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JNCHC

JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

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JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL VOLUME 4, No. 2

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Andrew Lang,
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and Joy Thrall

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and Alvin Y. Wang



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MULTIPERSPECTIVISM IN HONORS

JOURNAL EDITORS

ADA LONG

DAIL MULLINS

RUSTY RUSHTON

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

The National Collegiate Honors Council is an association of faculty, students, and others interested in honors education. Norman Weiner, President, State University of New York at Oswego; Virginia McCombs, President-Elect, Oklahoma City University; Jon Schlenker, Vice President, University of Maine, Augusta; Donzell Lee, Immediate Past President, Alcorn State University; Elizabeth Beck, Executive Secretary/Treasurer, Iowa State University. Executive Committee: Larry Andrews, Kent State University; Kambra Bolch, Texas Tech University; Akofa Bonsi, University of Alabama at Birmingham; Kate Bruce, University of North Carolina, Wilmington; Bruce Carter, Syracuse University; Lawrence Clark, Southeast Missouri State University; Lydia Daniel, Hillsborough Community College; Adam D'Antonio, Long Island University, C. W. Post; David Duncan, University of Florida; Maggie Hill, Oklahoma State University; Holly Hitt, Mississippi State University; Sophia Ortiz, Long Island University, Brooklyn; Nancy Poulson, Florida Atlantic University; Jack Rhodes, The Citadel; Jacci Rodgers, Oklahoma City University; Ricki Shine, Iowa State University; Charlie Slavin, University of Maine.

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Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council is a refereed periodical publishing scholarly articles on honors education. The journal uses a double-blind peer review process. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education. Submissions may be forwarded in hard copy, on disk, or as an e-mail attachment. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to: Ada Long / JNCHC / UAB Honors Program / HOH / 1530 3rd Avenue South/Birmingham, AL 35294-4450 / Phone: (205) 934-3228 / Fax: (205) 975-5493 / E-mail: adalong@uab.edu.

DEADLINES

March 1 (for spring/summer issue); September 1 (for fall/winter issue).

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CALL FOR PAPERS

JNCHC is now accepting articles for the Fall/Winter 2004 issue (Vol. 5, No. 2): "The Sociology and Psychology of Honors." We are interested in submissions that deal with such matters as student demographics; personality profiles (perhaps pre- and post-admission); the honors "environment"; campus-wide perceptions of honors programs and students; standardized tests; honors vs. non-honors curricula; "academic dishonesty" in honors courses and programs, including plagiarism; and service learning experiences in honors.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS SEPTEMBER 1, 2004

The following issue (**deadline: March 1, 2005**) will be a general-interest issue.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. We will accept material by e-mail attachment (preferred) or disk. We will not accept material by fax or hard copy.
2. The documentation style can be whatever is appropriate to the author's primary discipline or approach (MLA, APA, etc.), but please avoid footnotes. Internal citation to a list of references (bibliography) is preferred; endnotes are acceptable.
3. There are no minimum or maximum length requirements; the length should be dictated by the topic and its most effective presentation.
4. Accepted essays will be edited for grammatical and typographical errors and for obvious infelicities of style or presentation. Variations in matters such as "honors" or "Honors," "1970s" or "1970's," and the inclusion or exclusion of a comma before "and" in a list will usually be left to the author's discretion.

DEDICATION



ROSALIE OTERO

For more than fifteen years, Rosalie Otero has been a strong and eloquent advocate of multiplicity in honors education and in the National Collegiate Honors Council. Director of the University Honors Program at the University of New Mexico, one of the finest programs in the country, she has exercised her commitment to diversity on her home campus and transplanted that commitment into the fertile soil of the NCHC. From 1991 through 1998, Rosalie was Chair of the Gender and Ethnicities Committee, a committee that has undergone more name changes than any other in the organization, reflecting the growing, evolving consciousness of the organization. Fortunately for the NCHC, Rosalie was willing to serve in the long sequence of offices that include President of the organization; her influence in these capacities at the turn of the millennium and thereafter was invaluable not just to the NCHC but to all the administrators, faculty, and students who experienced her gentle but firm leadership. We also had the pleasure of hearing our welcomes to various meetings in Spanish. Rosalie remains a leader of NCHC as Co-Chair of the Assessment and Evaluation Committee, as a consultant to numerous programs and colleges, and as a prominent voice for multiperspectivism. The JNCHC will be very happy to welcome her onto its editorial board in 2004, and we are happy now to dedicate this issue to her in appreciation and respect for her leadership past, present, and future.

2003 Portz Award Winner

Toward Community: The Relationship Between Religiosity and Silence in the Works of Søren Kierkegaard

JOSEPH SWANSON

[WINNER OF THE JOHN AND EDYTH PORTZ AWARD, 2003]

INTRODUCTION

Søren Kierkegaard was a nineteenth-century Danish philosopher whose primary concerns were tied to the individual and Christianity. He felt that the ‘Christendom’ of his day was hollow, and that its hollowness led to inauthenticity¹ among those people who might otherwise have been true individuals and authentic Christians. He was wary of the ‘crowd’, viewing it as an abstraction of modernity, and he was skeptical of any attempts to reconcile the Judeo-Christian God with reason. He firmly believed that the depths of God could not be plumbed with rationality, and that the individual’s relationship to God must correspondingly be based in faith, which he saw as perpetually linked to suffering and to dread. He felt that it was his duty to “reintroduce Christianity . . . into Christendom”² by promoting the development of the inwardness of Christianity: a capacity for self-reflection and a tendency to struggle against the crowd. Kierkegaard felt that by this, the individual is born.

The Kierkegaardian individual is a person who has foregrounded the ‘vertical’ relation between the individual and God over the ‘horizontal’ and ethically-based relations between human beings. This action, Kierkegaard believes, is not in accordance with the status quo: it is far more common to find people who exist solely on the horizontal plane, sensing the infinity of the vertical relation only when they accidentally become curious as to the nature of the authority that underlies all horizontal ethical relations. The Kierkegaardian individual is ‘rare’ in this sense. By defining his or her identity in this fashion, the Kierkegaardian individual, in the search for truth, sets himself or herself up as over and against the crowd, because “the crowd in its very concept is untruth.”³ For Kierkegaard, truth is subjective, individualized, and

¹ I use this term in the Heideggerian sense. Cf. *Being and Time*, II.2, II.3.

² Søren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View for My Work as An Author: A Report to History (1859)*, Walter Lowrie (trans.), Benjamin Nelson (ed.) (New York: Harper & row Publishers, 1962), 23.

³ *Ibid.*, 112. From the essay entitled *The Individual* (1846).

TOWARD COMMUNITY: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOSITY

religious. In undertaking this perpetual struggle against the pull of the crowd, the Kierkegaardian individual adopts a certain silence, a silence which follows from the individual's relationship to God and which is necessitated by the qualitative difference between this divine relation and everyday human relations. While one is silent in the presence of God, one is also silent about God's presence. There are things that the religious individual cannot directly say to others without corrupting that individual religious truth which is to be said. This silence acts as the touchstone for any discourse that the Kierkegaardian individual engages in; the individual must always begin from this place of silence and return to this place of silence.

Kierkegaard found himself to be in this very position; he, in all of his religiosity, felt that it was his duty to remain silent. Believing that "a direct attack only strengthens a person in his illusion,"⁴ he shunned direct public discourse. Instead, he dedicated himself to what he called 'indirect communication'. He used his authorship to indirectly communicate with the inauthentic individual, revealing the individual to himself or herself as an entity profoundly lacking the inwardness of individuality. He intended to hold up a mirror rather than sermonize because he understood that there was something deeply false about direct and sermonic speech. He believed that indirect communication was the form of discourse which, paradoxically, was apt to be most honestly heard. He felt that the use of indirect communication satisfied both his felt duty to God and his felt vow of silence.

This translates into a lonely life lived against the grain. A significant portion of the Kierkegaardian corpus is a polemic against the untruth of the crowd, against the inauthenticity of Kierkegaard's Copenhagen. There is a palpable divorce between the Kierkegaardian individual and the rest of humanity, and Kierkegaard is commonly faulted for this. This divorce is seemingly held in place by a necessary religious silence, a silence which, at times, seems only marginally breached by indirect communication.

Here the question of the possibility of viable community begins to emerge: How does the backgrounding of horizontal inter-personal ethical relations to the vertical relation between the individual and God affect the possibility for the sustained genuine relations between individuals that allow for the creation of community? Can individuals sustain genuine relations between one another? My thesis is an attempt to preserve both the possibility for viable community and the strong Kierkegaardian connection between religiosity and silence. I will argue that this is not only possible, but I will argue that viable community can *only* exist when one strongly connects silence and religiosity. This is not to claim that all viable communities must be religious communities. I argue that emphasis upon an indirect communication that is always already oriented by the vertical relation of the individual to God rather than horizontal inter-personal relations is critical to the maintenance of the possibility of viable community. Without this emphasis, we will continue to share our world as dust shares the air. By speaking directly, community will continue to be a myth through which we tell ourselves to ourselves, unable to say anything at all. This is the fallacy of direct communication.

⁴ Ibid., 25.

THE BODY OF THESIS

RELIGIOSITY AND SILENCE THROUGH ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

That Kierkegaard understood himself as primarily a religious thinker is made explicit in the very first pages of *The Point of View for my Work as an Author: A Report to History*: “The contents of this little book affirm, then, what I truly am as an author, that I am and was a religious author, that the whole of my work as an author is related to Christianity, to the problem ‘of becoming a Christian’, with a direct or indirect polemic against the monstrous illusion we call Christendom, or against the illusion that in a land such as ours all are Christians of a sort.”⁵ Kierkegaard immediately makes a connection between being a religious author and silence: “There is a time to be silent and a time to speak. So long as I considered the strictest silence my religious duty I strove in every way to preserve it.”⁶ This connection between religiosity and silence follows from the nature of an individual’s relation to God and from the everyday relations between people. The more directly an individual relates to God, the more silence plays a central role in the individual’s discourse. Increasingly, in the face of the divine Other, the individual becomes silent. Kierkegaard sees this state of necessary silence in the face of God and the other as exemplified by Abraham in his response to God’s command to sacrifice Isaac, his beloved and only son.⁷ This example provides the foundations for the connection between religiosity and silence in what one might call the Abrahamic individual.

In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard explains the necessity of Abraham’s silence when the realm of the ethical, i.e., our relations to each other, becomes temporarily and paradoxically suspended by the command of God.

Abraham keeps silent—but he *cannot* speak The relief of speech is that it translates me into the universal. Now Abraham is able to say the most beautiful things any language can express about how he loves Isaac. But it is not this he has at heart to say, it is the profounder thought that he would sacrifice him because it is a trial. This latter thought no one can understand, and hence everyone can only misunderstand the former.⁸

Here Kierkegaard relates speech to a translation of the individual (the speaker) into the universal (the realm of the ethical). Said differently, it is through language that we commonly understand each other. Therefore, when the individual has transcended the scope of the universal by suspending the ethical in the face of the absolute (the realm of religiosity), then these common speech-acts become that which not only fail to aid in the trials that come with a direct conduit between the individual and the absolute, but they make the passage through such trials an

⁵ Kierkegaard, *The Point of View for My Work as An Author: A Report to History*, 5-6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷ Cf. Genesis 22.1-14.

⁸ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (1843) and *The Sickness Unto Death* (1849), Walter Lowrie (trans.), (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), 122-123.

impossibility by annulling that paradox by which such a relation arises. This is to say that if Abraham spoke to Isaac during the three days journey to Mount Moriah, this speechfulness would drastically alter the paradoxical nature of Abraham's act of faith, warping it into an act of murder.

To explain the matter away by means of repenting devotion to its imperative is to abandon faith. It is tantamount to assuming that one has power before God, that one must not surrender all for faith, that one might retain a vestige of pride before the divine. While this is a path of relative comfort, it is, in Kierkegaard's opinion and in my own, a fundamentally hopeless path. Abraham's silence, it seems, is totally unrelated to concern for Isaac's welfare, and, in fact, such a concern would be an affront to the dignity of God's command. Abraham's silence is mandated by a relation to the divine which transcends relations between persons.

While Abraham's silence is necessary, it is clear that Abraham's silence is not a total silence in Kierkegaard's eyes. Kierkegaard writes, fairly ambiguously, that about Isaac's sacrifice, his heart's burden, Abraham "is unable to speak, he speaks no human language. Though he himself understood all the tongues of the world, though his loved ones also understood them, he nevertheless cannot speak—he speaks a divine language . . . he 'speaks with tongues.'"⁹ What is this 'speaking with tongues' of which Abraham is allegedly capable? Kierkegaard might be understood as saying that because speech translates the individual into the universal and Abraham has transcended or suspended a relationship to or translation into the universal, it is the case that Abraham's speech either does not exist or is expressed in a radically different manner. This must be a manner of speech which does not translate the individual into the universal but into the absolute, a speech which is unintelligible to those for whom the ethical is the ceiling of intelligibility, a speech which 'speaks with tongues'.

While elegant, this idea brings up some very practical questions. Is this new speech unimaginably beyond that which we now conceive of as speech and common discourse? What does this 'speaking with tongues' actually sound like? Is this 'divine language' audible in the conventional sense? Does it operate discursively at all? The mystery of this proposition complicates an investigation into the nature of Abraham's necessary silence.

At this point, I can begin to frame my question about religiosity and silence. If Abraham and all Abrahamic individuals cannot communicate at all with others without surrendering to the temptation of repenting of a religious identity, then the possibility of viable community is clearly not preserved. If there is some means by which these individuals can communicate, then viable community remains a possibility. To some degree, it is a question of exactly who the 'others' are. If these 'others' are actually individuals, in the same way that Abraham is an individual, then communication, either through a mutually understood silence or by poetically indirect discursive exchanges becomes possible, or at least imaginable. If these 'others' are the members of the faceless crowd, then this possibility surely fades away.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE PUBLIC

Kierkegaard tends to suggest, like Heidegger after him, that more often we are members of the crowd than we are authentic individuals. Kierkegaard's deep concern, to the point of preoccupation, with the relation between the individual and what the 'public',¹⁰ the bodiless body, is reflective of this position. The public is described as "a phantom, its spirit, a monstrous abstraction, an all-embracing something which is nothing, a mirage"¹¹; it "is a body which can never be reviewed."¹² Kierkegaard describes how the individuals which constitute the public are fundamentally 'unreal': "Only when the sense of association in society is no longer strong enough to give life to concrete realities is the Press able to create that abstraction 'the public', consisting of unreal individuals who never are and never can be united in an actual situation or organization—and yet are held together as a whole."¹³

In short, the public retards the rise of any kind of Abrahamic individuality. "In order that everything should be reduced to the same level,"¹⁴ the public requires the unreality of its individuals. Kierkegaard calls the means by which this requirement is met 'the leveling process', "the victory of abstraction over the individual"¹⁵ and "the predominance of the category 'generation' over the category 'individuality'."¹⁶ The leveling process is a simplification of that which exists to the lowest common denominator. "The leveling process is not the action of an individual but the work of reflection in the hands of an abstract power."¹⁷

If it is the case that the single human being, when subsumed by the phenomenon of the 'public', is unable to emerge as an Abrahamic individual due to the pervasive nature of the public's leveling process, then it follows that some kind of alternative situation must be brought forth in order to allow the potential individual to become an actual individual, a situation alternative to the simple swallowing up of the person in the public. This alternative situation comes about when the individual is set-off against the public, when the individual becomes (self)-arranged in opposition to the public, when the individual begins to define his or her self as that which is ideally (although not actually) separate from the hollowness of the public conglomeration. It happens the moment Abraham sets out to Mount Moriah, Isaac and donkeys in the dust behind him.

However, this concept of 'separateness' demands unraveling, for it is a unique kind of separateness; it is a separateness which requires a simultaneous permanent attachment, a Hegelian synthesis. The mode by which the emergent individual is separate from the public (from which the individual has emerged) is the tense relation of

¹⁰ Cf. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age* (1846) Alexander Dru (trans.), (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962).

¹¹ Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, 59.

¹² *Ibid.*, 60.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

thesis to antithesis. The Abrahamic individual exists because of a *perpetual* struggle against the public. Put into the extreme case, Abraham is the father of faith only insofar as others are not. While it may be the case that the Abrahamic individual desires the end of this struggle, an end which is the finitude of the oppositional identity and escape from the public, this desire is one which, if it were fulfilled, would be equivalent to the annihilation of the individual who desires it (or total assumption into the divine). This is to say that if the individual were to surrender his or her identity as the full opposition to the hollow of the public, the individual would desire to be something else altogether, something which may not actually exist. Thus, the Abrahamic individual, bound to silence by the divine, must struggle against the public with which it cannot communicate, but the Abrahamic individual cannot or must not do this without completely severing himself or herself from this public. It must be noted, however, that this necessary remnant connection by no means qualifies as what I have called ‘viable community’.

TOWARDS A COMMUNITY OF ABRAHAMIC INDIVIDUALS

However, working within this Kierkegaardian framework of ‘individual-public’, the possibility of a community of Abrahamic individuals could be formulated antithetically. If a set of Abrahamic individuals were to emerge as defined over and against the public and alternatively oriented towards the divine, individuals whose identities had been created as both set-off-against that which is the public and in union with God, this set could have the potential to cohere into a gathering-up of individuals as individuals, into a community of individuals. However, it is by no means assured that (a) any number of such Abrahamic individuals even exists, and (b) that if they did, they would necessarily ‘cohere’. To posit this potential community, is, to invert Kierkegaard’s description of the public, to envision a set of real individuals who can be or are united in an actual situation or organization, individuals who can be held together as a whole.¹⁸ Kierkegaard seems to be on the edge of breaching the idea of this type of community when he writes of those who find it their duty “not to dominate, to guide, to lead, but to serve in suffering and help indirectly. Those who have not made the leap [away from the public] will look upon his unrecognizable action, his suffering as a failure; those who have made the leap will suspect that it is a victory.”¹⁹ The community that I seek to define is, then, as Kierkegaard intimates, a gathering-up of those whose lot has become one of quiet suffering in the names of both individuality and humanity, where communication consists in suffering, in seeing one’s own sufferings in the suffering of the knowing other, of recognizing that which is, to others, unrecognizable. It is a community of humility, a “representation of *humanity pure and unalloyed*.”²⁰ It is silent and its discourse is indirect in its operations. Communication of any other kind would result in submission to the leveling

¹⁸ This is an inversion of the passage quoted above from page 60 of Kierkegaard’s *The Present Age*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

process, which leads to a fatal intellectualization and ossification of the viable vital community.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE PROBLEM AND THE CENTRALITY OF KIERKEGAARD

In common discourse, we are confronted with the term 'community' with almost relentless frequency. At the same time, however, our discursive familiarity with the concept 'community' belies a fundamental lack of this term's phenomenological referent. The more we speak about it, the more certain we can be that we do not 'have' it. Community, in this present age, is largely a myth.

'Community' suggests a group that is able to see itself in two kinds of different light at the same time, a group that is able to see itself as both consisting of isolated and separate individuals and at the same time as one unified and organic whole. The idea of a community of individuals is a seemingly paradoxical conception of seamed seamlessness and it is one which I have failed to see in my life. Instead, I often find myself surrounded by or subsumed in broken or false communities. What is important to see is that these communities generally do not recognize their dysfunctionality; instead, they rhetorically affirm their likeness to the aforementioned ideal 'community', that paradoxical and mythological seamed seamlessness. This rhetorical affirmation might be likened to the process of painting one's own portrait and then, with the portrait as evidence, claiming one's beauty, democracy, and freedom. This seems at best deceptive and at worst utterly destructive. The rhetorical discourse that tends to arise during this 'paint-then-show' process seems to be marked, in our own context, by such terms as 'diversity', 'multiculturalism', 'tolerance', 'interdisciplinarity' and such activities as 'community-building'. Make no mistake: I by no means intend to intimate that these terms and the ideals they represent are to be rejected. What I do mean to suggest is that these terms, in the everyday and casual understanding, lack the essential critical aspect that makes them and the ideals they represent worthwhile. For example, 'diversity' as a simple propagation of differences is by no means a desirable state of affairs. Diversity as the historically-informed study of the interrelationships and discontinuities between both subtly and radically different socio-cultural identities is both desirable and, more importantly, rare.

It is this kind of schism that exists between what the communities around us actually are and what the communities around us perceive themselves to be; it is a disjunction between casual understanding and critical understanding. Kierkegaard's 'public' is what our false and broken 'communities' actually are beneath their rhetorical portraits; the difference is purely nominal.

Furthermore, I believe that, upon reflection, these publics (which we call communities) are foregrounded by their dysfunctionality. We can recognize them precisely because of their brokenness. Conversely, this is to say that if true and viable community exists, it is something that *works well*, and that which works well does not, in most cases, 'appear' to us in the same sense as that which is broken 'appears'. True communities are undisclosed. They are inconspicuous and hard to see. They are that which allows individuals to communicate; they are forums and

TOWARD COMMUNITY: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOSITY

they are unadvertisable. Once these forums, these real communities, begin to emerge from the background, once they begin to become conspicuous, it is because they have become problematic. This passage into conspicuousness renders the now problematic community vulnerable to passage into public-hood. Viable community is that which cannot be spoken about directly and cannot be created artificially. A lack of silence exposes the soft underbelly of true community.

Thus, the question from which the thesis blooms is this: "How is community possible?" The relevance of this question is clear; what is at stake is no less than how individuals coexist in a shared world. However, the relation of Kierkegaard's thought to the complex process of answering this question is less clear. Why Kierkegaard? Why does Kierkegaard occupy such a central position in the thesis?

Kierkegaard writes that to "sit in a room where everything is so quiet that one can hear a grain of sand fall and can understand the highest—that every person can do. But, to speak figuratively, to sit in the kettle the coppersmith is hammering on and then to understand the same thing—well, then one must have the understanding close at hand."²¹ Kierkegaard was acutely aware that he was, more frequently than not, sitting in the kettle the coppersmith was hammering on; he knew that to live rightly in the actual world is much harder a task than simply knowing how to live rightly in one's own mind. Kierkegaard writes about what it is to be a person in the world, an individual before God. Kierkegaard's work indirectly discloses a means by which we, whose ears are even now in this silence still ringing from the blows of the smith's mallet, might move towards community. Kierkegaard's work is a faint but honest harmony in a sea of discord, a sea which makes the harmony all the more gripping. This is the reason for the centrality of Kierkegaard to the thesis. His voice rises above the waters.

²¹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love* (1847), Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (eds. and trans.), (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 78-79.

Multiperspectivism in Honors

The Promise, Perils, and Practices of Multiperspectivism

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The modern university has, at best, an ambivalent relation to multiperspectivism. In the seventeenth century, when European universities finalized the break with their medieval past, a century and a half of religious wars had made multiperspectivism a pressing intellectual and social problem, one that, it was argued, could be overcome only with rigorous intellectual method (Toulmin 69-80, Stout 46-47). In our own day, the academy widely celebrates multiperspectivism as a means to achieve the legitimate ends of higher education or, in some cases, as one of those ends itself. Contemporary reflection on academic practice routinely cites notions of diversity, pluralism, or multiculturalism in justifying or modifying curricula, establishing new programs of study, hiring faculty, or admitting students. Furthermore, the recent Supreme Court decision on affirmative action in the University of Michigan's Law School admissions policy grants legal sanction to these practices. Writing for the majority, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor argued that both the university and the state have "a compelling interest in obtaining the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body," benefits which clearly include the ready availability of a multiplicity of perspectives to inform and animate classroom discussion (*Grutter v. Bollinger*). Ironically, the Supreme Court's ruling simultaneously indicates how far the modern university has evolved since the historical moment of its birth and how deeply problematic the practice of pluralism has been and continues to be for higher education.

Since intellectual pluralism has served, in the history of the modern university, as both a problem needing a solution and an object of our aspiration, we would do well to attend to both the promise and perils of multiperspectivism in higher education today. The best way to do so, it seems to me, is to examine in some detail the practices of an institution keenly aware of both the bane and blessing of multiperspectivism. It so happens that the institution with which I am most familiar—Christ College, the honors college of Valparaiso University—is just such a place. The Freshman Program at Christ College centers upon a sixteen-credit, two-semester, team-taught course called *Texts and Contexts: Traditions of Human Thought*. The course incorporates many of the features found in successful honors curricula around the country: common readings of challenging texts in small seminars, interdisciplinary modes of inquiry, weekly plenary lectures, and a rigorous emphasis on writing. Beyond these noble and salutary activities, Christ College freshmen also undertake two major common endeavors. In the fall semester, our first-year students invent,

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script, score, and produce an original piece of musical theater. In the spring, they wrestle with questions of local, national, and international importance in four public Cambridge-style debates. If learning the discourses and practices of the academic life can be likened to learning a language, the Freshman Program's instructional mode clearly is immersion.

