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JNCHC

JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

Fall/Winter 2005

Vol. 6, No. 2

WHAT IS HONORS?



In This Issue

ESSAYS BY:

- Dail W. Mullins, Jr.
- Jay Freyman
- Sam Schuman
- Len Zane
- Vince Brewton
- Daniel Pinti
- Sriram Khé
- Bebe Nickolai
- Bonnie D. Irwin
- Jacqueline P. Kelleher
- Laura Bender Herron
(Portz Prize Winner)
- James P. Hill
- Gayle E. Hartleroad
- Peter C. Sederberg
- Hallie E. Savage



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VOLUME 6, No. 2

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HONORS EDUCATION

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JNCHC

**JOURNAL OF THE
NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL**

A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

WHAT IS HONORS?

JOURNAL EDITORS

ADA LONG

DAIL MULLINS

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

The National Collegiate Honors Council is an association of faculty, students, and others interested in honors education. Virginia McCombs, President, Oklahoma City University; Jon Schlenker, President-Elect, University of Maine, Augusta; Kate Bruce, Vice-President, University of North Carolina, Wilmington; Norm Weiner, Immediate Past President, SUNY, Oswego; Patricia Ann Speelman, Executive Director, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; John Madden, Secretary, Cerritos College; Philip Way, Treasurer, University of Cincinnati. Executive Committee: Larry Andrews, Kent State University; Richard Badenhausen, Westminster College; Kambra Bolch, Texas Tech University; Akofa Bonsi, University of Alabama at Birmingham; Bruce Carter, Syracuse University; Danielle Coulter, Ball State University; David Duncan, University of Florida; Holli Hitt, Mississippi State University; Jocelyn Jackson, Morehouse College; Kathleen King, University of Maine, Augusta; James Knauer, Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania; Lydia Lyons, Hillsborough Community College; Nancy Poulson, Florida Atlantic University; Jacci Rodgers, Oklahoma City University; Stephen Rosenbaum, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Charlie Slavin, University of Maine; Stephen Wainscott, Clemson University; Emily Zhivotovskiy, Long Island University, C. W. Post Campus.

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EDITORIAL POLICY

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 and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at (phone) 850.927.3776 or (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

The *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* is now accepting papers for Volume 7, No. 1 (spring/summer 2006), which will be a general-interest issue

The deadline for submissions is March 1, 2006.

The following issue (**deadline: September, 2006**) will focus on the theme of honors administration. We invite research essays for this issue that consider matters related to directing an honors program, serving as dean of an honors college, changing from a program to a college, term limits (or lack thereof), serving in any administrative or staff position of an honors program or college, institutional relations, positioning within an institutional hierarchy, budgetary management, fundraising, national involvement, tenure and promotion, career advantages or liabilities, balancing administrative/academic or honors/disciplinary responsibilities, or any other topic relevant to honors administration.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We will accept material by e-mail attachment (preferred) or disk. We will not accept material by fax or hard copy.

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.

There are no minimum or maximum length requirements; the length should be dictated by the topic and its most effective presentation.

Accepted essays will be edited for grammatical and typographical errors and for infelicities of style or presentation. Authors will have ample opportunity to review and approve edited manuscripts before publication.

Submissions and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at adalong@uab.edu or, if necessary, 850.927.3776.

DEDICATION



JOCELYN E. WHITEHEAD JACKSON

Dr. Jocelyn Jackson has been active in honors education and in the National Collegiate Honors Council for close to three decades. She was Vice President, President, and Past President of NCHC from 1985 to 1988, and she currently is an elected member of the NCHC Executive Committee. Her voice has been strong and influential in the national evolution of honors, helping to direct its course and keep it on track. She has been active in many other contexts as well. She has been President of the Southern Regional Honors Council and held other offices in that organization over the years, and she was instrumental in the formation of the National Association of African American Honors Programs in the early 1990s, serving as its first Executive Director. Educated at Boston University (B.A.), Georgetown University (M.A.), and Emory University (Ph.D.), Dr. Jackson has held academic and administrative positions at Chafin College, the U.S. Naval Intelligence School, Clark College, Atlanta University, Spelman College, and (since 1987) Morehouse College. It has always been a special treat at honors conferences to see the Morehouse buses pull up at the conference hotel and get a first look at the young men who will always give the most polished and intellectually engaging conference presentations. One can see Jocelyn's influence in the professionalism of her students and feel it in the tenor of every organization in which she is involved. With special pride and gratitude, we dedicate an issue of *JNCHC* that addresses the question "What is Honors?" to a woman who has for many years helped provide and shape the answers to that question.

