My research background is in response time modeling. In particular, I want to evaluate how this alternative measurement approach could improve our ability to capture changes in cancer cognition. The conference I plan (the International Cognition & Cancer Task Force Conference) to attend this fall is a specialized conference dedicated to cancer cognition, organized by the task force dedicated to improving the measurement of cancer cognition. Thus, attending this conference would be extremely informative to building my own knowledge. Additionally, this will be a rare opportunity to network with experts from cancer centers around the world, which could be crucial for the development of my career.

This summer (Summer 2024), I attended an international conference dedicated to mathematical psychology (the field that created response time modeling). By traveling to the Netherlands for that conference, I was able to learn cutting-edge knowledge about my measurement approach. After seeing how impactful that conference was on my research, I do not doubt that attending the International Cognition & Cancer Task Force Conference would be transformative for my doctoral experience.

I am interested in this program because it is a joint meeting of all the leaders in my field. Cancer research centers are very spread out, so it can be very difficult to network with other individuals who specialize in cancer cognition. Thus, attending the one conference where the majority of the cancer cognition researchers from around the world are likely to attend is incredibly important for my research development. Additionally, as this conference only meets every other year, the opportunities to meet many of these researchers are very limited.

While I am at the International Cognition & Cancer Task Force Conference, my main goal will be to absorb all of the current knowledge directly from the researchers who have been reshaping our field. My second goal is to network with these experts, hopefully building future collaborations, and potentially finding post-doctoral opportunities and positions. My third goal is to give my poster presentation, and receive feedback on my new measurement approach for cancer cognition.

The International Cognition & Cancer Task Force Conference will contribute to my professional growth by allowing me to network with experts in my field. I will be able to learn how they approach our science, so I can hopefully replicate their success. Additionally, this conference will be my main opportunity to start collaborations or post-doctorates with established cancer cognition research programs. As this can be a difficult line of research to break into, a connection to an established participant avenue could be crucial for my ability to continue my research after graduation.

This conference will contribute to my academic growth by allowing me to learn about the success and difficulties other researchers have experienced with cancer cognition measurement, so I can continue to develop my approach. Additionally, I will be able to receive feedback on my response time modeling analyses, since my research will be the first time it has been implemented. Learning about the feasibility and willingness to implement my new approach could be incredibly impactful for my future research plans.

Personally, this experience will help me improve my presentation abilities. Additionally, this will push me to work on my independent networking skills, as I will be the only member from my lab attending.

One challenge I may face while abroad is the language barrier, as I don’t speak French. To overcome this, I will work on building my language proficiency through online programs. I hope that the French classes I used to take in my childhood after-school program will come back quickly. Additionally, I will have translation apps downloaded, just in case. As a backup option, I will reach out to my uncle who speaks French, to have him translate for me if needed.

A second challenge I may face is the lack of connections I have in this field. My undergrad and master’s research were in mathematical psychology, so my connections (and the connections of my mentors) are all in mathematical psychology, instead of cancer cognition. To overcome this challenge, I will need to be diligent in my networking attempts. At the Netherlands conference I attended this summer, I met one team who will attend the International Cognition & Cancer Task Force Conference, so I will work to reconnect with that team. Additionally, I will reach out to a researcher I have been in contact with through email and video conferences. I hope to further develop these connections, while developing new collaborations, by being purposeful and as extroverted as possible at each networking activity.