

Claire R. Hussey



ABOUT ME

WELCOME!

My name is Claire Hussey and my preferred pronouns are she, her, hers. I was adopted from China and attended high school in Pierre, SD. I am currently studying chemistry at Minnesota State University in Mankato, MN. I will go to the Navy Officer Candidate School after I graduate from MSU.



MISSION

My mission is to improve myself in the three competencies of the [Minnesota State University Honors Program](#) and as an individual. I will continue to dedicate my learning to those things that I have passion for and will use. I intend to go into submarines as a nuclear officer.

Click to view other pages:

[MNSU Honors Program](#)

[Leadership](#)

[Research](#)

[Global Citizenship](#)

[DOWNLOAD MY FULL RESUME](#)

Honors Program

MISSION:

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.

Click [here](#) to find out more about the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Click to see my work towards fulfilling the Honors Program competencies:

Leadership

Research

Global Citizenship

Personal Learning Plans

2019-20

2020-21

2021-22

Why Honors?

I joined the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, because I thought that it was something that was expected of me. I was one of the 4.0 high schoolers, so joining an honors program at whatever college I attend was the logical next step. I considered chemistry teaching for a time, and the honors would look good on a teacher's résumé. I no longer aspire to teach right after I graduate, so that remnant of usefulness has since disappeared. And while I appreciate the three pillars of Leadership, Research, and Global Citizenship, they aren't things that I didn't already have the drive to improve in myself.

So, why'd I stay in the Program? I think it was two things—the people and the hatred of the idea of quitting. I like to finish what I start, and the Honors Program is no exception. But more importantly, the people of the Program have kept me involved. Joining the Honors Launch Learning Community my freshman year was great because I got to meet and live with many like-minded people. The Honors Program has continued to serve as a community for me even though I don't live with the same people I lived with in the dorms. I still see and spend time with those people (I even live with one of them), but I also know more people in the Honors Program as a whole that I've bonded with. Several of my friends that I shared a class or two with were also in the program, and that commonality gave us another reason to talk (and complain) to each other.

Likewise, the director and the—now former—associate director have been great people for me to talk to. I appreciate their genuineness. They've been honest with me, and they've also let me be honest with them without worrying that I'll step on a minefield during the conversation. I continued in the program partially because I enjoy having them as people that care about what I do with my life. In short, the Honors Program didn't really push me to have experiences I wouldn't have had otherwise; I stayed in the Program for the people I met in it and the connections we've made.

[DOWNLOAD MY FULL RESUME](#)

Leadership

Leadership Synthesis

I came into college as an outspoken, organized person which translated to being good at organizing people. I have been able to get people to listen to me for a good majority of my life because I can present myself as someone who knows what's going on and has a commanding presence. Diving into the way we define leadership in the Honors Program, especially with the **StrengthsFinder and Values** exercises, has more clearly defined for me the things that make me a good, "natural" leader and the things that inhibit my leadership because they can cause more harm than good.

The first step to being a good leader comes from understanding the values that the group or team holds and the values that I hold both as a leader and as a team member. I have watched supervisors in the **security office** drive employees away from their jobs because they don't express genuine care in how the employees are faring with the work itself nor are they able to do the same jobs they ask their subordinates to do. I got fed up with my own supervisor only talking to me when he had an issue and never really noticing all the extra parts of the job that I had to complete that he's never done. Eventually, I stopped doing those extra things and just got more and more apathetic, trying to find other tasks that would allow me to spend less and less time doing work for this particular supervisor. Likewise, I've watched drummers shut down because they don't feel that they're getting help, and the director continues to pile on the pressure to perform well until it's not fun anymore. A team can only be cohesive when there is trust in the leadership. The team needs to trust that the leaders have their backs; they need to believe that the instructions the leaders give have valid reasoning behind them. It comes down to fostering respect and trust right from the start. The leaders have to respect the team members and the team will put their faith in the leaders in response.