ADA LONG

Editor's Introduction

ADA LONG

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

Probably most people reading this issue of *JNCHC* have to answer the question “What is Honors?” several times a week. Sometimes the answers come trippingly off the tongue with enthusiasm and clarity; sometimes they inspire new understanding of what a particular honors program or college is really about; sometimes they balk at being articulated; and sometimes they evoke annoyance, boredom, or weariness at endless repetitions of the same old buzzwords.

We all think we know what “honors” is, yet I suspect that we are often surprised at how differently others define it. Surprises come during interviews of candidates for our programs, conversations at NCHC conferences, meetings with campus administrators, and—most disconcertingly—chats with our own students.

Paradoxically, we mostly do know what we mean by “honors,” at least in a general way, and at the same time we are often stymied when we get down to the particulars. By definition, honors programs and colleges are exclusive—otherwise, what could the word “honors” possibly mean?—but at the same time they increasingly (and, in my view, rightly) struggle for inclusivity. Except in a few cases of free-standing honors colleges, we are part of our educational institutions yet also a thing apart. The paradoxes multiply the more we investigate them, yet the NCHC has managed to come up with a document defining the “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program” that most of us acknowledge to be appropriate and accurate, and, very recently (as described in an essay by Peter C. Sederberg in this issue), it has come up with a parallel document defining the characteristics of an honors college.

The focus of this issue of *JNCHC* on the question “What is Honors?” will likely reinforce both the paradoxes and commonalities of the way we think about honors education. While it is hard to find any single characteristic that distinguishes honors from non-honors students, teachers, or courses, and while honors programs/colleges across the country are far more different from each other than are, for instance, English departments or service learning programs, we do share one trait with passion and, I daresay, universal agreement: our belief in the vitality and necessity of outstanding undergraduate education.

I suspect we also know what we mean by “outstanding undergraduate education.” In my introduction to the spring/summer 2005 issue of *JNCHC*, I cited an essay called “The Organization Kid” by David Brooks, a columnist with whom I do not always agree on matters political but who is, in my view, one of the canniest commentators on education in America. So I will cite him again. In a column called “Psst! Human Capital!” published in the *New York Times* (November 13, 2005), Brooks defines human capital not in the economic terms of the marketplace but as a combination of

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cultural, social, moral, cognitive, and aspirational capabilities that he sees as the virtue and goal of education. About excellent education he writes:

The only things that work are local, human-to-human immersions that transform the students down to their very beings. Extraordinary schools, which create intense cultures of achievement, work. Extraordinary teachers, who inspire students to transform their lives, work. The programs that work touch all the components of human capital.

This statement is as good a definition of honors as any I have seen, and it is echoed over and over again in the essays that appear in this volume.

My own view is that increasingly what distinguishes honors and makes it the standard-bearer, fortress, and refuge of excellent undergraduate education is flexibility. As the national trend toward standardization and accountability grinds forward, more and more colleges and universities limit faculty autonomy, curricular experimentation, and student choices. There are two notable categories of exceptions: the most prestigious universities, such as Harvard and Stanford, and honors programs and colleges. If I am right, then our very inability—or refusal—to answer the question “What is Honors?” with unanimity of voice is what enables us to provide the finest education to our students. We are still able to experiment, to change course (and courses), to define ourselves in the contexts of our unique regions and student bodies, to go beyond the minimal, to stretch the maximal, to adapt to the changing individual and collective needs of our students, to welcome eccentricity, and to use our minds rather than simply obey the rules.

And so I treasure the difficulties we often have in defining honors. They keep us honest and interesting.

At the same time, I am struck by what I see as a commonality in all the essays submitted to the Forum on “What is Honors?” Each of them affirms some component of Brooks's definition of excellent education, and—as a whole—they provide a picture of honors that should make us all proud. Above all, what I see in them as a group is a reaffirmation of the holy trinity of great education: the student, the teacher, and the focus of inquiry. The accessories (all due credit to Vince Brewton's wonderful phrase “accessorized education”) that preoccupy honors administrators—extracurricular programming, recruitment gimmicks, admissions standards, mission statements, public relations, fundraising, assessment, and so on—mean nothing if we lose sight of this trinity.

