

# ANNA HAGAN

## *Welcome*

Welcome and thank you for taking the time to visit my efolio!

My name is Anna Hagan. I will be graduating in May of 2019 from Minnesota Sate University, Mankato with a Bachelor's of Arts in psychology and a minor in biology. I plan to continue my education in graduate school to earn my PhD in clinical psychology.

## *Mission Statement*

I will put forth my full effort towards every thing I am involved in now and in the future. I intend to use and build my valuable skill set that I've gained from MNSU's Honors Program to make a positive impression on people's lives in my future career as a clinical psychologist.



## *Honors*

The mission of the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato is to create future leaders, researchers, and global citizens by providing high ability and motivated students with exceptional learning opportunities, mentoring relationships, and a community of scholars that foster their development as future leaders in a global society.

The Honors Program encourages competency in three specific areas:

### LEADERSHIP

"Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to utilize personal leadership values and guide groups toward a common goal."

### GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

"Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to lead and serve in a multicultural world through increased self-awareness of one's own culture and its relationship to others, deepened understanding of other cultural perspectives, attainment of second language proficiency, and demonstrated awareness of culture-language connections in communication."

### RESEARCH

"Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to exhibit information literacy skills, synthesize and integrate ideas, produce original research or creative works, and contribute to knowledge."

### *Why Honors?*

I know the Honors Program has provided me with the tools I need to not only succeed in the workplace but also thrive. Because of the Honors Program, I know EXACTLY what my strengths and weaknesses are, and I know how to demonstrate my strengths when it truly matters. I know I work hard to make sure groups mend well together in order to get the most amount of meaningful work done. I know I am able to identify my mistakes and grow from them. I know I will always try to feel the struggles that others feel in order to relate to them better. I know I am a disciplined person who will do what it takes to reach my goals and stick to my commitments. I have learned more about myself in my three short years here at MNSU than I had my entire 18 years of life prior to coming to college, thanks to the Honors Program. Additionally, I have been constantly encouraged by my peers to keep growing myself through experiences and opportunities. By pushing myself and being encouraged by others to continue my growth, I know I will thrive wherever my future takes me because GROWTH means continuous improvements which will bring success in the long run.

# Leadership

## Leadership Synthesis Essay

"The most effective leaders are always investing in strengths," says Tom Rath in *Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams, and Why People Follow*. The Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato defines two themes within the leadership competency: values and teams. My first year at Minnesota State University, Mankato was the year I learned how to identify myself and my values in terms of leadership. Prior to coming to MNSU, I had developed my skills through a program called Family Career and Community Leaders of America or FCCLA. However, I never really knew exactly what "kind" of leader I was. In an **Honors First Year Experience** class, I took a StrengthsFinder Assessment and learned that my leadership strengths are restorative, developer, empathy, positivity, and discipline. I do agree with the results, especially with developer and empathy. I believe I am a positive developer because my favorite way to improve myself or help others improve is by focusing on utilizing current strengths to help transform possible weaknesses. Empathy has been a strength of mine since childhood; I have always been able to relate to others on a meaningful level no matter the situation which makes me a very personable yet effective leader.

Later in my journey as an honors student, in **Honors 401: Exploring Personal Leadership Through Social Change**, I learned about different theories of leadership as well as several individual values and group values. This class gave me the opportunity to develop my personal values and learn to work with others towards a common purpose. The personal values I identified were world peace, achievement, passion, health, openness, wealth and risk. This class encouraged me to move beyond my comfort zone and volunteer at Committee Against Domestic where I was able to use my leadership strengths for a greater purpose. I worked with a group of diverse volunteers to provide service to survivors of domestic abuse. I worked with a team of volunteers to watch several children while their parent(s) attended domestic abuse support group meetings. At times, it was difficult as some people believed leadership should be given to one individual, and others thought it was a good idea to divide tasks evenly and report back to a designated person. Additionally, there were different opinions on how to occupy the children. After discussion, we decided that we would designate tasks to people who were willing to put in extra effort. We also identified that we wanted the children to be occupied in a fun but education/constructive way, such as with puzzles, games, arts and crafts, etc.

In my second year of college, I took **Social Change in the 21st Century** where I solidified my values and passions. I continued to build on what I learned in the previous class. I practiced the group values I identified in Honors 401 to create a campaign: collaboration, common purpose, and controversy with civility. The campaign I created was centered around reducing the carbon footprint of MNSU. My group members and I worked diligently, effectively, and efficiently together. With reflection on my experience, I was able to recognize the social issues I feel passionately about which reinforced my values even more. Furthermore, my group members and I faced several challenges during our experience. Some of the challenges we worked together to adapt to were creating a campaign that aligned with the universities policies, gaining enough attention to create traction, getting in communication with large corporations like Sodexo, and many more. Some members of the group excelled at research while others were better at arguing our point. There were occurrences where all members of the group could not be present, so I had the opportunity to develop both off those skills.

