Liesel Theusch

Walters

FYEX

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Global Citizenship

When growing up in a small town of six hundred people, the word “global” is rarely put in front of “citizen.” My home town is the original model of Small Town USA, with a community of farmers, one school where you grow up with your classmates, but most importantly, almost the entire population is Caucasian and Lutheran. Before coming to MSU, I had never interacted in a truly diverse cultural atmosphere. Since August, I have recognized biases and stereotypes that I have towards people who are different from what I grew up with. I have started taking step to put these things aside in order to grow as a global citizen. I still have a lot of growing to do, but the experiences and opportunities I plan to take here will help me do that.

When applying to the Honors program, I did not understand why global citizenship was included as a competency. I now realize that having a global view is essential to success in our constantly changing society. The United States is a mixing pot of culture with immigrants from hundreds of years ago to the present. It takes an open mind to understand and consider these cultures when making decisions that affect large groups of people who may not share the same views. Articles written by Athanasopoulos, Boroditsky, and Robb all describe how language affects the perception of situations and personalities of people speaking different languages. These articles helped me understand why culture and language are needed to create a wholesome and balanced society. I want to experience these cultural differences first-hand by becoming competent in Spanish and use my language skills to communicate with people from another culture.

While at MSU, I have realized that there is never a lack of opportunities to grow in culture or experience one that is different from your own. On campus, there are multiple culture nights put on by different campus organizations and opportunities to interact with international students, whether it is in classes or at events. In order to expand my global citizenship skills, I plan to participate in Dr. Corley’s class where I will help students adapt the mindsets of ancient Athenians in the trial of Socrates and Italians in the trial of Galileo. This experience will expand my global citizenship skills because I have to explain the concept of another culture that existed hundreds of years ago to students in the 21st century. It will force me to keep an open mind and analyze patterns that can be seen through sources from that time. This ability to explain what another culture looked falls under the fourth level in the Global Citizenship competency rubric found in the MSU Honors Student Handbook.

Another way in which I plan to expand my global citizenship is by volunteering abroad in a Spanish-speaking country. I believe this is a great opportunity to understand another culture because I will be immersed in another culture while speaking their language. I believe it is important to be able to interact with people and speak their language because language “profoundly influences how we see the world”(Boroditsky). I want to be able to experience culture through the lens of the people. Until that time comes to travel abroad, I will continue studying Spanish here at MSU by taking classes and attending Spanish club to improve my conversation skills.

After starting college and being surrounded by culture of many countries around the world, I feel that I have become more open-minded. I now realize that I have never truly been surrounded by people of another race or belief and I have only viewed the world through one, narrow perspective. I have only seen events from the perspective of a young Caucasian woman who lives in a country where feminism is gaining ground every day. Yes, there are still glass ceilings to be broken, but those ceilings do not compare with the threats of war that other groups are facing around the world. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee wrote “you never really know a man…until you climb into his skin and walk around in it”(36). By the time I complete my degree I hope to be able to not only know what it is like to walk around in someone else’s skin, but to explain it and share the experience with others. So far this year I have worked towards this goal by taking a Spanish class, attending a cultural events, and interacting with classmates from different cultures. The world needs more citizens with the future success of its entire population in mind and I believe I am heading in the right direction.

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