

Forensic Psychology: The Passion of My Combined Interests

In middle school, my older brother and I spent countless nights devouring Flaming Hot Cheetos while watching our favorite TV show, *Forensic Files*. At first, it seemed like a fun late-night hobby. However, this changed immediately after watching a particular episode, “The List Murders,” which focused on the case of John List, who murdered his entire family. The case went unsolved for years until a piece of forensic evidence helped solve the crime. This episode made me realize that I wanted to be the person who helped struggling families overcome their uncertainties following unresolved investigations. From this point forward, I began watching the show with a new dream in mind: to one day become a forensic scientist.

To transform my dream into a reality, I began researching forensic science. I discovered that forensic scientists had four primary responsibilities: collecting evidence, analyzing evidence, communicating with law enforcement, and testifying in court. This discovery piqued my interest in the subject and inspired me to consider majoring in forensic science in college. However, during the college application process, I encountered a roadblock. I had just been accepted into my dream school, UCLA, and I realized they had no forensic science major. I soon began to reconsider my future career, recognizing that I would be in the laboratory for several hours, something I could not see myself doing. I researched UCLA majors similar to forensic science and encountered psychology. Psychology, like forensic science, had the aspect of helping others that I sought in a future profession. Therefore, I decided to take the risk, commit to UCLA, and declare myself a psychology major. My educational experiences since then have shown me that I can combine forensics and psychology into a fulfilling passion: forensic psychology.

I have always loved solving crimes and mysteries. I have further developed this interest in forensics by pursuing hands-on experience in the field. I spent the summer after my freshman year as an intern for the Nogales Probation Department. During this internship, I shadowed several probation officers as they supported their clients. I noticed that by building positive relationships with their clients, these officers were able to change their lives and prevent them from committing further crimes. For example, I was able to witness an interview inside a probation officer client's jail cell where the probation officer and his client communicated in a trustworthy, comfortable manner. Their positive relationship influenced the client, and he was released from jail shortly after this encounter. Additionally, I was also able to observe the forensic side of forensic psychology in court hearings where probation officers made various

sentencing recommendations to the court, including strengthening or weakening various probation parameters. My supervisor, Luis Fimbres, taught me a valuable life lesson along the way: I could potentially improve the lives of people in my community by assisting those in need. This entire experience made me realize that I wanted to pursue a career in forensics.

I have always been motivated to help those in need because it brings me immense satisfaction. I have been able to pursue this interest in psychology by working as a research assistant in a psychology lab, where I have taken part in a number of meta-analyses. One meta-analysis on the risk of suicidal thoughts altered my perspective on the field of psychology by demonstrating that I can directly assist individuals by developing interventions to help reduce their psychological issues. This opportunity allowed me to view psychology through a legal lens because I was able to work with youth involved in the criminal justice system and observe how their involvement affected their suicidal thoughts. This distinct integration strengthened my desire to become a forensic psychologist. I would not have had this valuable experience without my mentor, Dr. Steve Lee. Dr. Lee and I met during my sophomore year at UCLA. He quickly transformed from my professor to my role model. Dr. Lee made me realize that I wanted to pursue a career in psychology.

My educational experiences have allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of forensics and psychology, combining these interests into a single passion: forensic psychology. Through my active involvement in each field, I have demonstrated that I possess the skills necessary to become a successful forensic psychologist. I am ready to pursue my passion and be a helping hand to my community.