Now that I had practiced my leadership strengths and values in the classroom and in the community, I was introduced to a new environment when I chose to become a **research assistant**. Around this time is when I was preparing to decide what to do post-graduation, so it was the perfect opportunity to get more exposure to the field of psychology. Prior to starting research, I took time to reflect on my strengths and weaknesses once again to ensure I would get the most from this new experience as a research assistant. Most of my prior experiences had strengthened my leadership strengths of developer, empathy, and positivity. Being a research assistant allowed me to emphasize my last strengths: restorative and discipline. I looked for anything in the research process that could be done better and worked to improve it. It is important to attempt the most accurate data possible. The members of the research team worked very well together even with the overwhelmingly wild schedules of college life. Some people preferred to do work in small amounts of time frequently throughout the week while others worked better researching for long amounts of times. When we had the opportunity to talk about our research to others, certain members of the team stepped up because one of their strengths was communication. We adapted to challenges, such as scheduling and frustrating technology issues, through collaboration and a common purpose.

In conclusion, I have developed a leadership philosophy through my experiences that I feel to be most personable to me as a leader. I am an effective leader when I am able to practice my values with people who have the same greater goal as me by forming personable bonds to achieve great collaboration towards that goal. I want people around me to feel completely open to share ideas. This is a philosophy that will bring me steps closer to being a successful clinical psychologist by allowing me to form meaningful relationships with my future graduate school class mates, professors, coworkers, bosses, and eventually clients.

## First Year Experience – Leadership Module

I learned about a variety of leadership skills in my Honors First Year Experience course. For this course, I read a book by Tom Rath titled *Strengths Based Leadership* and in that book, there is a StrengthsFinder Assessment that assisted me in identifying my strengths as a leader. I also took a quiz in Susan Cain's book, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*, to determine if I was an introvert or an extrovert. I was able to determine what characteristics I value in a leader. I was also able to discover my strengths and attributes as an introvert that I have to offer when it comes to being a leader. Before learning about the different leadership styles, I hadn't thought about the idea of everyone having their own unique strengths.

This experience allowed me to reach the competency levels of Leadership Values levels 1 and 2. This was the first time I had ever evaluated myself as a leader, and the StrengthsFinder Assessment helped me identify my skills: restorative, developer, empathy, positivity, and discipline (Values 1). By identifying myself as an introvert, I was also able to identify my strengths and weaknesses. As an introvert, there are specific strengths I have. For instance, I am very open to and receptive to diverse ideas, and I am able to identify when other peoples' ideas would work more efficiently than mine. However, a weakness of mine is that I sometimes let others talk over me or pass by my own ideas. It has always been a goal/tactic of mine to identify my weaknesses and work on turning them into my strengths (Values 2). I continue to work on gaining confidence in group settings so that I can better contribute to the progress (Values 2).

I will be able to work more effectively in group settings now that I know how to recognize attributes in leaders. I need to know how to effectively work with groups and people of different leading styles because I will be working with groups for the rest of my life. Going into the field of psychology means not only working with others, but also working EFFECTIVELY and EFFICIENTLY with others. This was my first experience learning about specific leadership traits and styles, and I can't wait to continue developing and practicing my own unique leadership traits in my graduate studies as well as in my actual career!



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## Exploring Personal Leadership through Social Change – Volunteering

In HONRS 401, *Exploring Personal Leadership through Social Change*, I had the opportunity to learn a great deal about how to work towards social change by utilizing my strengths as a leader. At the beginning of the semester, I identified a global issue that I had a passion for and wanted to work on for the length of the course. I chose to focus on domestic abuse, so I began volunteering at Committee Against Domestic Abuse in Mankato, Minnesota. I volunteered every week as a childcare provider while parents attended domestic abuse support groups. I worked my hardest to occupy the children in a constructive, controlled, yet fun manner. Over the span of several months, I was able to grow a personal relationship with these children and empathize with the situation they were in.

Working at CADA allowed me to reach several Leadership levels: Values levels 1 through 4 and Teams levels 1 through 4. At the beginning of this journey, I identified my own personal leadership values in order to make me the most effective role model for the young children. In addition to the values listed in my reflection below, the leadership values I identified were empathy, positivity, and discipline (Values 1). After a few weeks of volunteering, I became overwhelmed with the growing number of children and their difficult behaviors, so I met with the director to discuss what I was excelling at and what needed some improvement. I analyzed my leadership style and came up with my strengths as empathy and positivity, but I realized I was not holding true to my value of discipline (Values 2). By identifying my strengths and weaknesses, I was able to adapt my leadership style to better suit the position as a childcare provider. In the artifact below, I discuss several individual and group leadership values from the book *Leadership for a Better World* by Susan R. Komives, Wendy Wagner, and colleagues that I utilized during this experience. There were times that the other childcare providers and I had disagreements about how to best occupy the children, so we decided to hold a group meeting to discuss the issues. I educated them on the group values identified in *Leadership for a Better World*, and we talked about coming up with a common purpose to work towards (occupy children in a meaningful, constructive way) as well as dealing with controversy with civility. We also discussed the contradicting leadership styles within the group that were causing most of the disagreements (Values 3). I utilized and strengthened my personal values of leadership which were restorative, developer, empathy, positivity, and discipline (in addition to the values identified in the file below) every single volunteer shift at CADA (Values 4). At the beginning of my volunteering experience, all of the volunteers met and decided which roles we would serve. I served as the coordinator/advisor while the other roles were note-taker/behavior tracker and bathroom duty (Teams 1). As a team, we discussed if our leadership styles aligned well with our designated position, and we concluded that they did (Teams 2). We worked very well together towards our common goal of occupying the children in a meaningful, constructive way while also preventing bathroom accidents and maintaining safety (Values 3).

