

Braxton Fair

Dr. Leah

White HONR

375

26 April 2022

### My Experience with Intercultural Engagement in the Honors Program

Going into the honors program, and during my time here, a competency area I thought I would struggle the most in was intercultural engagement. I grew up in a very white and very Catholic area in suburban Minnesota. While my parents raised me to be very socially aware and accepting of all people regardless of gender, sexuality, color of their skin, etc... I didn't grow up around very many people of color, or with different backgrounds than I. For these reasons I found it a little intimidating to achieve this competency, but at the same time I have been excited to grow that part of me.

In HONR 201, Introduction to Honors, is where I really started to dive deeper with my Intercultural Engagement, and to start, we were tasked with creating our own identity charts based upon traits we thought were crucial to our identity. A few of the things that I listed were that I am an LGBTQ+ ally, I have divorced parents, my love for computer science and mathematics, and how I am in a long-term relationship with my partner. These are a few among numerous other identity traits I have. These identity traits helped me figure out exactly what makes me, me, and what types of traits make people different.

Another portion of the class where I started the deep dive into intercultural engagement was the discussion posts we had for the class. There were a few videos regarding how race was

constructed and how people group up around segregation and slavery. In these discussion posts I answered questions like *“What stories of difference are used to mask or cover up oppression in 2020?”*, or *“How was “science” used to entrench the story of race into U.S. culture? Do we still see effects of this today? If yes, how? If no, why not?”*. There was a common denominator to my answers to these and the other questions asked, and what I found out is that race and the differences between them have been grossly exaggerated, and in most cases, completely made up. To quote myself, *“... early scientists used fake findings, or biased results, to segregate people of a certain demographic, culture, or race, and use “facts” to prove that they are subpar or less than whites... ”*.

From here I really hope to expand my intercultural engagement. HONR 201 helped with my self-identity and how it related to others and gave me a few tools I could use to analyze others and their cultural differences (such as understanding each person has a completely different identity, or might have experienced oppression due to those identities). For the rest of my time in the honors program, I plan on taking the ‘Honors with Distinction’ route, where I take 3 semesters of a world language. Through this I hope to connect with a culture other than my own. I also hope to attend a few cultural nights and a Maverick Diversity Institute event to further my experience with Intercultural Engagement.