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My interest with the subjectivity individuals experience in response to common events initially drew me to a career in law. Two internships within the political and legal fields demonstrated to me that these disciplines organize collective human behaviors rather than analyzing the fundamental mechanisms that drive individual decisions. This realization prompted a shift in my goals toward understanding and modeling the inner workings of the brain and its cognitive processes.

To broaden my perspective, as an undergraduate, I interned with a congresswoman whose ideologies differed significantly from my own. Engaging in discussions that challenged my perspectives deepened my understanding of complex issues and fostered a more nuanced worldview. This experience refined my ability to approach disagreements with openness to opposing perspectives, highlighting how individuals derive differing interpretations of the same circumstances based on their unique prior experiences - our personal 'training sets'.

Driven to explore how subjective frameworks shape decision-making, I interned with the Broome County Attorney's Office. Reading case files and attending court hearings, I gained an intimate glimpse into the lives of the county's delinquent youth. Many of these individuals, shaped by challenging circumstances, acted in ways that seemed inevitable - rational, even, when viewed through the lens of evolution which has shaped the human brain over millions of years to promote our survival and well-being. This experience highlighted a central drive in my intellectual journey: to investigate the biological foundations of learning, memory, and decision making processes, particularly to understand how biological factors constrain individual autonomy. This realization prompted a pivot in my focus from the macroscopic lens of the humanities to the microscopic organization of the brain.

Since my university offered limited neuroscience resources, I pursued a second major in physics to deepen my understanding of complex phenomena through quantitative reasoning. Shifting my academic concentration required great resilience, taking numerous winter and summer courses and self-studying through online lectures. Finding this new path deeply rewarding, I joined a computational material science lab which employed neural networks extensively. I was captivated by the parallels between neural networks and biological systems - particularly how a set of initial parameters can structurally modify the ways in which an organism processes and adapts to input stimuli - reaffirming the insights that I had gained from my political and legal internships. This research experience only solidified my commitment to transition to neuroscience, providing a bridge between the deterministic principles of physics and the complexities of biological systems.

Graduating with degrees in political science and physics during a liminal COVID era, I initially pursued research assistant roles in systems neuroscience. However, many opportunities were highly specialized, often revolving around equipment management. To gain broader exposure and avoid early career pigeonholing, I joined Thorlabs, a company whose photonics tools are integral to neuroscience research. As an Application Engineer, I provided technical support to professors, students, and researchers in microscopy and imaging. This role honed my technical communication skills and offered hands-on experience in building and troubleshooting photonics systems, including lasers, fiber optics, and imaging devices. While I valued the comprehensive understanding of photonics equipment that I had gained, I longed for the creative, exploratory nature of long-term research that I experienced as an undergraduate. This realization led me to transition to the Rinberg and Shoham labs at NYU, where I am now fully engaged in systems neuroscience projects that align with my goal of understanding how neural architecture shapes cognition.

At Cornell, I am committed to fostering inclusivity by supporting my colleagues and actively seeking diverse perspectives - values that I have cultivated during my time at Thorlabs and during my political and legal internships. Drawing on my unique background in computational physics and neuroimaging, I strive to contribute meaningfully to collaborative efforts. I believe that embracing a variety of viewpoints enhances the quality and impact of our work, as the richness of our individual experiences strengthens both the depth and scope of our scientific endeavors.