My leadership style has changed over the past several years. I've settled on a very authoritarian style when I'm in front of a group, whether that's the **Circle K club** or the **Machine Drumline**, but I also know when to ask for input from the members. I can't expect all of my drummers to be okay with every decision I make. So, there's a time and place to ask for opinions and feelings about where we're at and what I'm asking from them. I've settled on a middle ground where I can ask for that input without letting it start to rule the rehearsal or meeting. It's all about balancing the needs of the team members with the needs of the team as a whole. But with the authoritarian style, I've changed the way I approach standing in front of a team and giving instructions. I've come to take myself less seriously than I used to, which makes it much easier to keep the team meshing together. In the past with the Machine, I was completely focused on learning and cleaning our music without being willing to take breaks—that's just not realistic. I need to inject some humor and accept when we break attention to go off on a tangent here and there because it's good for morale. It's especially important for me to bring lots of energy to every meeting to get the other Machine drummers or Circle K members excited and really buying into the things I ask from them. I have to buy into the same things I ask the team to buy into, otherwise no one will be convinced that it's worth the energy.

I came into college being told I'm a natural leader since I was in elementary school. But a lot of that capability comes from my slightly intimidating and generally loud personality. I've put thought and effort into improving my leadership ability so I can appeal to different types of people that respond to different types of motivation and direction. Leading is more than just leading by example or just giving instructions or just reporting the opinion of a democratic decision; a true leader needs to find a balance of these things that works best for the specific group of people they are leading.

Circle K International (CKI)

Circle K International is a service-based RSO that has campus, district, and international club levels throughout the country. I first joined the organization during my freshman year after signing up at a tabling event on the campus mall during the first few weeks of classes. I didn't care much for the parliamentary procedures of elections or the formal structure of meetings; but at one of the first meetings I attended, one of the board members spent time talking to my friend and I and making us feel welcome. The three pillars of Circle K are service, leadership, and fellowship. To me, the most important one is listed last. I wouldn't have stuck around without the social connections in the club, and service and leadership are impossible without people willing to work together.

As a member of the club, I was mostly apathetic towards it. I liked the people that I knew, but I wasn't all that committed to the club itself. Then in the spring of 2020, I was one of three people that attended meetings and wouldn't graduate, so I was nominated and elected to be the next club president. Once in that position of leading the club, I knew I couldn't be apathetic anymore, and I knew I couldn't let the club die out once everyone else graduated. Starting that next fall, my board (which was primarily just my vice president) and I worked on consistency in scheduling, recruitment and retention, and fellowship. We took the club from being two members strong to fifteen paid members, and several more attending meetings and events.

To get to those numbers took a different type of effort than I anticipated. Because Circle K graduated most of its members, my election also handed me the chance to shape the club to whatever vision I had. That freedom proved to be a challenge because I'm not a visionary. I had that vague goal in the back of my mind to keep the club afloat but it took help from my vice president and club advisor to turn that into words that could become a plan. Being a visionary is probably one of the most challenging aspects of leadership for me to improve upon. Once the goal is named with enough information to make the plan, I can organize all the details; I struggle to come up with the goal. During my term I worked on finding ideas for different club activities and events; but in the end, I leaned heavily on the club as a whole to find and present ideas that I could focus on implementing. I improved more at asking for input and letting others carry some of the responsibility than I did at coming up with ideas.

I did improve greatly in my general attitude while in a leadership position. I'm guilty of letting the responsibility, frustration, and exhaustion show through when I'm in front of whoever I'm supposed to be leading, which can poison morale quicker than most external roadblocks. I've found that having energy is the best way to motivate others. Some people say it's a positive attitude, but I don't believe that. It's okay to agree with negativity; it's okay to complain about obstacles; it's okay to admit that not everything went according to plan—vocalizing these things shows that I'm not oblivious to reality. But I also have to make sure I don't let those things stop me. I must keep finding ways to show that I still have the will and energy to continue. Sometimes others won't follow that example; if that happened at a Circle K event, I'd make suggestions of things the other members can do. I'd acknowledge the complaint and follow it with ideas of solutions; and sometimes the solution is simply to take a break. Other times, all it takes it to get others into an activity or an idea is to literally exude energy—stand up, pace, use your hands to talk, have engaging facial expressions and body language, and inject liveliness into your voice even if you aren't saying much. Those are the things I did my best to keep as part of my presence when I was with the club or even saw a member in passing. I'm not an improved leader because I possess every single trait a textbook might list under a good leader. But I can remember names and faces quicker; I can encourage people to speak up and let them know I want to hear what they have to say; I don't retreat into my own head (as much) when life is busy but I'm supposed to be focused on the club (or whatever other matter at hand). These improved leadership abilities are all important to maintain as I go on to be a submarine officer in the navy.