The Christ College Freshman Program seeks quite deliberately to model for and nurture in its students the kind of intellectual humility that makes possible the best kind of multiperspectivism, by which I mean the ability and the inclination to attend carefully and empathetically to people, texts, arguments, and artistic works that are wholly or largely foreign and to comprehend them on their own terms. The first task, it seems to me, of freshman general education is to foster in our students just this kind of openness to the unfamiliar. The Freshman Program includes a number of ancient authors (e.g. Aristotle, Augustine), Eastern texts (e.g. *Mencius*, *Zhuangzi*), and difficult modern texts (e.g. Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*) precisely for this reason: They are, each for their own reasons, quite alien to contemporary students. Whether this alienation is historical, traditional, conceptual, or rhetorical in origin, it says to our students, "Yours is not the only way of seeing the world." Student responses to this challenge range broadly from indifference to bewilderment to inquisitiveness. At their best, our students respond with considerable attentiveness and empathetic imagination, but even the well-meaning student, eager to overcome the estrangement of an encounter with a foreign text, can inadvertently rob the text of its alterity by too quickly making it too familiar. Every year that I have taught Dante's *Purgatorio*, a handful of students have dreadfully misinterpreted the poem due to an unreflective identification of Dante's love for Beatrice with the banal lusts they know from Britney Spears lyrics and the *American Pie* movies. While we simply cannot avoid making use of the familiar to parse the unfamiliar, we must always guard against reducing the unfamiliar to the familiar in the process. Otherwise, we can never be surprised by the texts we study, and we have at once insulated ourselves from not only the intellectual pleasure that follows from a puzzle well-solved but also the very possibility of engaging in any genuine learning. Alasdair MacIntyre rightly observes that "it is a great defect in too many of our students and in ourselves that they and we do not find enough of the world astonishing or puzzling[,] and one reason why they and we do not is that they and we too often think of all problems as puzzles internal to and to be solved in terms of the enquiries of the specialized disciplines" (MacIntyre 2).

One of the chief benefits of introducing first-year students to higher learning through an interdisciplinary team-taught course, as we do in Christ College, is that faculty, not to mention students, have plenty of opportunities to be puzzled and surprised. When a Christian theologian teaches Confucian texts, a literary critic teaches Kant, or a philosopher teaches Shakespeare, there should be neither delusions nor illusions of expertise. Consequently, the faculty has the opportunity and obligation to model for students an earnest and open engagement with unfamiliar but nonetheless important discursive modes, intellectual methods, texts, traditions of thought, and historical periods. Teaching outside one's area of professional expertise is, on this account, pedagogically desirable (rather than practically necessary), for it puts the

instructor in an analogous position to her students, both as the wide-eyed freshmen they are and as the lifelong learners we hope they will become. Christ College's commitment to interdisciplinarity as a key curricular instantiation of multiperspectivism extends even farther, all the way to class assignments. Lest our students grow overly comfortable with the particular perspective of the historian or political theorist who happens to be leading their discussions, instructors switch seminars midway through each semester! The student groups remain the same, thus preserving the bonds they have forged through seven weeks of dialogue, while a new instructor invariably introduces new intellectual and pedagogical resources into their ongoing conversation. Thus each year our students apprentice under as many as four accomplished and diverse practitioners of intellectual inquiry, and in so doing they and we are reminded how different perspectives can enhance, illumine, or challenge one another.

While multiperspectivism can thus motivate, direct, and expand the characteristic activity of the academy, namely, intellectual inquiry, it can also undermine that very same activity. Nietzsche's derisive characterization of liberally educated men in nineteenth-century Germany retains much of its force in our own day. They carry within them "enormous heap[s] of indigestible knowledge-stones"; they are "wandering encyclopedias" who have only meta-knowledge and no knowledge that is truly their own; they become "restless, dilettante spectator[s]" whom "even great wars and revolutions cannot affect . . . beyond the moment" (Nietzsche 23-24, and 29). Nietzsche, of course, laid the blame for this phenomenon on the rise of historicism and its capacity for making us painfully conscious of the plurality of perspectives that have existed through time. Beasts, unlike humans, have no such awareness, so they are active and, therefore, happy: "Forgetfulness is a property of all action" and of "the smallest and greatest happiness" (6). Though our contemporary practices of multiperspectivism have a different motive and object than those of nineteenth-century historicism, do they nonetheless have a similar effect on our students? My own experience in the classroom suggests that they certainly can and do. Who of us has not faced cynicism, detachment, restlessness, inattentiveness, and intellectual satiety among our students? Do not even the best and brightest in our care sometimes display a kind of casual nonchalance with respect to the weighty matters under our consideration, as though education is only a game, a self-enclosed field of mental activity with no reference at all to the 'real world' of private and public action? While these qualities in today's students certainly derive in part from the contemporary tyranny of the market (see, e.g., Wolterstorff), educators nurture, and sometimes sow, the seeds of student malaise when general education fails to move beyond its first task as I described it above, namely, to foster in our students an openness to the unfamiliar. Unaccompanied by a second, complementary task of general education, namely, to nurture intellectual responsibility, the first task readily degenerates into systematic disillusionment. This tendency is most obvious in the enormous disparity between time spent teaching critical skills (which are essential to the first task of general education) and the time spent in constructive modes of thought and action. At its worst, this tendency is manifest in the all-too-familiar phenomenon of cynical instructors gleefully demolishing their students' unreflective parochialisms. Critique

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cannot be an end in itself; it always must be a prolegomenon to a more satisfying answer to a more important question. Insofar as we fail to model for and nurture in our students the dogged pursuit of better questions and better answers, we allow sloppy relativism to masquerade as intellectual humility, and we thus abandon the second task of general education, the formation of intellectual responsibility.

Christ College understands itself as an academic *community*, sharing common goals in a context of mutual responsibility, and so a number of our practices in the Freshman Program respond to this second task of general education. Participation in seminars provides students and faculty alike with daily opportunities to practice forming good questions and rigorously seeking their answers. In our weekly faculty seminar, we have lively and challenging discussions of the texts we are preparing to teach, and in our weekly plenary sessions, the faculty lecturer has as her interlocutors the whole Freshman Program, faculty and students. Team teaching thus removes individual faculty members from the isolation of their classrooms, where personal charisma, institutional authority, or old-fashioned inertia sometimes inhibit the pursuit of truth, and returns them to a larger community of discourse composed of both students and faculty peers. The Freshman Program also places a heavy emphasis on writing, and especially on writing as a public act. We stress argumentation and, therefore, the public criteria which make for sound arguments, including the writer's ethical obligation to take opposing positions seriously (see Williams 242). Moreover, we insist that in their written work, our first-years take a stand, and one that matters. Papers must not leave the reader asking, "So what?" The public character of intellectual work receives further attention in the annual Christ College Freshman Debates. Each spring, eight teams debate four topics over four nights before the entire college community and its guests, and at the end of each debate, the audience 'votes with its feet' by exiting the hall through doors corresponding to the affirmative or negative positions. Here the responsibility one owes to an intellectual opponent and to an audience could not be clearer.

The annual Freshman Production, like the Freshman Debates, places students in the roles of producers, rather than consumers, of discourse. In a scant twelve weeks, ninety students produce a completely original piece of musical theater that speaks to the issues addressed in their seminars. (For more on the Freshman Production, see Franson.) In the week after the production, the entire college gathers to discuss the meaning and merits of the Freshman Production, and this conversation is always characterized by both genuine praise and serious analysis. Invariably our first-years seem both humbled and ennobled by the community's thoughtful reflection upon their common work and amazed at just how much this work *means*. Having thus shared, perhaps for the first time, the perspective of the artist, their work as critics undergoes significant transformation in the semester's remaining weeks, for they have now experienced the act of interpretation as both self-investment and self-risk. The aloof indifference of the 'critic' quite noticeably gives way to the committed embodiment of the 'reader' (in Steiner's terms).

Thus multiperspectivism carries with it both peril and promise. As a means of intellectual inquiry, which I take to be the defining activity of the academy, multiperspectivism opens up the possibility of self-critique and therefore of learning at all. As

such it is essential to honors education. When multiperspectivism becomes an end in itself, however, we shape utopian students, citizens of 'no place' in particular. Lacking a substantive commitment to any particular human community, such students have the luxury of endlessly fiddling with ideas, of multiperspectivism in the worst sense of the word. But in the context of a community of intellectual inquiry, students and faculty have moral responsibilities to one another and to the truth which they seek together through their common endeavor. For this reason Nussbaum's proposal of 'cosmopolitanism' as the highest end of humanities education rings hollow, for to be a citizen of every place is to be a citizen of no place. While her emphasis on empathy as an intellectual virtue resonates with what I have here called humility, her vision of humanities pedagogy simply yields more wandering encyclopedias, stuffed with the stones of meta-knowledge and bereft of the kind of local knowledge that actually conduces to action. Empathy is best learned face-to-face, where our obligations to each other and to our common work, the search for truth, are more difficult to ignore. Only in community can multiperspectivism be saved from a banal relativism on the one hand and restless dilettantism on the other; only in robust communities of inquiry can the academy resolve its longstanding and legitimate ambivalence toward intellectual pluralism.

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The Myth of an Honors Education

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It is my nature to come at the question of honors from an idealistic perspective. I willingly admit that from the outset. However, as a student affairs professional I strive for balance in thought and in practice. I intend, through this manuscript, to provide a comprehensive, thoughtful look at the institutional commitment to honors tracks in higher education. Hence I explore, first, the controversial questions surrounding honors admissions policies. In addition, I look at the discrepancies that exist between the privileges afforded to honors students versus non-honors students. I believe these two issues challenge all honors administrators to remain vigilant in regard to the idea of honor and the oftentimes questionable barriers set in place that confer honors privileges. My graduate assistantship in the Provost's Office at The University of Vermont has provided me with an administrative angle on honors which has pressed me to construct my own unique view of what honors *is* and *can be*. In turn, I hope to challenge honors administrators to continue to actively reconstruct the notion of honors education in the Academy.

I believe it is to our detriment as educators to remain static in our view of any pedagogy. The ultimate success of an educational program will emerge as a direct reflection of the energy that is invested into its creation and implementation. I seek a transformative view of honors education in this country, a view that can be accomplished through a corresponding commitment to what excellence in honors can mean. I believe honors needs to be defined more broadly to include diverse cultural and philosophical perspectives in recruitment, curricular construction, and overall practice. I also believe honors needs to expand its commonly held conception of selectivity. Finally I see, hidden in the word honors, the word "honor" which should stand as the driving factor behind the subsistence and ongoing development of honors pedagogy in the Academy. For, without honorable energy infused throughout the mission of honors education, the reflection of its intent will appear murky.

This murkiness brings me to what I term the *myth* of honors education. A myth is a widely-held notion that is partially or wholly false. In the words of Judith Renyi (1993), "Myth... is not the same as fiction. Myth is narrative we believe in as truth." (p. 37). If we in the academy are to believe that honors programs produce the honorable benefits they claim to, a closer look may be in order. I fear that the questions of access and privilege call the underlying crux of honor into question. If institutions of higher education are serious about challenging the trends of social inequalities at the doors of the Academy, then the doors of honors should be open as well.

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the old French word “onorer”, and the Latin word “honarare,” mean “official repute,” “esteem,” or “dignity.” The early Greek root of the word “honor,” out of which the later Latin and French was derived, was “honos,” meaning “honest.” It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that any honors program would necessarily have at its root the aim of conferring honor and thus exemplifying what it means to be honorable. In an age where college administrators are plagued by a culture of consumerism and faced with an ever-growing population of college-aged students, I wonder whether the advent of honors is truly living up to the connotation of its name. I tend to echo the sentiment of Sam Schuman (1993):

So what can these abstract, albeit honorable, characteristics—conviction, courage, compassion, honesty—have to do with actual classroom, honors teaching and learning? Well, if “honors” actually has to do with “honor,” *everything*. (Emphasis added, p. 7)

Honors programs, historically, have developed in much the same way as remedial education programs in colleges and universities. Different students have different needs, and students who have an accelerated passion for learning are best served by a curriculum that offers a heightened academic challenge. The pedagogical intent of honors programs and honors colleges is to provide intellectually motivated students with increased opportunities to challenge themselves and each other. Oftentimes, the impetus for such students to question and explore on a heightened level is atypical of the majority of the student body.

However, there is a flip side to the pursuit and development of honors programs in the Academy. The attention to honors represents an intentional effort on behalf of university administrators to advance their universities’ academic reputations. The inherent benefits of honors programs include attracting and retaining more intellectually motivated students to the university, raising the overall intellectual level and reputation of the campus, providing an interdisciplinary honors curriculum that offers special seminars and independent study opportunities, and encouraging an innovative and experimental interaction between faculty and students. Selingo (2002, para 4) notes:

Since 1994, the number of honors colleges at both public and private institutions across the country has doubled, to more than 50, according to the National Collegiate Honors Council. Its membership rolls have risen 50 percent in the same period as hundreds of other institutions have established more narrowly tailored honors programs... By drawing a solid core of high-achieving students, the colleges hope to improve their standing with the public and with state lawmakers, as well as to raise the academic bar for all their students.

Does a conflict of interests surface amidst the chasm between the institutional mission toward recruitment and retention of high-achieving students, and the dedication to providing a premiere undergraduate education for all students?

HONORS ADMISSIONS: ELITIST OR NOT?

My initial struggle with the University of Vermont's interest in creating and implementing an honors college revolved around the issue of selectivity of admissions standards. Oftentimes elitism is equated with selectivity. Godow (1990) asserts:

Many seem to believe that elitism and selectivity are the same thing, and so they find it difficult to figure out how to be against elitism and still introduce some selectivity into honors programs. The result is some confusing talk which makes a lot of people who, in their desire to be against elitism, sound as if they also think that selectivity is a bad thing. (p. 64)

While the two words do not confer the same meaning in literal terms, they can, indeed, become intimately intertwined when it comes to issues of equity and diversity.

In my research of honors programs and colleges across the country, I found it to be generally true that standards for admission in honors programs and colleges were based on the following criteria: a minimum high school GPA of 3.5 and an average minimum SAT score of 1300. Heavy reliance on standardized testing has been linked with problematic ethics of access for students of color and students from low-income, disadvantaged backgrounds. If there is an institutional commitment to diversify the undergraduate population as a whole, do honors admissions stand as an exception to the rule?

Honors administrators and educators argue for the plus-side of selectivity in a manner that can be convincing on the surface. Honors programs, by nature, offer an otherwise unavailable intellectual opportunity to an elite group of students who display and seek an above-average level of academic challenge. This type of opportunity can positively influence an incoming student at the outset of college decision time, and further, can offer a more intimate, focused, intellectually demanding experience throughout the college years. For this reason, honors programs serve the dual purpose of drawing a higher-achieving student body and, correspondingly, igniting the academic climate of a campus. The honors experience is one of great value to honors students. They receive privileged individualized attention and an enhanced educational experience that they may not have otherwise. For this reason, the advent of honors is backed by a plethora of supporters from all corners of the university system.

However, the question I am asking is, doesn't the status of honors education imply an additional responsibility to provide access to a diverse body of students? If extensive research has shown that standardized testing is ethically and socially unjust, why are so many honors programs insistent on using standardized tests as an entrance requirement? DiFelicianantonio (2001, para 3) argues:

The time-honored myth is that the most intellectually curious among us are the ones chosen by the selective admissions process... It is not so much that the intellectually curious are selected, as that the selection process confers intellectual status.

If some honors administrators insist on using primarily unjust means to admit incoming students into honors programs across the country, I would argue that honors is not

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living up to its name. It is not enough to imbue an entering honors class with high-achieving students, determined largely by standardized testing and class rank, and then proceed to fill the remaining spots with diverse students from a wider array of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. That does not reflect honor. Administrators need to actively seek out diverse representation in the honors student body and faculty. This needs to be one of the foremost tasks of the honors commitment.

An additional response to the cry of elitism in honors is often the development of a dual entry-point means of admission. Many honors programs and colleges admit a certain percentage of their students immediately out of high school, while another percentage is admitted after the first year of college. This method allows for students to enter into honors if their high school academic record did not open the door for them initially. Many students have shown that they do not reach their full academic potential until after they enter college. Expectations are often woven into the picture, and students who were not expected to succeed in high school begin to push themselves beyond their own and others' expectations in college. In many honors programs, students are admitted after the first year based on first-year GPA, but some programs allow for faculty recommendations and individual interviews to accompany the admissions process. This multi-tiered method of honors admissions has allowed for increased representation and a diversity of life experiences in the honors student body. However, it is not enough.

For a time, I suspected I might have been overanalyzing my stance on honors. Perhaps I was making assumptions that weren't truly playing out in reality as they appeared in my mind. I became more and more discouraged as I watched my own institution enact admissions criteria that reflected a fill-in-the-blank approach to ALANA (African, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American) representation. However, as I researched other programs and spoke with various honors directors, I came to acknowledge that I wasn't being unreasonable in asking more of an honors pedagogy. Ada Long (2003), the editor for the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* (NCHC) and the Director of the University Honors Program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, had the following to say in an informational interview:

The ONLY way to accomplish genuine diversity in honors is by not using minimum SAT or ACT scores. Our program is, by design, small, and we interview every applicant. I know of no other honors program in the country that follows such a pattern. Having done so for 20 years, I now KNOW that ACT and SAT have no value as predictors of individual success, and I also know *that nobody really believes me...* I'm obviously biased, but the majority of honors faculty I know claim they want diversity while at the same time using admissions standards that make diversity impossible. I find that the subject of diversity in honors has become an invitation to egregious hypocrisy.

I was encouraged to discover that there are, in fact, a number of honors programs around the country that take the time and the resources to implement alternative standards of admission. There are even a few large programs that truly consider applicants as individuals rather than a composite of numbers. For example, the honors pro-

gram at the University of Minnesota reviews individual applications for upwards of 800 prospective first-year honors students. The program itself is one of the largest in the country, possessing over 2000 honors students. (Godow, p. 64) I believe this example challenges the notion that a more thorough admissions process would require an exorbitant amount of additional staff and application processing. Even if it did, institutional priorities that outwardly recognize a commitment to diversifying the undergraduate population should translate that commitment to honors, as well.

On top of creating a more just selection process, additional scholarship resources could be made available to attract diverse students with distinctive talents and experiences to honors. Active and intentional recruiting takes extra resources, for certain, however the honor that is lost without the commitment to a philosophy and pedagogy of pluralism cannot possibly be sustained in an exemplary democracy. Programs such as the University of Minnesota's can stand as models for the expansion of the conception of honors and encourage other developing programs to follow in the footsteps of such an honorable commitment.

While the tension between elitism and selectivity can often emerge as insurmountable, I believe a transformative view of honors can embark upon the challenge with integrity. I recommend that administrators review the principles and notions behind the advent of honors education in this country. New honors administrators must accept the challenge of assessing the touchstone of honors and challenging the history of exclusion that clearly does not coincide with the responsibility and privilege of an honors education.

I have heard honors referred to as a form of alternative education. If it is alternative in the sense that it has the potential for affecting positive change in all facets of university life, then administrators need to accept all slices of the challenge. In addition to providing access, administrators must attend closely to the assertion that honors students raise the bar of intellectual motivation for the rest of the student body. I fear this claim can become merely lip-service, as well.

THE RIFT BETWEEN HONORS AND NON-HONORS

A similar struggle emerged in my mind with regard to the charge of curricular and pedagogical elitism. Honors colleges traditionally, by design, allow honors students to benefit from smaller and more intimate class sizes, individualized faculty mentoring, priority registration and housing, special honors events and research opportunities, and innovative curricula developed specifically for honors seminars. The question I could not set free from my mind remained, why aren't we as an institution striving to create this sort of experience for *all* students? It seemed somewhat counter-intuitive to be focusing individualized attention on students who were already naturally inclined to succeed.

As a new administrator, I possess an unyielding desire for a unique, individualized educational experience for all students. While I believe that honors students can stir a culture of heightened academic motivation when they are infused amidst the greater student body, administrators and honors faculty need to be intentional about

making this happen. I also believe that honors faculty are often re-energized by new curricular experiments with honors students, and that they are able to translate that excitement into all of their classes, honors and non-honors alike. But why are Presidents and Provosts encouraging faculty to try bold new curricular experimentation within the realm of honors? Why not translate such pedagogy to *all* students at various levels of intellectual challenge?

Again, I feel that honors administrators must create a level of expectation and accountability among their faculty members that honors holds a unique responsibility to live out the privilege of being deemed honorable. Schuman (1993) maintains:

So, if honors is real learning, it is really about honor. It is honest and hard and caring and good. To the extent to which our work partakes of these qualities, it should be a source of pride to ourselves and inspiration to others. To the extent we deviate from this vision, we should be ashamed. (p.8)

Undergraduate education as a whole cannot afford to be left to the wayside while honors students and faculty focus on advanced forms of study, innovative seminars, and individualized advising that are not typically extended to the greater student body. We need to challenge the often boxed-in opportunities for honors students and allow for a critical co-creation of the honors experience. Harte (1994) contends:

My own experience leads me to question not whether I have done justice to my honors students, but whether I have too often not served my other students as well as I could have. I suspect my teaching might be better were I to treat all my students as honors students to the extent that I want them to be active, independent learners for whom I have high expectations. (p. 57)

Cultivating critical thinking in this sense should be the responsibility of honors faculty, administrators, and students alike. Being held accountable for how honors affects the undergraduate culture as a whole is a challenge that administrators should accept with enthusiastic anticipation.

A CHALLENGE FOR HONORS ADMINISTRATORS

I am aware that issues of elitism and selectivity in honors have been a prime area of dialogue and debate within the honors community for several years. I do not, by any means, intend to imply that honors administrators are not taking these issues seriously. What I *do* intend to imply, however, is that there is always a higher ground for which to strive. And until there is institutional backing for adjusted admissions standards and institutionalized connections between honors and non-honors, that higher ground will continue to elude us.

The NCHC developed a widely-used document entitled *the Basic Characteristics of a Fully-Developed Honors Program* which is referenced by numerous honors administrators in starting new programs. Item #14 states, "The fully-developed Honors Program must be open to continuous and critical review and be prepared to change to maintain its distinctive position of offering distinguished education to the best students in the institution." I propose that honors

administrators take the challenge of “continuous and critical review of their programs,” and add an additional basic characteristic to the list:

#17. Honors programs should strive to maintain the honor by which their name holds them accountable most notably, but not exclusively, in the following areas: defining a commitment to recruiting and retaining diverse honors students and faculty, developing a pluralistic pedagogy and system of admissions that challenges the entire campus, and further institutionalizing the co-created commitment to interdisciplinary teaching and learning in higher education.

New administrators can place themselves at the forefront of implementing innovative means of selecting students and faculty, and developing programming and curricula that reach across the chasm between honors and non-honors. I believe wholeheartedly that this is an area in higher education that is at the forefront of great change. Assumptions surrounding who can succeed at a heightened level of scholarship and service are being challenged. Now is the time to offer administrators a chance to transform the honors experience. Who’s up for it?

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Unity in Diversity: The Virtues of a Metadisciplinary Perspective in Liberal Arts Education

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“Without the possibility of action, all knowledge comes to one labeled ‘file and forget’ and I can neither file nor forget.”

—Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952)

SEEING THE ENTIRE ELEPHANT

Remember the story of the blind men and the elephant? Each man touches a different part of the animal (its side, trunk, tusk, leg, ear, and tail) and pronounces his find a wall, a snake, a spear, a tree, a fan, or a rope. As the poet Godfrey Saxe (1816-1997) wrote of the blind men in his retelling of this ancient Indian parable, “Though each was partly in the right, they all were in the wrong” (Galdone, 1973). This allegory quickly encapsulates the benefits, and the challenges, of seeing, or not seeing, something through multiple perspectives—in short, it illuminates the perils of hasty reductionism.

Consider that when people ask “Can I see that?,” 99% of the time what they truly mean is “Would you please hand that object to me so I can hold it in my own hands and turn it around, to see and feel and otherwise experience all sides of it?” This is what most of us mean by “seeing”: looking at something not from a distance or from one angle but closely, from all perspectives. Then, too, blind people do “see” with their hands, just as infants and toddlers “see” objects with their mouths. You can conduct your own “elephant” exercise in the classroom, both with blindfolded and “sighted” students, preferably using an unusually shaped or otherwise complex and unfamiliar item that cannot be described or understood from a single perspective.

