
Wendy Rivadeneira

February 5, 2018

Dear Ms. von Uhl,

I write this letter to you not only as a student of City College, but also as an aspiring social scientist. I use the term aspiring because I feel that there is a lot for me to learn before I can call myself a social scientist. In saying that I understand that anyone can potentially make links between human behavior and what they observe. However, when talking about myself I can say that many of my experiences have allowed me to observe relationships among groups that I am close to.

As a social scientist, it is important to pay attention to current events and realize what social issues start to develop around those events. For instance, in the past year alone, many social issues have risen. One social issue that I personally am most affected by is the immigration issue in the country. As an Ecuadorian who grew up in the United States, I feel more connected to this country than to the country I was born in. Lately however, this has changed. When our current President first started his election campaign I thought there was no way he could ever win. I believed no one in this country would vote for someone who calls immigrants from Hispanic descent criminals and gang members. What most surprised was the fact that there was millions of people who likely agreed with his stance on immigrants and voted for him to fix the “problem”. Of course I cannot expect everyone to think the way I do, but it was interesting seeing how so many people from “republican” states have different views than those “democratic” states.

Developing on the social issue of immigration, I have noticed firsthand how people from the same nationality can act so different. When saying this I specifically refer to my cousins who grew up here and those who grew up in Ecuador. Of course the environment clearly plays a role in the difference, but aside from that I notice differences in the way we communicate. For instance, when my cousins talk spanish they have their own way of understanding each other. However, even though I can speak spanish fluently, it does not come as natural to me and I find it hard to comprehend many of the things they do. In this sense, I could say that they were privileged to grow up in a place where everyone speaks only spanish and learns to understand each other’s lingo. However, I only learned spanish as a second language not my first. This difference has always bothered me because I feel as though I cannot really change it.

Going back to my thoughts on current social issues in the country, politics is an easy way to develop on my role as a social scientist. I used to think that the President's way of thinking would reflect how the whole country thinks or at least the majority of the country. Now it is fair to say that is not true. What most interest me is how electing this President has divided the country in many ways. I feel as though people who think like him now feel as though they have the right to spew hate and be ignorant to the issue of immigration because the President himself says many ignorant things on the issue as well. Personally, having a President who does not stand up for all types of race in the country is demeaning to me and to many people I grew up around.

Growing up, I have always been a bit quieter than my classmates. However, my mind never stopped observing and reflecting on the environment around me. I always found it easy to read people and to get to know someone's personality even without having ever talked to them. I always found it interesting to see how people behaved when they wanted someone to like them or when they wanted to fit into some group. Human behavior is easy to observe and it constantly changes depending on what we want. For this reason, pursuing a degree in psychology made sense to me. Reading people felt natural to me and it was the only thing I wanted to continue to get better in. Social scientists should be able to make connections to human behavior, past and present, and reflect on the importance of relationships that grow among groups.

Sincerely,

Wendy Rivadeneira