



March 9, 2007

Dear Angelique, Evelyn and Justice:

I appreciate your questions! It's great to hear from young women who are interested in science. I'll begin with addressing the question about when I planned on becoming a scientist and my involvement in the field. Honestly, I never sought out to be a scientist. What I realized from a very special teacher of mine is that we are all inherently scientists. If you come up with a question and look for ways to answer it, you're a scientist. You might think I am minimizing science, but I truly believe that the scientific method is something that is basic to our everyday living. For example, you might be experiencing some teasing from other students and wonder if you are the only one. You could conduct a survey of your class where everyone responds (anonymously- with no names) to their experience being teased by other students. When you get the responses you will have data to answer your question. My hunch is that many other students are teased. Knowing this information, you could share it with your classmates, ask your teacher or principal to have an assembly addressing the issue, or simply be satisfied knowing that you are not alone. Think about the impact you might have by asking such a question and engaging in research about it. Whatever you do with the info, you have asked a question, collected data, analyzed it and shared it with others. That's the scientific method, and it fascinated me that I could make a living simply asking questions that interested me!

With regard to the Gaining Options: Girls Investigate Real Life (GO-GIRL), we do plan to continue the program. However, it might be on a biannual basis rather than annually. In the first program, we had eleven middle school girls participate, and I feel that it was a great success. In five years, I hope that the program will continue to grow in the Bloomington-Normal area so that more young ladies can be exposed to how we use science in our everyday lives.

In my years of teaching, I cannot be sure how many students I have taught. As of now, it might be around 1000 students. I don't keep track, so pardon the rough estimation. I teach in so many capacities that it is hard to say. I teach undergraduate courses in psychology (e.g. Psychology of Racism, Abnormal Psychology). I also teach students in my lab how to do research. We study how people who are from different backgrounds interact and how their background influences the interactions. What I do know is that I really enjoy teaching and hope to continue to be able to do more of it.

I appreciate the questions and hope my responses gave you a better idea about what I do. I encourage you to continue to ask questions and explore different areas of science and social science to find what you enjoy the most!

All the Best,

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