Of course, this object lesson also demonstrates the hard truth that all of us, based on a single outlook, are generally quick to make up our minds, often stubbornly so, despite what everyone else tells us. A seeing person can make sense of an elephant, certainly, but if each of the figurative blind men had merely moved around the creature, or simply listened to his companions, he might have “seen,” inside his mind’s eye, exactly what he was dealing with. Only with a combination of all these diverse vantage points does a truly unified, realistic picture appear. A unique perspective does

not preclude one from finding “truth,” but it’s hard to dispute the conclusion that with multiple perspectives one can arrive at the truth much more quickly, conveniently, and reliably.

Many people learn this lesson late in life. Perhaps some never learn it at all. Clearly the best and most opportune place to learn the advantages of multiple perspectives is in college, preferably through a multidisciplinary liberal arts education (though not a traditional one, as will be explained). Many entering college students have not yet moved beyond a concrete view of the world, but we can hasten their intellectual development by showing them the virtues of a holistic education, with a firm basis in Socratic self-knowledge and an emphasis on unified knowledge. More specifically, an honors education is the ideal vehicle to dispel a limiting outlook. Instead of merely singing the praises of multiple perspectives and listing the challenges to such an approach, I hope to provide both the background rationale as well as practical advice to help professors and program directors incorporate this essential strategy into honors curricula.

UNI-, MULTI-, AND METADISCIPLINARY STUDY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Many metaphors have been employed to describe the journey students take during their college years: climbing mountains, crossing a sea or a desert, even jumping through hoops or moving over hurdles. All of these metaphors share a common theme, of course: moving forward. As students grow and learn they make progress, and they inevitably, invariably see things in a new way. This result—learning to analyze issues from multiple perspectives—should not be seen merely as a fortuitous outcome of education; rather, this must be the definitive goal. Multiple perspectives are not only conducive to but in fact essential to a modern liberal arts curriculum. As students take courses in a variety of disciplines, we hope that they see patterns and processes, concepts and connections linking one field to the next. They should find bridges between subjects. They should search for disciplinary parallels and intersections. They should learn to relate ecology and economics, public policy and government, history and literature, and so on—what Marion Brady has aptly termed a “seamless curriculum” (Brady, 1989), or what I call a “metadisciplinary” perspective.

Educators often speak of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary emphases that combine traditional disciplines of scholarship and teaching. Such an emphasis might lead students to learn not merely about political science, for example, but about political science in conjunction with history or philosophy. However, by metadisciplinary I am referring to a larger curricular focus that transcends or supersedes traditional disciplinary boundaries to create a truly holistic, systemic, integrative worldview uncluttered by familiar limits and barriers. Instead of merely linking two or more customary fields together at their margins, a metadisciplinary focus reveals that all such fields are fundamentally related in numerous significant ways, both theoretically and practically. Such a focus demonstrates that no one can legitimately study political science without due consideration of history or philosophy. The real world is not neatly divided into separate realms (of economics, politics, etc.), so why should education be? In

sum, a metadisciplinary curriculum is one in which traditional fields *must* be viewed together, as corequisites. One could study only elephant ears or tusks, but one must see these as components of a coherent, unified whole.

Admittedly, some of this is easier for students than for their professors. Whereas instructors generally have the advantage of a broader perspective that age and experience, not to mention years of intensive study, impart, there is no denying that in a majority of cases, faculty tend not to think in meta- or even interdisciplinary ways. Much of this stems directly from their training. Academics are trained in and think in terms of rather narrow, often extremely narrow, research interests and backgrounds. At too many institutions, especially larger ones, disciplines, even departments, have become isolated, focused splinter groups. How do we educate ourselves and our colleagues to adopt a metadisciplinary perspective? Surely this is just as important, and just as desirable, as instilling in our students a habit of multi-perspectivism. Fortunately, honors courses and programs constitute an ideal venue in which to develop metadisciplinary curricula.

It is a curious fact that even as fields of study become more and more narrowly specialized—as the world of academe becomes more splintered and esoterically arcane—the world is becoming a decidedly “smaller” place. Improvements in technology have rendered global travel and communication almost effortless and instantaneous. It is now truly a small world after all. Even in the remote, rural hamlet of Southside Virginia where I teach, we have international students from such (formerly) far-flung countries as Nepal, Ghana, Myanmar, and Bhutan. Having such a diverse student body makes obtaining a multi-perspective education ever more crucial, just as it should make it simultaneously easier. But just what is a “multi-perspective education”? To answer that query—and in particular to demonstrate why multiple perspectives are essential in education—one must address an even more fundamental question...

What is the purpose of education at any level? Is it to teach students what to think or rather how to think? Is it to introduce them to various subjects, culminating, in college and postgraduate or professional school, in specialized study of one particular subject? Is it to teach the basics (the “three R’s”) or to teach applied skills, such as use of computers and other ubiquitous technological aids? Is it to prepare students for a productive career or to prepare them to be contributing citizens? Is it to pass on a particular heritage (ethnic, cultural, religious, etc.), or to expose students to diverse customs and traditions? Is it to prepare students to pass standardized exams? Is it to develop the individual potential of each student, or to shape all students into a common mold? Is it to meet the needs of students, or to streamline the labor of teachers and administrators?

Western culture in general, and Western education in particular, is preoccupied with reductionism: taking things apart so that we can see how they function; reducing them to ever-smaller substituent bits. Western culture is, in addition, rife with Cartesian dualisms (sadly, often false dichotomies) that inexorably send us down one branching path or another, typically never to meet up with or intersect a previously taken path. As the opening quotation from Ralph Ellison illustrates, information is routinely and summarily heard, filed away, and forgotten.

The problem with this reductionist approach is that the world is, to put it mildly, a fairly complicated place, as are many of its parts—in fact, so complex that no one can ever hope to master more than one or two discrete parts. Hence our standard curriculum schools each student briefly and cursorily in many subjects—language, social studies, math, science, etc.—before more comprehensive education, eventually, in only one of them (Brady, 1991). After all, the common thinking goes, one can't be an expert in anything, precocious polymaths excepted, and it is better to know a lot about a little than a little about a lot of things. Once a student's interest is narrowed to science, for example, then there are several sciences to pick from. If one chooses biology, one must typically then select from deeper concentration in field biology, premedical studies, biotechnology, or another such specialty.

Taken to its extreme, this view supposes that knowledge comprises bits of information from various isolated disciplines. But is this a realistic depiction of reality? More to the point, is this a productive model for education? As Marion Brady (1989) notes, the things we try to understand in the real world—whether in business, politics, or any aspect of society—virtually never fall into neat little categories that correspond to the fields we are taught in school. To stretch my metaphor to the breaking point, there are no partial elephants in the real world, only whole elephants, and students should be trained—must be trained—to see the entire elephant.

It is true that the cumulative sum of human knowledge today is so vast that we are obliged to organize it into rough areas. Certainly society cannot function without a division of labor in which specialized workers attend to different tasks. It must be noted that a metadisciplinary emphasis can blur but not completely obliterate such boundaries between disciplines, and that such an emphasis better enables one to see significant differences between fields. As Wellek and Warren (1956) noted, differences are another kind of relationship important to liberal understanding; discrimination (in the sense of distinguishing between) is a useful intellectual exercise, as are drawing contrasts and comparisons. Still, our habit of “dichotomizing” (dividing everything into two camps, a la the ubiquitous claim of “two kinds of people”) belies the fact that what we often recognize as the sole two possibilities are endpoints of a continuum, extremes of a continuous range. Thus whereas familiar disciplines provide a handy framework with which to organize and operate our society, they don't, unfortunately, help people to see or study the whole of it. By no means are our familiar compartmentalized disciplines the simplest or best way to formulate an overall general education curriculum at any level, including (especially) honors programs and colleges.

In place of this exclusively reductionistic regime we need to integrate a holistic, synthetic outlook. There are two ways to achieve this. One approach is to begin with a topic, problem, or theme and bring various disciplines to bear on it, examining all sides from lenses of diverse disciplinary perspectives. A markedly different approach is not to examine disciplines head-on, but to treat them tangentially, by using them as sources of interconnected facts, ideas, and insights that help students to make sense of the world and their place in it. No matter which path we choose, we need not abandon or wholly revamp our Western science-based reductionist approach and replace it with New Age meditation or “touchy-feely” self-esteem workshops, but we must

abandon the outdated, simplistic assumption that “the traditional disciplines segment reality in the most useful way possible” (Brady, 1995).

No matter what one envisions as the principal purpose of education, it’s clear that what all students need is a way to stay engaged and interested. They need to distinguish what is important from what is trivial. They need to know where knowledge comes from—how we know what we do. They need a system that organizes their information, so that they can remember it for more than a few hours or days, and so that they can cope with new problems and situations rather than simply regurgitating facts. They need “a system that makes clear the systematically integrated, mutually supportive nature of knowledge” (Brady, 1989). Above all, we need a system that can instill these abilities in all students, regardless of their particular learning styles, their strengths and weaknesses, so that all students can understand and articulate—and appreciate—why education is so valuable for ourselves individually and for society as a whole.

The problem is that while each discipline does a job worth doing, collectively they leave undone a central mission. They don’t show students the whole—the complete elephant, if you will—of which the varied disciplines are random parts, scattered legs and ears and tails. The problem is that from elementary school onward, even in the majority of college honors courses, we do not teach students with such a system, because our collective curriculum is based on disparate disciplines that developed at different times, with vastly different approaches and methodologies, with different aims and goals, and with different terminologies and technologies. The traditional disciplines employ wholly different conceptual frameworks. Each ignores vast areas of significant knowledge and operates at a different level of generality (Brady, 1989, 1995).

Obviously, incongruent disciplines can’t easily be integrated, but even if they could we’d simply confuse even our best honors students with a hopelessly unmanageable mishmash of tangled bits and pieces. Can one analyze Shakespeare through a perspective of organic chemistry? How does Newtonian mechanics relate to *Brown v. Board of Education*? What does the life of Buddha or Lincoln say about global bond trading or the international monetary fund? This sort of ridiculously overweening reductionism—what philosopher Daniel Dennett terms “greedy reductionism” (Dennett, 1995), like comparing Keats and Shelley on the basis of molecular motion or analyzing court cases in terms of entropy fluctuations—is evidently nonsensical, yet it has led to much headshaking, hand-wringing, and general postmodern silliness as ill-advised intellectuals stew in their own disciplines and vainly attempt to acknowledge others (e.g., “How do we recast mathematics in the light of Women’s Studies or African-American Studies?”).

Education reformer and “supradisciplinary” proponent Marion Brady argues that we already have the educational system we need hard-wired into our brains. We use this natural “meta-organizer” all the time to understand and make sense of our experiences, as we take in simple bits of interrelated information (e.g., who, what, where, when, why), and we use it to retain this information so that it fits comfortably within a framework of all that we have previously learned, including many universal,

jargon-free elements that are “potentially relatable” (Brady, 1989). [This organizing propensity may be as natural as our opposite urge to divide.] The traditional and intuitive notion of education centers on transferring data on photosynthesis or grammar or quadratic equations from a teacher, book, computer, etc., in quantitative bits that can be poured or “crammed” directly into a student’s empty head (Kelly, 2002). Information transfer does teach, but it is clear that little specific knowledge is retained in this fashion. How many such facts do you recall from your high school or college courses? Can you remember even a fraction of what you were taught in trigonometry, anatomy, or philosophy? If you are like me, you are more likely to recall professors’ odd and interesting anecdotes than anything that would help you pass such a course again. In this sense, then, an enormous investment in time and energy, on the part of both teacher and student, yields minimal long-term return (Brady, 1989, 1996). The traditional disciplines—geology, economics, psychology, and so on—are legitimate academic fields of study, but they are not ideal for an overall educational curriculum, particularly in honors. They may be useful approaches in the scholarly search for “new” knowledge—and they do allow one’s mind to stretch and grow—but they are not so useful in disseminating “old” knowledge.

Instead of merely filling heads with facts from books, lectures, and documentaries, why not also learn by sorting information into broader, metadisciplinary domains, by noting patterns and relationships? Our students will surely be better served if we raise questions that require careful contemplation rather than simple reiteration or regurgitation, and if we conduct exercises that require contemplation rather than rote memorization. We can teach students better if we help them to see the holistic, systemic, emergent nature of knowledge, even if we must rebuild things that have been taken apart by the prevailing culture of reductionism. We must dispel the traditional approach of racing to cover material and excluding insightful yet tangential thoughts in the classroom. We must help students to forge connections and investigate relationships. We must take advantage of each individual’s natural curiosity, urge to explore, and desire to synthesize a coherent whole of experience.

CUTTING A MAGNET IN TWO

Students occasionally wonder what practical value, if any, their education holds. “What use will I ever have for calculus or sonnets?” What is generally overlooked in this analysis, however, is the fact that education (particularly in college) is not, and should not be, merely about committing facts to memory. It is about learning to see the world in new ways, from new perspectives—about breaking free of preconceived views, typically static and one-sided, and adopting a broader stance in which multiple views can be ascertained and accepted simultaneously. In this regard a metadisciplinary perspective is invaluable.

When considering any complex or controversial issue, I invariably admonish students to remember both sides of the proverbial coin. Even if one’s mind is firmly planted on one side of an issue, one should at the very least try to see and understand the other side. Put yourself in someone else’s position. Trying to imagine why other people hold a view opposite to yours is a valuable exercise that generally broadens,

sharpen, and strengthens one's own perspective even if it does not change it. One has virtually nothing to lose from such an exercise and more than likely much to gain.

Sadly, in modern public discourse people rarely admit to recognizing alternative points of view, let alone announcing they are conflicted as to which view is best. It is easy to imagine such a response—"I agree with those who say X, but at the same time I see the strengths of those who argue Y"—as a sign of intelligence and open-mindedness. Possessing an ability to understand and hold two positions at once, and having a broad metadisciplinary background from which one has been exposed to widely varying points of view, can only render a person wiser and more sensible. Admitting that one sees, at one time, more than one or even two sides of an issue, rather than simply seeing each issue as a concrete, cut-and-dried, black-versus-white thing, is a sure sign of intellectual development.

These days, it seems the third worst thing for any leader to do is to compromise his or her position and meet someone else "halfway." Politicians are expected to stick to their guns and stonewall the opposition, even if it ultimately means achieving none of their initial goals. The second worst thing in politics is for a person to change his or her mind. One is simply not allowed to do that, for it is exposed as the ultimate sign of weakness, even worse than compromise, concession, and conciliation. "You can't say that or vote that way—twenty years ago you held a contrary position!" Never mind that a person may have grown and matured, that she may have listened and read and generally kept an open mind about the issue, preferring to hear new arguments even as her mind was made up. Once you express a position in politics, it can be a career-ending kiss of death to admit you have reconsidered that position. Never "flip flop." And if you ever switched political parties, that must be kept secret. But the absolute worst sin in politics must be indecision. Make up your mind right away—don't bother taking time to listen to or think about other views. Only a nebishy wimp gets a second opinion. He who hesitates is lost.

This is not to say that there aren't times when one should have a clear and ready monolithic view. I am not advocating utter relativism. Nor do I mean to imply that wishy-washy, namby-pamby indecision is the goal. Sticking to one's principles is paramount. However, self-reflection and internal debate are among the thinker's oldest, simplest and most useful tools. Showing "backbone" is important, and we need not frequently change our minds, but we ought never to close them. It is important to have convictions, but even the firmest view must be revised in the light of new evidence.

Perhaps the analogy of a two-sided coin is unsuitable, as most arguments and issues better resemble multifaceted gemstones, with sides glinting off in all directions. Still, there are always at least two sides, and I can't help but try to envision and embrace them both as I mull over any topic. As a biologist, I like to say that we have bilateral symmetry to create backup systems and make our lives easier. One kidney stops working? Well, fortunately, we have a backup. That may be a reasonable scientific view, but it is also fair to say that having two hands enables us to weigh, literally, two objects—to balance, figuratively, competing points of view.

For example, I argued earlier in this paper that the world is getting "smaller," but that is a grossly simplified way of addressing the issue. Is the world more diverse

today or more unified? What about your campus? For every influence that increases the diversity of perspectives, there appears a counteracting force that decreases it. On the one hand, more college students are studying abroad than ever before; on the other hand, today's students are more likely to eat at a McDonald's overseas than students a generation ago. On the one hand, there are more international students at American colleges today; on the other hand, they may be as familiar with Coca-Cola, Levi's jeans, and reality TV shows as American youth, and they may speak English as well as their native language. Even U.S. children may be more likely to live in multicultural neighborhoods, but there may be more peer pressure than ever to conform to expectations—to dress and act a certain unified way. On the one hand, children today “grow up faster” than ever due to the pervasive modern culture of TV, movies, videogames, and so on, but on the other hand, they may be more narrowly specialized than ever, as coaches and parents counsel them to specialize in one sport or activity rather than partaking in a variety of pursuits. [More dualism—that's the Western influence again! Perhaps this is why many Eastern deities, such as Shiva, are depicted with more than two hands, so they can balance more than two objects, or points of view, simultaneously.] The bottom line is that few things are as simple as they seem. Most are like our elephant, with new aspects that emerge upon closer examination. Just as every classroom benefits from dialogue, discussion, and debate, every single person's mind benefits likewise from an ongoing internal dialogue.

This holistic “debate within” is similar to what happens within any magnet, which simultaneously holds opposing polar forces. As humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow pointed out, one can't cut a magnet in two (Maslow, 1973). Every magnet is a dipole, having both a north and a south pole. Take a simple bar or horseshoe magnet and try to cut or otherwise break it in two. You'll end up with two pieces, but each fragment is a wholly new dipole. There is no such thing as a unipolar magnet—each is a holistic entity, combining different strengths, indeed polar opposites, into a unified whole. As with our archetypal elephant, and with an ideal metadisciplinary curriculum, unity arises from diversity. This is of course the meaning of the Latin motto *E pluribus Unum*: “Out of many, one.” Unfortunately, even when our stereotypical politician recognizes multiple points of view, it's generally in an “us” versus “them,” black/white, wrong/right scenario, leading to bickering, bipartisan debate. Seldom are subtle nuances and shades of gray recognized; the focus is customarily on what separates us rather than (as with a magnet) what unites us. Like a magnet, a metadisciplinary perspective focuses on holistic unity arising from various diverging (often competing) views.

In his landmark study on the intellectual development of college students, William Perry (1970) observed that students initially have a very low tolerance for ambiguity. According to his work, most freshmen begin with a simplistic, absolute view of the world; only with considerable time and experience do they recognize the contingent, contextual, relative nature of knowledge. Only then will they acknowledge there are multiple perspectives to a given problem or topic, and eventually accept ambiguity. As noted, modern politicians seem to be rewarded, at least in the United States, for holding rigid positions. They seem invariably to be soundly and roundly criticized for espousing nuanced, balanced views instead. However, there is

no reason why educators should not foster in their students the latter approach. Simplistic statements play well in sound bites or on bumper stickers but bear little connection with or application to the real world. Again, an honors curriculum is the ideal vehicle with which to address this concern and hasten students' development away from a concrete worldview toward a more holistic—and realistic—standpoint. Ironic though it seems, “being of two minds”—having a “divided” or “split” opinion—can in fact enable one to have a more unified view.

WHY TOLERANCE IS A DIRTY WORD

One of the great benefits of a metadisciplinary curriculum is that it fosters a broad, holistic, integrative fusion of viewpoints—a scholastic diversity of ideas—while at the same time it promotes a social diversity of peoples. This is of course one of the most pressing issues on all college campuses today, where students of many diverse backgrounds are enrolled but rarely if ever sit together at the same lunch table (Moody, 2001). A multiple-perspective, metadisciplinary view cultivates harmony and trust, but ironically, it should not promote what could be called mere tolerance. For as my colleague Karen Williams is fond of noting, tolerance is truly a dirty word.

Despite the high regard in which it is often held, tolerance is in fact—upon closer examination—not a noble ideal and should not be the goal of any education, metadisciplinary or otherwise (Cooney et al., 1999; Williams and Okintunde, 2000).

The root word of tolerance is tolerate, which means, in essence: “I’ll put up with you, even though I may not like you. I will recognize and accept your opinion, even if I don’t care for it at all.” Tolerance thus commonly relates to begrudging acceptance—to put up with, allow, or endure without putting up opposition—rather than mutual respect, which is what is truly needed. Tolerance stifles dialogue rather than fostering it. Instead of seeking consensus, tolerance teaches us to be quiet and patiently let everyone else have his say, even though it matters not to us. Tolerance favors equal time for opposing viewpoints, not equal validity. Tolerance, in short, allows us to “put up” with each other but ultimately keeps us from dealing with each other and sorting out our differences.

We don’t all need to agree on everything, and the truth is we can’t agree on everything, but we can treat everyone, even those with whom we share little in common, with mutual respect and dignity. Rather than seeking to instill an abiding tolerance in our students, we should entreat them instead to seek relationships and understandings founded upon partnership: friendship, sharing, trust. This is not always possible, to be sure, but it is certainly better to seek mutual trust than mere tolerance.

Multiple perspectives might be seen as leading to conflict. [“Strike three!” “You call that a strike? What, are you blind?” “You’re out!” “No, he’s safe!”] However, multiple perspectives can just as easily bring about collaboration and cooperation. They can help us build bridges, not burn them. To return to the parable of the blind men and the elephant, multiple perspectives help us “see” more, and more clearly. This applies equally, of course, to those who are “blinded” by prejudice, or whose vision is at least curtailed or clouded by it.

Naturally, language makes a huge difference. What we choose to call someone, especially when we do not share their viewpoint, is often the factor that determines if our perspectives initiate accord or discord. Positions, and whole debates, can be framed in differing terms depending on the vocabulary one uses. For example, one side says “prolife” versus “proabortion,” another says “antiabortion” versus “pro-choice.” Similarly, consider the difference between “man and wife” versus “husband and wife.”

“Communicating Common Ground” is a comprehensive national service-learning initiative, jointly sponsored by the National Communication Association, the American Association for Higher Education, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and Campus Compact, that celebrates diversity and combats prejudice across the United States (Deal et al., 2003). More than thirty colleges and community groups have CCG programs. My college’s team, comprising volunteer faculty, students, and community members, seeks to provide a multicultural, multi-perspective education for students at a local public middle school where, as in many settings, “minority” students do not interact freely or easily with the “majority” population. The aim is not to broker an uneasy truce between differing parties—each situated on separate grounds—so that they will merely tolerate each other, but rather to bridge divides and thereby connect multiple groups, social, racial, ethnic, etc., into one. A surefire strategy is to begin by focusing not on differences but rather on similarities, to find mutual interests and shared qualities that are likely, in the end, to be more important than any minor differences. There’s no one else exactly like you, is there? The things that make you unique are important, but not as much as the things that unite us. And what works for people, individually and collectively, can also work for disciplines of study.

As a metadisciplinary perspective enables one to supersede disciplines, a multidisciplinary perspective allows one to connect one discipline to another, and to ford the rifts that often isolate disparate fields. In today’s world, such gulfs may be technological or even terminological. For example, the word “normal” means “usual” in most situations, but not in various specialized fields. In physics and mathematics “normal” means perpendicular. In biology it means “natural.” To a psychologist it means average or typical, and conjures an image of a bell-shaped curve (a “normal” distribution of data points). To a chemist “normal” describes a straight, unbranched chain of atoms or standardized solution by volume and solute weight. To a well-rounded mind fully educated in the liberal arts the correct definition, of course, should be “all of the above.”

A few regrettable teachers feel their job is to remold the minds of students, to impart their own views so to ensure that when students leave, they have been inculcated in the wise ways of their instructor—told what to believe, if not why. But we shouldn’t expect young people to believe and feel the same way about everything their parents or teachers do, and we certainly shouldn’t see this as a goal of education. Teaching involves both give and take; the best teachers learn a great deal from their charges. To be entrusted with the custody of young minds is an awesome responsibility. To fail to take something from these minds is nearly as great a catastrophe as to fail to teach our students how to use those minds.

Indeed, it is vitally important to spend time speaking to others with whom we disagree, for this is how one genuinely learns. In this way we not only learn about others' ideas and opinions, with which we may strongly disagree, but this also helps us to crystallize and articulate more clearly our own views. We learn much more about ourselves and our worldviews when speaking with others with whom we deeply disagree.

What if a student complains that tolerance itself is too much to ask for, that he or she not only rejects, for example, the idea of homosexual marriage, but that his or her religion condemns it out of hand? How can two such opposing viewpoints seek conciliation if there is not even mutual tolerance, let alone mutual respect? The answer, again, is that we don't need to agree with everyone on everything, and we shouldn't expect to agree with everyone on everything—the world would be a boring place indeed if everyone thought the same way. But we do need to live with everyone else. Humans are the most social of species; we cannot live alone. Just as multiple perspectives enable us to live fuller, more rewarding lives for ourselves, they better enable us to interrelate with and contribute to the community of citizens to which we all belong. Pigeonholing is lazy thinking, whether we are categorizing and isolating (often marginalizing) people or ideas alike.