After my experience at CADA, I wrote the reflection (below) where I decided to add both openness and risk to my leadership philosophy (Values 4). My experience of volunteering at CADA provided me with great knowledge and wisdom for the future. It is important to understand personal leadership styles in terms of social change because I am part of a generation where social change is a necessity and a challenge. By understanding my own leadership skills and style, I will be able to work with diverse groups of people throughout my entire life to achieve necessary change. However, I recognize I still need to learn how to communicate my own values/styles without feeling like I am stepping on toes. I will work towards becoming more confident with who I am as a leader.


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### **Social Change in the 21st Century - Creating a Campaign**


I took a class titled Social Change in the 21st Century, which was exactly what it sounds like: analyzing how social movements occur and achieve in the 21st century. I worked with a group to achieve a social project. Our social project was titled "Out with the Bottle, In with the Box," and our main goal was to reduce the carbon footprint produced by Minnesota State University, Mankato by reducing the use of plastic. We chose to advocate for the implementation of boxed water rather than single use plastic water bottles in all dining areas of campus. At the beginning of our campaign, we wrote a group contract discussing the expectations of each other as well as consequences of not meeting expectations. We also created a petition to show to dietary services and held several tabling events to gain popularity and momentum.


Creating the campaign "Out with the Bottle, In with the Box" allowed me to reach the Leadership competencies of Values levels 1 and 2 as well as Teams levels 1 through 4. At the beginning of the semester, I filled out several questionnaires and completed several reflections to determine what social issues I am passionate about based on my own values, which was very difficult since I was new to activism. However, through extensive research and participation in several activist events, I identified what my top values in terms of social change were: women's rights, animal rights, and racial equality (Values 1). In developing my activist statement (file below), I met with my professor and discussed my weaknesses (inexperience and self-consciousness) and my strengths (commitment, passion, and resilience) in activism (Values 2). In our group contract, we identified four different roles for the four members of the group: communicator, treasurer, back-up note-taker, and backup treasurer in case the primary treasurer was absent from a meeting. My group members and I held an additional meeting to identify who should be responsible for what portions of the petition: research, argument, signatures, creator, and delivery (Teams 1). We met after our designated due date where we were required to have our portion done and discussed what we liked most about the gathered research and what parts needed to be strengthened. Halfway through the semester, we held a meeting to discuss our current roles. We addressed several critiques regarding a group member's reoccurring absence and filled out evaluations about each of the members' ability to perform their designated role (Teams 2). We met for three hours every week and recorded all progress in order to reach our common goal of MNSU's food contractor, Sodexo, to implement boxed water as an alternative to bottled water. I used my communication skills and restorative skills to write letters to MNSU's dining services as well as Sodexo. We discussed our strengths as a group and as individuals. One of my skills is effective arguing, so I used the relevant research to create a strong argument as to why boxed water is a great solution to reduce MNSU's carbon footprint. Our common goal was to get Sodexo to implement boxed water in all dining services on the MNSU campus (Teams 3). At the end of the semester, we filled out evaluations for our own contribution to group work as well as other members' contribution. I was the only member who wanted to keep the campaign going because I had put forth too much effort to just drop it, so I decided to add "continuing commitment/dedication" to my leadership philosophy (Teams 4).

I gained a lot of useful knowledge for my future. This experience taught me how to effectively divide tasks up among individuals even when someone falls short on their designated task. I learned how to quickly pick up the slack of other group members which is a great skill for my future. For this specific course, we were required to contact the professor if a member didn't comply to the group contract. However, I do recognize that is not a feasible option in the future. In real-world scenarios, I would meet with the individual privately to discuss concerns and ask that they work to correct them. If correction did not happen, perhaps I could propose a meeting with my supervisor and the problematic individual. Something I need to learn for the future is how to stay grounded in my goals when other members give up. I can work towards finding other individuals of like minds with whom to collaborate.

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### **Research - Dr. Stark's Research Assistant**

I joined Dr. Stark's research team as one of her research assistants. As a research assistant, I am responsible for several important tasks. I provide feedback to Dr. Stark on studies she designs such as my personal opinion, additional research, strengths of the study, and possible problems. I also run participants through these studies every week which entails first objectively explaining what the study they are participating in, instructing them on what to do, and following up with them after the study. Towards the end of the study, I begin entering data into an excel spread sheet so it can be analyzed on SONA Systems. The first study I helped conduct was regarding critical thinking in the work place, and then we studied lie detection in job interviews.