The seed essays for the Forum were “What is Honors?” by Dail W. Mullins, Jr., and “What is an Honors Student?” by Jay Freyman. We sent these two essays to the NCHC list serve and invited short essays in response, with no requirement that the essays directly address the issues raised by Mullins and Freyman.

After first laying out the pitfalls of mission statements as euphemisms that hide rather than reveal the precise character of individual programs and colleges, Mullins addresses head-on the tension between meritocracy and egalitarianism that has characterized the discourse about honors for the two and a half decades that I have been involved in it. Mullins notes a shift in honors toward greater flexibility in admissions and what may be a tipping of the balance toward egalitarianism. He suggests that the question “What is Honors?” becomes a more complex and fraught one given the

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attempt to define, accommodate, and reward a diversity of talents that have not traditionally been associated with honors. Mullins points out that, beneath the shiny surface of all the abstractions that comprise mission statements, some serious philosophical and political issues emerge that belie the placid generalities with which honors programs and colleges advertise themselves to the world.

Freyman suggests a way to resolve the tension between meritocracy and egalitarianism described by Mullins. He argues for an understanding of “merit” that is roughly comparable to Mullins’s understanding of egalitarian principles: namely, a diverse range of criteria that transcend quantitative measures like SAT/ACT, GPA, or AP background. Based on his many years as Director of the Honors College at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, Freyman argues that the qualities of excellent recruits and members of honors programs are ascertained in an interview, not in numerical scores. Best among these qualities is curiosity, but Freyman describes many others along with suggestions about how to evoke and detect them. Freyman’s proposed admission strategy is admittedly inefficient when measured in amounts of time committed to the selection process, but it is highly successful, he suggests, if measured in the curiosity, diversity, educational commitment, intellectual depth, and cultural awareness of students admitted to an honors program or college. Freyman’s criteria for selecting and defining honors students are subjective, but they are precise; they are not numbers, but neither are they the vague generalities of a mission statement. His essay provides specific and identifiable characteristics that one can seek in candidates for an honors program—a program that would look altogether different from one that selected by the numbers.

Inspired by Freyman’s definition of an ideal honors student, Sam Schuman—with his usual clarity and eloquence—has provided his definition of an ideal honors teacher in “Teaching Honors.” The central word in his definition—a word that appears all too rarely in discourse about higher education but that shows up directly and indirectly in several of the Forum essays on “What is Honors?”—is *love*. Schuman describes in a precise, personal, and compelling way the three kinds of love that inform great teaching: love of one’s subject matter, love of one’s students, and love of bringing the subject matter and the students together. This essay will be helpful to honors administrators in identifying the best teachers for their programs or colleges; it will be helpful to honors teachers as a touchstone for reflection on their own teaching; and it will help honors students if their administrators and teachers work to provide the kind of love Schuman encourages.

Len Zane, from the pleasant distance of his post-honors rocking chair, contends that the focus on “honors student” or “honors teacher” displaces the central component of honors, which is the curriculum. In “Honors as an Adjective: Response to Jay Freyman,” Zane argues that the honors curriculum is what takes freshmen, whoever they are, to the status of “honors students” upon completion of their coursework and that “honors teachers” are the people who implement that curriculum. Part of Zane’s point is that we shouldn’t worry so much about who gets into a program as long as they are able to do the work; we should instead focus on what kinds of students we want to graduate from a program and how to get them there. Zane here addresses a very serious issue in higher education generally: should a university, college, or

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program be judged by the quality of freshmen it admits, or should it be judged and—more importantly—judge itself by the quality of its graduates? Zane argues that the standard thinking is backward, and he makes an interesting and persuasive case.

Vince Brewton, in “What Honors Can Do,” suggests a related but different misdirection that seduces honors administrators away from what it can and should be. He argues that, given the pressure to attract top students who already have a sense of entitlement, honors is too often a form of “accessorized” education, trying to “out-do, out-tech, out-gadget, and out-hype the competition.” What it should be is “serious study, serious teaching, and serious inquiry” aimed toward “teaching one student at a time.” Brewton acknowledges all the impediments to his ideal honors education, such as limited funding and staffing resources as well as student expectations (although James Hill’s research essay may suggest expectations more in line with Brewton’s ideal), but his sense that honors education may be drifting into recruitment gimmicks and marketing strategies rather than serious education may be an alarm bell we should all heed.