ON UNCOMFORTABLE EDUCATION, AND WHY PAIN IS A GOOD THING

Despite the mantra that every coach is fond of yelling, “No pain, no gain,” it is possible to gain something without pain. However, this is not to say that pain is necessarily a bad thing. Indeed, pain is a good thing—it can save you, as it indicates that something is wrong. Pain can tell you that your appendix is about to burst, for example, or that your heart is not beating properly. It can signal infection or tissue damage. Were it not for this pain, which warns us to seek medical treatment, we could surely die. Just as fear can be beneficial, by preventing us from entering a dangerous situation, pain, or at the very least discomfort, sends a helpful warning that we must heed. It is important not to confuse the pain, or the symptoms, with the root problem (illness or injury) itself. In both physiological and psychological contexts, pain tells us something is wrong. “Stop! Don't do that any more! Get help now!” Only masochists would argue that pain is truly desirable in and of itself, but to the extent that it warns us of discomfort, pain provides a very valuable service. In short, pain can be a good thing.

So what does this have to do with college honors education, and with a metadisciplinary perspective in particular? Simply put, education need not be—perhaps should not be—comfortable. Students need to see new things. We as educators try to make things easy, often too easy, for our students. We often focus too much on making things simple for and relevant to our students. Rather than simply bringing something to them, we need to bring them to it.

One might cynically aver that modern Western society revolves around comfort and complacency. We worship and promote all things consumer and capitalistic, the lowest common denominator, the vulgar and crude, in sum, all things non-intellectual

and non-spiritual. This may be fine for Hollywood or Madison Avenue, but it is hardly the goal of any educational institution, where the object is to raise, not lower, the level of discourse. Only by forcing students to confront and reconsider their beliefs—most of which they have held for years, and many of which they have never really thought about since they were acquired from parents, peers, and television figures—can we get them to see other views, other values, and other “hard” truths that are neither intuitive, straightforward, nor untroubling.

What’s wrong with a comfortable education? Simply put, if a group of people are just sitting, nodding, agreeing with everything they hear, then they are not learning anything. As the saying goes, “If there are two of us in a room, and we both agree on everything, then one of us is redundant.”

Many practical benefits derive from an “uncomfortable” education. At some colleges entering students are required to choose a major; they may even apply, before matriculating, for a specific major. This no doubt pleases parents who see a college degree as a ticket to a lucrative (or even any) career, but sadly it ensures that students will have a very narrow education, particularly if students enter a preprofessional field rather than one of the traditional liberal arts or sciences. Of course, most graduates learn that job descriptions and duties don’t fit neatly into the traditional disciplines studied in college. Studies have shown that most top business leaders do not hold undergraduate degrees in business; instead a majority earn liberal arts degrees in such majors as English, psychology, religion, or chemistry (Camenson et al., 1997). At many liberal arts institutions, including my own, at least half of a student’s credit hours are taken to satisfy core distribution requirements. This is not to say such students don’t complete a specialized curriculum in a major, but rather that non-major “electives” fulfill basic and important subject areas, providing a solid foundation in which to ground one’s accumulated knowledge. This may be the old model, “a little bit of everything,” but if we can succeed in connecting all areas, a truly coherent, systemic metadisciplinary education emerges. Once again, unity arises from diversity.

In a very general sense, there are three things that everyone learns, that everyone has to learn, with a liberal arts college education. The first is what the world is like—how the world works—scientifically, socioeconomically, politically, historically, culturally, and so on. The second thing one must learn is what one’s place in that world will be; not merely how one earns a paycheck, but what one’s worldview will be philosophically, spiritually, and socially. Finally, the third thing one gains from a liberal arts education is a suite of skills—critical thinking, reading, writing, etc.—that better enables one to see and deal with the world, and to ensure the attainment of one’s chosen place in it. Much of this learning necessarily occurs outside the classroom. The true value of a metadisciplinary liberal arts honors education is that it offers the clearest, broadest view of the world and the most direct approach to finding one’s place in it.

Another way to assess the value of a metadisciplinary education is to see the weaknesses of a narrow education. Consider first that the average college student changes majors at least once, if not several times, so that choosing a college based on a particular major is always a bad idea, particularly if an institution is not strong in

other fields as well. Second, bear in mind that the average worker today, unlike that of a generation or two ago, changes careers several times during his lifetime, even if he stays with the same employer, which is unlikely. Thus training for a single specific career, especially at the undergraduate level, is typically an unwise plan. Finally, consider that many of today's hottest jobs (information technology, biotechnology, etc.) are in fields that couldn't be taught in college fifteen years ago because these fields didn't yet exist! By the same token it is grossly unrealistic to expect to prepare students today for tomorrow's fields, which are, if existent at all, still in their infancy. Hindsight may be 20/20, but even the best foresight is seldom so clear. The bottom line, then, is that the multiple perspectives offered by a broad metadisciplinary education typically provide the safest bet for long-term job security. Instead of training narrowly for a specific job, a multidisciplinary education provides one with a collection of highly useful and marketable skills: critical and creative thinking; solid writing, reading, public speaking, and other communication skills; understanding of different cultures and traditions; basic background in history, literature, and other essential areas of study that prepare one for any career. This is a simple message that most faculty know all too well, but one that more administrators, parents, and students and prospective students need to hear. A metadisciplinary curriculum does indeed prepare one for a career, but it goes a step better, preparing students for *any and all careers* they will encounter.

When asked why they are in college, students give a variety of responses. Most will say they are there to earn a degree or to get a job. Many will say they were expected to attend college after high school. Some might say, perhaps jokingly, perhaps not, that they are there to have fun and attend parties. The truth in most cases is probably a combination of these reasons. However, few college students will likely say that they are beginning, or continuing, a lifelong process of real-world, whole-life learning. Yet this is precisely what a metadisciplinary perspective entails.

I began this essay with a series of analogies for the metaphorical journey that students take, such as climbing a mountain. If we wish to graduate students as fully-fledged, independently capable mountain climbers, surely we do them no good by carrying them to the top of the peak by ourselves. It may be a tough, tiring climb to the top—they may see that the slopes are littered with the bodies of those who did not survive the journey to graduation—and when they reach it, they may see a vast expanse of many more mountains to be surmounted in the course of their personal and professional lifetimes. As Pope (1711) noted, "Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise." Still, at least our graduates will know they can climb such mountains on their own.

SOME PRACTICAL ADVICE ON ELEPHANT OBSERVATION

Diversity should be a goal on both sides of every classroom, not only for students but also for faculty. This doesn't simply mean having a diverse faculty body—it means bringing multiple viewpoints, principally by having multiple instructors, into the same classroom. Hampden-Sydney's introductory honors courses are meta- or

interdisciplinary seminars taught by at least two and sometimes three instructors from different college “divisions” (humanities, social sciences, natural sciences). These special topics courses vary widely in content, but our honors students always see first-hand how scholars in different fields tackle a particular subject, whether it be bioethics, science fiction, critical thinking, or another of dozens of topics taught in the past two decades. [We offer three such seminars per year.] This approach brings obvious staffing concerns (it is hard enough to find one person to teach a course), but all involved—students, faculty, and administration—agree that the payoff is certainly worth the cost. [Our upper-level honors courses are normally taught by one instructor but must focus on an interdisciplinary topic. For more on interdisciplinary honors curricula, see Schuman (1989).]

Even if a course has a single instructor, guest speakers not only bring a welcome change from the student perspective but also introduce new viewpoints to the classroom. Even in a traditional “lecture”-style class, encourage or require student participation and collaboration. Don’t simply permit students to make comments. Force them to contribute. Help them to take charge of the classroom environment. Make their education active, not passive. Remember too that since honors education often involves “real-life” residential learning (Knobel, 2002), a “classroom” need not be delimited by four walls.

There are occasions, to be sure, when additional perspectives offer not a clearer but rather a cloudier view. For instance, at virtually any time diet books comprise roughly a third of the list of New York Times nonfiction bestsellers. Dozens of such diet books appear each year. Not all become bestsellers, but clearly there is much money to be made in this market. Yet if any one of these diet books offered genuinely sage advice there should never be a need for another such book to be published. Obviously, this is not the case. There may or may not be a kernel of truth to each book’s view, but in fact all this multitude of similar books is likely to do, besides raise oodles of cash for joyful writers and publishers, is confuse the general public. Surely everyone who writes (and most everyone who reads) such a diet book recognizes the truth of the simple declaration that “To lose fat one must burn more calories than one ingests; therefore, eat better and exercise more.” Such a statement would seem to be self-evident. Thus if people were truly serious about losing weight there would be no need for this profusion of competing advice books. One lesson: While it (almost) never hurts to listen to more opinions, it sometimes doesn’t help. Another: A comprehensive, all-encompassing view helps one to see the forest for the trees.

Again, an educator’s job is not to make things too easy for students. Look up the word “responsibility” in any dictionary and you’ll find multiple meanings. One refers to a duty or obligation or burden—something that one must do such as take out the trash, feed the cat, do one’s homework, study for the test, etc, and for which one is held accountable or answerable. Another definition of responsibility refers to the character trait of accountability, reliability, trustworthiness, and conscientiousness. This is a clear manifestation of maturity: being able to act on one’s own and understanding and accepting the penalties for failure to do so. There is an unmistakable causal connection between these two meanings. Accepting and fulfilling responsibilities makes one a responsible person. The more broadly varied the responsibilities,

the more likely that one will become responsible. A metadisciplinary education better enables students to mature and prepare for the world outside college.

Beginning at a very young age, today's students are schooled at home, and just about everywhere else, by television. This is not an entirely bad thing. Children pick up trivial tidbits and esoteric factoid minutiae, snippets of geography and history, morsels of popular culture. However, this light fare often leaves them starved for a more substantial diet replete with intellectual, moral, and spiritual fulfillment. The word intellectual is not necessarily synonymous with academic, for students learn a lot outside of class, and spirituality should not be solely equated with religion. Nonetheless, most students, raised on a steady diet of pop ephemera and instant gratification, are typically hungry for something more filling, even if they won't readily admit it. One thing students need is a broader framework upon which to hang all their apparently disconnected bits knowledge. This is precisely what a metadisciplinary education provides.

In my field, biology, as in other disciplines, there is no longer a single conference or journal that "covers" the entire discipline, as there was a century ago; indeed, there are thousands of specialized splinter groups and publications. Sadly, it is impossible to learn everything there is to know about biology today. But a biologist can always communicate with and seek the input of others, so as to build the most complete, comprehensive, coherent, concise picture possible. In other words, our metaphorical elephant is too large for anyone to examine in its entirety, but via metadisciplinary, multiperspective study anyone can learn of every aspect of the whole animal.

Further, I honestly cannot teach biology without making constant reference to economics, public policy and government, psychology, history, literature, philosophy, religion, art, modern and classical languages, especially Greek and Latin, and so on, not to mention physics, chemistry, and mathematics. As a firm believer in metadisciplinary education, I know that all these subjects are intimately related. When I discuss food webs, nutrient cycling, or energy transfer in ecosystems I can't help but point out myriad implications for human society. Not only do I feel a need to share this intricate web of interconnected, interwoven fields with students, but I know I would do them a grave disservice as (potentially) future biologists and (certainly) future citizens by depriving them of this knowledge. No matter what they do upon graduation from college, they will need to know about the complex ramifications of genetic testing, of environmental impact, and of so much more.

The challenge is that most textbooks are written by specialists, and many of the previous teachers our students have encountered have been taught to focus narrowly on their subjects—or mandated to prepare their students for very specific standardized tests—at the expense of such multi- or metadisciplinary perspectives. Never mind that science taught without a healthy helping of history, philosophy, and literature is obscenely sterile and mind-numbingly dull; I would go so far as to say that one cannot learn science independently of such subjects. This is especially significant since many science students (particularly in introductory-level courses) will not become scientists but will instead pursue careers in business, law, service, entertainment, etc.

At the same time, however, I would passionately argue that humanities and social science courses must involve and at least make reference to science, this not despite the obvious fact that such disparate fields of study employ strikingly different research methodologies, but indeed because of it. Close associations, correlations, and connections, causal, historical, linguistic, political, economic, and so on, exist between all fields of study. Our world is one great big place—a world-sized elephant, if you will—and to do it justice we must not see each part as a disconnected bit, but rather as a piece of the whole. When my students say, “Can I see that? Can I see the elephant?,” I know what they really mean. They don’t merely want to observe it from a distance. They want to pick it up, turn it all around, and explore every nook and cranny of it, every bump and protuberance—something they have learned to do from infancy. That may not be the only way to learn, but all our life experience surely teaches that it is the best way.

Teach the virtues of multiple perspectives by example. Be a positive role model. Don’t be indecisive or ambiguous, but make clear that the world is not fashioned from simple black and white hues. Vow to seek, hear, and consider as many different points of view as you can on any and every subject. Explain to students that the goal is not to be pulled in multiple directions—one can only walk, at one time, in one direction—but one can acknowledge that there are other legitimate paths. As the opening quotation from Ralph Ellison attests, I strive neither to forget nor to file away—as distinct, disparate threads—any of the views I hear. Rather, I endeavor to collect as many perspectives as possible, and then combine them into one coherent if occasionally unwieldy assemblage. Is this difficult? Is this exasperating? Is this often counterintuitive? Yes, yes, and yes. But the end result, both intellectually and practically, is knowing that while truth is seldom pretty (just as life is seldom fair), one can, if one tries hard enough, see as much truth at one time as possible. Elephants are big indeed, but no one expects to master them quickly. It takes a lifetime to do them justice, but I’m not worried: a lifetime is what it will take. A truly metadisciplinary college experience is not the end of an education—it’s just the beginning.

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Fostering Microenvironments for Teaching and Learning: Findings of a Study of Program Quality in Honors Programs

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INTRODUCTION

Honors education has long enjoyed a reputation for adding something unique to undergraduate education, and the advantages are touted widely, but there has been limited examination of quality in undergraduate honors education. Previous efforts have typically stopped short of considering program quality as it relates to student learning. Instead, program administrators and other researchers have examined the topic from the perspective of a single stakeholder group, focusing primarily upon student satisfaction or administrative concerns, such as enrollment management or program development. To be sure, these are important considerations—but it is becoming even more critical for stakeholders in honors education to communicate the efficacy of honors programs and the resources necessary to develop and support a high-quality program. Present economic conditions in the United States have constrained college and university budgets, challenging all programs to do more with less. In addition, because resources for undergraduate honors education are allocated to a relatively small number of students, some critics argue that this is unfair because these students are already advantaged by secondary and higher education systems. These critics (Sperber, 2000) charge that generous scholarships awarded to honors students regardless of financial need would better serve regular undergraduates who demonstrate financial need. The types of experiences designed for honors students can also be costly, especially smaller classes or residential programs. Students, faculty and administrators need to know more about the attributes of high-quality honors programs in order to respond to these critics and make informed decisions about the appropriation of funding, faculty time, campus space, and related resources.

The purpose of this study was to develop an original theory of high-quality undergraduate honors programs, i.e., an ideal type, in order to advance our knowledge and understanding of undergraduate honors education, and ultimately, to improve undergraduate teaching and learning.

¹ Material for this article was drawn from the dissertation *A Grounded Theory of High-Quality Undergraduate Honors Programs* (Author, 2003).

This, in turn, will provide students, faculty, and administrators with a foundation upon which they can thoughtfully reexamine their expectations of honors education, assess their own programs, better align resources and evaluation tools, and, if warranted, create an agenda for change.

For the purpose of this study¹, high-quality honors programs were defined as those programs that “contribute to enriching learning experiences for students that have positive effects on their growth and development” (Haworth and Conrad, 1997, p. 15). Haworth and Conrad developed this definition after extensive review and synthesis of the literature on academic program quality and in preparation for their comprehensive study of program quality in master’s degree programs. The definition was selected for use in this study because it emphasizes both student learning and development and accommodates the diversity of honors program types.

Developing a theory of high-quality undergraduate honors programs was accomplished by inviting and examining the perspectives of students, faculty and administrators in four honors programs at two large, public doctoral/research universities (based upon Carnegie Classification 2000 edition) in two states located in the Midwest. The following question guided all aspects of the research process: “What are the attributes of a high-quality honors program?” Drawing upon and extending the work of Haworth and Conrad (p. 22), three sub-questions were considered throughout the study to enhance the identification of program attributes. First, what steps or actions do stakeholders take to implement or enact the attribute? Second, in what ways do these actions enhance students’ learning experiences? Third, what positive effects, or outcomes, do these learning experiences have on students’ growth and development?

BACKGROUND

Despite the prominence accorded undergraduate honors education in the literature advertising colleges and universities, there is a paucity of scholarly attention. A considerable amount of attention is given to K-12 programs for “talented and gifted” students but there is relatively little mention of programs and related opportunities for high-ability students in higher education. A significant source of publications remains the National Collegiate Honors Council, including this journal and the numerous monographs designed for practitioners, addressing topics related to program design, delivery, and evaluation (for example, Reihman, et. al., 1990). Major areas of evaluation include recruitment, attrition, and course satisfaction. Braid and Long’s monograph Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning (2000) offers a comprehensive review of the National Honors Semester initiative of the National Collegiate Honors Council and describes various models for active learning. The NCHC has also published lists of essential components of honors programs and expected outcomes (Fuijs and Clark, 2000, p. 3) drawn from previous work in related areas of research and the observations and experiences of faculty and administrators who participate in honors education. Finally, Peterson’s Honors Programs (Digby, 1997) offers an encyclopedic guide to honors programs in the United States and England. While these publications offer a rich source of information, they are largely descriptive, rather than the product of original research.

A second, and also growing, area represented in the literature is honors education at community colleges (for example, Schuyler, 1999 and Outcalt, 1999). A third area includes essays and commentaries on undergraduate honors education and descriptions of specific program models (Austin, 1986; Friedman and Jenkins-Friedman, 1986; Robinson, 1997). This area also includes research on personality traits, characteristics, and learning needs of honors students (Ender, 2000). Two dissertations (Capuana, 1993 and Dehart, 1993) present case studies of honors programs and provide comparisons between programs. Related to this group is a body of literature representing specialized combined degree programs for honors students, including but not limited to Baccalaureate-M.D. degree programs (Arnold, 2000; Albanese, VanEyck, Huggett, and Barnett, 1997; Epstein et al., 1994) and co-terminal bachelor's and master's degree programs (Robinson, 1997).

While the body of literature specific to honors education is still expanding, this study intersects with many important topics in higher education, including student development, collaborative learning, problem based learning, learning communities, student recruitment, student and faculty satisfaction, curricular quality and innovation and program quality. Of this list, two areas in particular—student development and program quality—merit attention here.

The literature on student development theory augments our understanding of honors education because theories of student development offer insight into the ways in which students, including those who participate in honors programs, develop identity, adjust to college life, adopt new skills to foster learning, create meaning about new experiences, set goals, persist, and succeed in college. Previous research has illustrated the connections between student development and learning and these connections are essential to understanding the attributes of high-quality honors programs.

Chickering's (1969) seminal work on the theory of identity development, later revised (Chickering and Reiser, 1993), describes seven vectors that characterize students' psycho-social development during college: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, establishing identity, developing interpersonal relationships, developing purpose, and developing integrity. Chickering also offers recommendations for fostering positive development, such as providing a curriculum that invites diverse perspectives and opportunities for students to interact with faculty.

Related to perspectives on identity formation are views on self-efficacy and self-concept. Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) addresses students' beliefs in their abilities to accomplish tasks. Self-concept (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991) is a personal measure of ability or competence in comparison with others. These theories, along with other perspectives on "self," explore beliefs that contribute to students' academic performance and their relationship to other factors such as the learning environment.

Research on learning environments has examined the significance of factors such as student organizations, student activities, residence halls, class size, student-teacher interaction and student-student interaction (Silverman and Casazza, 2000). Astin (1993) identified 190 institutional characteristics, analyzed their influence on

student development, and found that learning and student success are positively related to involvement in college. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) and others have investigated student involvement in organizations and extracurricular activities and found positive effects on the development of self-concept and educational persistence. Haworth and Conrad (1997) developed a theory of program quality that is predicated upon the mutual engagement of students, faculty and administrators. Their research identified five clusters of program attributes that contribute positively to student growth and development. The five clusters are: diverse and engaged participants, participatory cultures, interactive teaching, connected program requirements, and adequate resources (p. 28). Mentoring, an aspect of interactive teaching, has received considerable attention in the literature, including longitudinal research by Astin (1993) that indicates mentoring contributes to students' satisfaction with the college experience.

The studies described above, along with others, represent a growing body of evidence supporting claims that student-student and student-faculty engagement enhance student growth and development. These have enlarged our understanding of student success and offer a foundation for examining the attributes of high-quality undergraduate honors programs.

The literature on academic quality is diverse and includes a number of literature reviews—but only a handful of empirical studies have helped to fill the gap in our understanding of academic program quality as experienced by program stakeholders or participants. The majority of these studies examine measurable characteristics of departments or programs that are correlated with programs perceived as high-quality programs. Contributing to this vein of research are reputational rankings and objective indicator rankings completed by faculty members identified by researchers as experts who presumably possess knowledge of programs and departments beyond their own (Webster, 1986).

Support is growing for a perspective on quality that is both multidimensional and multilevel. This perspective (Conrad and Blackburn, 1985; Fairweather and Brown, 1991) holds that quality is a function of the complex interplay of factors across multiple dimensions and levels (e.g., program and institutional levels). Instead of accepting the traditional views of quality, Astin (1985) suggested that institutions should focus on an approach to excellence that he calls "talent development." Put simply, he asserts that colleges and universities should view quality as the development of students' talent. Nordvall and Braxton (1996) criticized the traditional approaches (reputational, resources, and value-added) for defining quality in undergraduate higher education and introduced an alternative definition of academic quality. They posited that quality is dependent upon the alignment of the goals for instruction, the level of student ability and the level of understanding of course content.

Building upon the recognition that program quality cannot be evaluated by examining a single dimension, and coupled with a growing belief that quality is linked to both environment and experience, recent efforts to understand academic program quality have engaged multiple approaches to inquiry to better explain this phenomenon. In order to develop a theory of high-quality master's degree programs, Haworth and Conrad (1997) engaged qualitative research methods to systematically

collect data from program stakeholders and identify attributes of high-quality programs that are linked specifically to student learning experiences and positively affect students' growth and development. Donald and Denison (2001) also articulated a need for additional research that incorporates the perspectives of multiple stakeholders in higher education. They conducted a study that examined students' perceptions of criteria for student quality and concluded that students' perceptions of quality are more closely aligned with Astin's theory of talent development rather than with traditional input or resource perspectives on quality.

As this review of the literature reveals, there is still much work to do to augment our understanding of academic program quality as experienced by program stakeholders or participants. Bogue and Saunders, writing in the preface to The Evidence for Quality (1992), remind us that many of the experiences and outcomes of a college education cannot be measured precisely and pose this question: "Where is the instrument powerful and sensitive enough to translate every beautiful moment into numbers?" (p. xiv). Their question, while admittedly powerful as a rhetorical device, also offers a challenge to those who wish to study academic program quality.

RESEARCH METHOD

In keeping with the intention to learn from stakeholders and understand how they interpret and assign meaning to their experiences with honors education, and consonant with the goal of *developing* a grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) of quality in honors education, this study was designed and conducted following the principles of qualitative research. This section will provide an overview of the research method used in this study, and additional information may be found in the technical appendix.

THE STUDY DESIGN

While it would have been easier logistically to consider just one honors program at a particular institution, a multisubject, multisite design was selected to reflect the broad array of programs and experiences under the rubric of honors education. This design also allows for the consideration of a greater number and range of data sources, and contributes to the transferability and generalizability of findings (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998, p. 63), should further study occur. However, the design of this study could not possibly embrace all of the variations in program design or institutional characteristics, and there is a need for future research to address these considerations.

In order to enhance heterogeneity (substantive representativeness) at the institutional level, four cases (honors programs) were selected at two public, research/dor-toral universities in two states located in the Midwest. The four cases, and the reasons for their selection, are described in the next section. The programs were *not* selected for perceived reputations or any such identification as high-quality programs. Readers will note that all participants in the study were assured of the confidentiality of their responses according to human subjects/IRB guidelines. As an additional measure of confidentiality, especially in consideration of the small size of some

programs and their staff, and the frank and sensitive nature of some discussions, pseudonyms were assigned to each program and institution and are used in reporting the findings of this study.

