

Student Profile

Vanessa Delgado – Sociology PhD Program



Your Time at UCI

What made you decide to pursue a graduate degree?

Coming from an immigrant farm-working community in rural Washington, I had no idea what a Ph.D. was until I went to college. As an undergraduate, I was selected to participate in the Ronald E. McNair Achievement Program, a program designed to prepare undergraduate students from underrepresented backgrounds to pursue graduate degrees. As a McNair Scholar, I was granted the opportunity to critically explore issues that I was deeply invested in. I was invigorated by the ability to formulate research questions, engage in data collection, contribute to theoretical debates in my field, share my

work with regional and national audiences, and use data to implement direct change with the communities I worked with. I decided to pursue a Ph.D. in Sociology to explore how children of immigrants help their parents navigate everyday life in the United States.

Why did you choose to come to UCI?

The Department of Sociology at UCI is the ideal place to study immigration because it has leading scholars who explore immigrant integration, legal status, and families. I deliberately applied to this department to explore intra-family dynamics between first generation immigrants and their 1.5/2nd generation children. In addition to the strong research produced by the faculty in my department, the all-year-around beautiful weather was a big incentive to move to Southern California!

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

Broadly, my work explores the ways children of immigrants contribute to their families in both financial and non-financial ways. Navigating life in the U.S. can be a difficult feat for immigrant adults who are marginalized by immigration laws, are unable to speak the English language well, and come from a low socioeconomic background. A long-standing literature suggests that 1.5 and 2nd generation immigrants experience rapid acculturation to the US; thus, allowing them to serve as both language and cultural brokers for their immigrant parents. My current work explores the various ways adult children engage in the brokering process for their parents.

My work is inspired by both my parents and grandparents. As the eldest in my family, I consistently had to translate and interpret for them. From ordering food at Burger King to helping my mom apply and receive citizenship, I not only brokered information to my immigrant family members but also facilitated their access to vital social institutions. Children of immigrants often take on powerful roles in their families as they help their parents navigate everyday life in the United States.

What are your hobbies/passions outside of research?

Outside of research, I enjoy cooking, long distance running, playing Mario Kart!

Reflections

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

Connect with as many faculty and graduate students as possible. Mentorship from various faculty and older graduate students has been instrumental during my time at UCI. From navigating the year-long statistics course series, learning about funding opportunities, to social and emotional support, a network of support is crucial to making it through the program.

Career

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

In 5 years, I hope to continue my work on immigrant brokering as a professor at a research university. I also hope to develop my book project from my dissertation during this time. This book project would explore the complexities that emerge when children of immigrants engage in the brokering process and the results of this research will have important implications for scholars, educators, and policy makers interested in parent-child dynamics among immigrant communities.