

Purpose

It must be understood that I am guided in totality by my *spiritual* purpose: to affect change by inspiring and fostering transformation in adolescents and emerging adults through critical race theories and intersectionality-asserting positive psychology.

My *practical* purpose is to achieve a school psychology or education PhD program to continue propelling me on my near future path. It is *also* to meet and interface with researchers I believe are doing effective, meaningful work with real-world impacts, and to learn from them. Finally, it is to broaden my network via those shoulders of giants, to confidently, *through* my support and faith from strong allies, know *how* to exact change.

My *effective* purpose is to: a) develop a foundation of research wisdom to enter the public sector with practical *and* theoretical expertise in order to use my experience and education to create pedagogical and anthropological recommendations for educators and institutions, b) to live a long, well-published life from which I will know I have helped contribute to the wealth of knowledge in a meaningful way, and c) inspire those same children of my ilk to grow stalk-straight through the cracks in the blacktop.

I have found that what has been most relevant to my own learning and maturation of skills, as a fifth-year first gen non-trad undergrad, has been the development of a social network, in order to be as expansive and broadening as possible. Thus it is extremely important to me to continue to meet and collaborate with those generating meaningful insights and praxis, to continue developing and adopting practices from those before me.

I have so far been overwhelmingly successful in this at UC Santa Barbara, where I was honored to meet and connect with my two mentors, Dr. Darby Feldwinn, and Dr. Vanessa Woods. In the three years since first meeting them, they have been instrumental to my path in their wisdom, their expertise, their compassion, and their sheer punk. Punk in the mode of understanding and asserting equitable practice, in their teaching, in their research, and in their relationship with students. With them I was able to spend over two years now in each's lab, working on equity in evidence-based practice generally.

In Dr. Feldwinn's SciTrek science intervention research, which sends undergraduates into classrooms to have elementary students design their own experiments in order to curate interest in science-related careers, I was a paid researcher and also the sole assessment coordinator for partner site Cal State Channel Islands where I independently coordinated, conducted, collected, analyzed and reported on the data in focus; this included two dozen instances of roughly 30 minute independent classroom leading in elementary classes across one year of work.

In Dr. Woods' ACCESS lab I was many things including senior research mentor for one year, but I spent the majority of my time: a) leading an undergraduate research group to craft and present a poster, b) collecting, analyzing, and reporting/publishing data on transfer student success at UCSB, c) creating multiple data keys for large data sets, and d) earning the second author position writing methods and portions of an intro section for a research paper based on my group's poster (lead by a doctoral student).

My mentors instantly and unhaltingly connected me outwards to make sure I understood the breadth and depth (and responsibilities) of research *above the undergraduate level*; they

saw drive and compassion and challenged me to cultivate it at a level that I had never met before; it has led to the most productive, rewarding, and interesting learning opportunities of my life, ones which only continue to unfold in their rewarding applications. This included, among many things I will mention, the confidence and experience that comes from attending and presenting at multiple national conferences, which I was able to use to network with dozens of potential advisors years and months in advance of applications to learn how to better navigate the graduate sphere. I need to underline that this was their goal and mine now: to operate at the graduate level in advance of the actual undertaking.

In terms of familiarity with research, I now have *years* of experience with nearly every dimension of conducting research (particularly *quantitative*) the extent of which should suggest the level at which I've been able to achieve and output graduate level work:

I have lead a team of five undergraduates to: develop a scientific question; design the methodology based on strong and well-researched background literature; collect and organize the data; analyze the data and operationalize research questions so that analysis could also be handed off to a data analyst, and; report in the form of a poster (and manuscript in the process of being published). The content of this poster was to test the validity of an assessment's scaffolded abilities of fifth graders in the SciTrek program (to know how to make a conclusion) which we theorized interact in hierarchical relationships.

I have managed and trained over eight new coders for over a year with SciTrek, and I have also played front-facing roles for interactions with partner sites CSCI and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, to schedule operations, give recommendations, increase collaboration and facilitate continued partnership.

I have conducted over a dozen single-person interviews and 2-4 participant focus groups; from them I have completed several (one project out of three, with PhD colleagues) multi-month qualitative analyses; of these one I presented at NASPA SSHE Conferences 2025 with my colleagues, one I have presented at an on-campus conference on student equity at UCSB, and the last I have turned into sections of a report for nonprofits in Santa Barbara county that will be published in late 2025 (on which I will be an author).

I have begun work in June 2025 on an honors thesis in order to graduate with a distinction in my major; the project expanded on my previous work with a data snapshot on 2023-2024 UCSB transfer students (from the question *in what ways does an institution's Transfer-Focused Commitment mediate the potential threats of transfer variables which threaten adversity on transition quality?*); I have since completed the literature review, methods, and quantitative analysis, and am preparing to conduct a round of interviews with some of the survey takers.

I sought in Summer 2025 to shore up my least developed proficiencies of: measure-creation, framework application, qualitative analysis and lit reviews. I joined a lab in the Girvetz School of Education, Center for Evaluation and Measurement as a paid researcher, and I secured a paid research internship in the office of the County of Santa Barbara Homelessness Initiatives Programs Director developing new measures, based on strong research foundations, to collect more accurate data on all unhoused populations within Santa Barbara County. These new experiences have included 100+ hours of independent qualitative

emergent theme analysis on surveys and interviews, independent conduct of five plus interviews, exploration of modern AI tools like CoLoop for qualitative analysis, and about ten donor and sponsor/facilitator period reviews. I have also been able to begin taking education grad courses at Girvetz with Dr. Jason Duque on teaching, education, and teaching practices for units.

Finally, in my more recent efforts in Fall of 2025 I have begun conducting data management and analysis workshops for small student groups on campus, and have spent considerable extracurricular time setting up quantitative exercises and independent research challenges using fresh, live, data in a new near-peer mentorship undertaking; with the privilege of access to a dataset and my self-built data key, of live transfer climate data captured just two years ago from my own mentors, I challenged many entry-experienced undergraduates in my peer-collaboration radius to independently run and write up their own analyses. Each mentee pledged to learn what a mediation analysis was, how to conduct one on a data analysis software of their choice, and use just three variables from the total data set to test a single mediation hypothesis, in order to report on it for five minutes at a lab meeting within two weeks; all independently (I provided accessible office hours and emails).