THE FOUR CASES (PROGRAMS)

Case One:

Case one is a small honors program located in a school of business and was selected because it offered the opportunity to examine honors education in a professional school. This case will be referred to as the Honors Program in the School of Business at Midwest University. Approximately 40 students participate in this honors program each year. Promotional literature for this program indicates it “seeks to provide high-potential students special opportunities for academic challenge, social interaction, and career development.” The most significant benefit of this program, as described in program literature, is the “opportunity to work closely with students and faculty who love to learn.” Students may enroll in honors courses or undertake “individually tailored research projects where students work closely with other high-potential students and faculty members.”

Case Two:

Case two is a large honors program in a college of letters and science and is the largest honors program at this particular university. This case will be referred to as the Honors Program in the College of Letters and Science at Midwest University. Approximately 1,000-1,400 students participate in this honors program each year. This case was selected because the program enrolls a large and diverse number of students who may elect to pursue honors recognition in the liberal arts, in the major, or both (comprehensive honors). Promotional literature about the program includes this statement describing the program’s goals:

By bringing students and professors closer together in small classes and individual research settings, the Honors Program fosters a feeling of community even as students push themselves to explore the very frontiers of knowledge.

According to program literature, students who wish to earn honors in the liberal arts must complete at least 24 honors credits “in broadly distributed subjects ranging from the humanities to the social and natural sciences.” Students seeking honors in the major apply to their major department and follow department-specific requirements. Candidates for honors in the major also write an original research thesis or complete a culminating project as directed by the department.

This program is known for its extensive array of research and social opportunities. Students in the program are encouraged to apply for residence in the university’s residential college, but this particular residence hall is not organized under the auspices of the honors program and honors students are not guaranteed a place in the residential college.

Case Three:

Case three is a mid-size honors program in a college of agricultural and life sciences. This case will be referred to as the Honors Program in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at Midwest University. Approximately 150-200 students participate in this honors program each year. Promotional material about the program explains the program is for students who seek the following:

A challenging and intellectually rewarding undergraduate experience . . .the program has the flexibility to meet the unique needs of each student, challenge the mind of the independent thinker, and stimulate the curiosity needed for continued learning.

This program was selected because in addition to offering honors in the major (with some exceptions), it also offers options for honors in research and individualized honors. All students are required to write a senior honors thesis and present the results at the college's annual research forum.

Case Four:

Case four is an honors college open to students in virtually every department. This case will be referred to as the Honors College at Central Midwest State University. This honors college advertises flexibility and freedom for students to design their course of study, including a mix of honors and non-honors courses. Program documents provide this description of the academic environment and experiences:

Honors courses and sections . . . are much smaller than their non-honors counterparts. Material is usually covered in greater depth, and there is more classroom interaction in general. The pace is faster and more challenging, since students are surrounded by other students of the same caliber, and, often, the same interests.

This honors college is described as an "umbrella" and students are allowed to select any major, complete two majors, or complete two degrees. The honors college does not require a senior thesis but some departments have thesis requirements. Honors students may elect to pursue independent study or research that may contribute to a senior honors thesis. In addition, this program includes a residential component. Honors students are invited to live on an honors floor in one of five residence halls and rooms are assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis.

SAMPLING

Theoretical sampling (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 183) was engaged as an overall strategy for the selection of participants and provided flexibility in meeting the needs of developing the theory. Program directors were queried for their suggestions and access to names of junior and senior students enrolled in honors programs and faculty members who currently teach honors courses or have taught honors courses within the past two years. Senior students were the primary focus (among students) because of the likelihood that they had enrolled in a greater number of

honors courses and participated in a greater number of honors activities. Likewise, they were more familiar with non-honors courses and had encountered a greater number of experiences as college students. After establishing contact with an initial group of participants, the researcher expanded the number of participants by employing snowball sampling (see Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Using this strategy, the researcher asks participants for the names of additional individuals whose participation could contribute to the emerging theory.

DATA SOURCES AND PROCEDURES

The primary sources of data were interview transcripts and documentary evidence. On-site interviews (n=58) were conducted with students, faculty, and administrators in the four honors programs between February 2002 and June 2002. The final number of participants was 58, and the distribution included 6 program administrators, 19 faculty and 33 students. Additional information about the distribution of participants may be found in the technical appendix. Each interview was approximately 60 to 90 minutes long. The interviews were conducted as dialogues and questions were primarily open-ended, with probes for clarification. The discussion and questions were guided by topics selected to address the research question (“What are the attributes of a high-quality honors program?”) and three sub-questions, but they were not used as a formal interview protocol. When prompting was required, the interviewer posed questions such as “Where did the real learning occur in this program?” or “What do you think has been the most valuable aspect of this program?” With only one exception, each interview was audio recorded and transcribed to provide an accurate and enduring record of the interview. Additional sources of data included documents produced by honors programs for current students and faculty members, documents produced by universities for prospective students, and web sites designed for current and prospective students. The researcher’s personal field notes, including observations, reflections, descriptive notes and analytical memos, were yet another source of data.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously and continued for the duration of the study. Prior to beginning data analysis, decision rules were established to enable the systematic identification of the attributes. First, each attribute had to be considered important by participants in at least three of the four programs (preferably all four) in the sample, and second, each attribute had to be considered important by participants in at least two of the three participant groups in the sample.

The process of data analysis followed the four stages of the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Conrad, 1982) and these are described in greater detail in the technical appendix. In the first stage, the researcher read the transcripts from the 57 interviews that had been audio recorded and the notes from the single interview that was not recorded. Program documents and field notes were also reviewed at this time. Following the decision rules established earlier, data incidents (e.g., references such as “welcoming environment” or “faculty champion”) that

occurred in multiple programs or across multiple participant groups were recorded. This was accomplished by reviewing incidents at the program level and also at the participant group level. Incidents where interviewees mentioned attributes of high-quality programs that they believed were *absent* from their program were also recorded. As the researcher proceeded with this preliminary round of coding, data were coded into categories aligned with the research question and three sub-questions: attribute, actions taken to enact the attribute, barriers to enacting the attribute, consequences for learning experiences and the effects on students' growth and development. At the conclusion of this stage of data analysis, nineteen attributes of high-quality undergraduate honors programs were tentatively identified.

In the second stage of data analysis, the researcher returned to the code file and the interview data and searched for evidence to support or disprove the preliminary list of attributes. Evidence was sought to refine the original attribute or even discover a new attribute that might have been missed during the initial stage of data analysis. During this second stage the researcher also began to examine the data, across programs and participant groups, to glean additional details about the attributes and the actions, consequences and effects that shaped them. Through careful review and constant comparison of the data incidents, a rough theory of program quality was developed. After refining the list and discovering areas of overlap between two or more attributes, the initial list of nineteen attributes was trimmed to twelve. The names of some of the attributes were altered at this point so that they would provide a more accurate description of the functions they performed.

In the third stage of data analysis, the theory was delimited and tested by reviewing the code file and examining the "fit" between the data and the emerging theory. When the researcher was no longer able to find additional data incidents to support or refute the emerging theory, the requirements of "theoretical saturation" (an explanation is provided in the technical appendix) were satisfied and the twelve attributes were grouped into three thematic areas, or clusters. Finally, a summary of the theory was developed, including descriptions of the actions taken by program participants to enact the attribute, the consequences for learning experiences, and the effects upon students' growth and development. This summary was instrumental for undertaking the fourth stage of data analysis: writing the theory.

Careful attention was given to the trustworthiness, or credibility of findings and interpretations. A detailed research log with memos and reflexive notes on the research process was maintained to insure the accuracy of the record and heighten the researcher's awareness of subjectivity. Interview notes were constructed soon after completing an interview session and this enhanced the production of "thick description," (Geertz, 1973) an additional means to insure validity. In addition, periodic member checks and the triangulation of multiple data sources were also used to ensure validity.

FINDINGS

THE ENVIRONMENTAL THEORY OF HIGH-QUALITY UNDERGRADUATE HONORS PROGRAMS

The theory of high-quality honors programs developed in this study is described as an “environmental theory of high-quality honors programs” because it is anchored in the idea that “ideal” honors programs are microenvironments for teaching and learning in which program participants interact with each other and take specific actions that affect this environment. These actions, in turn, have consequences for students’ learning experiences, and ultimately, their growth and development. Figure 1 summarizes the environmental theory. This theory of program quality was constructed from the findings of the study, specifically the 12 attributes that characterize an “ideal” high-quality honors program. To review, the researcher identified the attributes by analyzing the interview and documentary data, identifying data incidents that addressed the research questions and met the requirements of the decision rules, and then testing and refining the list of attributes that emerged. The attributes are organized into three thematic clusters:

- A culture animated by a shared commitment to individual and collaborative teaching and learning;
- Stewardship of resources;
- Continuous environmental monitoring and adaptation.

The three clusters and their respective attributes will be discussed in the next section. Because of the large volume of data collected throughout the study, it is not possible to print the entire set of responses provided by participants. However, tables detailing the theory are provided in this section and these present a summary of the responses addressing the research question and three sub-questions. Put simply, the narrative provided in the table represents the responses relevant to each attribute and question.

A culture animated by a shared commitment to individual and collaborative teaching and learning

This cluster of attributes in the theory demonstrates that high-quality honors programs, as microenvironments, develop their own culture—one that may be distinct from the culture for teaching and learning found elsewhere on campus. This micro-culture, as in any ecological system, is both created and influenced by program participants as well as local conditions, resources and program features. A culture animated by a shared commitment to individual and collaborative teaching and learning is fostered through the interplay of six program attributes:

- Customized Learning Experiences
- Purposeful Mentoring
- Learner-Centered Advising
- Open and Inviting Community of Teachers and Learners
- Opportunities to Create New Knowledge
- Shared Responsibility for Teaching and Learning

CUSTOMIZED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Almost from the start of this study it was apparent that customized learning experiences were an integral part of a high-quality honors program. Administrators described altering students' programs to encourage those who wished to pursue custom-tailored projects or course sequences, faculty recalled innovative student projects or theses, and students recounted—often with enthusiasm or satisfaction—learning experiences that would not have been possible without the flexibility offered to individuals by the honors program. Every program included in the sample for this study offered evidence of policies and practices established by program administrators and faculty to enable students to customize learning experiences. For example, at Central Midwest State University, honors students select from honors courses, sections, course options, and research experiences to construct a personalized honors curriculum. Students are expected to complete eight honors experiences over a typical four-year period and they are not required to fulfill the university's undergraduate core curriculum requirements.

Some students even described a transformative effect, i.e., their customized learning experiences introduced them to new topics that, in turn, encouraged them to reconsider their career plans. For example, a biochemistry major in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at Midwest University found her true interest after taking steps to tailor her research experiences. In her words:

I've jumped around, I've been in three different labs and I think that's somewhat better because you get to experience the different sorts of labs and the different things out there. I've worked with animals and cancer and they are totally different things. Just when I had one set of skills . . . I found out I really liked cancer and I might want to go into that, and if I had never left the other lab and gone into cancer, I would never have known that.

In some cases, students described situations where they had anticipated greater flexibility and their disappointment underscored the significance of this attribute. In no small measure, customized learning experiences enhanced their undergraduate learning experiences and positively influenced their growth and development.

PURPOSEFUL MENTORING

Purposeful mentoring emerged as another attribute of high-quality programs. Distinct from academic advising, purposeful mentoring fosters a culture animated by a shared commitment to individual and collaborative teaching and learning by connecting students and faculty in teaching and learning experiences that are typically anchored in research assistantships and thesis projects. Although mentoring can occur without design in myriad venues, the findings of this study indicate that purposeful mentoring in this setting is intentional, ongoing, and responsive to students' needs as they undertake extensive research or writing projects. The consequences for learning experiences are significant: students who feel valued and supported by faculty mentors persist in challenging learning experiences and develop

skills in analysis, problem-solving and laboratory techniques. For example, a nutritional science major at Midwest University explained how her initial anxiety about working in the laboratory dissipated over time as she discussed the progress of her research with her mentor. She commented that when problems arose in lab, “We just talked about how we just don’t know why a lot of the times.” This taught her that “there will be even more of a learning curve” but she said “it will be exciting. I think that at the end of [the research experience], I hope I come away confident and I think I will.”

LEARNER-CENTERED ADVISING

The topic of academic advising ran like an electrical current throughout the interviews conducted for this study. No topic evoked as many impassioned responses from students as this one: Students who were satisfied with their experiences peppered their speech with positive exclamations, while those who found the advising experience lacking were visibly disappointed, and in some cases, downright bitter. It became evident early in the study that students held high expectations for the academic advising experience. More importantly, they often employed an expanded definition of academic advising—a definition shared by many of the faculty and staff who participated in this study. Advising emerged as a critically important attribute and central to creating a culture animated by a shared commitment to individual and collaborative teaching and learning, but it was not simply the quantity of advisors or the accuracy of the advice that mattered. After reviewing the data from across the sample it became clear that *learner-centered* advising was essential to students’ positive growth and development. Instead of limiting the advising experience to a review of rules and requirements, advisors who engage in learner-centered advising take a holistic approach and focus on student learning. In so doing, they encourage students to explore courses and experiences that will complement their degree program. Some of these connections were more abstract. Advisors discussed issues that might be encountered in the field or profession and invited students to begin to formulate their opinion or response. A premedical student at Midwest University described an advising relationship where she discussed connections between her major, a proposed research assistantship, and her future work as a physician. As she recalled:

[W]e talked about the different options and he said that research puts you at a different mindset and especially since I want to become a doctor. He said that as a physician I’m going to be confronted with problems all the time where you can’t find the answer in a textbook and he said if I did the research it would be easier to formulate the questions and understand what’s going on and be able to think of how I could go about solving the question.

The effect of this is significant: Students who find ways to bridge classroom and out-of-classroom learning make connections that lead to career opportunities or graduate study.

OPEN AND INVITING COMMUNITY OF TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

Another attribute of high-quality programs is an open and inviting community of teachers and learners. Because community is a word used liberally, and in wide-ranging contexts, this researcher was especially attentive when discussing this subject in the interviews and later, when examining the data from across the sample. It will come as no surprise to the reader that community, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. A community of teachers and learners might mean a group of students enrolled in an honors section or a close-knit cadre of students participating in a residential, living-learning environment. Given this range of perspectives, the researcher proceeded carefully, searching for evidence about the nature of interaction within the community and the relationship to teaching and learning. What emerged in this study was an interpretation of community that might at times appear loosely organized but one that is critical to creating rich undergraduate learning experiences that enhanced students' growth and development. Illustrating this, a student at Central Midwest State University described how feeling that she was part of the honors community encouraged her to learn from others in the program:

I think that when Honors College students get together, a lot of good ideas circle. And so when you lump us all together . . . it's kind of a good thing for everybody involved, because somebody starts talking to somebody and says, "Oh, I'm doing this," or, "You know, I'm working on this volunteer thing, do you want to come?"

OPPORTUNITIES TO CREATE NEW KNOWLEDGE

Throughout the study, opportunities to create new knowledge emerged as an important attribute of high-quality programs. These opportunities take many forms and are found in classroom, laboratory and field settings. While most of the students interviewed for this study described meaningful experiences where they had participated in the discovery and generation of new knowledge, some did not. This may be due to the choices that students made as program participants (e.g., selecting an honors degree track that did not require a thesis) or the organizational structure of their respective programs. To be sure, the programs included in this study approached the topic of creating new knowledge with varying levels of intentionality. At one end of the spectrum there was a program designed around a series of required research experiences, and at the other end of the spectrum, a program that created pathways to honors degrees that did not include research or thesis requirements. Likewise, students shared examples of course assignments where they were encouraged to pursue questions of interest, either individually or collaboratively. This was not a universal experience, however, and the negative remarks that students shared about "cookbook" labs or uninspiring assignments underscored the importance of this attribute.

Students who have the opportunity to create new knowledge develop in several ways, including gaining confidence in their knowledge and skills and growing more comfortable with the complex and ever-changing nature of research. Their interest in

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the process of discovery mitigates the frustration of failed experiments or faulty equipment. A biochemistry major at Midwest University explained that she had learned how things can go wrong, but also learned a lot about herself:

[Y]ou actually feel like you're doing [something] important . . . like you are creating knowledge. From my research project there are only maybe a handful of papers on the topic that I am doing and in the big picture, with the stuff that I'm doing, could eventually create a cure for cancer or disease. . . . This is new stuff that you are learning, you're discovering what you are capable of doing and you're seeing a possible interest for your future.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

In reviewing the interview and program materials, it became clear that a shared responsibility for teaching and learning is another attribute of high-quality programs. Programs that invite students, faculty and staff to be both teachers and learners help to create a culture animated by a shared commitment to individual and collaborative teaching and learning that is essential to enhancing students' growth and development. Interviewees from across the sample shared stories of opportunities to reinvent the traditional roles of teacher and learner and, while this was at first new and intimidating for some participants, the outcome was almost always the same. Students who worked in collaborative settings enjoyed learning from each other and those who assumed individual responsibilities for teaching were sometimes astonished to find they had so much to contribute. In this vein, a student who completed an integrated honors biology sequence at Midwest University commented upon the multiple areas of competence he developed during the final course in the sequence. He said the course required the following:

[T]hat kind of team approach where you are given some papers to read, sit down with your team to discuss what it means, have the teacher talk about what it means and then be given a problem set to extend what you learned from the paper, what conclusions can you make.

He acknowledged that this “kind of class takes a lot of extra work, both on the part of the teacher and the T.A.s [teaching assistants], and the students” and concluded, “I thought it was an incredible learning experience, both from the standpoint of learning the information and how to learn, but also learning how to work as a group.”

Additional detail about this cluster and the three sub-questions that enhanced the identification of the attributes is presented in Table 1.

STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

This second cluster of attributes in the theory departs from traditional analyses of resources as “inputs” and the attendant belief that program quality is a function of the characteristics and quantity of inputs. Instead, this cluster of attributes in the theory

Table 1 Cluster One: A Culture Animated by a Shared Commitment to Individual and Collaborative Teaching and Learning

<i>Customized Learning Experiences</i>	Actions Taken by Stakeholders To Enact the Attribute	Consequences for Learning Experiences	Effects upon Students' Growth and Development
	<p>Programs offer students license to design their own academic programs by eliminating prerequisites or core courses; making the senior thesis optional; and/or offering multiple pathways or honors degrees.</p>	<p>Students pursue an honors experience that best fits their major, schedule and learning goals.</p> <p>Students bypass introductory-level courses and select challenging, upper-level or graduate courses.</p>	<p>Students feeling challenged and empowered take responsibility for their learning and are more likely to remain in the program.</p>
	<p>Programs encourage students to design individual or collaborative learning experiences by offering options for honors credit within a course and/or offering honors options in addition to honors courses or sections.</p>	<p>Students who pursue topics of interest engage with the material and seek connections to previous coursework or research.</p>	<p>Students who explore the disciplines are introduced to different topics and new ways of knowing.</p> <p>Having completed individual projects, students gain experience in negotiating project details, creating a schedule and managing their time.</p>
		<p>Increasing schedule flexibility allows students to complement breadth and depth of study.</p>	<p>Having successfully tailored their undergraduate experiences, students are enthusiastic about lifelong learning and approach their post-graduate plans creatively, with less regard for traditional pathways.</p>

Table 1 (cont.) Cluster One: A Culture Animated by a Shared Commitment to Individual and Collaborative Teaching and Learning

	Actions Taken by Stakeholders To Enact the Attribute	Consequences for Learning Experiences	Effects upon Students' Growth and Development
<i>Purposeful Mentoring</i>	Faculty demonstrate interest and care for students by sharing stories from professional experience and introducing students to new material, research or career opportunities.	Students who feel valued and supported by faculty mentors persist in difficult learning experiences and develop skills in analysis, problem-solving and laboratory techniques.	When students feel respected they take ownership of their learning and reexamine their career goals and assumptions about their potential for success.
<i>Learner-Centered Advising</i>	Academic advisors take a holistic approach and focus on student learning rather than limiting discussion to honors program or degree requirements.	Advisors encourage students to explore courses and experiences that will complement their degree program.	Finding ways to bridge classroom and out-of-classroom learning, students make connections that lead to career opportunities or graduate study.
<i>Open and Inviting Community of Teachers and Learners</i>	Programs offer a mix of social and cultural events to extend in-class learning, bring participants together, and offer a venue for discussion.	Students participate more in program activities when they have an especially meaningful connection to other participants.	When students feel connected and part of a community, they are more comfortable sharing ideas and opinions. They are more willing to examine their own beliefs and learn from other participants. Students meet honors students with similar goals and develop friendships outside of the culture of alcohol and parties.

Table 1 (cont.) Cluster One: A Culture Animated by a Shared Commitment to Individual and Collaborative Teaching and Learning

<i>Opportunities to Create New Knowledge</i>	Actions Taken by Stakeholders To Enact the Attribute	Consequences for Learning Experiences	Effects upon Students' Growth and Development
	<p>Programs increase students' access to research by offering research tracks, thesis requirements or summer research programs.</p> <p>Program administrators and faculty coordinate the research placement process to ensure a better match between students and their research interests.</p> <p>Faculty design course activities that require student participation, innovation, and inquiry.</p>	<p>Students who complete research projects or theses apply knowledge acquired in the classroom and forge a direct connection to the material.</p> <p>Students who are involved directly in the teaching and learning process explore topics with creativity.</p>	<p>Having completed research projects, students experience a feeling of accomplishment that inspires confidence to pursue new endeavors.</p> <p>After engaging in research, students learn there are no correct answers or unchanging facts. They are comfortable with ambiguity and interested in the process of discovery.</p> <p>Students who learn actively see the course material come alive and are more likely to retain and apply new information.</p> <p>Students exposed to research early make better-informed career decisions, especially regarding faculty careers.</p>

Table 1 (cont.) Cluster One: A Culture Animated by a Shared Commitment to Individual and Collaborative Teaching and Learning

<p><i>Shared Responsibility for Teaching and Learning</i></p>	<p>Actions Taken by Stakeholders To Enact the Attribute</p> <p>Faculty share responsibility for teaching and learning by inviting students to participate fully in critical dialogue and creating opportunities for students to teach each other.</p>	<p>Consequences for Learning Experiences</p> <p>Students who are respected and valued for their knowledge will invest their time to prepare class presentations, lead and engage in discussions, and learn from each other.</p>	<p>Effects upon Students' Growth and Development</p> <p>When students assume the dual roles of teachers and learners, they consider both perspectives and move beyond traditional assumptions about authority and knowledge.</p> <p>Students who engage in collaborative teaching experiences develop the communication, organizational and planning skills required to work in teams.</p>
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suggests that program quality is dependent not only on the procurement of adequate resources but also a commitment to the thoughtful management of fiscal, human, and physical resources. High-quality honors programs require:

- Procurement and Measured Distribution of Fiscal Resources
- Investment in Human Resources
- Development of Physical Resources

PROCUREMENT AND MEASURED DISTRIBUTION OF FISCAL RESOURCES

The procurement and measured distribution of fiscal resources stands out as another attribute of high-quality programs. Even during periods of fiscal uncertainty, program administrators and faculty engage in actions that demonstrate thoughtful stewardship of fiscal resources. Interviewees across the study explained that while they never had enough funding to accomplish all of their goals for the program, they managed to find ways to secure new sources of funding and allocate those to best enhance students' learning experiences.

INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

Both positive and negative evidence revealed that a program's investment in human resources is another attribute of high-quality programs. While administrators and faculty members representing all of the programs included in this study cited budget constraints that limited the scope of their activities, some departments and programs take a more proactive—and sometimes creative—approach to managing their human resources. For example, some departments find opportunities to offer small honors courses by taking advantage of existing low enrollment courses. A faculty member in the English department at Central Midwest State University described how they successfully introduced a small honors course without increasing the dollar amount:

Now it's fairly easy to offer that kind of class because [this course] is capped at a low number of enrollment. It's an introduction to English for English majors. There's a lot of reading and writing and discussion and it's usually about 25 students. So when we offer an honors version of that course, it's not necessarily more expensive to offer it.

This option depends upon program administrators, faculty members and department chairs who keep honors teaching “on the radar screen” and identify faculty to teach the honors version.

Keeping honors teaching at the forefront is an ongoing task for program administrators. Throughout this study, personal contact emerged as just as critical as the promise of funding in recruiting faculty to teach honors courses. Taking time to articulate the expectations and advantages of teaching honors courses demonstrates a program's respect for their faculty and this is another aspect of the investment in human resources. In no small measure, actions like these demonstrate a remarkable investment in the human resources responsible for offering a program that contributes to students' positive growth and development.