Daniel Pinti sounds a similar alarm in his essay “Is, Ought, and Honors,” providing an ideal of honors education akin to Brewton’s and also identifying the misdirection of honors toward marketing and consumerism. Above all, however, Pinti blames the twin pressures of “competition and perfectionism.” He suggests that we ought to be encouraging students to do less and to do it more fully, to do it in such a way that they discover themselves in their studies. The central capacity of honors, he writes, is “to be transformative” and to lead students toward “inwardness.” This ideal does not require funds and accessories as much as a commitment by faculty and staff, as well as students, to take a path toward fulfillment and self-understanding rather than perfection and a place at the top.

In “A Way of Life,” Sriram Khé provides another, but compatible, ideal of honors education as a continuous pleasure in inquiry that extends beyond any course, program, or college to include a way of experiencing the world. Echoing both Freyman and Mullins, Khé argues for an understanding of honors that transcends and transforms our promotional images of ourselves, a bigger and more all-inclusive concept than can be included in any brochure or website.

Bebe Nickolai, in her essay “In Praise of Silence,” describes her experience this semester in an honors rhetoric class as she became the student, learning from her students that *being* a student is often the best way to teach. Obviously, Nickolai’s insight applies to more than her one honors class during this one semester at her one university. Her essay reveals that shifting the power and the voice from the teacher to the student often leads to the best education for both.

In “A Student like Me,” Bonnie D. Irwin describes the diversity of students in her honors program at a state comprehensive university, focusing especially on their diversity of backgrounds and motivations. As she points out, and as any honors teacher has probably learned, high test scores and grades (as well as low test scores and grades) tell only part of the story. She challenges us to direct attention to students who have, as she had in college, the highest test scores but not the highest ambitions. To teach these students well—and to teach well all of the students who don’t fit a single prototype—requires listening to them and getting to know them. She reaffirms the

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values that Jay Freyman espoused and that many contributors to the Forum have echoed, especially that honors education is above all personal.

The Forum concludes with an essay by a former honors student who we can all wish were speaking about our own programs. In “Honors: When Value-Added is Really Added Value,” Jacqueline P. Kelleher writes about her experience as an honors student in a way that would make any honors administrator proud and that serves to illustrate the highest ideals of honors expressed in all the essays in the Forum on “What is Honors?” If one seeks consensus on what we all hope that honors is, Kelleher’s essay provides it, and any honors director, dean, or teacher who does not read this essay is missing an opportunity to feel *great*. Here is one sentence as an enticement to read the whole essay: “I also remember vividly the time I sat in the kitchen, staring down gravely at two applications: one for the University of Southern Maine and one for welfare.” Two bonuses to Kelleher’s personal narrative illustrating honors at its best are: (1) that she is now a national and international consultant on assessment and accountability with a perspective that is way too rare in this field and that was shaped by her honors experience, and (2) that she is a passionate and unflinching advocate for honors. I know we will be hearing more from her in the future.

The centerpiece of this issue of *JNCHC* is an outstanding essay by Laura Bender Herron, an honors student at Kent State University and a 2005 winner of the NCHC’s Portz Prize. “Redemptive Memory: The Christianization of the Holocaust in America” is a thoroughly researched, beautifully written, and intellectually sophisticated analysis of the way the Holocaust has been transformed within the collective American memory into a narrative that Christians can find comfortable and comforting. Choosing three examples to illustrate her thesis—the movie “Schindler’s List,” Corrie ten Boom’s memoir *The Hiding Place*, and The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum—Herron demonstrates that the American version of the Holocaust, more myth than history, represses the fact that Hitler’s Germany was a Christian country, foregrounds the tiny number of Christian “rescuers” to make them the heroes of the story, and distorts the events of the Holocaust into a story of Christian redemption. Herron’s argument is far more complex and subtle than I (perhaps anyone) can summarize. The essay needs to be read in its entirety, and fortunately such a reading is pure pleasure and excitement from beginning to end. It is one of the finest pieces of undergraduate scholarship I have ever read, and honors administrators would do well to assign it to their students for its educational value and also as a model of scholarly research.

The next section of this issue of *JNCHC* includes three research essays related to the topic “What is Honors?” The first two of these studies contain the kind of research that the NCHC has especially encouraged: comparisons of honors students to control groups of non-honors but honors-eligible students.

