For Sarah Cassidy and Tanya Tran, both 4th year undergraduate students at Queen’s Psychology, interest in Clinical Psychology began with unique personal experiences. Sarah says, “I became curious about antisocial behaviour when I noticed that the theme of malice was pervasive in my favourite books, films, and television shows. When I came to Queen’s, I began keeping up with the literature on aggression and antisocial behaviours in general. My interest in aggression research through my undergrad years has become a passion.

Tanya explains, “When I was in high school I volunteered at a geriatric mental health hospital. At the time I had very little knowledge about mental disorders and it was my first exposure to older adults with dementia. My volunteer experience left me curious to study the psychopathology of cognitive disorders but at the time I did not know how I could go about that. It was in my first year psychology class at Queen’s that I was exposed to the multidimensional research scope (i.e. biological, psychological, and sociological) that the field applied to studying mental disorders. I subsequently chose psychology as my major so that I could pursue my research interests”.

Sarah and Tanya are each currently conducting their own research studies under the supervision of Dr. Christopher Bowie in the CPD Lab at Queen’s Psychology. “I joined the Cognitive and Psychotic Disorders (CPD) Lab because I was drawn to their diverse use of research methods and their emphasis on the clinical applications of research,” Sarah recalls. “In my current study, I am investigating how people with depression engage with or avoid tasks of varying cognitive difficulty.. We are trying to identify factors that predict cognitive approach, and should this tendency to seek or avoid challenges relate to functional outcome, we hope to find ways to encourage cognitive approach behaviour in individuals with depression.”

Tanya’s research explores another aspect of depression. “While depression is often conceptualized as a disorder of low mood, people with depression often experience a symptom called anhedonia. Anhedonia is a reduced ability to derive pleasure or enjoyment from favorite things in life,” Tanya says. “My current research project aims to experimentally study the underlying cognitive and emotional processes that contribute to
Sarah sums up her experience as a Queen’s Psychology undergraduate student with enthusiasm. “Working on research projects as an undergrad makes me incredibly busy, but I love it! The final year of undergrad is conditioning me for graduate school and beyond. I have been stimulated by my courses and extracurricular research, and these experiences have helped me grow as a researcher,” she says. “Undergrads benefit from having graduate students and lab directors as supervisors. Grad students serve as both peers and mentors, and they have been terrifically valuable in my development.”

Both Sarah and Tanya plan to pursue graduate studies in psychology, with long term goals of clinical practise and continuing their research.

The CPD Lab is actively recruiting participants for a collection of studies. Please consider contacting the CPD lab coordinator at 613-533-6000 x78478 to learn more about opportunities to participate in current studies and eligibility criteria.