Working as one of Dr. Stark's research assistants means being a member of a research team, so this experience was great for excelling me in the Teams Leadership competency. Specifically, I reached Teams levels 1, 2, and 3. When I joined this research team, Dr. Stark hosted a meeting for all team members to discuss what our roles would be as researchers. All of the research assistants were responsible for completing the tasks listed above. In addition to those tasks, we could also identify our own research project to work on if desired (Teams 1). Dr. Stark is the research advisor, so she is responsible for the team's study topics, such as lie detection and critical thinking. She is also responsible for consulting with each of her team members about how tasks are going. We meet as a full team about once a month to discuss how our research roles are going and what might need to be improved. However, we are able to meet whenever needed to discuss struggles, concerns, etc. When we identify a concern, we talk about possible solutions and work out the problem as a team (Teams 2). Each of the team members works on either their own individual study or research project while receiving feedback from Dr. Stark, or they run participants and work on the main study (Teams 1). Those who choose to work on their own research project are also required to contribute to Dr. Stark's research as well. We are all working towards the common goal of seeing if there are any trends in our research in order to produce meaningful results that could benefit society as a whole (Teams 3).

In the field of psychology, research will be an enormous portion of my future career, so I am thankful for this experience. Working on Dr. Stark's research team provided me with relevant knowledge and skills to be able to work with a collaborative team on a research project. I have also been exposed to how research is conducted in a lab setting, so I will know where to start and what to do in the future when I

have my own lab and participants. In the future, I still need to learn more distinct roles in a research lab since most of the research assistants have similar tasks.

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# Global Citizenship

## *Global Citizenship Synthesis Essay*

Being a part of the Minnesota State University, Mankato Honors Program means striving for academic excellence and personal development. However, it also means striving to become a culturally competent individual by learning how to be a global citizen. A global citizen is someone who is able to recognize their own culture along with its prejudices and biases towards other cultures, build up knowledge of other cultures, and learn the complexity of communication both within cultures and between cultures.

Prior to my **First Year Experience course**, I had never heard of global citizenship. Global competency was a brand new concept to me, especially as I was coming from a very rural community with little diversity. I discovered that global citizenship means significantly more than just learning another language. This course taught me how to recognize and understand characteristics of my own culture, and I learned how to identify preconceived cultural prejudices that I had. I had never actually analyzed my own culture before, so this was a great exercise for me to complete in order to start engaging in global competence. I began working towards minimizing my biases by engaging in different experiences with other cultures. This class was the perfect foundation for me to begin exploring the world through a new, open-minded perspective.

I had the opportunity to expand my global competency when I began working as a **direct support professional** for four older men with physical and cognitive disabilities. In this job, I was able to indulge in a culture of which I had never been a part. I spent countless days and nights with the individuals and learned a great deal about the struggles they face as adults with disabilities ranging from fetal alcohol syndrome to obsessive compulsive disorder to cerebral palsy. At first, it was difficult for me to find patience and understanding for their difficult behaviors. However, after building a strong bond with each individual, I began to recognize the inaccuracies of the prior prejudices I had were interfering with my ability to understand and empathize with people from this specific population. Because I learned how to identify my own cultural prejudices in my previous First Year Experience class, I was able to become more accepting of our differences.

I continued my growth towards global citizenship in a **Gender and Women's Studies course** where I completed extensive research on gender issues in Afghanistan. This was one of my first experiences gathering data from specific regions of the world and comparing it to what I knew about my own culture. My previous experiences helped me learn thoroughly about my culture, and this was a chance for me to compare what I had learned about myself to what I learned about other cultures. I began to recognize more aspects of my culture by learning about Afghanistan. Specifically, I began identifying the privileges I have as a white American woman. I don't face the same struggles as Afghanistan women, and this research allowed me to learn about why mothers in Afghanistan choose to raise their daughters as sons which is a concept known as "bacha posh." The research I conducted focused on identifying a relationship between gender identity issues and bacha posh, so it was a great experience to begin drawing connections between different aspects of cultures. I also learned about false stereotypes that Afghanistan culture deals with and began clearing my mind of previous judgements to become more globally competent.

**Studying the Spanish language** is where I began to develop my ability to communicate with other cultures. I completed four Spanish courses throughout my time at Minnesota State University, Mankato. These courses helped me develop a knowledgeable foundation of the Spanish language, and I learned about different ways to address specific groups of people, such as authorities and peers. I created a few different presentations centered around Hispanic culture. I was required to use my acquired knowledge and understanding of the Spanish language and culture in order to prepare detailed presentations as well as deliver them with accurate Spanish language. I was continuously challenged to improve my Spanish speaking skills by thoughtfully communicating with my peers on a regular basis.

**In Honors 401: Exploring Personal Leadership through Social Change**, I created a social change project centered around domestic abuse. I volunteered at Committee Against Domestic Abuse in Mankato, Minnesota and completed research to understand the prevalence of domestic abuse on both a local and national level. I used the global mindset skills that I gained in my previous Gender and Women's Studies class to step out of my comfort zone by interacting and connecting with a new population. In my experience of volunteering at CADA, I had several opportunities to interact with Spanish speaking people. The environment was judgement-free, so all preconceived prejudices were pushed aside which allowed me to interact with these individuals on a meaningful level. I had the chance to practice my Spanish speaking abilities by talking to native speakers about their experiences with domestic abuse. I began to understand and empathize with the individuals who were still in abusive relationships which is something I didn't understand before. I learned about the challenges they face as minorities in Mankato that hold them in the abusive relationships.

I will continue to work towards becoming an even better global citizen by engaging in intercultural communication of all forms. I want to use the skills and knowledge I have acquired through my experiences to provide psychological help to people of all cultures and background in my future career as a clinical psychologist.