9.15.2021



2.26.2022

[Leadership Compass](#)

4.23.2022

[CKI Banquet Program 2022](#)

[Certificate for Hours](#)

Maverick Machine Athletic Band

I have been in the drumline as a bass drummer for the Maverick Machine since my first year at Minnesota State. The drumline is a very different environment for leadership growth because we usually have a drumline instructor on staff. During that first year, I watched the drumline section leaders interact with each other and work with our drumline instructors. The bass section leader at the time struggled with patience when teaching the incoming freshmen. She would also try to duck out of responsibility if one of the instructors called the basses on doing something wrong. I knew these were things I did not appreciate in a leader.

The following year, I took over as the bass drum sub section leader. Our drumline section leader that year quit during band camp, so we didn't have an official member in the leadership corps. Because it was also the year of the most COVID restrictions, our music was more difficult because we wouldn't be able to march on the field. We also had to record the music as individual sub sections, so we couldn't even afford small slip ups musically being that exposed. I focused my time and energy on getting lots of practice time in for the basses to learn the show music and the cadences. I tried to improve upon my predecessor in the amount of time I spent actually breaking down the music, so everyone could understand what they were supposed to be playing.

Towards the end of the fall 2020 season, I applied to be a drumline section leader and was accepted onto the leadership corps for the 2021 season. I had already been a natural leader within the drumline at this point because of my loud voice and intimidating demeanor, both of which are extremely beneficial to get a large group of drummers organized. It seemed like the natural progression to go from organizing just the bassline to helping organize the entire drumline. During my first season as a drum captain, I still had a drumline instructor on staff who was able to bear the burden of teaching the drumline section as a whole. I was able to spend most of my time focusing on the basses musically that season; but I had the added responsibilities of loading our equipment and making sure the other drummers knew their call times for various events. But I went too far in asking others for their input. The whole reason for having section leaders is to minimize the number of opinions that factor into a decision. For some things, it's very important to hear what the other drummers were feeling, but not everything. I realized about midway through the season that asking for other input constantly made me look like I was far too unsure of myself in that section leader position and allowed too many other egos to push back when given instructions they didn't like.

I felt like I've been able to lead much more in my final season. I reapplied and was renamed a drum captain for my final season, and this season, we don't have a drumline instructor. I've had to step up more for this season because I have to do a lot more teaching and lesson-planning for the entire drumline. It's meant I split a lot of my time at rehearsals going between the different sub sections of the drumline; I make sure the drummers are taking water breaks; I lead marching basics with the whole drumline; I try to keep us on schedule; I learn my own music and drill on my own time; and through everything, I have to keep morale and energy high so we keep learning and improving. The added responsibility has been stressful, but it has also given me a different feeling of satisfaction. There's the pressure of pulling everything together and not looking foolish, but I also get to see a lot more of the successes in other sub sections that can contribute to the line looking and sounding better.

In the drumline, we respect the people that have both knowledge and confidence. I know they feed off of each other because each year, I've found that more of the line listens to me (this year, they all do) because I've become a better drummer every year which leads to more confidence. In the leadership corps, there's a lot of strong personalities and my task for myself was to make sure I was heard and acknowledged but only when needed. I have been able to keep my nose out of other sections while keeping good relationships with at least all of the other section leaders. That's helped especially with the tuba section because we share a storage unit. Again, it's the self-confidence that makes those relationships possible. I'm comfortable in my position that I don't think having other section leaders' input will detract from anything I do or say. I know what I know, and I know I can keep learning; but that doesn't change that I'm good at managing the drumline, and the confidence just from that is radiating into all of my other interactions within the band.

