As a PhD student, I hope to explore the development of social categories, stereotypes, and bias. I am particularly interested in the processes that lead children to develop concepts of race and gender, and the ways in which these categorizations affect children's perceptions of themselves and others. In light of these interests, I am excited to apply to New York University's psychology PhD program to work under the mentorship of ███████████████

My interest in social cognition evolved out of a lifelong desire to help others. This desire was shaped most by two recent experiences: tutoring a transgender high school freshman and teaching at a high-needs high school. Though distinct, both experiences exposed me to the unique challenges faced by youth with marginalized identities – specifically, the challenges of being stereotyped, judged, and discriminated against. I began to wonder: How do these patterns of social bias emerge? What developmental processes lead children to distinguish so firmly between in-group and out-group members? How might children learn to see beyond social categories, both within and outside of themselves? I look forward to progressing in the field of social-developmental research to investigate these important questions.

My first foray into psychological research was with ████████████████ at ████████████ In her lab, I became interested in children's early conceptualizations of social categories, and joined a project investigating the development of implicit racial and gender bias. This project laid the foundation for my senior thesis, which sought to examine whether the link between implicit racial attitudes and prejudiced behavior seen in adults (e.g., wherein higher implicit racism yields more prejudiced actions) is mirrored in children. To test this question, 4- and 5-year-old children completed the Affective Misattribution Procedure (AMP) – a task probing implicit bias – and then engaged in a resource allocation task. Although our results did not reflect the association found in adults, we did find a significant allocation preference in favor of white children. My project earned the Hunt Award for Outstanding Senior Psychology Thesis, and, more importantly, cemented in me a passion for research grounded in real-world issues.

Wanting to continue studying social cognition, I joined the labs of ████████████████ and ████████████ at ████████████████████ the following year. As a junior research scientist in ████████████ lab, I worked extensively on a project investigating the effect of identity-focused language on children's pro-social behavior. Building upon the literature on generic language, this study explored whether identity-focused language (e.g., asking children to "be helpers") would demotivate children in the face of a setback compared to action-focused language (e.g., asking children "to help"). In addition to data collection, I devised a data processing workflow and drafted a comprehensive manual for behavioral coding in Datavyu. Consistent with our hypotheses, we found that identity-focused language led children to help less and report less positive attitudes toward helping after they had faced a helping-related setback. I presented these findings at the Cognitive Development Society conference this past October and am a co-author on the manuscript. More recently, I helped develop two new studies within the lab: One probes the effect of identity- versus action-focused language about science (e.g., "being a scientist" versus "doing science") on children's persistence in online science activities, and the other explores children's implicit associations between racial and gender categories.

In ████████████ lab, I serve as the lab manager for a 20-person research team. In addition to establishing the lab infrastructure, developing research protocols, and managing all on- and off-site studies, I have also undertaken an independent research project under the mentorship of ████████████ This project investigates the role of racial bias in the field of venture capitalism, particularly with respect to funding allocation decisions for start-ups. In this study, adult participants are presented with one of two start-up pitches. Critically, the two pitches are identical; the only variable manipulated across conditions is the perceived race of the team members, as suggested by their first and last names. Participants are then asked to decide how much to fund the hypothetical start-up. Our initial findings revealed the predicted racial bias in funding decisions (i.e., lower funding for the predominantly black start-up team), particularly among participants who scored high in a measure of racism (the Modern Racism Scale; McConahay, 1986). The opportunity to lead the design, implementation, and data analysis on a study with a focus so central to my interests – the manifestation of racial bias – has been

personally enriching, and I am excited to present our preliminary findings at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology conference in March of 2018.

In light of my previous research experience and current interests, I believe that New York University's psychology PhD program would serve as an optimal platform for my graduate training. I am primarily interested in working under the mentorship of Dr. ███████████ in the Cognition and Perception program, as well as with ██████████████████████ in the Social and Personality area ████████ work on social essentialism dovetails with my own interest in children's understanding of social categories. With ████████ in particular, I would be interested in exploring the development of children's understanding of social categories as fixed and intractable. How do adults – whether intentionally or unintentionally – encourage children to think about social categories such as gender in such rigid, essentialized terms? How do other factors of children's environments (e.g., the media to which they are exposed) fuel this type of essentialist reasoning? And, importantly, how can we encourage children to think about social categories in less fixed and more malleable ways? I am excited to pursue these questions, as well as others within the domain of social cognition, as a PhD student. I believe that my strong research skillset positions me to be a dynamic contributor to New York University's program in particular, and I thank you for considering my application.