## *First Year Experience - Global Citizenship Module*

In my First Year Experience Class, I was introduced to the concept of global citizenship for the first time. At first, I thought global citizenship simply meant learning another or even several languages so I would be able to communicate with different cultures/ethnicities. However, this course taught me that global citizenship means so much more than that. Global competence means becoming aware of the world around me by understanding communication, behavior, perspectives, etc. within and between cultures. Global competence means learning to accept and even participating in cultural differences. I also learned that "culture" refers to so much more than just ethnicities and languages; it also refers to lifestyles, societies, ages, and several more characteristics.

This class allowed me to reach the Honors Competencies of Self-awareness levels 1, 2, 3, 4 as well as Knowledge and Understanding level 1. Because of this class, I was able to reflect on my experience living in a very rural community and how my views changed when I moved to a college with a much greater level of diversity (Self-awareness 1). I recognized the lack of diversity in my hometown and high school and reflected on having a closed mindset in the past because of a lack of exposure to other cultures (Self-awareness 2). I learned that I am able to be a "small town girl" with a big city mind. Living in a rural community hindered my ability to view cultures with acceptance and understanding. I had my first exposure to people from different areas of the world and different gender identities. I was able to adapt my own cultural views to become a more accepting and open-minded member of society (Self-awareness 3 and 4). I also reflected on my experience interviewing a college basketball player with paraplegia. In the interview, we discussed the different challenges he has to face that mobile individuals like myself don't have to deal with. In the interview, I asked several questions about the man's culture in order to better understand his experiences and perceptions (Knowledge and Understanding 1). I was able to directly relate this experience to the global citizenship concepts I was learning in FYEX.

This class provided me with the perfect introduction to global competence. It was my first experience analyzing my own culture and recognizing past misconceptions I had about other cultures. I will always be able to use the skills I developed in this class because society is constantly evolving and changing, so it's important to be able to know how to open your mind in order to be a more accepting and globally competent member of the world. In the future, I would like to participate in more personal interactions with diverse individuals so I can begin to understand other cultures on an even deeper level.

### **Working as a Direct Support Professional**

One of my first jobs in college was working as a direct support professional for four men with cognitive and physical disabilities. This job required a tremendous amount of patience. I assisted them in their daily lives and struggles. I completed common everyday tasks such as cooking and cleaning. However, I also helped them with more challenging tasks such as bathing, communicating, controlling temperament, using the bathroom, etc. Additionally, I brought them out into the community for different activities so they could get proper social interaction. I developed personal relationships with each of the four men and found different things to bond over.

This experience allowed me to reach Honors Competencies Self-awareness levels 3 and 4 as well as Knowledge and Understanding levels 3 and 4. This job allowed me to recognize my own privilege as a fully competent and able adult and compare it to the struggles that people with disabilities face (Self-awareness 3). I faced several challenges in this job that tested my patience. Over time, I learned how to accept difficult behaviors in order to provide the best personal care for these men. I recognized the prejudices in my own mind that had been causing me to misunderstand this specific population of people (Self-awareness 4). I spent a significant amount of time with these four men. I was there when they went to bed and when they woke up. I interacted with them and asked them many questions about their experiences living with severe disabilities. I began to understand daily living for adults with fetal alcohol syndrome, severe dementia, obsessive compulsive disorder, cerebral palsy, and many more mental/physical disabilities. Over time, I grew a strong and unique bond with each individual in the home which allowed me to be more understanding and accepting of their difficult behaviors (Knowledge and Understanding 2 and 3).

Being able to work with people of varying disabilities is an essential skill that I will use in my future career as a clinical psychologist. Each of these men required unique treatments/therapies, and someday I will be the one providing those services to individuals like them. In the future, I would like to learn how to open the minds of average people to be more accepting of individuals with disabilities.

### **Gender and Women's Study – Research on Gender Issues in Afghanistan**

In a Gender and Women's Study course, I read a book titled *The Underground Girls of Kabul* by Jenny Nordberg which was about how young girls are often raised as boys in Afghanistan because of the privilege differences. This book sparked my interest in gender issues in Afghanistan. I conducted extensive research on Afghan culture as well as various other cultures in order to understand gender identity issues in Afghanistan. By doing elaborate research on the inequalities that women face in Afghanistan, I was able to describe and address why people in Afghanistan choose to raise their girls as boys.

This experience allowed me to reach the Honors Competencies Knowledge and Understanding levels 3 and 4. In my extensive research, I learned primarily about different gender identity issues as well as attitudes towards genders in Afghanistan. I also gathered information from other areas of the world in order to compare them to the information I found about Afghanistan. I learned about the intense struggles Afghan women face that women from my culture don't (Knowledge and Understanding 3). Specifically, I asked the difficult question of whether or not raising young girls as boys leads to gender identity issues later in life. The research I conducted provided me with answers by comparing several different gender perspectives from different cultures (Knowledge and Understanding 4). This experience helped me recognize my privilege as a Caucasian woman in America.

I will definitely use the skills I acquired through this experience in my future as a clinical psychologist. A huge part of my career will be to ask complex questions about different cultures in order to psychologically understand different areas of the world. This experience was a great opportunity to expand my knowledge on already existing gender issues in today's world. In the future, I hope to have the opportunity to interact with more individuals who have been affected by gender biases and learn how they have been affected psychologically.

