

Abelizet Dominguez

Minnesota State University, Mankato

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Welcome!

I am a senior at Minnesota State University, Mankato pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and Gender & Women's Studies. In the near future, I plan to pursue a Master's and Ph.D in Clinical Psychology. I am passionate about women's rights and social justice. I strive to incorporate my passion for social justice in my education and professional life. This portfolio is a series of reflections on my experiences that are of learning and growth.

Mission Statment

To learn from the experiences and lives of others as I work to make a positive impact in society. I hope to always let my passion to help others guide me in my academic and professional life. As I continue to fight for the rights of women and those that are oppressed, I will always remember my roots.



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Leadership Synthesis

Before becoming a student at Minnesota State University, Mankato I did not consider myself to be a leader. In groups, I would let other people lead because I did not believe I had the skills to do so myself. This soon changed at MNSU when I became involved with Latino Affairs. I had a passion for the work that was being done in Latino Affairs, and I wanted to be a part of it.

My journey as a leader at MNSU began when I was elected the Vice-President of Latino Wellness during the second semester of my Freshman year. As a Freshman, I wanted to be involved and there were opening to be on the leadership board of Latino Wellness. The club had been inactive for a few semesters and the new members and I had the desire to not only re-activate the club but improve it. Holding the position of Vice-president as a Freshman was motivating, yet terrifying. In this position, I discovered my first leadership values: responsibility and achiever. **(Values Level 1)**. There were many instances when I took on more tasks and responsibilities than I could handle. I experienced burn out early on which led me to work with the board members in a different way. I realized that as a leader, I needed to share my responsibilities with others. **(Teams Level 1)**. I learned that asking for help while working in a team is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength.

My position as Vice-President of Latino Wellness continued into my Sophomore year when I also held the position of Secretary of the Chicano Latin American Student Association (CLASA). As Secretary of CLASA, I worked with the leadership board and the office of Latino Affairs to create cultural workshops and events for Latino students at MNSU. In both positions, I worked on projects that were specific to my role as did other board members. **(Teams Level 2)**. Through the StrengthsFinder and through these two experiences, my leadership strength of responsibility was evident. Responsibility was a strength in that I accomplished my part in both club's goals, however it was also a weakness when I took more responsibility than I could handle. **(Values Level 2)**. Finding a balance in my responsibilities became essential to me as a leader.

One of my leadership strengths is that of an achiever, and it was a strength that was evident during my Junior year when I decided to become the President of CLASA, the Social and Behavioral Senator for the Minnesota State Student Association (MSSA), and a Mentor for the Guided Pathways to Success Program (GP5). As a Mentor, I continued to work on my collaboration with others by creating educational workshops to ensure our mentees were making progress toward graduation. **(Teams Level 3)**. As an academic Senator for MSSA, I continued to work with and learn from others. By working with other Senators in MSSA, I noticed that many had deliberative leadership skills in which they could anticipate obstacles in their projects and plan accordingly. In working on my own projects for MSSA, I learned that even having the best plan was not enough for things to go well. I started to make plans for my projects in a way that allowed me to think about the different obstacles and challenges that can occur. **(Values Level 3)**. During my time as a senator, I was also the President of CLASA. From what I observed working within the MSSA committees, I decided to change the way that I led the meetings with the leadership board of CLASA. I was sure to be clear in the way I delegated tasks to the other board members. I designated tasks equally so that the work would not be overwhelming. For the most part, this was effective, but I realized it would be even more so if tasks and projects were designated based on strengths and interests. **(Teams Level 4)**. Based on my experiences and observations, my philosophy in leadership has improved and will continue to do so. Without a doubt, this year was full of experiences that led to my growth as a leader.

