Sylvia Zuniga

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I am a fourth-year undergraduate at the University of California, San Diego, majoring in Cognitive Psychology and minoring in Cognitive Science. I am interested in research topics in the Cognitive and Social Psychology fields, including social norms, problem solving, decision making, and human-computer interaction. I am currently a research assistant in a Psychology lab at the University of California, San Diego, supervised by Dr. Gail Heyman, where I am researching attitudes towards ChatGPT among students and non-students. I aspire to contribute to the study of human-technology interaction, particularly within media-focused industries, as I continue to explore opportunities in research and academia.

Education

University of California, San Diego   **Sep 2021 - Present**
Bachelor of Science in Cognitive Psychology   **Expected 2025**
Minor in Cognitive Science   **GPA: 3.83**

Awards

Chancellor's Associates Scholarship Program (CASP)   **Aug 2021 - Present**
University of California, San Diego - Full Ride (~$60,000)

Triton Research & Experiential Learning Scholars (TRELS)   **Jun - Aug 2024**
University of California, San Diego - $5,000

Best Presenter Award   **May 2024**
CSUSM 30th Annual Psychology Student Research Conference
California State University, San Marcos

Anderson Travel Award   **Dec 2023**
University of California, San Diego - $200

Muir Student Travel Scholarship   **Nov 2023**
University of California, San Diego - $300

IDEA Scholars Program   **Jul 2021**
Jacob's School of Engineering
University of California, San Diego - $1,000

Quest Bridge   **Sep 2020 - Dec 2022**
2020 National College Match Application
Semi Finalist

Research Experience

Research Assistant   **Jun 2023 - Present**
Social Cognitive Development Lab, PI: Dr. Gail Heyman
University of California, San Diego
- Lab focuses on diverse topics including academic dishonesty, children's psychological development, and artificial intelligence
- Current lead of two studies on ChatGPT, initiated shortly after its release, to explore user behavior and societal impacts of AI
- Developed coding schemes and categorized and analyzed data for research studies
- Authored abstracts and manuscripts based on study findings
- Conducted peer reviews and piloted studies to ensure research quality
- Mentored fellow research assistants by providing constructive feedback to improve study execution
- Presented research findings in lab meetings and academic settings

Review Team Lead   **Jun 2023 - Present**
Social Cognitive Development Lab
University of California, San Diego
- Collaborated with a team responsible for literature reviews, peer reviews, pilot studies, and other tasks requested by senior lab members
- Led and guided the review team during sessions to support lab research and information-gathering efforts
- Created and assigned literature review and peer review tasks, ensuring clarity and alignment with project goals
- Provided support by answering questions from team members and senior staff
- Monitored task progress and ensured timely completion of assignments within deadlines

Research Summer Program Scholar   **Jun - Aug 2024**
Triton Research & Experiential Learning Scholars (TRELS)
University of California, San Diego
- Participated in a program providing hands-on experience in research, creative projects, and public service under faculty mentorship at University of California, San Diego
- Dedicated 30 hours per week to an independent research project
- Attended weekly cohort meetings to collaborate and share progress with peers
- Presented research findings through a slide presentation at an on-campus conference

Conference Presentations

Zuniga, S., Gabrenya, A., Waltzer, T., & Heyman, G. D. (2024). How is ChatGPT integrated into society following its release? Students and their new tool. *Poster presented at the University of California, San Diego Lab Expo,* San Diego, CA.

Zuniga, S., Gabrenya, A., Waltzer, T., & Heyman, G. D. (2024). How is ChatGPT integrated into society following its release? Students and their new tool. *Poster presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology annual convention*, San Diego, CA.

Zuniga, S., Gabrenya, A., Waltzer, T., & Heyman, G. D. (2024). How is ChatGPT integrated into society following its release? Students and their new tool. *Poster presented at the CSUSM 30th Annual Psychology Student Research Conference*, San Marcos, CA.

Zuniga, S., Waltzer, T., & Heyman, G. D. (2024). Naturalistic research on ChatGPT experiences. *Talk presented at the University of California, San Diego Summer Research Conference*, La Jolla, CA.

Academic Writing

Zuniga, S. (2024). Yes, but Also No: Ambivalence Towards ChatGPT During Its Initial Release. [Manuscript in preparation]

Zuniga, S. (2024). The role of attitudes in norm spreading: A case study of ChatGPT adoption among student and non-student groups. [Submitted for TRELS program]

Volunteering

Development Volunteer   **Feb 2025**
University Development Office
University of California, San Diego
- Engaged high level scholarship donors in stewardship events
- Represented scholarship program with high degree of professionalism

Sun God Festival Volunteer   **Apr 2022**
Associated Students office of Concerts & Events (ASCE)
University of California, San Diego
- Volunteered for student-run music and arts festival overseeing photography operations

Bear Gardens Volunteer   **Apr - May 2022**
Associated Students office of Concerts & Events (ASCE)

University of California, San Diego
- Volunteered for multiple student-run daytime carnivals
- Helped with setting up and cleaning up the carnival
- Hosted carnival games, music stations, picture stations, and assisted attendees

Customer Service Volunteer   **Sep 2019 - Sep 2020**
Sharp Health Care, Chula Vista, California
- Volunteered for Sharp hospital gift shop
- Helped patients with gift shop needs, fostering communication skills in a professional setting
- Exposed to work experience in a professional setting

Vice President, Publicity Manager, and Volunteer   **Jul 2019 - Mar 2020**
Key Club Local Chapter, Hilltop High School
- Facilitated meetings and volunteering opportunities for local Key Club Chapter at Hilltop High School
- Made digital and physical posters to promote volunteering opportunities

Technology Manager and Volunteer   **Jul 2019 - Mar 2020**
Key Club International, State Chapter California
- Oversaw promotions, including digital posters and social media posts, on volunteering opportunities
- Made promotional material for State Chapter

Activities

Member and Part of the Event Committee   **May 2023 - Present**
Psi Chi at the University of California, San Diego
- Attended weekly meetings to discuss opportunities, professor spotlights, and participate in committees (research, business, event, volunteer, journal, Psi BETA)
- Helped plan and set up events and promote professional engagement with the Psychology community

Member   **Jul 2017 - Jun 2022**
Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE)
Local Chapter, Hilltop High School
- SHPE is a national society that aims to empower the Hispanic community in STEM
- Made use of resources and networking opportunities
- Attended and hosted SHPE local chapter outreach events
- Made posters promoting opportunities and events

Vice President and Member   **Jul 2017 - Jun 2021**
Robotics Club at Hilltop High School
- Oversaw meetings, made decisions on volunteering and fundraising opportunities
- Built and programed robots to compete in VEX Robotics competitions locally and nationally
- Participated in the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) in Del Mar in 2019 and 2020 as a robotics designer, safety captain, and mechanic
- Focused on leadership, teamwork, and community, including community service

Additional Skills and Training

Languages: English (native fluency) and Spanish (native fluency)
Programming Languages: Python, R, MATLAB, HTML, git_bash
Software and Applications: Google Hub, Microsoft Office, VSCode, Jupyter Notebook, GitHub, Canva, CapCut, DaVinci Resolve, Open Broadcaster Software (OBS), MediBang Paint
Training: Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program) for Social & Behavioral Research and Research Involving Children, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) for Sharp Hospital

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