

Student Profile

Hugo Sanchez Hernandez – Psychology and Social Behavior PhD Program



Your Time at UCI

What made you decide to pursue a graduate degree?

My passion for understanding how emotions work is the reason I decided to pursue a graduate degree. As an undergrad, I was drawn to psychology because I knew I was fascinated by the idea of emotions. I was interested in how and why they influenced every aspect of our lives. When I discovered what research was, I fell in love with the entire process and the systematic way in which it works. I realized it was the right academic avenue through which I could pursue my interests further.

Why did you choose to come to UCI?

I had my eyes set on UCI for a good while before I applied. I loved the way the Psychological Science program emphasized conducting research across various mentors and specializations, unlike so many other graduate psychology programs that are much more restricted in the specialization/focus that students can choose. I feel like I have a great degree of flexibility in the research I can do and the way I can examine the questions I am most passionate about. I also think an important trait of UCI that may not be as widely known is how much it cares about its graduate students. I have visited many psychology graduate programs in other schools and I felt the most welcome and the most individual support from UCI. At UCI it really feels like I matter and am not just another number to add to the list of graduate students.

If you are conducting research, how would you explain your research and its significance to your grandparent?

I am examining the way people express emotions differently in various situations. Take pride for example. You may be happy about a recent achievement and may express pride to someone who is having a bad day, someone who may have received a low score on a test. Expressing pride to this person may cause them to feel even worse about their perceived “failure” and may negatively impact them. The ultimate goal of my research is to make people aware of the different ways they express emotions to others so that they can know when to express them accordingly. This will help improve our relationships with others, be it friends, family, or romantic partners, and help us communicate better.

What are your hobbies/passions outside of research?

My main passion outside of research is film, and it is a big contributor to what my research interests are now. I have always been a huge film fanatic and was originally a film major as an undergraduate. I soon realized what made me so passionate about film was the way the characters on screen could influence our emotions, which eventually led to my research interests. I now keep up with the latest film releases, be it arthouse, independent, or mainstream, and am constantly discussing them.

Reflections

What advice do you have for a new graduate student in your program?

I think it is incredibly important for new graduate students to build their foundation of social support early. Having those close friends and peers who can identify with you, and who you can confide in and enjoy outside of strict academic purposes, is going to be very important for your mental well-being in the years to come.

Career

What do you see yourself doing in five or ten years?

In ten years, I see myself working as a faculty mentor with my own research lab. I aim to pursue research and teaching as a career and believe UCI is going to be the best way for me to achieve that goal.