### **Spanish courses – Learning a Second Language**

I took a series of Spanish courses including Spanish 101, 102, 201, and 202. Throughout these courses I was able to develop my Spanish speaking abilities significantly. I had no experience with a foreign language prior to coming to college as my rural high school did not offer a foreign language courses. In Spanish 101 and 102, I learned basic Spanish vocabulary and grammar. Spanish 201 and 202 are the courses that helped me actually practice speaking Spanish more fluently. I also began to learn about Hispanic cultures.

These Spanish courses allowed me to reach the Honors Competency Communication levels 1 and 2. I developed and presented with Spanish language a presentation centered around Madrid, Spain and their cultural habits. This presentation included an itinerary of a trip that included diverse events that indulge in Spanish culture (Communication 1). In an additional project, I created an educational trip to a Spanish speaking country that would provide the travelers with many culturally unique experiences (Communication 2). For both of these projects, a great deal of background research was required to understand Hispanic cultural habits and experiences. I needed to use creativity to create trips that reflected my knowledge of the culture.

Being able to speak Spanish will absolutely come in handy in my future. Already, I have encountered Spanish speaking individuals in school, at work, and in the community. In my presentation experiences, I felt nervous speaking in front of a large group of people, so I need to work on building confidence and fluency in the future.

### **Exploring Personal Leadership through Social Change – Domestic Abuse Social Change Project**

In Honors 401, I learned how to use leadership skills to achieve social change. In this course, I was required to choose a social issue that I was passionate about and work towards understanding that issue. I chose to focus on domestic abuse. I volunteered at Committee Against Domestic Abuse in Mankato, Minnesota as a child care worker. I looked after the children of domestic abuse survivors while they attended support group meetings. Additionally, I extensively researched the trend of domestic abuse on a local level as well as a national level.

This experience allowed me to reach Honors Competencies Knowledge and Understanding level 4 as well as Communication levels 3 and 4. By researching the trend of domestic abuse on a local and national level, I was able to recognize patterns in prevalence of domestic abuse. I also looked into city records to see who specifically was working towards progress in this social issue. Since this was nationally scaled research, I used statistics from all over the world and drew conclusions from the gathered information (Knowledge and Understanding 4). In my experience of volunteering at CADA, I had the opportunity to continuously interact with young children from many ethnicities without judgement. There were several Hispanic families that attended the support group meetings at CADA, so I was able to practice communicating with young children and adults using Spanish (Communication 3). I recognized the difference in communication between them and myself; I noticed the differences in body language and the way the children addressed adults. I recognized that my experiences and perceptions as a Caucasian American do not align with all other cultures (Communication 4).

It's no secret that our society becomes more diverse every day, so I will undoubtedly use my acquired Spanish speaking skills in my future. I will be able to use these skills in everyday life, such as at the grocery store, as well as in my career as a clinical psychologist. I need to continue to exercise and develop my Spanish speaking abilities. While interacting with Spanish speaking individuals at CADA, it was difficult for me to understand their fast speaking and accents.



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# Research

## Research Synthesis Essay

Prior to coming to college, I had little experience with research. I took classes in high school where a deep google search was sufficient, but I had never learned about what makes good research or how to find it. In my very first Honors class, **First Year Experience**, I was introduced to the concept of information literacy. Furthermore, I was taught how to be information literate by learning how to develop the skills that are needed to find and use credible information in order to produce ethical research. Ethical research has many important components such as giving credit the original source, disclosing fully of the methods that were used, and recording all information properly and accurately. This course also taught me how to talk about accumulated research in an understandable way while avoiding plagiarism by using proper citations. I was also introduced to some of the most vital, useful, and important research tools that Minnesota State University, Mankato has to offer such as their online library, Undergraduate Research Center, and several online article databases with thousands of scholarly articles. This class served as the perfect foundation for my future research experiences.

I had the opportunity to put my newly acquired research skills to the test in a **Gender and Women's Study** course where I used several reliable sources to write a supported research paper on the relationship between "bacha posh," which is a concept I define thoroughly in my paper, and gender identity issues in Afghanistan. I was introduced to bacha posh in a book titled *The Underground Girls of Kabul* by Jenny Nordberg which inspired my research project. I created a thesis stating that individuals who were raised as bacha posh may experience gender identity issues late in life. I synthesized data and background research from several studies to show that bacha posh correlates with gender identity issues which is a great demonstration of working towards a research goal. I had to look at both topics, gender identity and bacha posh, separately and use my synthesizing skills to show the relationship.

I encountered a brand new way of researching when I was required to write a full length lab report on photosynthesis and cellular respiration in **General Biology**. As a sophomore, I hadn't had much experience conducting actual experiments. Previously, I mainly worked on observing and discovering correlations/relationships, but I hadn't worked much with actually manipulating variables and observing change. I called on my information synthesis skills once again to create a strong thesis by integrating research from several different scholarly resources. This time, my research goal was to determine if different light conditions had an effect on photosynthesis and cellular respiration by manipulating environmental conditions and following the scientific method. My strong information synthesis skills helped me build strong background research to support my hypothesis as well as relate already known information to my experiment. After the long process, I had the opportunity to reflect on a new form of research.

