Teaching Statement

Research promotes and provides major improvements and advancements in education; a cog in a wheel that imparts evolving knowledge and information onto both the teacher and the student. As a researcher I have the opportunity to access and contribute to some of the current advances in psychological science, while as an instructor, I've translated this knowledge in ways that enrich my students' learning on multiple fronts. My goals for teaching are three-fold, to: (1) create a sense of excitement and curiosity about psychological science by encouraging students to make connections between psychology and their own lives; (2) teach students how to critically evaluate research and identify sources of bias; (3) empower students to take ownership in the learning process.

These teaching goals operate differently when teaching graduate compared to undergraduate students. In my graduate teaching my students have taught me to let go of rigidly adhering to prescribed plans that for me typically operated in the form of lecture-based instruction. Instead I stimulate student curiosity and critical thinking in the form of discussion-based classes that challenge students to take ownership of the learning process. Students write thought papers and discuss key points raised to a series of open-ended questions based on class readings and students' own research experiences. They also lead discussions themselves. This format has allowed my students and myself to dig deeper into the issues raised in our readings and to raise new questions for future research. For instance, after one of my cognitive development courses, one graduate student approached me exclaiming that she never thought about the role of caregiver/child attachment in the study of delinquency, and was excited about incorporating new measures related to this construct in her research. I have also taught a behavioral epigenetics seminar with **near perfect** (5.94 average out of 6) evaluations from graduate and advanced undergraduate students and plan to broaden this course in the future to generate a *developmental neuroscience* course.

In my undergraduate *Infancy* course I found the need to structure the classroom environment so that the aforementioned goals may be reached. Students may need a short lecture in order to structure engaging activities and discussion-based learning. These later activities I believe are crucial in fostering critical thinking and engagement in the material. For instance, I fostered class debates whereby two groups of students describe the support for and against a "controversial" issue in child development, such as the use of daycare. These exercises were well received by my students, as evidenced by my high teaching evaluations in this course (5.6/6). I also value training undergraduate students in research and I supervise 2-3 honors theses in any given year as well as several Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) students.

Graduate supervision is particularly fulfilling to me because of the opportunity to train the "next generation" of academics. My goal is for all my students to be competitive for a job in academia and thus I encourage them to develop their own research niche that is related but distinct from my own research program. I view supervision as a developmental process whereby junior graduate students may need more support with formulating a research question and testing hypotheses while senior students may be given the freedom to work more independently throughout the research process and may come to me for support only once analyses for a paper are complete. In this manner I hope to instill in my students a sense of confidence that they may be able to function more independently as they pursue positions in academia.

Indeed my first graduate student will be obtaining his PhD in June, 2019, funded through an NIH postdoctoral fellowship at Penn State University. Together we have published five manuscripts, with my student as first author on four. My other two graduate students have

published with myself and are on-track for obtaining positions in academia if they so desire. I also co-mentored a post-doctoral student who is now has a tenure-track assistant professor position in clinical child psychology at the State University of New York at Albany.

In sum, I deeply value teaching and I take student feedback quite seriously. I have to work hard at teaching effectively and I regularly solicit student feedback to improve the quality of my teaching. For example, in my graduate cognitive development seminar I have almost completely abandoned the use of power point in response to student comments that they valued a discussion-based seminar. I have consistently improved my teaching based on the critical feedback of my students which have culminated in outstanding ratings for teaching effectiveness. I look forward to continually learning and improving on my teaching based on the feedback I receive from my graduate and undergraduate students.