

Enrica Bridgewater



Personal Statement

Communication and Media PhD

*“All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them.” – Walt Disney.*

Applying to doctoral programs is probably one of the most courageous things that I have done so far in my life. Being the only member of my immediate family to graduate college and the first to even think about pursuing an advanced degree, I always knew that making it to graduate school would be nothing short of an arduous journey. Born to a Grenadian mother and a Trinidadian father and growing up in a neighborhood with a predominantly immigrant community in Brooklyn, New York, most people I knew only had a high school diploma and virtually no one, to my knowledge, possessed a degree higher than a Bachelor's. It is solely because of the mentors that I have met along the way who not only saw potential in me, but encouraged me to strive for my goals, that I am applying for the Communication and Media PhD program at the University of Michigan. It may take a village to raise a child, but it also takes a village to get one to graduate school.

My village came in the form of the NIH Research Initiative for Scientific Enhancement (RISE) program. Being in RISE not only showed me that my goal of attending graduate school is achievable, but it also sparked my desire to help other underrepresented minority students (URMs) in the same way that this program has helped me. My village later expanded when I participated in the NSF Psychology Research Experience Program (PREP) REU at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the summer of 2017. Diving into the world of death in animated films (as morbid as that may sound) with Dr. Karl Rosengren gave me a sense of joy and accomplishment that I never thought I would experience conducting research. My work started off as just a summer project, but over time, it became much more than that to me. It

became kind of like my child; witnessing its development from a small idea to a full-blown study felt like a proud parent watching their son or daughter go off to college. I found a similar joy as an undergraduate research assistant in Dr. Erika Niwa's adolescent development lab. It was here that I immersed myself in the areas surrounding the complex nature of adolescence and concluded that I want my future research to focus primarily on minority youth development.

I am incredibly grateful for all of the experiences that I have had leading up to this moment. However, the work is not over yet. I hope to continue my journey at the University of Michigan, where I will not only be able to contribute to a campus community that sees value in uplifting the voices of those who have often been silenced, but I can also serve as an example for other URMs to show them that if I can make it, so can they.