James P. Hill’s “What Honors Students Want (and Expect): The Views of Top Michigan High School and College Students” is a two-part study investigating what honors students see as the value of an honors education. The first part examines the expectations of a large group of top high school students, mostly from Michigan. These students, as part of their application process, responded to essay questions about the criteria they believed were most appropriate to admission to an honors

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program or college. The second part of the study focused on large samples of current Central Michigan University students, both those in the CMU Honors Program and those who, though equally eligible, were not in the program. The study concluded that all these sets of students valued the same qualities that honors administrators and faculty tend to value: high-quality instruction, small classes, social opportunities, and long-range academic goals. These broad educational goals are students' primary expectations, Hill concludes, putting criteria such as standardized test scores or prerequisites such as honors residence halls in perspective as component parts of a larger, more academically motivated set of expectations. As Hill contends, the data in this study point to the importance of student voices in promoting honors education.

Gayle E. Hartleroad, in "Comparison of the Academic Achievement of First-Year Female Honors Program and Non-Honors Program Engineering Students," presents the results of a research study of female students in the Purdue University Freshman Engineering Honors Program. The study compared these students' grade point averages to those of female engineering students who were eligible to join the program but did not. Hartleroad's data indicate that the Honors Program students earned significantly higher grades in both semesters of their freshman year and in the year as a whole. She discusses the particular importance of providing the support and community characteristic of honors programs to women who are in small minorities within male-dominated fields such as engineering. Her data are reassuring to incoming women students, not just at Purdue but probably at most universities, who unnecessarily fear that honors program participation will negatively affect their grades.

The final research essay is one of great interest to the membership of NCHC, addressing the question "What is an Honors College?" Peter C. Sederberg's "Characteristics of the Contemporary Honors College: A Descriptive Analysis of a Survey of NCHC Member Colleges" is fascinating reading even for people who have no stake in creating or maintaining an honors college. Lucid and compelling in style, the essay lays out issues relevant to all of us in honors. Reporting on the recent proposal to and acceptance by the NCHC Executive Committee of a document outlining "The Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College," Sederberg presents the results of a recent survey of honors colleges that revealed common practices. He also presents guidelines and their rationales as deliberated by the NCHC *Ad Hoc* Task Force on Honors Colleges, which he chaired. He notes the accelerating trend of transforming honors programs into colleges, arguing persuasively that these changes should not be simply nominal, that becoming an honors college should entail more than a new marketing strategy. Honors educators who have been wary of an established set of guidelines—or skeptical about the "Basic Characteristics" document—will have much to learn from Sederberg's essay, and many will be reassured by his acknowledgement that programs can be as vital and effective as colleges. Program directors as well as current or aspiring college deans will benefit from Sederberg's explanation of the legitimate and desirable—if not always actual—characteristics of an honors college.

The final section of this issue—a section that we hope will expand in future issues—is the "Book Review" section. We enthusiastically invite reviews of books

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that might be of special interest to honors administrators, teachers, and students, and we are grateful to Hallie E. Savage for leading the way with her review of Charles Lipson's *How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to Your Finished Paper*.

In addition to research essays, Forum submissions, and book reviews, we are happy to receive responses to texts published in *JNCHC* and will consider publication of such responses based on their value to the readership. Meanwhile, we hope that the current issue of *JNCHC* will be of use to its readers the next time they are asked the perpetual question "What is Honors?"

Forum on “What is Honors?”

DAIL W. MULLINS, JR.

What is Honors?

DAIL W. MULLINS, JR.

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

For several years I have edited a small, in-house journal for the School of Education's Technology Advisory Committee at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), a journal which is distributed to the faculty and posted on the School of Education's website. Until last issue. The last issue I submitted—while dutifully made available to the faculty and staff—never made it onto the website. No one offered an explanation, and I never inquired about the matter—after all, I was still able to add the activity to my already portly and now largely useless post-retirement *vita*—but I remained mildly curious about it and wondered whether it was a simple oversight or something “unseemly” I'd written in the newsletter. After some months, I decided that it was the latter and that it was likely the article I'd written about a graduate student at MIT who had developed a computer program that generates random Mission Statements. (Sample: Our mission is to continue to efficiently supply innovative opportunities in order to professionally facilitate high-payoff technology for 100% customer satisfaction. In addition, we strive to continually leverage existing error-free resources such that we may continue to synergistically maintain corporate data.) It was, I figured, simply a matter of poor timing on my part. The university, it turns out, was in the midst of a SACS accreditation visit and no doubt had dozens of vision and mission statement “specialists” poring over its school and departmental websites. My guess is that the dean of education didn't want to take the chance of offending one of the SACS folks—accreditation personnel are notoriously lacking in a sense of humor—and so requested that the Technology Committee not add my last issue to the school's website. Fair enough, I reasoned, and that was the end of that.