DEVELOPMENT OF PHYSICAL RESOURCES

The analysis of interview material and program documents demonstrated that the development of physical resources is another important attribute of high-quality honors programs. Providing physical space for honors program functions helps establish a program's identity as an entity that exists beyond the sum of honors courses and degrees. In turn, this sends a signal to participants that their program is both viable and worthwhile. This was especially significant for participants in the larger and more diffuse honors programs included in this study. For example, the space identified for the honors college at Central Midwest State University serves as a home base where students know they are welcome to meet or hang out between meetings. A student at CMSU commented that it was nice that "there is a location where you can come for Honors College stuff because I think it would be a little disorienting if . . . there was no actual Honors College building. It's just out there somewhere." In much the same way, program participants also recognized virtual spaces such as web sites and electronic mailing lists as important resources for publicizing opportunities and building community.

Additional detail about this cluster and the three sub-questions that enhanced the identification of the attributes is presented in Table 2.

Continuous environmental monitoring and adaptation

Continuous environmental monitoring and adaptation requires that program participants are aware of the environment for teaching and learning, reflect upon current conditions and practices, and alter the program to enhance learning experiences. The attributes in this third cluster are:

- Advancing Program Visibility and Stature
- Fostering a Shared Commitment to the Program
- Continuous Assessment and Improvement

ADVANCING PROGRAM VISIBILITY AND STATURE

Advancing program visibility and stature emerged as yet another attribute of high-quality undergraduate honors programs. Undertaken mostly by program administrators, and, to a lesser extent, faculty and students, this attribute requires that participants are knowledgeable about program features and opportunities and aware of environmental conditions for teaching, learning, and recruiting students. In what may be an unfortunate cycle, programs that lack visibility are not accorded stature and, as such, may stand to lose participants and resources. A student majoring in information systems and finance in the Honors Program in the School of Business at Midwest University recalled that he had "recently encountered a student who . . . had no idea that the program even existed." Recalling the student's disappointment, he offered this assessment:

In my opinion, she was definitely the type of student who would be ideal for that kind of a setting. Unfortunately, she was a graduating

Table 2 Cluster Two: Stewardship of Resources

	Actions Taken by Stakeholders To Enact the Attribute	Consequences for Learning Experiences	Effects upon Students' Growth and Development
<p><i>Procurement and Measured Distribution of Fiscal Resources</i></p>	<p>Program administrators secure and dedicate money for scholarships and research stipends and distribute these to attract a more diverse student body.</p> <p>Program administrators allocate a portion of funding to research mentors for supplies and expenses.</p>	<p>Scholarship money allows students to work fewer hours at part-time jobs and instead elect to take additional honors courses, pursue thesis research, or attend honors activities and events.</p> <p>Faculty who receive S&E money—even limited amounts—are more likely to welcome students into their labs. This additional money improves access to research positions that match students' interests and learning goals.</p>	<p>Providing funding for student scholarships and research stipends enables students and their families to attach greater meaning and significance to their work.</p> <p>Having observed the distribution of funding to their mentors, students realize the program or university values both research and undergraduate education.</p>
<p><i>Investment in Human Resources</i></p>	<p>Program administrators and faculty develop financial or other incentives to encourage faculty to teach honors sections.</p> <p>Honors administrators encourage faculty to serve as departmental advisors or serve on committees.</p>	<p>When departments create additional honors sections students have greater access to small courses where the limited enrollment fosters interaction and supports innovative teaching methods.</p>	<p>Students who experience a personal and comfortable environment improve listening, analysis and speaking skills.</p>

Table 2 (cont.) Cluster Two: Stewardship of Resources

<i>Development of Physical Resources</i>	<p>Actions Taken by Stakeholders To Enact the Attribute</p> <p>The honors program acquires adequate and centralized space for honors program administration, advising and student activities.</p>	<p>Consequences for Learning Experiences</p> <p>Program administrators provide on-line resources.</p> <p>Students are more likely to visit advisors and attend program events because they feel like they have access to these resources and are part of a community.</p>	<p>Effects upon Students' Growth and Development</p> <p>Having participated regularly in program activities, students assume leadership roles and develop planning, publicity and budgeting skills.</p>
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senior and she just learned about it now as she was heading out the door. She was actually kind of disappointed . . . we were joking back and forth that she was bitter now that she totally missed out on this opportunity. It's kind of funny because she's a real go-getter type of person. I'm sure had she seen it she'd have been all over it.

The lack of visibility, in this case, meant that one less woman would join a program already dominated by men, and because of this, the program lost an opportunity to diversify its student population. A student majoring in finance and marketing observed: "I think part of the problem is just visibility. That people just don't know it exists." Not unexpectedly, programs with small numbers of participants and limited resources may find it difficult to maintain or gain visibility, especially at large universities.

FOSTERING A SHARED COMMITMENT TO THE PROGRAM

Review of the interview material and field notes revealed that fostering a shared commitment to the program is yet another attribute of high-quality undergraduate honors programs. While the administrators, faculty and students interviewed for this study offered myriad visions for their programs, many expressed a common belief that program participants needed to be "on the same page" when it came to understanding the purpose and operations of their program. As an advisor in the psychology department at Midwest University observed dryly: "You are only as great as the people involved." She also cautioned that continuity within a program or department could make or break a student's experience because courses or research experiences are often dropped when key faculty members leave the university or assume new responsibilities. Although closely related to another attribute, advancing visibility and stature, this attribute presumes that program participants are not only aware of the program, but also invested in its continuance and success.

CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

Continuous assessment and improvement is the final attribute in this environmental theory of high-quality undergraduate research programs. Across the sample of programs included in this study, interviewees described formal and informal efforts to evaluate and enhance programs and courses. Ongoing assessment occurred on several levels, including the individual, departmental and program levels. For example, all of the program directors interviewed shared observations about weaknesses in their programs or areas they hoped to develop or revise. In some cases, their recommendations were drawn from survey data, but many simply expressed their personal concerns as administrators who routinely monitored the daily operations of the program and lived experiences of students and faculty. They were keenly aware of the environment in which their program functioned and knowledgeable about the political, financial and organizational forces that would bear upon efforts to effect change. Some of the areas they cited as targets for improvement included introducing or expanding faculty training, updating recruitment strategies, streamlining paperwork, initiating thesis seminars, and developing new sources of funding.

Program administrators and faculty were genuinely concerned about students' learning experiences and intentional about keeping abreast of current problems or concerns that might impede students' positive growth and development. Even without incentives for reform, participants pursued new initiatives or revised current policies in order to better meet the needs of students. This was illustrated by the comments of a professor at Midwest University who told me of her interest in improving opportunities for students who earn honors credit by completing a special project or paper. She intended to use her appointment as the department honors coordinator to bring faculty together and "talk about what are good options and what has worked as good [honors options] ideas and try to get the students to give their input as well." She was concerned about this aspect of pedagogy and wanted to review the expectations "because just writing another paper is not a very useful exercise for the students for the most part."

Additional detail about this cluster and the three sub-questions that enhanced the identification of the attributes is presented in Table 3.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

There are three potentially significant implications for the findings of this study. First, the environmental theory of high-quality undergraduate honors programs developed in this study not only enlarges our understanding of honors programs, but also builds upon and extends the literatures on honors programs and academic program quality. As described earlier, both areas are characterized by scholarship that is largely descriptive. Second, the perspective on program quality advanced in this paper offers an alternative to traditional perspectives on program quality that consider the amount of resources available or the perceived reputation of the program. Furthermore, this study is unique because it examines program quality from the perspectives of key stakeholders. Finally, the theory of an "ideal" high-quality program presented here may be useful to program administrators and faculty not only because it offers a catalyst for discussion and reflection, but also because it invites program stakeholders to examine their respective programs and discern whether the theory, as defined by the 12 attributes, is aligned with their own program's definition of quality. If not, the findings of this study may suggest an agenda for change. This final section explores the implications of this research for these areas.

ENLARGING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF QUALITY IN HONORS PROGRAMS

While previous scholarship on honors programs has addressed various aspects of honors education, including program development, pedagogy, management, and evaluation, investigation of program quality and its relationship to enhancing students' growth and development has been limited. This theory of high-quality honors programs, constructed from multiple perspectives and grounded in systematically gathered data and analysis, offers new empirical evidence that may confirm or disconfirm varying beliefs and assumptions about honors program quality. In so doing, it presents a perspective on quality that is both unique and comprehensive.

Table 3 Cluster Three: Continuous Environmental Monitoring and Adaptation

	Actions Taken by Stakeholders To Enact the Attribute	Consequences for Learning Experiences	Effects upon Students' Growth and Development
<p><i>Advancing Program Visibility and Stature</i></p>	<p>Programs actively recruit high school seniors and first-year freshmen and emphasize the recruitment of students of color.</p> <p>Program administrators take actions to ensure that faculty members are aware of and knowledgeable about honors program requirements and opportunities.</p>	<p>Efforts to publicize the program and recruit students lead to the enrollment of a more diverse student body.</p> <p>Faculty members who are knowledgeable about the program provide accurate information about courses and think creatively about course substitutions or other “perks” that enhance flexibility in designing the academic program.</p>	<p>Students who interact with students whose interests and backgrounds are different learn from others’ experiences.</p> <p>Inspired by faculty who support creative approaches to designing academic experiences, students “think outside the box” about courses, research, internships and service opportunities.</p>
<p><i>Fostering a Shared Commitment to the Program</i></p>	<p>Program administrators and faculty employ centralized leadership to serve as hub for communication, planning and policy-making.</p> <p>Faculty who are supportive of the program encourage other faculty members to teach honors courses and/or serve as mentors to honors students.</p>	<p>Administrative coordination ensures continuity across departments and programs so that students receive timely and accurate information about their academic program.</p> <p>Enlarging the pool of participating faculty members helps to ensure the continuity of learning experiences.</p>	<p>Students who have confidence in the administration of the program are more open to taking risks.</p> <p>Because a shared commitment to an honors program bolsters other attributes, it enhances the effects of these attributes.</p>

Table 3 (cont.) Cluster Three: Continuous Environmental Monitoring and Adaptation

<p><i>Continuous Assessment and Improvement</i></p>	<p>Actions Taken by Stakeholders To Enact the Attribute</p> <p>Program administrators and faculty assess and revise the program periodically.</p> <p>Faculty who teach honors students reflect on their teaching and participation in the program.</p>	<p>Consequences for Learning Experiences</p> <p>Honors program requirements and options are updated to better meet the needs of teachers and learners.</p> <p>Honors courses and related learning experiences are altered to address advances in the field or improve pedagogy.</p>	<p>Effects upon Students' Growth and Development</p> <p>Students who observe faculty and staff leaders who are committed to improvement view their program as dynamic and responsive.</p> <p>Having observed faculty who engage in continuous improvement, students learn how critical reflection can improve teaching and learning and be important for all professionals, regardless of discipline.</p>
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In constructing an environmental theory of high-quality honors programs, 12 attributes of high-quality honors programs were identified and organized them into three main clusters: a culture animated by a shared commitment to individual and collaborative teaching and learning; stewardship of resources; and continuous environmental monitoring and adaptation. While these attributes are specific to honors programs, it is important to note that support for each of the attributes can be found in several areas of the literature on higher education, including literatures on teaching and learning, advising, organizational theory, program quality and leadership.

As a foundation for further discussion, it is useful to consider the findings of this study in concert with the list of “Basic Characteristics of a Fully-Developed Honors Program” developed by the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC, 1994). Drawn from the collective experience and knowledge of council members and approved by the council’s Executive Committee, the list offers 16 “characteristics which are common to successful, fully-developed honors programs” (1994). Although the document does not define “fully-developed” or “successful,” the list serves as a point of departure for further consideration of the environmental theory of high-quality undergraduate honors programs. While the study described here was designed to develop an original theory of quality in honors program rather than “test” an existing set of criteria such as the NCHC’s characteristics, there are areas of congruence between the two that lend support to the new theory. Likewise, there are attributes embedded in the environmental theory that are not addressed in the list of characteristics—and these “gaps” suggest opportunities for discussion, future research and, if warranted, revision of the list of basic characteristics.

Among the 16 characteristics of a fully-developed honors program, there is some correspondence—albeit in general terms—to the first set of attributes in the environmental theory, a culture animated by a shared commitment to individual and collaborative teaching and learning. For example, regarding advising—one of the 16 characteristics—the committee made this recommendation: “There should be provisions for special academic counseling of honors students by uniquely qualified faculty and/or staff personnel.” While this guideline does not explicitly call for advising that is “learner-centered,” it is clear that the committee recognized the significance of advising that is conducted by knowledgeable individuals and tailored to the learning needs of honors students. Another area of congruence is mentoring; while the list does not include a specific reference to mentoring, the following characteristic addresses some aspects of mentoring: “Faculty participating in the program . . . should be carefully selected on the basis of exceptional teaching skills and the ability to provide intellectual leadership to able students.” This characteristic, when considered in tandem with the provision for special academic counseling, might be interpreted as a call for “purposeful mentoring.” Likewise, the NCHC list of characteristics does not address the attributes “customized learning experiences” or “opportunities to create knowledge” but recommends experiential learning, including the following examples:

A fully-developed program will emphasize the participatory nature of the honors educational process by . . . offering opportunities for students to participate in regional and national conferences, honors

FOSTERING MICROENVIRONMENTS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

semesters, international programs, community services, and other forms of experiential education.

This characteristic of fully-developed honors programs—experiential learning—points to some of the ways in which students customize their learning experiences and find opportunities to create new knowledge. That said, the most striking finding associated with this attribute is not only the type of learning experience (e.g., international study program or senior thesis), but the significance of simply offering opportunities for students to tailor their learning experiences. As the findings of this study suggest, there are powerful effects upon students' growth and development when they have the freedom and flexibility to pursue learning experiences that complement their interests and learning goals. This particular attribute, customized learning experiences, may also provide evidence of a more recent phenomenon that was just emerging when the NCHC Executive Committee constructed their list in 1994. Perhaps due in part to increasing commercial marketing efforts that encourage high school and college students to customize everything from faceplates on cellular phones to the mix of songs downloaded to personal audio players, students are requesting that colleges and universities offer greater customization of services such as food service and housing options. Students at many colleges and universities can customize their on-line interactions with their institution by using web portals that direct them to campus news and resources—but only those they have selected. Given the increasing number of opportunities for customization, it should not come as a surprise that students would also value—and expect—customized learning experiences in an academic setting.

There are two additional attributes that contribute to a culture animated by a shared commitment to individual and collaborative teaching and learning: open and inviting community of teachers and learners and shared responsibility for teaching and learning. Neither is addressed directly in the NCHC list of basic characteristics, but the list does call for student participation in the governance of the program and recommends the following:

The program should have in place a committee of honors students to serve as a liaison with the honors faculty committee or council who must keep the student group fully informed on the program and elicit their cooperation in evaluation and development.

There is greater alignment between the environmental theory and the NCHC list of basic characteristics in the area of stewardship of resources. The first attribute in this area, procurement and measured distribution of fiscal resources, corresponds with the NCHC call for an adequate budget and the second attribute, development of physical resources, dovetails with the following NCHC recommendation for adequate physical space: “The program should occupy suitable quarters constituting an honors center with such facilities as an honors library, lounge reading rooms, personal computers and other appropriate décor.” Strangely, the final attribute in this area, investment in human resources, is not represented by the 16 characteristics on the NCHC list. When faculty and staff are cited in the list of characteristics, the reference is limited to recommendations for the organization of faculty and staff positions. For example, one characteristic states: “The honors director should report to

the chief academic officer of the institution.” No mention is made of the actions that program administrators and faculty can take to encourage and sustain participation in learning experiences for honors students.

There is a modest amount of support for the third and final area of the environmental theory: continuous environmental monitoring and adaptation. One attribute, advancing program visibility and stature, is expressed clearly in the following NCHC characteristic: “The program should be both visible and highly reputed throughout the institution so that it is perceived as providing standards and models of excellence for students and faculty across the campus.” The environmental theory, however, provides a richer interpretation of the significance of program visibility and explains the positive contribution to students’ growth and development. A second attribute in this area, fostering a shared commitment to the program, draws support from an NCHC characteristic that proposes the following:

The program should have a clear mandate from the institutional administration ideally in the form of a mission statement clearly stating the objectives and responsibilities of the program and defining its place in both the administrative and academic structure of the institution.

This attribute also finds expression in a characteristic describing faculty affiliation: “Faculty participating in the program should be fully identified with the aims of the program.” Although the precise definitions of the terms and phrases presented in the NCHC list are uncertain, it seems very likely, at least in this context, that “fully identified with the aims of the program” is closely associated with a shared commitment to the program. The final attribute in this area, continuous assessment and improvement, is articulated clearly in the following characteristic: “The fully-developed honors program must be open to continuous and critical review and be prepared to change in order to maintain its distinctive position of offering distinguished education to the best students in the institution.” The environmental theory may be useful to practitioners because it provides additional insight into the actions that program participants take to insure continuous assessment and improvement and details the consequences for learning experiences and the effects upon students.

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON PROGRAM QUALITY

In addition to enlarging our understanding of quality in honors programs, the environmental theory of high-quality honors programs also builds on and extends the literature on academic program quality. This research offers three significant contributions to the literature. First, by using Haworth and Conrad’s (1997) definition of quality, this study produced a theory of academic program quality that places student learning at the center of the discussion. The bulk of previous studies have examined program quality by evaluating measurable inputs or outcomes—or even the perceived quality of a program as demonstrated by reputational rankings—but this study is rooted firmly in the belief that the effect upon students’ growth and development is the yardstick by which program quality should be measured. As such, the environmental theory joins a growing body of research that recognizes that program budgets,

adequate staff, retention statistics and other related variables may contribute to program quality but do not by themselves define it.

In addition to examining program quality through the lens of an alternative definition of high-quality programs, this study also contributes to our understanding of program quality by presenting a theory of program quality constructed from the perspectives of stakeholders in honors programs, namely students, faculty and administrators. By using qualitative methods of inquiry, including interviews with participants of four programs at two institutions, the attributes of high-quality honors programs were identified along with the actions required to enact the attributes, the consequences for learning experiences, and their effects upon students' growth and development. As a result, the environmental theory confirms that program quality is multidimensional and multilevel, and represents a significant departure from the traditional outcomes approach to quality represented in the literature on honors programs (for example, Reihman, Barhus, and Whipple, 1990) and, more closely, parallels Astin's talent development approach (1985) and Haworth and Conrad's (1997) engagement theory of high-quality programs.

TRANSLATING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

In much the same way that the theory of an "ideal" high-quality honors program presented here suggests an opportunity to re-visit the NCHC's list of basic characteristics of fully-developed programs, this study may also provide the impetus for programs directors, faculty, and students who wish to undertake a critical review of their own programs. By comparing existing programs with the ideal type, stakeholders can identify similarities and differences and discuss these in the context of the program, the institution, or the mission of the program. In addition, the theory presented here may encourage program administrators to pursue new avenues in program evaluation. This study was designed from the beginning around a definition of quality that placed students' learning, growth and development—rather than student satisfaction—at the center, and this could be easily translated into a template for focus groups or survey instruments.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

This appendix contains supplemental information about the research methods used in this study.

CONSTANT COMPARATIVE METHOD

Consonant with the goal of developing a grounded theory of quality in honors education, rather than testing a hypothesis² constructed from previous, tangential work, I designed and conducted this study following the principles of qualitative research. I employed the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Conrad, 1982) to allow for the systematic, ongoing, open-ended, inductive discovery of grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss describe four stages in the constant comparative method: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category; (2) integrating categories and their

² For a detailed description of inductive data analysis, see Bogdan and Biklen, (p. 6).

properties; (3) delimiting the theory; and (4) writing the theory (1967, p. 105-115). These overlapping stages require that the researcher begin by coding incidents in the data and creating as many categories as possible as they emerge. This continues as the researcher compares new incidents with previous incidents in the same and different categories. Eventually, “the constant comparative units change from comparison of incident with incident to comparison of incident with properties of the category that resulted from initial comparisons of incidents” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 108). The researcher delimits the theory when the emerging theory begins to come together and the original list of categories is refined to reflect a select group of categories in close connection with the data. Glaser and Strauss recommend “theoretical saturation” as a strategy for managing the volume of categories that will continue to emerge and describe saturation as the point where “what has been missed will probably have little modifying effect on the theory” (p. 112). After arriving at theoretical saturation and delimiting categories, the researcher translates codes and categories into a theory that informs major themes. This activity builds the framework for writing the theory in the final stage of the constant comparative method. The researcher verifies grounded theory throughout the process by examining the relationships between hypotheses and supporting data, eliminating concepts and hypotheses that lack sufficient support or closeness to the data (Conrad, 1982).

The constant comparative method of generating grounded theory offered congruence with the purpose of my study as it enabled me to focus upon the multiple perspectives of the participants so that I could learn about the ways in which they think about honors programs, decide what is important or valuable, and create personal definitions of quality given the context of their program or university. This method also offered a means by which data analysis could inform and direct data acquisition (Glesne, 1999, p. 84). By employing inductive analysis of these data, I was able to examine and interpret the relationships between the data and, in turn, develop an original theory of quality specific to undergraduate honors education.³

Theoretical sampling

Theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was employed as an overall strategy for the selection of participants and this afforded me considerable flexibility in meeting the needs of developing theory. Theoretical sampling, as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 183), can take several forms, including the purposive or deliberative selection of sites, persons and documents. For this study, I identified initial criteria for selecting programs and participants and altered my selection only to maximize theoretical relevance as the theory emerged (Glaser and Strauss, 1976, p. 46).

The interviews

The interviews for this study began with a less focused structure in order to provide participants the opportunity to think broadly about their experiences rather than focus too narrowly on topics or issues that I might draw to their immediate attention.

³ Strauss and Corbin provide a thorough explanation of the development of theory in *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques* (1990).

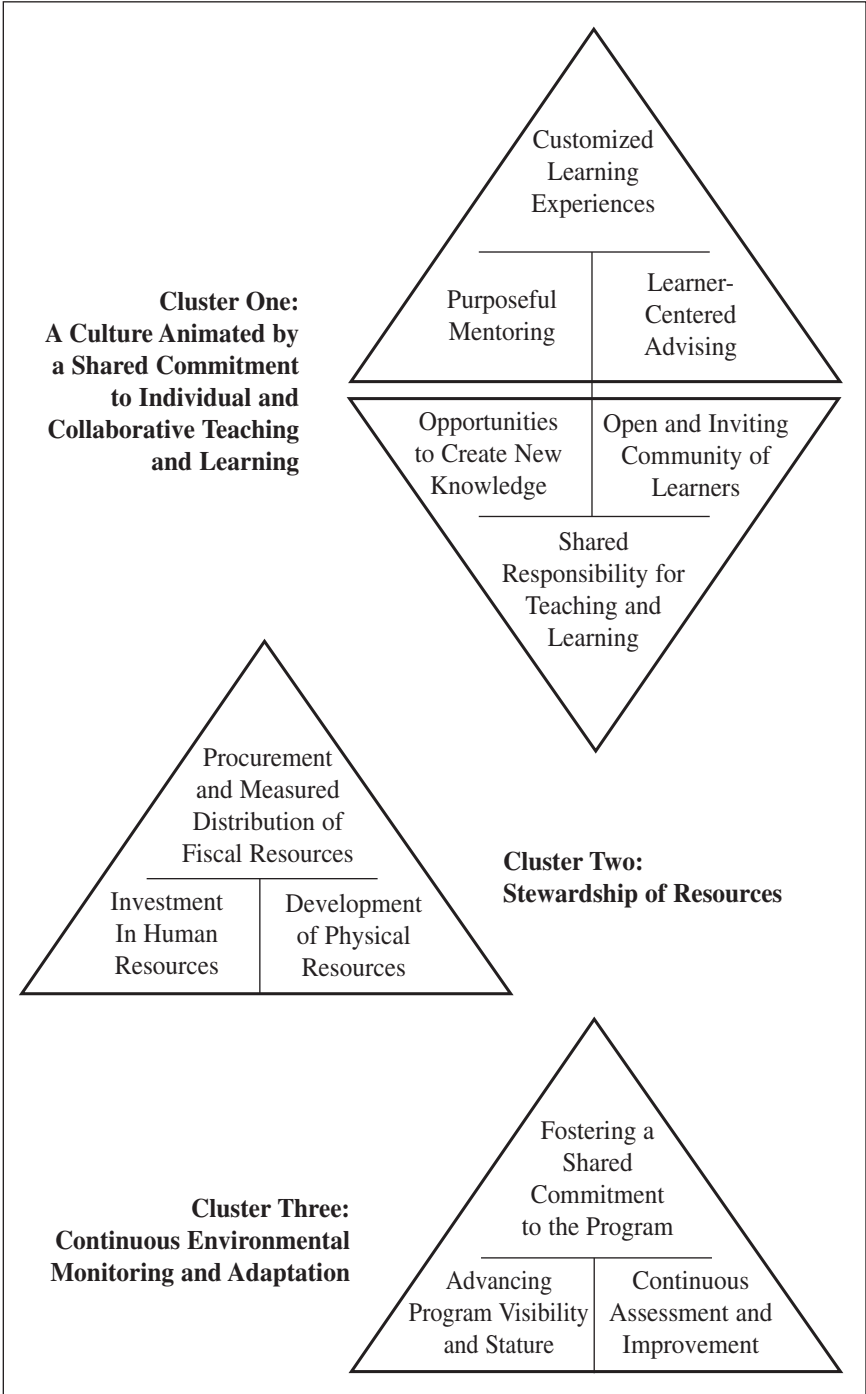
The interviews were marked with a high degree of overtness as I provided a thorough description of the project, its purpose, and the ways in which participants' comments would be used. Finally, I worked to create a respectful and relaxed environment for each interview.

