s influence in shaping mental health law would be invaluable. I would revel in the opportunity to gain more experience in the administration of forensic assessments for the courts, and the research interests of the faculty at Sam Houston spark my interest to conduct more original research of my own. For example, Dr. Boccaccini’s interests in death penalty cases involving mentally retarded defendants, as well as Dr. Conroy’s interests in risk assessments are two areas that I am very interested in learning more about, and I would be more than excited to participate in research involving these two areas. Finally, I feel as if my educational experience, field work, and research experience make me a competitive candidate for acceptance into Sam Houston State University’s Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program.

To begin, while completing my undergraduate degree I took 6 credit hours of research methods in addition to an introduction to statistics for behavioral sciences. While completing my masters degree, I completed courses in research methods, advanced research methods, as well an intermediate statistics class for behavioral sciences. These courses educated and trained me on the various approaches to research as well as the critical thinking necessary to overcome the various practical and ethical obstacles faced by researches in the field of psychology. Moreover, I enrolled in a course on advanced data analysis which helped me become conversant in several software programs, including SPSS, which would aid me the efficient entry of research data in addition to the calculations of many statistical tests. The work I accomplished in these courses proved invaluable to the research I would later conduct and will continue to bolster the research I will undertake in the future.

Furthermore I have served as a researcher on some very exciting projects. The first of these research projects was a joint research project with the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Behavioral Science Unit and it explored ritualistic behaviors in serial rape cases. It was a truly rewarding experience for my fellow researchers and me to investigate an issue that had never been looked at before, and getting the opportunity to present our findings in front of the FBI’s Chief Psychologist and Chief Criminologist was a truly defining moment in my education. What is more, our research team was invited to present our findings at the annual Master’s Student Research Conference, held at our college.

Moreover, I am currently serving as first author on a project that involves assessing attorney’s perspectives on competency related issues involving their mentally retarded clients. Ultimately, the research I have been a part of has shown me two things, that I am not only incredibly passionate about creating and conducting new research, but that I am also capable of conducting research and working together on a team to conquer the inevitable obstacles that accompanying any research. It is this passion and ability that I hope to hone and build on at the doctorate level.

Additionally, my in-field experience in clinical psychology has been as equally rewarding as my research experience. To start, I completed a 300 hour externship at the Kings County Psychiatric Clinic in the Supreme Court building of both Brooklyn and Queens, New York. The time I spent working with the psychologists and psychiatrists at the clinics was invaluable. I was able to receive first-hand experience in evaluating forensic psychiatric defendants for competency to stand trial, as well as assessing drug offenders for rehabilitation and MICA programs. The clinical staff working in these offices candidly discussed with me the various issues faced by those professionals working in forensic psychology, but also showed me just how worthwhile it was to make a difference in both psychology and the law. What is more, I was able to gain practical experience when I was allowed to conduct various assessments under the supervision of the psychology staff. Some of these evaluations included the WAIS IV, R-BANS, TOMM, PCL-R, and the SORAG.

Currently I am gaining even more clinical experience in the world of psychology as a result of my employment as a Community Liaison Worker in the Behavioral Health department of Kings County Hospital in New York. While my chief responsibilities involve following up with recently discharged psychiatric patients to ensure they are complying with treatment, the real satisfaction I get from this job is the few hours a day that I spend on the psychiatric unit itself. Here, I am able to interact with individuals suffering from a variety of mental illnesses with various degrees of insight into their condition. Some patients welcome my presence and are eager to learn what it is that I do at the hospital as well as share their concerns with me, others are withdrawn and require much more patients and time to get to know.

Moreover, I get to work hand in hand with the unit’s treatment teams to present unique cases, and help to identify each patient’s unique needs challenges. While challenging at times, I have discovered just how remarkable it is to be able to provide even the smallest amount of aid and relief to a person struggling with a mental illness, and the experience has also shown me just how fascinating the therapeutic side of psychology can be.

With regards to my long-term goals, I wish to be both an avid researcher and devoted practitioner in the field of clinical forensic psychology. In terms of research, I would like to expand on my knowledge of the psychology behind violent crimes, centering on extreme violence in the family, namely filicide and patricide. Additionally, I wish to explore the current research on risk assessment and competency to stand trial. As far as clinical work, I would greatly enjoy a career performing forensic evaluations for the criminal justice system, particularly those evaluations centered on competency to stand trial, insanity pleas, risk evaluation, and pleas of extreme emotional disturbance. In addition, I also possess a strong desire to teach psychology at the undergraduate level in hopes of inspiring young students to get involved in what is a truly an exciting and rewarding field.

Ultimately, I have accomplished a great deal in preparation for doctorate level work in psychology, and I know that there is no other place that I would want to move forward with my academic and professional career more than at Sam Houston State University.