Challenging and strengthening my research skills continued when I conducted my own study for a **Research Methods and Design** course. In this course, I was a part of a group consisting of about 10 members. We worked as a team to research if college students with various mental illnesses viewed their treatment plans as effective. Each member conducted their own research on a specific mental illness, and we synthesized our results together at the end of our studies to show that overall, college students with mental illnesses view their treatments as effective. This was a great experience to complete literature reviews, create and launch my own study, and analyze my own data via SPSS. Once all results had been analyzed, I presented and disseminated my results to a group of my peers in the psychology department and some faculty members. This project put together everything that I had learned in my previous classes like information literacy skills and information synthesis, but it was also my first time conducting original research.

During my senior year of college, I had the opportunity to produce original research again. This time, I was working under Dr. Stark as a research assistant. My research project was on **lie detection in job interview settings**. I conducted extensive background research, ran a great number of participants in the lab, collected and analyzed data, and finally, presented a poster board that summed up my study at the Undergraduate Research Symposium. At the URS, I talked to several individuals and communicated my results to them. This research project required me to pull all of my learned research skills and abilities together.

As a psychology major and biology minor, research is a core component of my education and will continue to be a core component of my future as a clinical psychologist. In the future, I want to continue researching topics of interest in the field of psychology. There is no greater feeling than meaningfully contributing to the growing pool of knowledge.

## First Year Experience – Research Module

In my first Honors class at Minnesota State University, Mankato, there was an entire portion of the semester devoted to learning how to find, use, and conduct ethical research. There were class periods that were held in the library so we could learn and practice navigating both the physical library and online library. I was also taught how to find reliable, scholarly resources to ensure that I would be able to conduct accurate research in the future. I practiced identifying reliable research and unreliable research. I also completed several assignments where I reflected on my knowledge of ethical research. This class was the perfect foundation for me as a psychology major since a huge portion of psychology is research.

This experience allowed me to reach the competency levels of Information Literacy 1 and 2. This was my first time learning how to use a college level library. In high school, I conducted research, but not on the level that would soon be required of me as a psychology student. I received detailed training on how to use many of the important tools on MNSU's "online library." I practiced finding peer-reviewed, scholarly, subject-specific sources in the actual library and online (Information Literacy 1). I learned how to distinguish between ethical and unethical information by looking at different components such as author credentials, experimental design, citations, etc. I also learned that identifying ethical information requires developed critical thinking skills in order to find research/information that unbiasedly expands on the topic of study at hand (Information Literacy 2).

By learning the foundation of accessing and properly using ethical information, I will be able to think critically about articles, new research findings, experiments, etc. which will allow me to conduct my own unbiased research and obtain accurate, relevant knowledge. Although I know how to access ethical information, I sometimes have a difficult time trying to put all of my newfound information into one idea or opinion. Research is one of the main components in the study of psychology, so I will have many opportunities to continue strengthening my research skills.




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## Gender and Women's Studies – Extended Research Paper

In a Gender and Women's Study class, I read a book titled *The Underground Girls of Kabul* by Jenny Nordberg. Through this book, I was exposed to the culture and secrets of women and children in Afghanistan. This paper contains my researched argument that gender identity issues are prevalent in Afghanistan and can be linked to the way children are raised. I completed extensive research via MNSU's online library to draw relationships between the concept of "bacha posh" (discussed in paper) and gender identity issues later in life.

Through this experience, I was able to reach the competency levels of Information Literacy 3 and 4, as well as Information Synthesis 1, 2, and 3. To create a well-rounded research paper, I read through several research studies and papers to find information on gender issues in Afghanistan. I used *The Underground Girls of Kabul* by Jenny Nordberg to focus my research on the concept of bacha posh (Information Literacy 3 and Information Synthesis 1). I identified the specific research goal of analyzing the relationship between bacha posh and gender identity issues (Information Literacy 4). The process of reading through diverse sources, such as books and online peer-reviewed articles, let me recognize that many researchers have different ways of conducting research, and they each have their own individual goal (Information Synthesis 3). Specifically, I realized that researchers had different ways of analyzing gender identity issues. I also had to take into account that I was analyzing results from several different areas of the world and relating them back to Afghanistan, so I emphasized relating results from each study in order to effectively argue my thesis (Information Synthesis 2). At the time of this class, this was the largest research project I had done yet, so I was able to develop my research skills tremendously.

I believe it is important to be able to draw relationships between different sources, especially as a psychology major. A large portion of my college career as well as my actual career will require me to be able to produce well rounded and supported research. There are still countless discoveries to be made in psychology, and they all need to start with research. Being able to use multiple sources will also make me a more open-minded individual by showing me different, possibly opposing information. Something I want to strengthen in my research skills is analyzing actual data sets and being able to get an overall comparison of different studies instead of relying on the descriptive texts.


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### **General Biology – Lab Report**

In Biology 105, I wrote a detailed lab report on an experiment regarding photosynthesis and cellular respiration. I first conducted background research and completed the experiment, which is explained in the lab report. Then, I created several graphs and charts for a physical representation of the results of the experiment. Lastly, I integrated and evaluated all of my research so that only relevant topics were addressed. This report was a challenge for me because it was very time consuming and elaborate. I was able to produce my own results and then compare them to results of past experiments as well as address the scientific explanations of my results.

