

Statement of Contributions to Diversity

SANDRA POLANIA-REYES

Department of Economics

University College London and University of Siena

spolaniareyes@gmail.com

<http://spolaniareyes.github.io>

Phone: + 1 (734) 277 - 1984

Coming from a developing country, I have been exposed to poverty and inequality. The strongest memories come from my teaching work at Fundación Bella Flor, a NGO that works with 160 children from a slum in my native Bogota. The study of communities and the factors that lead them to thrive led my choice of an academic career.

Inequity is the manifestation of a lack of diversity. Being a woman and ethnically mixed I have experienced the difficulties of coming from an underrepresented minority. However, it has also given me the chance to witness and be part of initiatives such as *Women in Economics* (WinE), which gives both a support network and a career platform. As I become more involved with initiatives like this I will in turn be able to support the inclusion of more women into mainstream Economics.

Discrimination is the main barrier to diversity. Hence the first part of a more diverse community is to detect and understand instances of discrimination. Having written a paper (*Discrimination in the Provision of Social Services to the Poor: A Field Experimental Study*) on the subject has given me a good sense of the problem. I also worked in the field with several minority groups in Bogota: ex-combatants, displaced people, homeless, recycling households, and indigenous households. I am grateful I have the ability of compassion and service. Every person is a whole world and it is an honor to be part of it. The second part is to understand why diversity is important. Among other papers I have written, the one about identification of social preferences (*Prosocial behavior, Heterogeneity and Incentives: Experimental evidence from the local commons in Colombia*) makes the point that heterogeneity of social preferences is a key aspect when looking to attain a socially optimal outcome.

Diversity can only become an asset when it adds value to a community. Having understood the value of both research and individual actions, I intend to continue and expand my research to understand and help underrepresented groups, especially the poor. In particular, first, by understanding parental approach to early childhood investment (currently work in progress) I can bring about knowledge that will add value to the most important asset a society has: its children. Second, my research on leadership, cooperation and coordination aims to shed light on the role of status and cues in enhancing prosocial behavior in which leadership is key to create and sustain social norms that enhance the common good.