I was asked recently if I believe I have an ego. I responded, "yes, for some things." I admit I used to have a chip on my shoulder because I thought I had to be good at everything. I no longer have that chip. But I do know when I'm good at something, and that gives me an ego for those things. I'm a solid bass drum player; I'm great at communicating with my section, the other drum captain, and the director; I do my best to make decisions that are good for the entire line, not just one section; and I listen to what the other drummers have to say, good and bad. To be a good leader, an ego is necessary to a certain degree because it's the basis of self-confidence. Believing in my own knowledge or skill is what leads to exuding confidence when I'm in front of the line. Of course, it's important to gain and maintain that knowledge or skill, but to be aware of its presence and having pride in it do not make me egotistical; rather, it makes me confident in my own ability. Especially as a junior navy officer, I need to keep that self-confidence to ensure others listen when I need them to. The one who asked me if I have an ego was Admiral Caldwell, a four-star, who accepted me into his nuclear submarine officer program.

10.12.2020

[Leadership Application](#)

2021 - 2022



University Security Job

I've worked in the Security Department at Minnesota State University since September of my first year. I started in parking and got cross-trained on just about everything else after my first year. I spend most of my time there now doing keys, but I'm still one of the most-trained people in the department. That also means I've gotten to see the way that the department runs from many angles.

My perspective has changed as I learn more about what other employees do for the department. The more I learned, I would find more potential improvements to the way certain things are done. Lots of my learning has simply come from my coworkers explaining or complaining about their jobs. I spend a lot of time listening and learning, both of which have made me become known as reliable and knowledgeable. That benefits me because I'm gaining insight, and it benefits the office because I can do more to help it continue operating smoothly. It would make sense for those that make the large decisions within the department to spend some time doing what I do, and truly listening to gain insight and learn about the jobs that their workers perform. That way, they could make decisions based on the information from people who will have to carry out and deal with the fallout from the decisions.

Even though I'm considered a student supervisor, I don't need to supervise much more than myself when I'm at work. I use a much more level approach where I try to ensure any other worker that I'm responsible for feeling comfortable in the job while knowing they can reach out to me if they have questions. Even though we have a chain of command in each division (keys, communications, parking, etc.), anyone who isn't one of the supervisors in the department is pretty much on the same level as anyone else. We're generally of the mindset to stick together because all of our positions allow us about the same amount of authority to make actual change, which is very little.

Working in this department has helped me better understand how to work for people that I don't agree with. I can't claim to always hide my annoyance at decisions that don't make sense from my perspective, but I don't lose my temper. It's been more of a lesson in drawing the line of where I invest my time and energy. It's just a job, and I'm just a worker, so I'm not responsible when a decision made above me makes others upset. I've also gotten better at listening and learning from coworkers instead of listening for the moment and forgetting what was said right after. I learned to lean on coworkers more than supervisors because we can make more meaningful relationships that extend beyond work. We're also the ones in the department that can get the jobs done. It's helpful to know who will have my back if I need it.

Trust can make or break a team. There's little trust between many of the security department workers and their supervisors. Trust among the workers is much higher. I can point to several instances where we will call each other for help because we know we'll actually get the help. I've built trust between myself and my coworkers by listening to them and doing my job well. I don't want to be on the side where the rest of the team can't trust me to listen or care about them and their thoughts. In the next few years, I hope to build a trusting relationship between myself and the other officers and sailors on a submarine similar to the one I have with my coworkers in security now. My first steps to building trust will be to pull my own weight and to actively listen to whatever is being shared with me, whether or not it seems important in the moment.

04.29.2020

[Workplace Leadership](#)

05.15.2021

[Supervisor Reflection](#)

StrengthsFinder & Values

09.12.2019

The StrengthsFinder is a questionnaire that determines your individual strengths. These strengths each go into one of the following leadership categories: executing, influencing, relationship building, and strategic thinking. Based on these strengths, I determine the most efficient leadership style for myself.

The values ranking worksheet was an activity to visually represent the importance of different values. The values I ranked the highest are the backbone of my leadership strengths.