This experience allowed me to reach the competency levels of Information Synthesis 3 and 4. I used class material, textbooks, and several different studies to integrate knowledge on photosynthesis/cellular respiration and the effects that different light effects have on the rate (Information Synthesis 3). I used each step of the scientific method to produce meaningful results: question, research, hypothesize, experiment, analyze, and share results. Since this was a lower level general biology, most students hadn't ever written a full lab report before, so the professor had us write a reflection on how following the scientific method allowed us to conduct ethical and controlled research. I also reflected on the portions of the lab report that were the easiest and most challenging for me. I found the background research portion to be the easiest because I love reading research articles. However, talking about the results was the most challenging for me as it is difficult to put complex numbers and equations into meaningful words (Information Synthesis 4).

Overall, I learned a lot from such a common assignment. First of all, being able to write a full length lab report will be very useful in my future as a clinical psychology graduate student. In graduate school, I will be placed in countless diverse research scenarios and required to communicate my findings with others, so it's essential I know the formatting of a thorough lab report. Additionally, I gained firsthand experience using the scientific method which is another essential for researching in graduate school because it will help me produce understandable, accurate, and meaningful results that will contribute to the knowledge of psychology. In the future, I need to work on communicating my results in an interesting tone. I realize that the average person is probably not fascinated by photosynthesis or cellular respiration nor do they know jargon, so it's important to be able to captivate them with interesting but relatable words.


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### **Original Research – Effectiveness of Treatment in Students with ADHD**

In a class titled Research Methods and Designs, I had the opportunity to gather my own raw data in order to analyze the effectiveness of treatments in college students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. I was actually part of a group research project that was looking to analyze overall attitudes about treatments for common mental illnesses/disabilities. Each group member gathered data on a specific illness/disability, and we integrated our research to see if students who have been diagnosed with a mental illness/disability view treatments as effective. I gathered my own data by launching a survey to MNSU students. In the survey, I asked about different treatment methods such as counseling or medication and then asked for an effectiveness rating. The results were difficult to analyze because I didn't have as many participants as I had hoped. However, I was able to adapt to the challenge and conclude that overall, those who have been diagnosed with ADHD do rate their treatments as being effective and beneficial.

This research experience let me reach the competency levels of Information Literacy 4, Information Synthesis 3, and Original Research 1, 2, 3, and 4. In order to make sure audience would understand my findings, I conducted extensive background research on ADHD in different stages of life as well as different treatment options. The survey I made via Qualtrics helped me collect my own unique data, and a program called "SSPS" allowed me to analyze the data in order to accomplish my goal of identifying whether or not college students with ADHD viewed their treatments as effective (Information Literacy 4 and Original Research 3). My research paper contained both my original data as well as supporting evidence from other scholarly sources (Information Synthesis 3). The reason I chose the specific research topic of "ADHD treatment effectiveness in college students" was because in previous classes, I learned extensively about the different treatments for ADHD and their levels of effectiveness, but I noticed that most research addressed mainly childhood and adolescence. I decided to analyze treatment effectiveness for ADHD in young adults (Original Research 1 and 2). Once my project was complete, I created a presentation for my peers in the psychology department, communicated my results to them, and answered any questions that they had (Original Research 4).

Some aspects that were unique to this research experience that helped me develop my own skills were the creation of my own survey and using a computerized program (SPSS) to statistically analyze my results. SPSS is a common tool for psychologists to analyze results and draw conclusions, so understanding how to use it efficiently is essential to being a psychologist that contributes to the growing knowledge of psychology. Understanding SPSS is a somewhat time-consuming task that requires practice and consistency, so I will definitely need to continue practicing with it to prepare for my future research duties as a psychology graduate student.


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### **Presenting – Gender Impact on Lie Detection in Job Interviews**

During my last semester at Minnesota State University, I had the opportunity to tie all of my research experiences together. I collaborated with another member of my research team and a professor to research gender impact on lie detection in job interview scenarios. After running many participants through the study, we analyzed data on SPSS to find statistics regarding correlations and significance between gender and deception ability. We worked together to prepare a poster with a summary of our study to present our findings at the Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Through this research experience, I was able to reach the competency levels of Dissemination of Results 1, 2, 3, and 4. My partner and I presented our research at the Undergraduate Research Symposium at Minnesota State University, Mankato where we had the opportunity to talk to people about our research and findings (Dissemination of Results 1). Several weeks before the symposium, we worked together to create an abstract that provided a brief overview of our study (Dissemination of Results 2). At the symposium, we stood next to our poster and discussed our methods, results, and thoughts regarding the study. It was a great opportunity to talk about *why* our research is important and what it means (Dissemination of Results 3). After presenting, we had the opportunity to submit our results for publication in MNSU's Journal of Undergraduate Research (Dissemination of Results 4). This will be my first of hopefully many publications. I loved contributing to the field of knowledge in Psychology.

As I stated previously, I'm hoping this is my first of many research experiences that reach the point of possible publication. Talking to others about my research using understandable language is a skill that I will need to use in my future clinical psychology graduate program and career. Psychology is centered around research, so I will definitely need to know how to properly conduct and communicate it.

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