Stanford



Maria Jose Melendrez

Ph.D. Student in Education, admitted Autumn 2024

Bio

BIO

María José (she/her/they) is a third-year doctoral candidate whose research focuses on access and equity for first-generation, immigrant, and disabled students, particularly those navigating intersecting identities. Grounded in their training in sociology, their work examines how institutional contexts, student agency, and social networks shape students' educational experiences, pathways, and opportunities for meaningful learning.

Prior to her doctoral studies, María José worked with students, families, faculty, and administrators across student affairs and academic affairs. In these roles, they translated her classroom learning and research commitments into practice by supporting students as they navigated institutional systems and pursued their educational goals.

As a doctoral student, María José examines how meritocratic narratives shape institutional understandings of access, equity, and student success. Their work also explores the social construction of disability, with particular attention to burn-survivor students' experiences of visibility, embodiment, belonging, and access in educational spaces.

HONORS AND AWARDS

- EDGE: Enhancing Diversity in Graduate Education Fellowship, Stanford University (2024)
- RISE: Representation, Inclusion, Support and Empowerment Fellowship, NAFSA: Association of International Educators (2023)
- Sociology Field Group Honors Senior Thesis, Pitzer College (2016)
- Undergraduate Research Fellowship, American Education Research Association (2016)
- Jill Ford Harmon Endowed Scholarship, Pitzer College (2014)
- Arnaldo Rodriguez Scholarship, Pitzer College (2012)
- Evan Foster Scholarship, Pitzer College (2012)

EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS

- M.A., Claremont Graduate University , Higher Education & Student Affairs (2018)
- B.A., Pitzer College , Sociology (2016)

Publications

PUBLICATIONS

- **Critical Survey Research** *HANDBOOK OF CRITICAL EDUCATION RESEARCH*
  Perez, W., Espinoza, R., Melendrez, M.

edited by Young, M. G., Diem, S.
2024: 612-629

- **Learning How to Drive: Rites of Passage in Being and Becoming (A Collaborative Autoethnography <i>Not Just About Driving</ i>)** *CULTURAL STUDIES-CRITICAL METHODOLOGIES*
  Alexander, B., Carroll, J., Perez, W., Melendrez, M., Flaherty, J., Espinoza, R., DeSilva, C., Axtell, J.
  2023; 23 (4): 354-373

- **Undocumented American Students: How Fear of Deportation and Societal Marginalization Complicate Their Identity Pathways** *Adolescents at School: Perspectives on Youth, Identity, and Education*
  Perez, W., Melendrez, M. J., Espinoza, R.
  2020: 66-74