Because the interviews offered the most significant source of data and because I did not want my assumptions to cloud the credibility of this study, I primarily used open-ended questions (e.g., "Where did the real learning occur in this program?") and probes for further clarification. I tested this approach in the first few interviews and revised some questions over time, mindful of Glesne's recommendation to strike a balance so that the questions allowed participants to reflect critically but were not so vague that they couldn't possibly begin to answer (Glesne, 1999, p. 75).

In addition to the conduct of the interview, the tenor of the interview was also important. I aimed for a conversational style that invited rather than preempted thoughtful replies. I also paid particular attention to the development of rapport, noting Glesne's assertion that "rapport is tantamount to trust and trust is the foundation for facilitating full and detailed answers to your questions" (Glesne, 1999, p. 83). To foster rapport, then, each interview session began with my personal introduction and expression of appreciation to the individual for their participation. I explained that each interview would last approximately 30 minutes to one hour, and shared this timeline with all participants when we scheduled the meeting and also at the start of the interview. I also described my commitment to preserving privacy and explained that all responses would be kept confidential and reported anonymously. Before we began the interview, I asked permission to tape record the session and asked the participant to read and sign the individual consent form. Finally, I invited participants to ask questions about the interview and/or study.

The interview questions were designed to hear the experiences and perceptions of the participants and were not intended as checks on the participant's knowledge base—questions that might be perceived as threatening. The possibility that participants might perceive my questions as threatening—or invasive or any number of possibilities—underscored the need to establish rapport but also heightened my awareness of the dynamics of the interview. Again, I turned to Glesne's (1999) recommendations for anticipation, flexibility in questioning, and the ability to seem open, naïve and nonjudgmental. Finally, I kept in mind Bogdan and Biklen's advice that "Good interviewing involves deep listening" (p. 96).

Figure 1: Overview of the Environmental Theory



DISTRIBUTION OF INTERVIEWEES

Sample Size N = 58

Case One: School of Business at Midwest University

Administrators N = 1

Faculty N = 1

Student N = 7

Case Two: College of Letters and Science at Midwest University

Administrators N = 2

Faculty N = 6

Students N = 11

Case Three: College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at Midwest University

Administrators N = 1

Faculty N = 6

Students N = 7

Case Four: Honors College at Central Midwest State University

Administrators N = 2

Faculty N = 6

Students N = 8

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Supporting the Aesthetic Through Metaphorical Thinking

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During my time at the C. W. Post campus of Long Island University, I have been fortunate to be the mentor to a number of art majors who have also been honors students. During this time I have found that defining the fine line between input and output needs to be finessed. These students normally deal with the visual image and how it relates directly to their own personal work. In many cases, especially with freshman and sophomore students, their understanding of creativity is that an artist's inspiration comes out of thin air. As they progress through their academic years and through the honors process, they start to understand that this is not the case. Their scope of comprehension broadens, and their ability to use this newfound capability helps them in other areas of their discipline and throughout their core courses as well; however, keeping the balance between influence and derivation is a difficult task. The possibilities of derivation and influence were defrayed by requiring these students to focus their honors tutorial and thesis projects on topics not directly related to their specific discipline in the visual arts. In this paper I will discuss how I have used the honors method to impose a strong research framework, based on metaphorical thinking, which has subsequently improved the artistic process of four art students.

Metaphorical thinking as defined by Pugh et al. (1992) and used by Dr. J. W. Hamilton in her dissertation, "Doubly Informed" (2002) draws parallels between apparently unrelated phenomena to gain insight and make discoveries. In her dissertation, Dr. Hamilton speaks of how "metaphorical thinking under girds the creation and understanding of both literature and art." Hamilton also discusses how she has used art to broaden the skill sets of her writing students to see different relationships and harmonies brought out in the art. In my experience as an honors advisor, I have flipped this process by mentoring digital art and design students to see the relationship between the construction and process of the written word and the visual arts.

This restructuring has, at times, been a difficult process for these young artists and designers to embrace. Art and design students do not necessarily 'see' things the same way as other students. Michael Baxandall in his *Words for Pictures, Seven Papers on Renaissance Art and Criticism* best expresses the problem by stating, "Our language and other languages around the world are crude. We are able to share feelings and communicate with others, but it is our descriptive and informative speech that is a problem. It is nearly impossible to share with someone a purely visual sense of a scene or picture through words or writing. It is easier for our own eyes and mind to perceive them visually." The balancing of these two issues, the necessity to 'show'

something as opposed to writing about it and the need to build a strong basis of critical thinking relies on the use of metaphorical thinking. The balance is not an easy problem to solve but the honors process has helped to reinforce, the structure that Hamilton describes.

MAINTAINING INTEGRITY AND PROGRESSION

As with any method of teaching, maintaining the integrity and progression of the student is paramount. As a teacher of the visual arts, I feel that keeping the student from being predisposed to inspired free-spirited creation as opposed to creating from focused research may be more of an issue in art than in other disciplines. In the arts nothing could be more detrimental to a young artist's career than being seen as a bad copy of another artist. Being from a certain school or derivative is one thing, but structuring one's approach on the research or styling of another artist can be the death card to an ingénue. In mathematics or in any of the sciences, imitation—even rote learning—may have some positive value. Students must understand theorems and the “order of operations” before they can move to more difficult processes and to their own concepts. In the arts, however, imitation has a strong negative connotation despite the need to build on history and models. As a result, keeping the artistic spirit and uniqueness of these young emerging talents alive and well can be tricky. Similar to a director in a movie, the art professor must pass the overall vision along to the actors without requiring the young artist to mimic commands or direction. In the visual arts too much direction is a legitimate concern. For example, in teaching two-dimensional design, the instructor must convey certain elements and principles of design. A composition must have a dominant shape, sub-dominant shapes, focal point, motion, and counter motion. Students must understand them, embracing and using them daily from the first day of the first semester to the end of their professional design career.

Another issue that I discuss with young designers focuses on the reality that design needs to be functional. I have them read the work of Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus School. Gropius was the founder of the Bauhaus School in Dessau, Germany, in 1925 and responsible for using the concept of “form follows function.” This became the credo of the entire school and the movement. I also request that they read Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. In this work Kant emphasizes an opposite view, that beauty need not be functional. I believe this perspective is contrary to good design and the Bauhaus theory and is actually one of the main reasons why design has not been embraced the way it should be in the society at large.

Because these design principles and elements themselves are abstract and difficult to conceptualize, bringing them to light is best done by concrete example. This approach typically is discarded when students progress towards higher levels of education. Obviously I would not teach a sophomore the same way that I would teach a freshman and so on. As the projects become more difficult, so do the requirements. I do, however, count on the previous methods to be fixed within their routine and psyche. The problem comes about when I use direct examples of these themes and the student is not allowed to expand his or her thought. In other words, if I declare

a composition to be a perfect example of a “balanced” design, students have a tendency to create their design in accordance with the look and feel of the example. This limits their creativity and projects a perception of singularity to the world of art and design. This is the point at which the rote method appropriately becomes both necessary and dangerous.

In writing, appropriating passages of another’s work without proper attribution is called plagiarism. In the visual arts, artists or designers are discouraged from using another person’s symbols or even rendering style in their own work; instead they are encouraged to branch out and develop their own. Artists or designers cannot attribute another artist’s work directly, past stating in the title “with homage to” whomever, but this is usually done with a rendered copy of a known work. Although artists or designers whose work is too derivative of another person’s would run the risk of losing their original approach, they must learn how to take that master’s work and use it as a logical catalyst for their own.

In the arts the method of critiquing student work is more democratic than most other learning situations. Usually a student presents work as if in a private showing to a group for discussion. The students will then offer suggestions and other commentary, as part of the critique. In a typical design critique, for example, the professor will usually open the floor to suggestions. Students will then make alternate design suggestions, offering a reason or end result they think will be brought about from the suggestion. More likely than not, the originator of the work will take this criticism and move forward with it for the next critique or defend his or her approach. Designers, similar to artists, are sensitive to how well their work communicates with the world. This process is how they judge their own work. But rarely do you hear a designer say, “this is my vision.” Usually they are looking for how well they have explained their message to the viewer. Artists, on the other hand, validate their work via personal vision or logic. This is developed through a substantial body of work or through reflecting on another artist’s composition. The overall creative process is not a black and white issue as it may be in other disciplines.

In the arts establishing a personal style is the goal. Influences are considered and become requisite to establishing validity to the work, but my experience in fifteen years of doing these critiques is that art students cannot directly note those influences when critiquing. They are hesitant to do this; they see it as “copying” another’s style. For this reason, learning how to properly research a topic or how to validate using that research correctly is where an honors thesis helps them. They often ask me when seeing my personal work or other abstract artists’ work, “how did they come up with that?” The students think that they are looking for a recognizable figure or object. What they are actually looking for, without realizing it, is an attribution. They are looking for something to hold on to, some kind of previous knowledge or reference point in their life to help them relate to what they are viewing. In essence, they are looking to relate metaphorically to the artwork. This development of metaphorical thinking comes to light directly during the research and evaluation process in an honors tutorial or thesis.

During their early years of college, all students learn proper citation and research techniques in freshman and honors English as well as in other core courses. Inspiring

them to use these techniques later in their respective disciplines often requires great subtlety. Most visual arts students find writing to be quite a unique and foreign form of communicating. Some write well while others struggle with putting together sentences rather than images. Once they engage in the process of creating their honors tutorial and thesis, they must produce both a written product and a visual series that supports these findings. This path is difficult, but one that does help them to construct a positive approach to an array of issues.

In constructing an honors tutorial and thesis, students are required first to select a topic. Then through meeting with their advisor, they formulate an outline. From this outline students explore diverse materials to use as validation for their tutorial. From this outline they construct an annotated bibliography and then start to work on the thesis. Through research, via annotation and documentation, the thesis writer (in my experience typically an artist or designer) must construct a clear and concise logic and path through borrowed and assimilated sources to their finished thesis project. This process is almost contrary to what they think is done in the act of creating a piece of artwork. In the following sections, I will describe four honors student theses. Each of these students researched an area that is, at best, tangential to their personal work. All of them are unique in their respective topics, but they do share a common process and final goal.

STAYING THE COURSE AND KEEPING THE CREATIVITY

By way of preface, I should like to say a few words about my own background in design. I personally have been using a computer as a designer for almost twenty years. In their infancy computers did not have the resources that are available today. This deficiency was a double-edged sword. Users did not have available online essays or image banks, so typically anything a designer needed to create had to be original. Early computer graphic work usually looked like it was made on a computer. True, we did have scanners, but they were at best minimally effective. Today, it is obviously a different story. Students can mechanically 'cut, copy and paste' their way into total ignorance. That is, they can bypass both thought and creativity and simply borrow pieces of other works. This shortcut is true with written work as well as with visual arts. In creating visual work today, students must recognize true originality and creativity.

In maintaining the aesthetic in art, originality comes to the forefront. Now, with the current technology available to students in the visual arts, the definitions of aesthetics, ethics and originality are constantly questioned. Having worked with a number of honors students on their tutorial and thesis projects, I know that they do benefit immensely from the honors process. As I have already suggested, the benefits, as exemplified by the following four students, come about in many ways.

The first student is named Kara. Her honors thesis was on the use of natural movement in computer character animation. The focus of Kara's research was to understand how the origins of beauty in Western civilization and throughout the world affected the development of character animation programs and projects.

In the case of Kara, the sense of accomplishment in an arena that was foreign to her was her greatest gain. Usually with an artist this sense of accomplishment comes from viewing a visual or tactile product. In this honors situation, the sense of accomplishment came from finishing a unique and atypical task, that is, completing research that culminated in a paper. Kara exhorted when I collected her paper for review, "Be gentle with it; I can't believe I wrote all that!" Her exclamation revealed how much the paper and its respective research lead her to a broad range of thought and analysis. Her thesis focused on the need for an understanding of actual beauty before an animator could invest aspects of beauty in humanistic shape and form. As background, Kara needed to research some of the philosophical ideas about pure beauty from a perspective of multiple cultures. She started with Plato's writings and worked up to the contemporary use of modeling an animation after an actor's qualities.

Her experience with metaphorical thinking came from the written works of Plato and from other cultures, accepted concept of beauty. Through these writings she could understand a logic and sense that are the actual basis for beauty. From reading Plato Kara realized that his belief in the origin of beauty came about via the object itself and not in its replication. This helped Kara challenge the "wow" factor involved in appreciating computer-generated effects. Kara learned that the beauty of character animation was not so much in the technical solutions but found more so in the beauty of logic that these programs and machines create.

Through studying these writings, Kara saw how the relative perfection contained within the movements of the human body embodied greater accounts of beauty than the efforts to replicate those movements. She came to appreciate the logic and beauty of the human as a traditional symbol of perfection more so than the ability of a computer to replicate those actions. This appreciation, I believe, was brought about by Kara's involvement with Plato's theories on beauty. The construction process of her thesis also aided her in her artistic work ethic. She found out both firsthand from her research and later unintentionally that everything needs to be planned and that all good final work comes from a structure, whether it is surface or substance. She found this process to be especially true once she studied how much planning and detail are used in creating one character animation. This form of metaphorical thinking is not necessarily unique to the student artist/designer, but when used to create a final product, it astounds them.

In this next case Michael was constructing a paper on the international redefining of clean water as a commodity. He truly relished his research. His weekly Emails became a diatribe of facts and figures, of linkages and statements. The only problem was he seemed to be fighting with his artistic belief that creation comes from a blast of inspiration. During his tutorial and thesis process, he realized that in this case creation would come from an accumulation of facts and a desire to do something with those facts. His intentions were earnest and focused; his approach, however, was not. My first goal with Michael was to help him focus on the structure of the project.

By nature Michael is an artist not a designer. He is inquisitive and thorough, and he already exhibited a broader range of thought than just the arts. He was at the time involved socially, politically, and morally with his selected subject. Typically an artist

SUPPORTING THE AESTHETIC THROUGH METAPHORICAL THINKING

works via the moment, waiting for inspiration to elicit a response or action. The same is true with some creative writing, but usually one must fight through a research paper, and during my sixteen years of teaching, I have found that most art students frequently complain about the lack of originality or creativity involved in such a methodical process. This changed, however, once Michael became immersed in the honors tutorial. Through his research he became involved directly with Public Citizen, a group of political activists. Once he saw how their ideas were formulated and brought together, he started to understand the power of research and planning. Here Michael realized that his involvement was more the architecture of the project than the fine art. His final paper documented that he had learned to organize, compare, edit, and refurbish the thought process. He produced quite an admirable thesis and subsequently a fine interactive presentation. Yet the presentation in its earlier incarnations was chaotic and whimsical. Once he started to use his research structure as part of his artwork's structure, it all fell into place. And he did not lose his personal style and approach.



Michael Kane,
Water for All,
digital media, 2002

Through these materials and their use, he has built such a reputation as a local expert for the field of water reclamation and privatization that he has actually turned this knowledge into a movement that has had federal authorities come to his hometown to pay for cleaning up the local pond. Currently he is presenting his findings via different performance artworks on campus and in New York City. His use of metaphorical thinking was not as great a leap as other students must make. Michael's transformation came directly through witnessing how others have dealt with a social issue or movement. He had to fight not to lose the creative artistic sequence that he had integrated into his process while dealing with and understanding the resulting stamina and power that comes from learning how to construct a proper research system.

This third case displays in a more traditional sense how, through the honors tutorial and thesis process, students gain expertise in their respective art or design field and also enhance their understanding of the theoretical basis for a piece of good design or art. In Julianne's case, however, this led to a greater understanding of the human psyche than to the actual use of art and design principles.



Julianne Lovejoy,
Fear, digital print 2003

In the arts a culmination of expertise tends to bring together years of visual information and decision-making. While doing research Julianne reflected on how she had always thought that one commercial design was completely original and often questioned how the designer had come up with the concept. She also, from my viewpoint, believed that art was again inspirational rather than a generation of complete thought and construction. Once she started her paper on “Fine Art versus Graphic Design,” she discovered the resources available to the artists and designers she was exploring. As she put it, “everything started to make sense both visually and theoretically.” For a visual artist, especially a designer who typically has only one to three mandatory art history courses, such research is a blessing in disguise. This comparison of multiple techniques truly allowed her to see the long development of these new designers, how one work might reflect years of research and discovery. In studying a book written by a designer, David Carson’s *End of Print*, Julianne appreciated how even though these elements and principles of design were true, they needed to be tested and subverted in order to rightfully present their meaning and duality. She stated, “I first came to realize how this worked through doing the research and seeing what [Carson] was doing.” This was brought about once she was coerced into placing one image next to another, or one statement next to the other and then could physically and mentally see the relationships. This process then became for her another example of how analogy or metaphor worked into the thesis process. She also came to understand how a trained sociologist like David Carson could essentially create a new design style. Quite simply, I explained to her, “he knew his audience.” To explain this further, I told Julianne a bit of Carson’s history. I explained to her how he was a sociologist for a number of years and was also one of the top-ranked surfers in the world. I also explained to her that Carson came to design as a profession late in his life, approximately in his late thirties. Nevertheless his work started a revolution in visual design. The theory behind his work appears to deal directly with the psyche of the community he is addressing and is reminiscent of the work of the Neo-Abstractionists Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. By this I mean that Carson, like the work of Rauschenberg and Johns, dealt directly with the times in which he was living. He was not replicating current designer methods but was truly creating a new vision and style (which came about by actually using old constructs). I explained to Julianne that Carson was directly of his time, but he had at his disposal a huge arsenal of intellectual and diverse weaponry. He, like Rauschenberg and Johns, was creating directly from the time they lived in - a sort of zeitgeist mentality.

One of Carson’s first publication designs for *Raygun* magazine was groundbreaking, a watershed for the design world. Carson’s work has been discussed for over twenty years. A recent promotion for Curtis Paper cites this review of Carson’s

design: “To those in the know Carson is a Master of Typography, ... but whether one’s in the trade or merely an admirer of the style, there’s no denying that Carson’s pioneering use of typeface in design has had a tremendous impact. With its usual penchant for the grand statement, *USA Today* even proclaimed that Carson’s work would save the world... Okay, so what it actually said was that his work would get young people reading again, but in our book that amounts to the same thing.”

These dramatic changes in the tenet of the design community were later revisited in the design of publications such as *Speak*, *Wired* and *Blue*. His juxtaposition of images and words created a chaotic structure that led many in the design community to challenge his credibility and staying power. Carson was commonly referred to as a “flash in the pan.” He would later quote this remark at an award ceremony marking his twenty years in design. I explained this history to Julianne in hopes of her understanding how a reservoir of previously collected materials can impact the decision-making process. Through this designer Julianne could experience the use of metaphorical thinking firsthand while still being influenced directly by his work.

I will address the fourth student in this series after the following preface regarding developing a new aesthetic for digital art.

SAVING THE AESTHETIC IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Another place where all of these resources come together dynamically is in an interactive art or design environment. Here the artist or designer has to deal with a diverse set of realities. True, in good design or fine art the artist/designer does deal with diverse resources, but in an interactive structure the creator deals with resources that come from such diverse sources as psychological case studies, user-interaction studies, information architecture, programming trials and visual design. The artist/designer needs to completely embrace the basis of aesthetics while sorting through this data. Given my background in interactive design, I can empathize with these young explorers. Displayed below are two samples of the same interface design in similar yet slightly diverse styles. The first focuses on a visual dependency, using overall thematic feeling to generate the proper response from the user. The second is geared more to usability and less to theme. These two designs are at best tenuous and were later reworked to a more information-based format.



First two interface samples



Final interface design
© Patrick Aievoli

In the redesign of this interface, the goal became to focus more on functionality and less on the visual aesthetic. As it pertains to the study of design, Kant's belief in *Critique of Judgment* that beauty need not be functional could not be more wrong. However Kant's theories on empirical knowledge and the establishment of a priori are used to validate and substantiate the selected metaphor.

Everything about design is functional, and it finds its beauty in that functionality. Once a design is started for an interactive environment, the function of the design becomes the primary goal. Here the research is everything, and the emotional component falls by the wayside. What gets particularly interesting in interactive art is mixing the components of research, emotion, and ergonomics. Here the user's experience, based on a preset theory of usability, denotes the success of the final product. This is where the user's supply of resources is as necessary as the artist's, whether they pertain to art or to simply walking through life. Interactive art requires involvement and cannot just be a simple surface aesthetic. In this arena, metaphorical thinking becomes a basis and not an end product of a muse or inspiration. The best part is no one realizes it until it is over and they have passed through to the following sections or on to other artworks. Through lectures and via samples of interactive projects I have related to my students how interactive work utilizes Kant's theory on empirical and pure knowledge. While the third case study emphasizes the relationship between art and society (product and audience), this fourth example raises questions about the nature of aesthetics.

In this fourth study, Charles started to examine the creation of graphical user interfaces via the accepted theories of beauty and function. After much discussion and research, Charles has changed his thoughts on the matter of designing just for the look and not the feel via our discussions on the credo "form follows function" espoused by the Bauhaus school and its founder Walter Gropius versus the theories of Immanuel Kant. This new conviction of, functionality over visual aesthetic, Charles found to be especially true given that the nature of interface design is for the user to engage with the information as opposed to passively reading it as one would in a traditional information venue. Charles has challenged himself to redefine the graphical user interface and to even change the route with which he develops this artistic environment. In the sample of his work displayed below Charles balances the need of pure visual aesthetics versus the aesthetics of function and engineering.



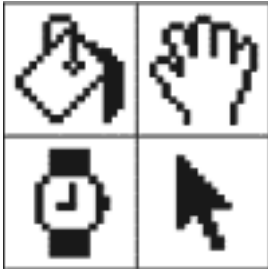
Charles Roth, *Warsongs*,
digital media, 2003

SUPPORTING THE AESTHETIC THROUGH METAPHORICAL THINKING

For his project Charles is now reviewing commercial application of this environment and is also starting to look outside of his myopic commercial attitude towards the influence brought about by the new fine art movement, “Net Art”, which was recently exhibited at the Whitney Biennial 2002. He has discovered how “Net Art” is changing the way the world views the Internet. Although he is only in the tutorial semester of his thesis work, he has already benefited from the process just by seeing the linkages and understanding that much thought goes into the placement of icons and how they are made into metaphors for the user and the common world. I explained to him how the Macintosh hard drive icon appears in the upper-right-hand corner of the screen by design, not by choice. Someone, in this case, Susan Kare, thoroughly researched shape and placement before she designed the actual screen and icons.



Macintosh Icons © Susan Kare



The icons and dialogue boxes represented here are the work of Susan Kare. Ms. Kare’s work has become a benchmark for all computer iconography. These simple and direct images reflect the concept of the interface as a metaphor. Although these original icons were restricted in their use of curves or volumetric shading, each one successfully relates back to the users experience outside the “box” of the computer.

Kare has been responsible for all of the Macintosh icons since the start of the product line. She has compared her work to the early Roman mosaics. In “The Mother of the Mac trashcan” (*San Jose Mercury News*, Business Monday, May 28, 1990), Ron Wolf states: “Although computer iconography may be a new specialty, Kare traces its lineage to ancient roots. ‘There are ways people have expressed themselves in the past that are analogous. The tile mosaics of the Romans can be thought of as an early form of bit-mapped graphics,’ said Kare, who holds a doctorate in art history. ‘Similar techniques appear in medieval weavings and tapestries.’”

I also explained to Charles that the artistic community has not always embraced other forms of computer art, most recently interactive art. Charles needed to understand that the community critiquing “Net Art” work may not see the level of thinking and universal thought that the originator of the work considers in order to create work of this magnitude and effect. The concept of metaphorical thinking as it relates to something as abstract as interface design or “Net Art”, in my opinion, becomes more important than in the appreciation or understanding of

most concrete representational art. The need to associate a more factual structure with an ephemeral art form is required by the viewer as well as the artist/designer.