The biggest benefit to writing down my values and seeing my strengths in concise terms is seeing my limits. I know I can be the person that will say "yes" to almost any request. But sometimes, I'm not the person that's meant for the job. Any job can be done by any person; but not every job can be done well by every person. For example, I know I'm not great at influencing other people, and now I have the StrengthsFinder results to back that up. It's simply not my style and shouldn't be where I dedicate my time. Moving forward, the more I keep my strengths in mind, the better suited I will be to make the most out of my time.

[Strengths-Based Leadership Report](#)

[Values Ranking Worksheet](#)

[DOWNLOAD MY FULL RESUME](#)

Research

Research Synthesis

Entering college as a STEM major, I expected that research would be built into my schooling. I have been proven right several times over throughout my undergraduate career. I've done research both for independent projects and for assignments. Both have contributed to my ability to find information, think critically, and present my conclusions effectively. These skills will continue to aid me as I pursue a career as a naval officer.

Being able to efficiently find reliable information is a skill that I began to hone in high school. Completing the **Library Activity** only added to that skill. I have several papers to show for it, but my **extended literary analysis** is more noteworthy because it was much different than any scientific research that I do. The process was essentially to write a normal literary analysis, then find critics that support my ideas. It seems a little backwards because it's choosing a stance before reading the external sources, but it makes sense to have the interpretation first when analyzing a reading before checking what others think. Finding the actual information is much harder when I already have a fully formed opinion. I had to be much more specific in my internet searches, and then obviously verify that the opinions I found were from actual literary critics, not just another opinionated person. Moving on to other research projects after this extended literary analysis was a good change in pace because I didn't have to maintain such a narrow scope when searching for information, and I had much more leeway to change my thoughts based on what I found.

Being able to change my initial ideas is a result of good critical thinking, being able to determine the significance of the data I have in front of me. Between my **sulfate quantification research** and my **Honors 401 final paper**, I've been given lots of opportunities to take the information I gather, compile it, and analyze it. For the Honors 401 paper, I took in lots of information about the ancient civilizations and modern religions. I needed to sort out the important pieces of information to include, but I had to understand all of it to form a full picture on my topic. Even though not everything I read made it into the paper as a quote or paraphrase, it was still involved in the way I understood my own position that I was defending. For the sulfate research, it is much clearer to see where I interpret information. The initial experiments were based on basic turbidity, then we changed them to incorporate the methods for sulfate quantification that are well-established in the field. After we looked at the results of each experiment, I would change a certain part of the method to identify what causes the change in results. We would decide what part of the method to change based on the information from Hach and Tabatabai and understanding what is likely happening chemically at each step of the method.

Presenting information in a way that makes the audience understand my thought process can be tricky. The extended literary analysis on Hamlet required me to explain to an audience my interpretation of a Shakespearean play, when one of the joys of theater is the varied interpretations. I also had to work in a group, forcing us to mesh our writing styles together in a way that made the paper flow well but also expressed our individual thoughts. On the other hand, my paper comparing modern religion to the practices of the Maya, Incas, and Aztecs still allowed me to choose my own topic to justify, but it was only my thoughts and understanding of the sources I had available. They both still required me to present my thoughts and findings in writing, meaning I had to make sure I was communicating clearly with proper grammar, etc.

Working on my own presentation for my sulfate quantification methods research was a different experience. I prepared slides with images and some brief information, but the meat of the presentation came from the things I said. The preparation is much different to physically do a presentation because it's more of a single shot to get it right, whereas an interested person can re-read a paper later if they choose to. So, the presentation had to be both informative and interesting to keep the audience engaged. In addition to the oral presentation, my research advisor and I will create a lab from my work for the environmental chemistry class at Minnesota State. The lab will focus on creating and utilizing calibration curves to determine detection limit, linearity, and %RSD to detect sulfate in water. Presenting and using my work make me think back on all the time I spent pipetting in a positive light. Any scientist should have some background in performing their own research before they go into the field. I won't be working strictly in a lab in my near future, but understanding the lab processes that go into research benefits builds my ability to understand developments in my field. For example, I can read a scientific article and have enough context to interpret and draw my own conclusions from the information presented. I will need to find, understand, and implement information constantly as an officer in the navy in order to make the wisest decisions. Research for me has been less about the information I've actually found and more about how to find and use it.

