

Honors Portfolio



Welcome to my portfolio! My name is Isabella Pearson and I am currently an honors student at Minnesota State Mankato. I'm majoring in psychology and German. My expected graduation date is the fall of 2023.

Personal Mission Statement: My mission is to pour all the effort I possibly can into understanding others so that I may learn how to become both an effective leader and team player, being harmonious yet insistent in times of need.

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About Me

I grew up in Rochester, Minnesota and graduated with honors from Mayo Senior High School in the spring of 2019, and began attending MSU Mankato in the fall of 2019.

I'm double majoring in psychology German. I first became interested in psychology my senior year of high school, and only became more fascinated after taking PSYC 101 my freshman year of college. I took German classes all throughout high school, and continued through college. I'm extremely interested in linguistics and the psychology behind language and language learning! I'm not quite sure yet of what I'd like to do for a career, but I'm hoping to find something in which I can utilize these interests. I plan on taking some time off after graduating to decide on how I'd like to move forward. Should I continue with my education, I hope to go into the field of linguistic psychology.

I'm extremely active within the Centennial Student Union, as I work as a Building Manager within the Operations department. Additionally, I also act as the service secretary for Mavs in Action, a service project based club within the Community Engagement Office.

In my spare time I enjoy crocheting, knitting, cross stitching, writing poetry, playing the violin, and weaving bookmarks.



Honors Program



Mission Statement: "Minnesota State Mankato's Honors Program challenges motivated students to take their college experience further than they thought possible. They will develop the ability to solve problems, the skills to tackle tough jobs and the courage to engage in difficult discussions. They will cultivate the desire to seek new knowledge and to explore new places. They will become widely recognized, renowned, prominent, distinguished leaders, researchers and global citizens who are able to bring about change in the world, no matter what their chosen discipline may be."

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LEADERSHIP

RESEARCH

INTERCULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

Why Honors Essay (HONR 375)



Why Honors Essay (HONR 475)



LEADERSHIP

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

Throughout my time as an honors student, my growth in the leadership competency has not been entirely linear. For example, I had already started to implement leadership practices in an applied experience before I had taken [HONR 401 Developing your Mentor Philosophy](#). I had to find a way to integrate these two things together and reflect on how they could help inform and provide each other with feedback. It took time and trial and error to develop my skills, and this can be seen in my various leadership experiences, both developed and applied.

One of the very first steps in fostering leadership growth is discovery. Discovering one's own strengths, weaknesses, and goals is one example. "Discovery" can be a generic term, referring to something more hypothetical and reflective rather than a physical, tangible discovery of something. Due to this, it would be easy for me to categorize discovery as a stage within my leadership growth, but this would be inaccurate. Truthfully, discovery occurred throughout my development, and it will continue to in the future as well. One example of discovery early on in my time in honors is when I took the StrengthsFinder assessment in HONR 201. I had a basic idea of what my possible strengths could be beforehand, but this assessment provided a more detailed picture. Although this was my first initial discovery within the honors program, I continued to have many more throughout my college career, and I still experience them in the present. As I mentioned earlier, I had already started to become a leader before taking HONR 401 Developing your Mentor Philosophy. I was becoming more comfortable leading shifts, talking to clients, and dealing with the unpredictable at my [job as a Building Manager](#) at the Centennial Student Union. However, that honors course aided me in further reflecting and establishing a mentor philosophy, helping me to test out new leadership techniques at work. Some methods were effective, and some weren't, but I wouldn't have discovered this if I hadn't taken the time to reassess and open myself up to additional revisions. I like to think of this as running multiple trials for different conditions in a scientific experiment. Running tests on each variable multiple times can allow for more accurate results. Through that class, I was able to establish a leadership philosophy that emphasizes growth for all participants.