SUMMARY

The arts will continue to shift and change as they have since the start of recorded history, from the cave drawings of Lascaux to the recent Whitney Biennial. The question is how do teachers of the visual arts accommodate and convey that shift in ways that expand a student's thought without turning these new young artists and designers into mirrors of themselves? A catalyst towards that end is for these apprentices to explore and expand their thinking through the written word. This task is not easy. Typically artists and designers work with images rather than words. This practice is not an excuse or criticism; it is simply a fact. The written word is more foreign to them as a form of expression than the visual image.

One structure, however, that has helped these students to discover, digest and denote their own respective talent has been an embracing of metaphorical thinking. My experience has been that this process works best outside their respective disciplines. The honors core has helped make these connections. Through that structure these young artists and designers take pride in their efforts and gain a new respect for their own intellect and the intellectual reservoir that is available to them through their use of critical and metaphorical thinking. My experience has been that this new respect and newly formed reservoir lead these young artists and designers to create something that they have been searching for: a personal voice and vision.

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A Multi-Perspective Class Project at Oral Roberts University

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ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY

In 2001, Oral Roberts University launched an honors program. Unlike most honors programs, the ORU program is two-tiered, meaning that the top sixteen to eighteen students in every class are considered fellows and the rest of the students who meet the academic requirements are scholars. ORU requires both fellows and scholars to complete twenty-four hours of honors coursework through designated sections of general education classes. One unique aspect of the program is that the fellows are required to complete five of six special interdisciplinary honors seminars as part of their required twenty-four hours. These classes replace traditional general education courses like introductory English, humanities, and social sciences. Two departmental teachers work together to integrate their areas of specialty to create a cohesive synthesis. Disciplinary combinations include: art and English, mathematics and history, science and philosophy, and drama and English. Students find that these seminars provide a more challenging, interesting, and comprehensive educational experience as opposed to the ordinary introductory level courses.

One of these classes, "History of Quantitative Thought," was co-created by a faculty member from the mathematics department whose specialty is quantum field theory and by a colleague from the history, humanities, government department whose specific area of study is the ancient and modern Middle East. They first taught the course in the spring of 2003. The goal of the course was to teach the history of mathematics and in doing so give the students a feel and appreciation for the culture and times in which the mathematics developed. Objectives included a mastery of early number systems, an understanding of Babylonian and Egyptian quantitative thought and culture, a knowledge of Greek accomplishments with special emphasis on thinkers like Pythagoras and Euclid, an awareness of Asian mathematics and its context, and finally, a familiarity with mathematics in Europe during the medieval period. The course investigated the historical and cultural context behind the development of quantitative accomplishments. For example, the professors sought to help students understand the implications of significant mathematical accomplishments during an era without electricity (no computers, calculators, or electric lights), pens, or even paper. Because the object of the course was understanding the historical development of mathematics, it did not concentrate on developing specific quantitative skills but rather utilized the existing abilities of the honors-caliber students in the class.

A MULTI-PERSPECTIVE CLASS PROJECT AT ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY

Students came from a variety of majors and mathematical backgrounds. While some students were engineering or mathematics majors, others had not done serious quantitative reasoning since high school. Understanding that mathematics can be frustrating for individuals with limited prior training, the professors sought to make the students' academic diversity an asset rather than a liability by capitalizing on their multiple perspectives through a class project. The goal of this project was to have the students trace the conflict between science and religion from the ancient world through the early modern period over the earth's shape, size and position relative to the stars. The class was divided into four groups, each with a variety of students whose educational background would complement each other. That is, each group contained one student with a major such as engineering or mathematics, one with religious studies, one focused on a science, and one or two students from another major. As a result, group dynamics contributed to a multi-faceted understanding of the subject matter. Through group collaboration and classroom presentation, the students worked together to enhance one another's understanding of the material. Students with a strong science and mathematical background researched and gave an in-depth look at the quantitative side to the assigned subject, while others who understood religion presented an analysis of the church's reaction to the science, and still others with an interest in history and culture examined the sociopolitical context of that science.

The four groups took sequential key individuals in the development of Western cosmology from ancient times to the scientific revolution. The first looked at Claudius Ptolemy and the geocentric theory of the universe; the second examined Nicholas Copernicus and the beginnings of a heliocentric model; the next group looked at Galileo Galilei and his concrete support of Copernicus' theory; and the final group discussed Isaac Newton and Johannes Kepler and their creation of mathematical formulas to describe, explain, and predict the movements of the heavens. Each group wrote and presented a paper, giving a biography, cultural context, mathematical and scientific explanation of theories, and an ecclesiastical response. These four chapters became a single paper more than one hundred pages long presenting an overview of developments in cosmology spanning more than 1000 years. In addition, the presentations prompted class discussion, which helped to solidify ideas and concepts.

The class project was so unique and distinctive that it was accepted for presentation in a special session of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's 78th annual meeting. Eight students, two from each group, and the faculty member from the mathematics department presented five papers in a session entitled "Christianity and Cosmology." The first four papers were those of the students', while the final paper, "Einstein and the Big Bang" was given by the faculty member. Together, the five presentations gave a multi-perspective look at how the Western world has viewed the universe from the time of the Romans until today. This session truly stood out at a conference of biological, chemical, and psychological papers and added an interdisciplinary dimension to the conference as a whole. The class's efforts and contribution were rewarded when one of the student presentations received an honorable mention.

Offered for the first time in 2003, this class was an experiment in multi-perspective learning. With a variety of students, a team of teachers, several thousand years of history, and an array of mathematical concepts, this class had many frontiers to explore and challenges to overcome, the principle of which was the extreme diversity of mathematical backgrounds. It was difficult to create a challenging but not frustrating curriculum that would cater to the needs, abilities, and interests of both the engineering major and French education major.

From a faculty perspective the biggest problem we faced in the class was the integration of history and mathematics. Both faculty members expected a certain level of achievement in their respective fields by the students. This expectation at some points made the course seem like two different classes in one. We were not alone in having problems like this. Our honors program has several classes being team taught by two faculty members from different departments, and they all have had this same problem to varying degrees. Complete integration is impossible to achieve; we do not expect the mathematician to teach history or vice versa, but we do want the course to flow well. We are currently teaching the course for a second time and are avoiding disjointed feelings from lecture to lecture by working closer together than we did before. With knowledge gained from previous experience, we are doing a better job with the course this time. We have more general discussion time with both faculty members present, each presenting their own perspective, more expert guest speakers reinforcing material, and more class research projects.

As with any pioneering undertaking, the class had its triumphs and failures, as students realized firsthand the difficulties inherent in even ancient mathematical discoveries. Chief among the triumphs was the class project and paper, and even more so, its presentation at a professional scientific conference. Furthermore, this project provided a success story for the fledgling ORU Honors Program because it was able to create synergy from the diversity of student backgrounds and disciplines rather than allowing the different viewpoints to become a detriment to learning.

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Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance of College Honors and Non-Honors Freshmen

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A positive freshman year experience is critical for student persistence and long-term success in college (Tinto, 1975; Tinto & Goodsell, 1993). Recently, institutions have begun to recognize that student factors beyond demographics, academic records, and standardized test scores influence the likelihood of a positive freshman year experience (Levitz & Noel, 1989). "Emotional intelligence" is one such factor which is instrumental in situations that call upon students to adjust successfully from one environment to another (Hettich, 2000). While there is some data on the personality characteristics of college Honors students (Grangaard, 2003), to our knowledge no data have been collected on their emotional intelligence. Therefore, we designed this study to investigate two hypotheses. First, we wondered whether Honors college freshmen differed from their non-Honors peers in emotional intelligence. Second, we were interested in determining whether measures of emotional intelligence were predictive of first-semester college GPAs in addition to traditional predictors such as SAT scores and high-school GPAs.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI)

Our study follows the research of Salovey and Mayer (1997) who define EI as "the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others" (p. 10). There is a fairly substantial body of literature which suggests that as a measured construct, EI is predictive of performance in educational as well as industrial/organizational settings (Goleman, 1995; 2001; Tett, Fox, & Wang, manuscript submitted for publication).

EI AND THE ACADEMICALLY TALENTED

Some researchers have argued that academically gifted children tend to have increased social and emotional difficulties (Winner, 2000), and that these difficulties may occur due to stereotyping of giftedness (Yewchick & Jacoby, 1991). Research also suggests that behavioral problems for gifted and high ability students can be

exacerbated by unchallenging curricula, as well as educator and peer myths (Callahan, 2001; Garland & Zigler, 1999; Johnson, 2000). Some of these myths include negative stereotyping such as the “nerd,” “know-it-all,” and “teacher’s pet” (Moulton, Moulton, Housewright, & Bailey, 1998). Accordingly, one might expect these negative stereotypes to increase levels of emotional and behavioral maladjustment leading to lower levels of measured EI.

In contrast, another line of research suggests that there are multiple intelligences and that intellectual and emotional intelligence may go hand in hand (Gardner, 1993). In proposing the construct of “emotional giftedness,” Mayer and his colleagues (2000) claim that giftedness comes in many forms, and that high ability in one area (e.g., regulating one’s emotions) can positively affect the performance in another area (e.g., academic achievement). As evidence for this, other researchers (Schutte et al. 1998) have found that EI scores of college freshmen were correlated with first-year college GPAs.

Further research is needed to explicate the two opposing views on the emotional intelligence of the academically talented (e.g., the “nerd” versus the emotionally gifted). Indeed, previous researchers (Clark, 2000; Grangaard, 2003; Palmer & Wohl, 1972) have noted the dearth of data regarding the personality characteristics of academically talented students. Moreover, there have been no studies that have reported on their emotional intelligence. Therefore, under Hypothesis 1 of the present study we compared the EI scores of Honors college freshmen with their non-Honor peers.

EI AND THE FRESHMAN-YEAR EXPERIENCE.

Effective managing of the emotional, social, and academic challenges associated with the “freshman experience” is needed to transition successfully from high-school to the university environment (Tinto, 1975). Indeed, the aforementioned study by Schutte et al (1998) corroborated the relationship between emotional functioning and freshman GPA. However, to our knowledge there are no studies that have determined whether emotional intelligence might be predictive of Honors students’ GPA in college. Specifically, for Hypothesis 2, the present study undertook a regression analysis to determine whether EI as well as traditional measures of academic performance (e.g., high-school GPA and SAT scores) would be predictive of first-semester college GPA. We performed separate regression analyses on both Honors students and their non-Honors peers. This type of analysis proves useful when researchers want to determine the degrees to which variables (e.g., high-school GPA) are predictive of some outcome (e.g., college GPA). Separate analyses were undertaken on Honors and non-Honors students to determine whether different sets of predictors might exist for these groups. This outcome seemed likely because each group might react differently to the academic and social expectations placed upon them as they transition from high-school to college (Yewchuk & Jacoby, 1991).

THE MAYER-SALOVEY-CARUSO EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TEST (MCSEIT)

The present study used the MSCEIT (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000) which is the first standardized test developed by researchers to measure EI. According to the test developers, MSCEIT possesses high internal inconsistency ($r = .92$) and good test-retest reliability ($r = .86$). Moreover, a confirmatory factor analysis supported the test developers' intent to organize the MSCEIT around a four-branch model of emotional functioning (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2003):

Perception of Emotion (Branch 1): The ability to be open to feelings, and to modulate them in oneself and others as to promote personal understanding and growth.

Emotional Facilitation of Thought (Branch 2): The ability to generate, use and feel emotion as necessary to communicate feelings or employ them in other mental processes.

Understanding Emotion (Branch 3): The ability to understand emotional information such as how emotions progress through relationship transitions, and to reason about such emotional meanings.

Managing Emotion (Branch 4): The ability to be open to feelings, to modulate them in oneself and others to promote personal understanding and growth.

There are also two main area scores assessed by the MSCEIT: Area 1 which is an Emotional Experiential (EE) score and Area 2 which is an Emotional Reasoning (ER) score. The EE score is a combined score of branch 1 and 3 scores while the ER score is a combined score of branch 2 and 4 scores. These area scores are then combined with the branch scores, and together they constitute a total EI score. The area scores are defined as follows (Mayer et. al. 2000, p. 47).

EE score (Area 1): A person's ability to perceive, respond and manipulate emotional information- without necessarily understanding it. It also indexes how accurately a person can "read" and express emotion, and how well a person can compare emotional stimulation to other sorts of sensory experiences (e.g., colors or sounds).

ER score (Area 2): A person's ability to understand and manage emotions-without necessarily perceiving it well or fully experiencing feelings. It indexes how accurately a person understands what emotions signify (e.g., that sadness typically signals a loss) and how emotions in him/herself and others can be managed.

In sum, emotional intelligence is seen as the "ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayer et al. 2000, p. 23).

METHOD

SAMPLE

The 300 Honors and 230 non-Honors sampled in the present study were all first-semester freshmen attending a large metropolitan research university in the Southeastern United States. Table 1 shows the demographic and academic performance data of these two groups as a function of gender.

Table 1 Means (Standard Deviations) for all variables as a function of student group and gender.

	Honors Students		Non-Honors students	
	Female (n = 156)	Male (n = 144)	Female (n = 145)	Male (n = 85)
Total EI	104.55(14.64)	96.88 (17.49)	99.44 (12.83)	95.37 (16.29)
College GPA (1 st semester)	3.47 (.61)	3.32 (.70)	3.28 (.67)	3.18 (.64)
High School GPA	4.36 (.35)	4.22 (.38)	3.76 (.55)	3.51 (.69)
SAT Total	1273.67 (80.22)	1309 (84.73)	1073.15 (115.72)	1121.52 (124.04)
Age (yrs.)	17.95 (.42)	18.04 (.46)	18.40 (.90)	18.63 (1.30)
Branch 1 Score	105.91 (14.43)	101.28 (15.97)	100.85 (13.66)	101.99 (13.29)
Branch 2 Score	101.84(12.55)	96.61 (15.81)	99.97 (13.79)	96.57 (15.54)
Branch 3 Score	106.42(15.09)	100.90 (18.44)	100.93 (14.47)	95.14 (18.73)
Branch 4 Score	101.94(14.20)	94.33 (16.37)	99.09 (15.93)	94.71 (18.47)
Area 1 Score	104.91 (14.06)	98.48 (16.28)	100.18(12.97)	98.99 (13.73)
Area 2 Score	104.66(15.13)	97.21 (18.05)	99.92 (15.49)	94.12 (19.56)

Table 1 shows that the mean high-school GPA and mean SAT scores of incoming Honors students are considerably higher than for non-Honors freshman. In fact, the mean SAT score for our sample of Honors students ($M = 1291$) is over 100 points higher than the overall mean reported for our university ($M = 1167$).

MEASURES

The MSCEIT takes approximately 30 to 45 min. to complete, and is self-paced. Four branch scores, two main area scores, and a total EI score are derived from the MSCEIT. The test developers encourage the reporting of total EI scores because this composite score has a face validity similar to IQ scores (which are also composites and have a mean normed value of 100 points). In addition, first-semester college GPA, High School GPA, and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores were obtained from the university registrar.

PROCEDURE

The MSCEIT was distributed in booklet form to a class of Honors students during their required attendance at an Honors freshman symposium. It was given to the non-Honors group in booklet form and via Internet test form during class, as a method to obtain extra credit in a General Psychology class. Both groups were instructed to take it at their convenience, and to bring the completed response sheets back within a week.

RESULTS

GROUP COMPARISONS

Table 1 shows mean age, GPA (high school and college) and MSCEIT scores as a function of group (Honors and non-Honors) and gender. MSCEIT scores that were analyzed included: Total Score, Area 1 and 2 Scores, Branch 1, 2, 3, and 4 scores. Separate completely randomized 2 (Honors vs. non-Honors) x 2 (male vs. female) Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were used in making all group comparisons. All statistically significant values were beyond $p < .05$ (dfs may vary as a function of missing values).

SAT SCORES AND HIGH-SCHOOL GPA

As expected, Honors students had higher high-school GPAs ($M = 4.28$) compared to non-Honors students ($M = 3.67$), $F(1, 543) = 229.19$. Honors students had higher total SAT scores ($M = 1291.39$) compared to non-Honors students ($M = 1089.91$), $F(1, 520) = 460.78$.

FIRST-SEMESTER COLLEGE GPA

Honors students ($M = 3.40$.) had higher first-semester GPAs compared to non-Honors students ($M = 3.25$), $F(1, 543) = 58.09$. Additionally, women ($M = 3.38$) had higher first-semester GPAs than men ($M = 3.27$), $F(1, 543) = 4.86$.

TOTAL EI SCORES

A 2 x 2 ANOVA revealed that Honors students had higher total EI scores ($M = 100.86$) than non-Honors students ($M = 97.94$), $F(1, 528) = 5.83$. Furthermore, women ($M = 102.08$) had higher total scores than men ($M = 96.32$), $F(1, 528) = 18.36$.

AREA 1 SCORES (EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE)

The only significant effect was for gender. Specifically, women had higher Area 1 scores ($M = 102.26$) than men ($M = 98.67$), $F(1, 532) = 7.21$.

AREA 2 SCORES (EMOTIONAL REASONING)

Women displayed higher Area 2 scores ($M = 102.37$) compared to men ($M = 96.06$, $F(1, 528) = 19.34$). In addition, Honors students ($M = 101.07$) had higher scores than non-Honors students ($M = 97.77$), $F(1, 528) = 6.77$.

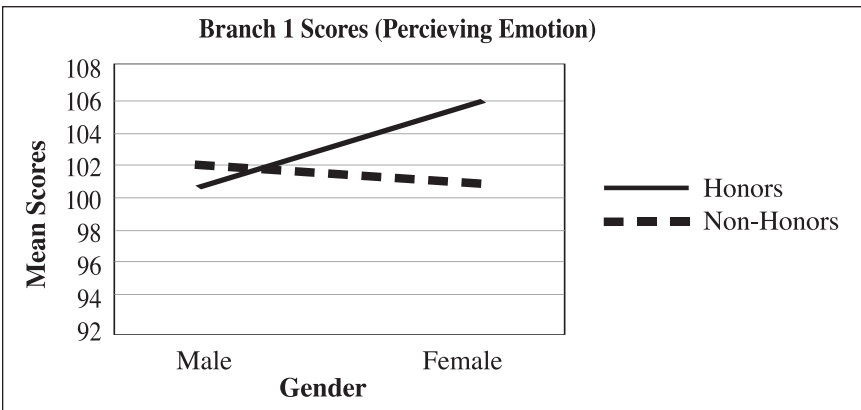
BRANCH 1 SCORES (PERCEIVING EMOTION)

A 2 x 2 ANOVA revealed no main effects. However, a significant group x gender interaction was obtained, $F(1, 534) = 4.97$. Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) Test indicated that female Honors students had higher Branch 1 Scores than the other three groups which did not differ from each other, $t_{LSD} = 3.04$. This interaction can be seen in Figure 1.

BRANCH 2 SCORES (EMOTIONAL FACILITATION OF THOUGHT)

The only significant effect obtained was for gender. Specifically, women had higher Branch 2 Scores ($M = 100.94$) than men ($M = 96.60$), $F(1, 532) = 11.37$.

Figure 1 Branch 1 Scores (Perceiving Emotion) as a function of group and gender.



BRANCH 3 SCORES (UNDERSTANDING EMOTION)

Honors students ($M = 103.73$) had higher Branch 3 Scores than non-Honor students ($M = 98.79$, $F(1, 531) = 14.50$). Moreover, women ($M = 103.77$) had higher scores than men ($M = 98.79$), $F(1, 531) = 14.63$.

BRANCH 4 SCORES (MANAGING EMOTION)

No main effects were found for either group or gender. However, there was a significant two-way interaction, $F(1, 529) = 17.50$. Fisher's LSD Test revealed that Honors' women had higher scores than non-Honors women while the Branch 4 scores of Honors men and non-Honors men did not differ, $t_{LSD} = 2.00$. This interaction can be seen in Figure 2.

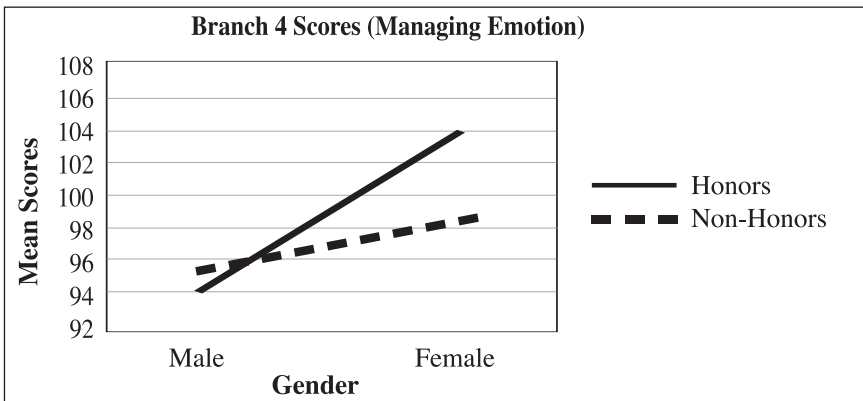
CORRELATIONAL ANALYSES

Separate correlational analyses were performed for Honors and non-Honors students using all of the variables shown in Table 1. We were most interested in determining whether any variables would correlate with first-semester college GPA. It turns out that four variables were correlated with first semester GPA when Honors students are considered. These variables were: high-school GPA [$r(170) = +.47$], Branch 2 scores [$r(168) = +.22$], Area 1 scores [$r(168) = +.16$], and Total MSCEIT scores [$r(165) = +.16$].

When non-Honors students are considered, only two variables were correlated with first-semester college GPA: high-school GPA [$r(177) = +.39$] and SAT Total scores [$r(169) = +.20$]. For non-Honors students, none of the MSCEIT measures correlated with their college academic performance.

Finally, it should be noted that when all student data were included in a correlational analysis, a positive correlation was found between total MSCEIT scores and total SAT Scores [$r(321) = +.17$]. This analysis also found that total MSCEIT scores were correlated with first-semester college GPA [$r(334) = +.13$]. While the strength of this correlation may appear low, it is similar in magnitude to that found between total SAT scores and first-semester college GPA [$r(335) = +.12$].

Figure 2 Branch 4 Scores (Managing Emotion) as a function of group and gender.



MULTIPLE REGRESSION

Based on the first two correlational analyses reported above, separate multiple regression analyses with a forward stepping solution were undertaken for Honors and non-Honors students. In each analysis, first-semester college GPA was treated as the dependent variable and any other variables that were correlated with first-semester college GPA were entered as the independent variables. A step-wise multiple regression analysis for Honors students revealed that high-school GPA (R^2 change = .21) and Branch 2 scores (R^2 change = .02) were predictive of first-semester college GPA, $F(1, 286) = 42.42$. A similar analysis for non-Honors students revealed that only high-school GPA ($R^2 = .15$) was predictive of their first-semester college GPA, $F(1, 226) = 39.75$.

DISCUSSION

Regarding Hypothesis 1 of the present study, we were able to dispel the notion that high academic performance and emotional difficulties are associated. In fact, the results found here support the notion that academically talented college freshmen exhibit higher levels of EI than their non-Honors peers. In line with the results reported by Schutte et al (1998), we also found that women had higher overall levels of EI than men. When Hypothesis 2 is considered, we found that one EI subscale (Branch 2 scores—Emotional Facilitation of Thought) was predictive of first-semester college GPA for Honor students. In contrast, none of the EI measures was predictive of first-semester college GPA in non-Honors students. It was also the case that for both groups of students, high-school GPA was a reliable predictor of first-semester college GPA.

We believe that the pattern of results reported here convey three important lessons for Honors students and their instructors. First, regardless of the negative stereotyping (e.g., the “nerd”) that may exist toward the academically talented, Honors students should take heart. The fact is that Honors students function at a higher level of emotional intelligence than their non-Honors peers.

Second, the predictiveness of Branch 2 scores for academic performance in Honors students was small albeit significant. This suggests that Honors students are able to effectively use their emotions (Branch 2 scores) in ways that promote academic success. Thus, compared to their non-Honor peers, when Honors students experience negative emotions (e.g., test anxiety), they are better able to re-channel the negative thoughts and feelings associated with these emotions into adaptive behaviors (e.g., spending more time on test preparation). As a consequence, this adaptive behavior is likely to produce higher academic performance. This suggests that this relationship between EI and academic performance is a characteristic of Honors students, but not their non-Honors peers. Future research is needed to replicate this relationship and to determine whether it is a characteristic of high achievers in other domains such as the arts, sports, and business.

Third, we are not advocating that Honors educators use EI measures as a means for predicting academic performance in their students. Rather, we would prefer that the results of our study reinforce the view that Honors instructors should approach

their students in a holistic fashion. That is, instructors should not only consider their students' high levels of intellect, but also their emotional intelligence in the promotion of academic and personal excellence. From an institutional perspective, Honors programs that have freshman orientation seminars and residence life activities should take advantage of their students' high level of emotional intelligence when fostering an Honors sense of identity and community.

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