My role as a Mentor for GP5 has continued into my Senior year at MNSU and I am thankful for the opportunity to continue working with first-year students. Through my experience as a Mentor, my leadership methods have changed. By working with my Mentees, I realized that being a leader is more than having good ideas, planning, accomplishing goals, and delegating tasks. My mentees taught me that being a listener is an essential aspect of a leader. This is something that will become a part of who I am as a leader. **(Values Level 4)**. As a senior, I also held the position of Activities Chair for the Psychology Club at MNSU. This position allowed me to use the leadership skills I had previously developed through my involvement with Latino Affairs. I used the communication skills I developed in creating cultural events to organize various graduate school preparation workshops. My communication skills have evolved significantly with each leadership role that I held. Looking back at my first leadership experience, I was only comfortable communicating ideas if I was completely knowledgeable on. Presently in my role in Psychology Club, I have learned that I can communicate well even if I may feel unsure in the knowledge I have. **(Values Level 4)**. The evolution of my communication skills has helped me become a stronger and more confident leader. My experiences at Minnesota State University, Mankato have influenced my growth as a leader. I have further developed and reinforced my leadership values and more importantly, I have acquired new leadership skills along my journey.



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Research Synthesis

My research experiences have evolved over the course of my time at Minnesota State University, Mankato. During the first few years of my undergraduate career, I was intimidated by the idea of research. While I was passionate about the field of psychology, I was afraid to become involved with research. There was a strong emphasis for research within the psychology major, I told myself that because I wanted to pursue a career as a counselor, I did not need to pursue research opportunities. My perception of research soon changed as I began to take higher level courses within my major. The course Research and Methods for psychology had a significant influence in my learning and understanding of the process of research. The main objective of the course was to develop a psychological research project. In this course, I was taught how to look for peer-reviewed articles that provided a background for the research I was developing. [\(Information Literacy Level 1\)](#). Being that this research was a group project, we each had different ideas about the direction in which we wanted to take the project in. It was difficult to come to an agreement, so we decided to compromise and integrate everyone's interests and ideas into our project. This led the group to search for academic articles that provided various perspectives and arguments that would best serve the purpose of our research question. [\(Information Synthesis Level 1\)](#). Having a research project that implemented a variety of ideas and perspectives on the topic of behavior allowed us to create a project that was unique and contributed knowledge to the area of social psychology. [\(Original Research Level 1\)](#). This was a great learning experience because I was able to interpret statistical data and understand it enough to share it with others.

While my Research and Methods course introduced me to the process of developing psychological research, my interest in research was sparked when I took Feminist Research & Action and Advanced Cognitive Psychology. Taking these courses during the same semester was challenging, but it was also an enriching experience. I was able to improve my research skills in the disciplines I felt passionate about: Psychology and Gender & Women's studies. Each of these courses provided a different set of research skills that contributed to my growth as a researcher. The goal of the Feminist Research & Action course was to engage in feminist research and apply research into activism. Even though this was a different approach to research, I was able to apply what I learned in my Research & Methods course to feminist research. With my previous knowledge, I conducted a literary search related to the topic of primary prevention of sexual assault. The research search would help our group determine the direction in which we would take our activism project. This aspect of the research project would lead the way to make an impact in real life. [\(Information Literacy Level 4\)](#). Being that my activist project was a group effort, we worked on a literature search together. We all had different perspectives on primary prevention methods, and we decided that it would be beneficial to our project if each of us researched our perspective of interest. [\(Information Synthesis Level 2\)](#). Through our literature search, we realized we had the opportunity to use that information and use our group's ideas to create something new. We created a program (tool kit) that included methods and activities regarding the primary prevention of sexual assault on college campuses. [\(Original Research Level 2\)](#). The activism aspect of this project was to present our research-based proposal to the Residential Life Director of MNSU. [\(Dissemination of Results Level 2\)](#). Working on an activism project based on research was a learning experience that taught me research is necessary to make a change in society.