Chemistry Research

07.26.2020

I have done individual research on the methods of quantifying sulfate in water systems with Dr. Trent Vorlicek. I was originally going to be working on his vanadium research, but we had to switch gears because of equipment issues. So, he came up with an overall concept of looking at the way scientists quantify sulfides (various forms of the element sulfur) in solution because that relates back to his vanadium research. The ultimate plan is to figure out a way to quantify combined sulfide by calculating total and free sulfides separately. My part was to specifically look at sulfate and figure out how and why the turbidimetric method is used so regularly to quantify sulfate in natural water systems, and to optimize the conditions to replicate it in a lab.

To start the process, we used a well-established paper from 1974 as the baseline for our quantification method. That paper quantified sulfate using turbidity, which uses UV-vis absorption to measure the clarity or lack thereof of a sample. The turbidimetric method adds barium ions to a water sample that contains sulfate and measuring how much of the resulting barium sulfate precipitant scatters the light from a UV lamp. We were comparing this paper to the Hach method, which is commonly used in the field to test the sulfate in natural water systems. The primary differences between the methods are reagents and reaction time.

This research has potential application to design a lab for an environmental chemistry class. The point of my data was not to show that the 1974 method was extremely better than the Hach, but to find out why the Hach method is used in the field instead. The 1974 method is already seen as the "gold standard" for sulfate quantification. The Hach method was derived from that 1974 method, so we wanted to figure out why they made the changes that they did and how different the results are between the two methods. We looked at factors other than the actual quantity of sulfate, such as detection limits, the correlation coefficient of the calibration curve, and the percent relative standard deviation (%RSD). I could design a lab similar to the overall research I conducted to demonstrate how those factors each give a different piece of information, and they must be considered when choosing a method.

The lab work itself was not challenging for me, but it did help improve my technique and patience in lab. I had a great motivator to get extremely accurate and precise data, so I took my time and double-checked just about everything. I was able to demonstrate my pipetting precision and good judgement in identifying strange data that may have been due to some human error (i.e., poor pipetting). I also know a lot more about the UV-vis machine and the program we use with it simply from all the extra time using it that isn't possible to get during a class. It was a nice change of pace to work alone in a lab instead of with a class because I could figure out the best organizational system that worked for just me. Having a set system is important because it will minimize random error as it increases the number of factors that remain the same throughout every trial. It will also ensure that any systematic errors (i.e., instrument calibrations) will be consistent throughout every trial.

One of the best things about the opportunity to help Dr. Vorlicek design a lab is that it puts my work to use. I thought the experiments seemed a bit pointless for the first week or so; I needed to see the potential applications, like lab design, for it to feel worthwhile. Being able to explain all of the work is also energizing in a way because it gives me a chance to show that I understood both what I was doing and the significance of it. Presenting to others in the field is a bit intimidating because I know I can't lie or tell half-truths without them seeing through it. But that challenge gives me a reason to put effort into my own understanding and my ability to effectively communicate the things I learned and brought to the wider field of quantifying sulfides in solution. I had a great teacher who had two adages that are especially relevant in conducting and disseminating research: "know what you're looking for" and "you don't know it unless you can teach it." Good research involves finding and understanding the things that are missing from the current field, and adding to the field by teaching others about it.

Being able to conduct good lab work and share my findings effectively is important as a chemist. I'm required to know my own information extremely thoroughly because I completed each step of the project myself. I've been able to figure out what does and does not work for me in lab, and I've been forced to come up with ways to make my work sound both interesting and understandable to other people that did not participate in the research. Explaining my own finds in such a way is necessary for any scientist; we're all expected to question our world and seek and share knowledge about it.