I bring all this up, however, because when Ada Long asked if I would write an introductory piece for this issue of *JNCHC*—devoted, as is indicated on the cover, to the question “What is Honors?”—I began by researching several dozen honors program websites from around the country and came to the quick realization that their various program descriptions all seem to be “cut from the same cloth” and might very well have been produced by an “Honors Program Description Generator.” Most notably, certain words and phrases appear again and again on these websites: “challenging,” “innovative,” “intellectually rigorous,” “enriching,” and “enhanced” to describe the educational environments offered by the programs themselves; “talented and highly motivated,” “high-achieving,” “promising,” “academically superior,” and “high ability” to describe the kinds of students enrolled and/or sought. Thus, one answer to the question “What is Honors?” seems to be that it is a system that exposes students of exceptional ability or promise to an equally exceptional educational

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experience. The details of just how each program goes about these matters are also typically revealed on their respective websites or in literature made available to prospective students. Alas, the devil, as they say, is in the details.

Most of these details, it seems to me, are of two broad types: practical/programmatic on the one hand; philosophical/political on the other. Although these are most conveniently addressed separately, they have obvious and critical points of overlap that demand some measure of simultaneous consideration, and both are worthy of serious debate and discussion, whether in NCHC itself or within individual programs.

From a practical/programmatically standpoint, perhaps the two most fundamental issues affecting honors administrators and faculty include: (1) defining and identifying the kinds of students a particular program hopes to attract, be they “academically superior,” “talented and highly motivated,” “high achieving,” simply “promising,” or all of these; and (2) designing and implementing the desired academic environment (or curriculum), whether “innovative,” “intellectually rigorous,” “enriched,” “enhanced,” or some combination of these descriptors. Add to these issues such concerns as funding demands, faculty and staff recruitment, and the question of whether a particular “honors experience” ought to exist as a “program” or “college,” and most honors administrators may find they have scant time left to reflect on the philosophical/political dimensions of their activities. Which is unfortunate, I think, because these dimensions are in many ways far more interesting topics, and it may even be argued that they help address more fundamentally the question “What is Honors?”

Ada Long, the former director of the University Honors Program at UAB, past president of NCHC, and an editor of *JNCHC* and *HIP*, once remarked that as much as she enjoyed working in honors—both with students and with her colleagues in NCHC—she wasn’t altogether sure she actually approved of honors programs. She was referring, I believe, to a paradox of sorts which has resulted from two contradictory cultural beliefs that have helped shape American higher education since the late 1950s and in which the “honors phenomenon” has helped play an interesting role. As described by Elena Galinova in her recent doctoral dissertation from The Pennsylvania State University (*The Construction of Meritocracy Within Mass Higher Education: Organizational Dynamics of Honors Programs at American Colleges and Universities*, 2005), these two cultural beliefs include: (1) the egalitarian notion that a college education should be the right of every American citizen regardless of wealth or social standing; and (2) the equally strong notion of a meritocratic system whereby the “. . . best rewards, including [the] best education” are distributed to the most motivated, talented, and capable individuals.

This is so, even though the consequences of a “pure meritocracy” could never be acceptable in this country. In the public consciousness and through public policy, the laws of meritocracy have constantly been challenged, ameliorated and complemented by the idea of social justice and the responsibility of education to eradicate social injustice. Nevertheless, the modern higher education system would be inconceivable without its meritocratic foundations. (Galina, p.1)

While egalitarian motives have been crucial to the development of the American system of higher education—one of the first systems of mass higher education in the world—meritocratic forces have at the same time contributed to a simultaneous “. . .

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process of increased differentiation and stratification within that system, both among and within institutions” (Galinova, p. 2). The honors phenomenon (programs and colleges) which began appearing at state universities in number in the late 1950s and early 1960s—although the very first such programs date back to the 1920s—have reflected and contributed to a system based both on egalitarian access and meritocratic sorting.