With the enthusiasm I felt in my Feminist Research & Action class, I felt inspired to create a meaningful research proposal in my Advanced Cognitive Psychology course. In my previous course, I learned and worked through the process of conducting a research project with a group, however in this course I would have to work on psychological research on my own. I applied what I learned in Research & Methods in my literature search. I found certain psychology academic search engines to be more useful than others, and I let that knowledge guide my search in Advanced Cognitive Psychology. I also applied the skill of choosing articles based on the abstract and discussion section. This made the search quick and effective. [\(Information Synthesis Level 3\)](#). Reading through a variety of academic articles on the topic of effective reflection practice made me realize that there was a lack of information on the topic of reflection specifically for college students. This caused me to formulate a research question and hypothesis for my research proposal. [\(Information Synthesis & Original Research Level 3\)](#). Creating a research proposal for psychology allowed me to think about my role as a researcher in advancing psychological knowledge through research.

As I took these research-based courses, I was also involved with Psi Chi (Psychology Club) At first being involved in this club was intimidating to me because the focus of the club was to develop original research. I felt comfortable working on research in courses because I had the guidance of my professors and often, group members. However, in the club, we were responsible for creating our own project with a personalized timeline to complete it. As a club, we decided that once we formed a research question, collected, and analyzed data we were going to present at a regional Conference. Presenting at a Conference would be a new experience and it motivated me to become more engaged in the development of the project. I used my skills to help with the literature review that would become the basis of our research. [\(Information Literacy Level 2\)](#). After collecting data through a survey and analyzing it, we found that our results reflected something different than previous studies. This added new knowledge to the topic we were studying. While the results that we found were inconsistent with previous studies, they did support our hypothesis. [\(Information Synthesis & Original Research Level 4\)](#). With the completion of the research project, the club had the opportunity to share our research findings at the Regional Rocky Mountains Psychological Conference. I was able to formally explain our research procedure and findings to other psychology students and to professionals in the psychology field. [\(Dissemination of Results Level 3\)](#). Even though I had not presented at a Conference before, I utilized everything I learned in my courses about presenting and applied it in my presentation. This experience had motivated me to continue pursuing research opportunities that challenge my abilities and make me a stronger researcher.

While I engaged in research experiences that contributed knowledge in the field of Psychology and Gender & Women's Studies, joining a research team provided a new perspective in conducting research. Being a part of the cognitive research lab allowed me to engage in research and data collection in a new way. The research that was being developed in the lab would have an impact on the learning strategies of college students. My previous research experiences prepared me well to evaluate the background of research studies that originate from extensive literature reviews. Understanding the background of the research study we were working on was an essential piece in moving forward with the research [\(Information Literacy Level 3\)](#). Being that the study was a continuation of previous research, my peers and I immediately began working on the data collection aspect of research. Working directly with participants was new to me, however I learned how to instruct and lead participants through activities that would influence results. I realized that correctly instructing participants was essential in gaining accurate results. This was especially important in our research because we needed to correctly assess the fluid and crystallized intelligence of participants. Knowing this would determine the need for students to master effective learning strategies in college courses [\(Information Synthesis Level 4\)](#). Being a part of a research team has taught me that research goes beyond literature reviews and developing surveys for data collection. Psychological research can be developed in numerous ways, however it is the desire to make a difference in society that makes research efforts meaningful and necessary.



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Global Citizenship Synthesis

Being the daughter of immigrants from Mexico has impacted my perspectives and experiences in my personal and academic life. Even though the life I lived in school seemed very different than my bilingual life at home, I could not ignore the cultural background of which I was so proud of. Despite the fact that speaking Spanish was discouraged in school, I did not let them stop me from communicating in the language with which I felt the most comfortable. **(Communication Level 1)**. Surrounding myself with people who had a similar background and who spoke Spanish while growing up encouraged me to seek opportunities in college where I could continue connecting with Latino students. With much enthusiasm, I began attending events hosted by Latino Affairs- a department of the Multicultural Center. I was beyond excited to interact with Latino students who like me, wanted to conserve and celebrate our culture and language while pursuing higher education. I began attending Tertulia which was a discussion group where Latino students could discuss topics pertaining to culture, identity, and politics in Spanish. **(Communication Level 2)**. By attending events where I could have discussions with Latino students on the complexities of our cultural background and identities, I learned more about the way in which my intersecting identities as a Latina influenced my perception of myself and various aspects of my life. **(Self-Awareness Level 1)**. Not only did I begin understanding my own intersectionality through interactions, but I began to understand the cultural similarities and differences among Latino students that affected the forms of oppression that we faced. **(Knowledge and Understanding Level 1)**.

