

Getting to know:

Biography

Mindy Westlund

Mindy Westlund is a May 2012 Psychology graduate from the University of Minnesota. Beginning in January 2011, she volunteered in the research lab of Drs. Bonnie Klimes-Dougan and Kathryn Cullen. During her senior year, she was awarded a grant through the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program which funded her work on this publication. She was also a Psi Chi officer and Phi Beta Kappa inductee. After graduation, she began working full-time as a research coordinator for the same lab where she had been volunteering. This coming fall, Mindy will begin working toward her PhD in Clinical Science and Psychopathology Research at the University of Minnesota where she will focus on adolescent psychopathology and neuroimaging.

Q&A

What sparked your interest in psychology?

I have been interested in psychology since I was 11 years old when my cousin introduced me to personality tests. Afterward, my love of reading led me to novels depicting adolescents experiencing psychopathology, which I found extremely fascinating.

What led you to this topic?

I have been very fortunate to have found a place in a research lab that was perfectly aligned with my interests from the start. However, I would have to say that my involvement with putting together a self-harm grant for NIMH is what piqued my interest in neuroimaging and self-directed violence in particular.

Did you have a mentor and how did you get involved with him/her?

After taking Abnormal Psychology with Dr. Bonnie Klimes-Dougan, I began volunteering in her lab and we began forming a great research relationship. It was through this experience that I also met Dr. Katie Cullen, who has been a key figure in helping me understand the neuroimaging aspect. They have both provided me with a wealth of information regarding research.

*How long have you been working on this paper?
What has the process been like for you?*

I started working on this paper around February or March 2012 and essentially had it completed by graduation in May 2012. The process has been very beneficial as it has been a great learning experience. In addition to going through the peer review process, I have been able to critique my own work and think of ways to better go about testing my hypotheses. I look forward to repeating my questions with a more theory driven approach, refined methods, and much larger sample.

What was it like to be an undergraduate student completing your own research project?

I am someone who loves to acquire knowledge and also work independently. This was a great opportunity to do both of those things under the guidance of very experienced researchers. My only regret was not taking advantage of this opportunity earlier in

my undergraduate career.