[Presentation](#)[Poster](#)

HONR 401: Maya, Aztecs and Incas

07.26.2020

I took a class on the ancient civilizations of the Maya, Incas, and the Aztecs that culminated in a research paper on a topic of my choosing. I chose to compare the theme of sacrifice that is shared among those three cultures to modern sacrifice in religion, attempting to show that their culture is not quite as different

as they may seem. I already had some knowledge in the topic which made me choose it, but I learned a lot about modern practices in various religions. One part of writing a research paper of this nature involves finding lots of information from various sources and comparing them. I started with the textbooks for the class, then moved to books from the library, mostly from the history and religion sections. Using books can be very helpful because it has much more compiled information than an article, making it easier to use fewer sources. I also found that books gave me other thoughts and ideas because I could look at and learn from other sections that I wasn't originally intending to use. I chose the books based on book and chapter titles, and from there I would look at the publisher and author to ensure they would provide reliable information. It doesn't hurt that using a library means that a librarian sorted the books into their proper categories (i.e., nonfiction), and I could ask if I wasn't sure how credible the book was or if the author would have some hidden biases that would impact their writing. Figuring out which pieces of information to use was sometimes not apparent until I had a whole paragraph written and realized it didn't impact my thesis statement in any way. But one of the best parts of researching when the topic is completely up to me is getting to absorb so many different perspectives and experiences.

To actually write my paper, I had to learn a new writing style—Chicago. When I was taking the class, I'd only written using APA or MLA, so I had to put a good amount of time into making citations and reading through the style guide. I remember using Purdue's OWL more for that class than I ever had before or since purely because I was so unfamiliar with the footnote/bibliography style. The other large difference in writing this paper was my use of physical books that I'd gotten from the library instead of online articles as my main references aside from the class textbooks. Using books was a different approach for me, but the books were more accessible; plus, it was easier to go through the exploration phase of research with a whole book with subtopics embedded as chapters to peruse. But purely because I'm used to using online sources, I found it more difficult to create my citations using the physical texts.

The process of finding and sorting through information probably took more time than writing the paper. I had to narrow my topic slightly by focusing only on comparing the class civilizations to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and avoiding other religions. From there, I had to pick through many different beliefs, ceremonies, and traditions in each religion to find strong parallels to the civilizations to which I was comparing them. Despite this process being the most exhaustive, it's also enjoyable in a way. It's the part of the research process where I can just take in information without regurgitating it elsewhere.

The process of writing is where I get to form and share my own opinion. I was able to use all the information I had been taking in to draw my own connections between the cultures. But when I wrote the paper, I couldn't just spew out all the facts I'd found onto the page. The point of writing the paper is to bring the reader along my thought process, so I had to select the pieces of information that very clearly pointed the reader towards my conclusions. I struggled the most with putting in random facts that were interesting but not very supportive to my claim. I had to learn, with some help, what information really needs to be included and what can just be for me and other readers of that particular source to find interesting.

Sharing an opinion backed by research can be difficult because it must fit a given style to appeal to the given audience, and it needs to be cut and dry in order to gain traction. I had to focus on writing within the Chicago writing style and cutting out the "fun fact" information tidbits to write a conclusive argument. Spending time on this paper gave me a better idea of how well I can work through information and adapt my writing. Knowing how I operate in this context will ultimately help me plan my future approach when I need to learn anything on my own, either for a class, a job, or my own research project.

[HONR 401 Final](#)

Library Activity

11.04.2019

During the first few weeks of my first semester at Minnesota State, I completed an activity to practice determining credibility of sources, creatively called the Library Activity (guess where I did it). Much of the information I got from this activity were things I had learned and practiced in high school. The process of finding information starts with understanding where and how to search for credible information. I'm confident in my ability to pick out keywords, use search filters, and apply Boolean operators when needed. I often try to use the library search engine or Google Scholar because they will assist in weeding out irrelevant information and get me to scientific articles that can aid in my research. Also, knowing about databases like ProQuest and ScienceDirect generally speeds up my vetting process of journals I'm willing to use because they have their own standards for what journals and articles they are willing to keep in their system.

The main things I consider when considering a source's credibility are appearance, publishing date, availability of information about authors/publishers, and the presence of peer review information.