The more I understood forms of oppression and discrimination in my life and in the lives of other Latino students, the more I found it necessary to become involved with the Latino community in the city of Mankato. As I volunteered, I continued to use my Spanish to translate and inform Latino members of the community of resources available to them. **(Communication Level 3)**. My involvement with Latino Affairs caused me to spend my free time in the Multicultural Center where students from African-American Affairs, Asian-American Affairs, and American-Indian Affairs also spent their time. Even though we were associated with different areas of the center, we still attended each other's events and workshops. At first it was intimidating to attend events where topics I was unfamiliar with were being discussed. However, the more I attended, the more I realized we had a lot of similarities in beliefs and values despite our different ethnicities. **(Knowledge & Understanding Level 2)**. Our culture may be different, but forms of oppression that we encountered in school and in our personal lives are very similar. As people of color, we shared the feeling of being 'other' and 'different' from White Americans and this feeling led us to have discussions that helped our understanding of each other's struggles. **(Self-Awareness Level 2)**. To further understand the social struggles and oppression students from the Multicultural Center face, I decided to take a one credit workshop for the Pan-African Conference. I attended various sessions, but the sessions about activism and mental health within Black communities led me to reflect on the similarities between Black and Latino communities. In both communities, the stigma surrounding mental health prevents people from seeking professional help. Even admitting to the existence of mental illness of any sort is difficult in both communities. **(Self-Awareness Level 3)**. Learning about the way in which activism and social movements influence the mental health of people in the Black community was compelling. The criminalization of Black people has an impact on their mental health, but because even activist efforts are criminalized, fighting for rights can affect mental health. **(Knowledge & Understanding Level 3)**. This conference helped me understand the intersecting aspects of the oppression, mental health, and activism that is seen among Black communities. Experiences like this Conference have contributed greatly to my understanding of issues outside of my culture. The understanding that I have gained has inspired me to continue learning from other's cultures and experiences.

In addition to actively seeking opportunities on campus to broaden my understanding on different cultures and identities, I traveled to Costa Rica with the Gender & Women's Studies Department. This trip was an opportunity to learn about the intersections between land, activism, and gender within a country and culture that is different than my own. Being Latina and growing up in the United States, my thoughts on Feminism are different as I try to think of the feminism that is present in Latin America. Being able to travel to a country in Latin America to understand a different form of feminist activism was an unforgettable experience. While on the trip, I reflected on the resources that are available to women in the U.S and the resources for women in Costa Rica and the way that influences feminist activism. **(Self-awareness Level 4)**. Listening to the stories of the women we met on the trip was a crucial aspect in understanding the perspectives and efforts of Costa Rican women to dismantle the oppression of women in their country. **(Knowledge & Understanding Level 4)**. Traveling to Costa Rica allowed me to speak Spanish in a different context and reflect upon the power of language. I realized that while English is considered to be a 'superior' language around the world, speaking English is not always practical and it can change power dynamics when an English speaker travels to a Spanish speaking country and communication becomes difficult. **(Communication Level 4)**. My experiences on campus and abroad have shaped the way I view the world and the struggles that people experience due to their background, culture, and identity. I have come to understand the oppression of others and the different ways that people from different cultures fight for their rights. I hope to continue growing as a global citizen by pursuing opportunities where I can connect, listen, and work with others.



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ibelizet.dominguez@mnsu.edu

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