Alongside discovery, practice is also undoubtedly critical. Rather than practice coming sequentially after discovery, they often elicit reactions from each other. Practice was the most challenging aspect of the leadership competency for me. The [StrengthsFinder test](#) told me that one of my strengths is restorative, but how do I use that in my job as a building manager, or in Mavs in Action as the secretary? The simple answer is to practice, but that's easier said than done. Although this advice is extremely common, the thing I benefited the most from was forcing myself out of my comfort zone. For example, I only intended to join [Mavs in Action](#), a campus volunteering club, as a member. After being in the organization for a while, new members started to look for me to information and guidance, and I had to help them even if I wasn't a formal leader. When I learned that the secretary position was vacant, I knew it was an opportunity to work on my leadership abilities. At first, I didn't want to go to extra meetings or socialize in large groups of people, but I knew that I wouldn't be able to develop my hypothetical strengths and weaknesses otherwise. The same went for my job at the CSU. I was reluctant to take on the extra responsibilities that came with being promoted, but how else was I going to manage my fear of talking on the phone? In cases like these, I had to step outside of my comfort zone in order to test out various methods.

Once I practiced the abilities that were previously only hypothetical, it led to discovering what I needed to improve, what wasn't suited for my leadership style, and what my future goals should be. Although it makes sense to go from taking leadership inventories and reading leadership style literature to being an active team member that initiates discussions and guides others, my experience is that both are necessary in a nonlinear fashion. They have assisted in my cumulative leadership only by working together. Going forward, I would like to continue utilizing other strategies, such as seeking out feedback from those who are less similar to me. Although I'm still deciding on my future after graduation, I'm certain that my experiences with leadership will aid me in both the work force and academia.



RESEARCH, SCHOLARLY, AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY

"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."

As a psychology major, research is one of the most vital aspects of truly understanding the field. Just as with other science disciplines, research is the medium through which psychologists better understand the human brain. Although my high school courses prepared me in navigating article databases and conducting literature reviews, it wasn't until I entered college that I was able to get a taste of what it's truly like to be an active researcher. I was able to gain [research experience](#) in other areas as well, such as through my German coursework, but the role of research in my psychology courses was extremely prominent.

One of my development experiences, as well as one of the most important pieces of my psychology education, was with the course [PSYC 211W Research Methods and Design](#). This course is required for psychology undergraduates and it's easy to see why. Throughout the class, the instructor explored and explained the basics of the scientific method in ways relevant to psychological research. Not only did I learn how to create surveys and analyze data, but I also learned how to design a study as a team with my classmates. This was helpful for my leadership skills as well, as I sometimes had to take charge and guide others to stay on task. My group and I designed and distributed a survey to determine the possible effects of music on mood. I was able to write a blog post about the study for [Communicating Psychological Science](#), a website run by MNSU professors Dr. Emily Stark and Dr. Karla Lassonde. My blog post is located [here](#).

By the time I took the course [PSYC 433 Child Psychology](#), I was aware of the various research methods often utilized in psychology. Through a project for this course, I was able to practice a naturalistic observation case study by observing the behavior and development of an infant. This was a particularly important experience for me, as it challenged my automatic ideas of what research is. Although I know this isn't always the case, my idea of psychological research involved an image of an active researcher, one that completes actions on or towards participants. However, of course, this method is not always the norm, and often not possible at all. Although I didn't perform any actions and simply observed the infant, I was still able to collect important and interesting data.

This, along with PSYC 211W were excellent preparations for fall of 2022, when I joined Dr. Emily Stark's [research team](#). As an assistant, I administered surveys in person, coded and analyzed data, and worked together with my fellow assistants to develop a scale to measure beliefs in pseudoscience. In April of 2023, I presented a poster on this pseudoscience study at the Undergraduate Research Symposium. Just as with my PSYC 211W project, there was a lot of collaborative work. My partner and I deliberated over which topics were most important to include, and which details we should emphasize. The most beneficial part of presenting at the URS was being able to receive feedback from judges and fellow students. We were able to hear opinions and suggestions from people who were not involved in the project, such as the idea to provide a formal definition of effectiveness of pseudoscience practices. This was very valuable, and it gave me the chance to verbalize research that was personally interesting to me.

Going forward, I plan on utilizing what I've learned through these experiences. Although the specifics aren't clear right now, I'm especially interested in conducting research regarding linguistic and social psychology, and I look forward to trying out other research methods.



INTERCULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

"Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated an increased self-awareness of their own and other cultures, knowledge and understanding of cultural perspectives. Students will have experiences outside of the classroom to develop their own framework for intercultural engagement."

When I started as an honors student, I assumed that most of my intercultural engagement experiences would come from my language classes. This assumption was not wrong, but it only scratched the surface. Rather, my language classes helped me to mentally elaborate on and connect intercultural ideas. Although language served as the main infrastructure for my intercultural engagement experiences, it was certainly not the only factor.

I started taking German courses my first year of college. I had taken German for four years in high school, and I enjoyed it enough that I wanted to continue. Throughout the introductory courses, German language skills were taught while using cultural context as a reference to guide our understanding. One project that exemplified this was [an essay I wrote for GER 102](#). For this essay, my goal was to write two emails – one written informally and one written formally. This wasn't an easy task. Even when I believed my German writing was on the formal side, my instructor revealed that there were ways to sound even more polite. After reflecting on this, I realized just how informal language and attitudes can seem in The United States. As an American born English speaker, my standards of politeness were very different from what may be expected in other cultures. This assignment was one of many moments that helped me understand how fundamentally linked language and culture are with each other.

Ideas such as these become even more complex in the context of multiculturalism. This is something I learned in my course [LC 445 Service-Learning Project](#). In this course, my classmates and I translated several historical German documents into English for Dr. Kimberly Contag. Although the documents were in German, the people who wrote them primarily grew up in Ecuador and frequently spoke Spanish. They even spoke of an identity crisis – they didn't quite feel like they completely belonged to either culture. This was one of many obstacles in translating, as there were numerous cultural and historical references important to the documents' content that I couldn't fully grasp as someone from the U.S. The process of translation was a lengthy one, full of deliberation, reconsideration, and editing. In the end, I was able to present the results of this project at the Panlingua conference in 2022. This was an extremely valuable application-level opportunity, and it helped me comprehend the importance of translation work, and why translators make certain decisions.

As mentioned earlier, language was not the only way in which I gained more intercultural knowledge. In the course [GWS 220 Sex and Gender Worldwide](#), I learned about topics such as intersectional feminism, and various world views of sex and gender. Through this class, I was able to critically examine and analyze women's issues in different cultures. As a result, I reflected on my own views, taking the time to truly think about how the culture I was born in shaped my ideas about sex and gender. For this course, I completed an informational pamphlet about the topic of parentification, which occurs around the globe and may affect various groups in different ways. Although my experience here was more culture based than language based, I have been able to apply these ideas to my German classes as well. For example, in my German literature course, we are studying literature written by Jewish women and Afro-German women, voices that are often ignored in Germany. Thanks to the different courses I've taken, I'm able to see how the experiences of these women are complex when considering their intersectional identities.

GER 102 was only the start of my language and culture journey. Since beginning college, I've also taken GER 201, GER 202, GER 340, LC 445, GWS 220, WLC 280W, GER 460, and GER 442. Outside of world languages and cultures courses, I've learned beneficial information from my psychology courses as well. Many of these psychology classes emphasized cultural biases in research and how they influence researcher behavior, what is chosen to be researched in the first place, and how data are interpreted. One example that comes to mind is in my child psychology course, where I learned about the cultural biases in intelligence testing. Intelligence tests tend to measure knowledge that is often more familiar to white and middle-class people, and so there are issues with claiming that IQ tests are a valid means of measuring how intelligent someone is. Exploring ideas like these in my courses has allowed me to think more critically about issues of racism and classism within the field of psychology. My psychology education in combination with my language and culture courses have helped me to form a holistic framework for intercultural engagement in which language and culture are mutually inclusive in all facets of life, from personal values to scientific research.

Going forward, I hope to continue elaborating on the knowledge I've gained and be open minded when interacting with groups that I perceive as different from myself. As a Psychology and German major, I'm likely to encounter many kinds of people, and I want to communicate effectively and empathetically, whether the interactions are personal or academic.



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