I was first introduced to the field of sociology when I took an introductory course about race and ethnicity at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM). I learned about U.S. history from a minority group’s perspective, which highlighted the social injustices they faced. This class and a new perspective on history led me to fall in love with sociology because I saw the parallels of how Latinos and Hispanic groups have been historically treated in the U.S. As part of the Latino community, I have witnessed and experienced the struggles that the community faces when accessing quality healthcare and education. As a first-generation Mexican immigrant to the U.S., I struggled with navigating the education system with very few resources. I have also seen my mother struggle with access to healthcare because of her language barrier. These disadvantages show how social issues can disproportionately impact minority groups. For these reasons, I am motivated to pursue a PhD in Sociology to investigate the social issues in healthcare and education that impact Latinos in the U.S. and to provide research data that helps improve social policies. My long-term educational goal is to earn a Ph.D. in Sociology at Texas A & M to continue refining my research interests and to help the Latino community have access to more resources that will provide greater opportunities for social mobility.

Since 2020, I have been conducting independent research with the guidance of my faculty mentor Dr. Jill Weigt at CSUSM. I have been interviewing Latina mothers who work in agriculture to understand their lives of and how they manage work, family, and motherhood. I conducted six interviews in Spanish, where I transcribed, translated, and coded them. My analysis of the data found that Latina mothers who work in agriculture try to meet the ideology of intensive mothering but because of their financial circumstances, they do motherwork. These mothers focus on the physical safety and economic survival of their children. Some of the mothers had to explain to their children that the reason they go to work is to bring in money, so that they have food, shelter, and clothes. One of the challenges of my project was securing participants for interviews. The lack of participants available to interview delayed my progress, but I overcame this hurdle by resubmitting a revised application to the IRB.  After making changes in the IRB, I was able to conduct the interviews necessary to analyze, compare, and interpret the data of the interviews. I have learned that research takes time, patience, and persistence. I have presented my independent research at the 2021 Southern California Conference for Undergraduate Research (SCCUR). Having the opportunity to present my research at SCCUR is important because I was able to inform others about the situations that Latina mothers that work in agriculture face. By presenting my research I am educating and communicating my findings of my research to my audience so they can value the work that Latina mothers are doing. Presenting in conferences allows me to strengthen my communication skills to apply my abilities for the PhD program at Texas A & M.

In Spring 2020, I was admitted to the TRIO Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program. This program helps me with the necessary steps for applying to graduate school. During Summer 2020, I participated in an 8-week training that included GRE preparation, professional development workshops, and graduate school application review. It has also allowed me to formally present my research findings on Latina farmworkers. Continuing doing research within sociology is important because it allows people to hear the voices of others that cannot speak for themselves because of their life circumstances doesn’t allow them. Being part of the McNair community has taught me to be supportive of other students that are going through the same journey as me. Moving forward with my education at Texas A & M having the guidance of the graduate community will make my journey of earning a PhD more successful.

During the summer of 2021, I participated in the Student Training Academy for Research Success (STARS) Program at the University of California, San Diego. I worked under Dr. Victor Ferreira and Tamar Gollan, as my faculty mentor, and Dalia Garcia, one of his graduate students. Over the 8-week summer training, I was in the Production Language Lab and Bilingualism and Aging Lab working directly under Dalia Garcia. Her research involved predicting which participants would convert into Alzheimer’s disease based on their rating on a dementia scale and oral proficiency interviews. I reviewed the transcribed interviews to analyze them and note when the participant made errors or used mazes, for example, “uhm,” or “umm.” I learned how to be an organized researcher; for instance, I learned to collect all documents, such as interviews, transcriptions, data, and bibliography in a systematic manner. I also reinforced my existing research skills, including transcribing interviews, my communication skills, and exercising patience. The STARS program helped me to become a more informed researcher and more prepared for the expectation of graduate school. It helped me realize that there is research focused on bilinguals that will benefit them in the future. It opens my mind that research is not only about the researcher but also about how the research can benefit society. Knowing that others will benefit from my research motivates me to continue pursuing a doctorate in sociology.

I am applying to Texas A & M to obtain my Ph.D. in sociology am interested in specializing in social issues that impact the Latino community, including education and health care. I have found faculty with whom I share similar research interests and see myself working, such as Dr. Dr. Nancy Plankey-Videla and Dr. Sarah Gatson. Dr. Plankey-Videla focuses on Immigration, Latinx sociology, gender and work, and community-based research. As for Dr. Gatson focuses on race, ethnic and minority relations, law and society, cultural sociology, gender, qualitative methods, community and citizenship, communication, and information technology. Having the opportunity to work with faculty who have specialized in these areas will greatly support my research interests. Earning my Ph.D. in sociology will allow me to explore more about the inequalities that the Latino community face in their lives. I look forward to the mentorship Dr. Plankey-Videla and Dr. Gatson can provide as researchers working with Latino populations. With their knowledge and direction, I believe I can earn my Ph.D. in sociology in order better support the Latino community.