I used these criteria to look at three Open Access journals and rank their credibility in the Library Activity. The activity not only encouraged me not only to use my criteria to judge the sources, but also to consider the benefits and drawbacks of publishing in an Open Access journal. The information in an Open Access is easier for the average person to find, but it can be more questionable because Open Access databases usually have fewer requirements for their authors. Ironically, it requires a person to be more critical when looking at information found in Open Access journals because it's not a given that the information has gone through any review process. They are often more wide-reaching journals in that they will cover a wide range of loosely-related topics. That might be beneficial if someone is unsure what exactly they are looking for, but for one scientist looking for other similar work, it can create more confusion in finding useful information. Whenever I am using sources in a paper, I am hesitant to use Open Access journals because I don't want to spend the extra time searching for indicators of credibility. Those things are readily available if I stick with reliable databases, especially the ones targeted at chemists.

When it comes to publishing work, there's significantly more prestige in getting published in a well-established journal that can only be accessed with a subscription to either the journal or a traditional database. One of the drawbacks of that route is the extra time that it takes to get published because of the peer review process. Despite the added convenience to have the information more accessible quickly to the general populace, it adds credibility to put it into a journal with a well-known peer review and credibility-checking process. I know I will learn heavily towards attempting to get published in a more traditional journal. Even though the process of getting published is longer, I can count on receiving plenty of feedback on my work before getting published which will drive my research to be the best it can be. For some scientists, the lengthened time from submission to publication can be a problem because it means the information is not public for longer. If I were to conduct research on something that impacts lives on a smaller timetable, then I would consider Open Access journals as a medium to presenting that work. However, I don't anticipate researching anything that would be urgent enough for the time difference to be a factor in debating between getting published in an Open Access journal as opposed to, say, American Chemical Society. Any of my publications will hopefully be accepted to go into a scientific journal that's specific to my research.

[Activity](#)[Reflection](#)

Extended Literary Analysis

04.29.2019

For my Honors English 12 class, I wrote a group extended literary analysis on Hamlet by Shakespeare. The topic we chose was on the demonic implications within the story, especially regarding the ghost of King Hamlet. To write an extended literary analysis, we first had to create fully fleshed out and organized thoughts on the topic. From there, we went to outside sources to find critics' opinions that could support our claim. We also found opinions that we only included because they did not support our claim, but we could easily critique them. The research process for this paper was very different than anything I'd done before and anything I've done since.

It felt strange to only start searching for outside ideas after having a set argument written out. It felt much more biased than my normal process in which searching for outside sources and information comes right after determining the topic I was to research. Because we primarily searched for critics that backed up the interpretation of the play, it felt a lot like very intentional confirmation bias. We did find critics that disagreed, but we were only picking out the ones with arguments we could poke holes in easily. With the entire paper being a subjective interpretation, however, the process does make sense. We needed to have our own ideas about the play before reading everyone else's ideas. It was necessary to treat the project as more of a discussion of ideas than as something that we needed outside input to learn new information. That shift in mindset was difficult for me to wrap my mind around, and it didn't really click until we were writing the final draft. I had to both understand and accept that the "rules" of research are not concretely the same in different fields. Doing research in the field of literature and writing, where lots of content is left to interpretation, is very different than research in the field of chemistry, where the vast majority of content is hard numbers and figures.

Some things remained the same in the process as a normal scientific research project. One large piece was still searching for sources and checking their reliability. I struggled to find sources that were reliable because in a lot of ways, we were searching for opinions that we liked. We had to be very careful with our search terms, and we would look at the source and its publisher to make sure it was credible. Searching for expert opinions added to the pressure of checking credibility too because everyone can have an opinion. We tried to avoid finding people that only had something to say about Hamlet and demons specifically. We were searching more for details that others had picked up that would still contribute to our argument. So, I learned to pick over the information in sources, interpreting and inferring information at every sentence.

The process of writing an extended literary analysis was difficult because it is so different than writing a typical research paper that starts with a simple topic or question. I had to switch my mindset to finding and using outside information and depend on my own ideas much more throughout the process. It was especially helpful to be able to explore the line between needing to stick to my own ideas and needing to be open to others. I also needed the different process to force me to look more critically at the information in a given source, not just look for credibility. A source in any field can be credible, but still present questionable information. That skill of carefully assessing information given to me will help me especially moving into a career as a naval officer. There are times to be open to hearing other ideas; there are also times to pick over information several times and think about it with a fair amount of skepticism.

[Hamlet Extended Literary Analysis](#)