The controversy—perhaps tension is a better word—surrounding the meritocratic and egalitarian forces at play in higher education, and honors programs in particular, can perhaps be illustrated by an experience I had while serving in my dual roles as a faculty member in the School of Education at UAB and as an administrator in the University Honors Program.

UAB currently has two campus-wide undergraduate honors programs (the University Honors Program and the Science and Technology Honors Program) as well as twenty-three school or departmental honors offerings. Moreover, during the last few years I was with the university, schools and departments were being strongly encouraged by the central administration to initiate more such in-house programs, the rationale apparently being that the promise of an “honors” curriculum for almost every capable student—i.e., an egalitarian movement—helped attract more and better students. Three years before I retired, the dean of the School of Education asked me—primarily because of my simultaneous involvement as Associate Director of the University Honors Program—to research, design, and coordinate the implementation an honors program within education. As he and I found out in fairly short order, however, it was not an idea particularly well received by the faculty in the School of Education (although a few informal surveys I administered to students in my own classes suggested that they were by and large amenable to the idea.) And, as best I could tell through my own inquiries into other universities, school and departmental honors programs in the field of education are generally rather scarce across the board.

Certainly much of the opposition or at least hesitant skepticism about establishing yet another administrative and academic “program” within the School of Education at UAB had to do with the proverbial questions of funding and staffing, space allotment, and release-time issues for faculty involvement—that is to say, practical/programmatic issues. At the same time, however, there was widespread reluctance on the part of many of the faculty in education even to discuss the issue, and this seemed to have more to do with latent philosophical/political matters within the discipline itself.

As a kind of “interloper” in the field of education (see Mullins Jr., Dail W., *JNCHC*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 21-29), I was aware of the fact that honors programs and courses in general are likely to be viewed with a jaundiced eye by teacher educators and that the charge of “elitism” is not uncommon. This was perhaps particularly true for a school of education which is expected to play a major role in preparing teachers for service in a large, underachieving, and troubled school district such as exists in the city of Birmingham. While a meritocratic system of honors education might be fine in principle, many argued that it was not something that future secondary school teachers in Birmingham were ever likely to encounter in the public schools; that the

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implementation of such a program would only serve to further increase the “differentiation and stratification” of teacher candidates themselves; and that in the end no good purpose would be served. When I retired on July 1 of last year, the School of Education was the only professional school at UAB serving undergraduate students that still lacked an honors program.

So is honors a means by which the educational system “subverts” its broader egalitarian traditions? Or can egalitarian motives perhaps be used to soften the “differentiation and stratification” phenomena inherent in honors programs themselves? And does it matter so long as access to a chance at higher education is made available to anyone who seeks it?

In some respects, the sentiment voiced by Ada Long about honors programs in general can be viewed as echoing all these concerns. Her response, as many of her colleagues know, has been similar to that of Andrew Delbanco at Columbia University, who believes that students are best educated by arranging for classrooms which allow them to know “opposite lives.” In her view, this means bringing students of proven high academic ability and privileged educational backgrounds together with those who may lack these advantages but who clearly show promise and ambition. I used to think that the University Honors Program at UAB was the only program in the country that did not set minimum GPA and standardized test scores for admittance, and I suspect it was one of a very few for almost two decades, but my recent survey of honors program websites indicates that admissions criteria are now more diverse and complex.

Like vision and mission statements, honors program and honors candidate descriptions are often idealized representations which can become devilishly difficult to reconcile with day-to-day administrative matters, coursework design and implementation, and perhaps especially the screening of applicants. It is obviously up to the administrators of individual honors programs to decide how they will balance the tensions inherent in trying to accommodate both meritocratic and egalitarian goals. My survey revealed the full range of options, from those which admit every incoming student on a conditional basis to those which go strictly on the basis of standardized test scores and other quantifiable measures. Increasingly, however, there does appear to be a tendency to look at the “whole” student from the perspectives of both achievement and promise, past performance and recognized latent talents. Whatever one’s philosophical/political views of honors might be, there does seem to be room for more and different minds in the boat, thus adding a new dimension and urgency to the question “What is Honors?”

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JAY FREYMAN

“What is an Honors Student?”

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It is first necessary to recognize the distinction between the questions “What is an honors student?” or better “What are the characteristics of an honors student?” and “How do you recognize a student with those characteristics?” The first of these two questions is easier to approach since it is more a matter of prescription than of description, a presentation of an ideal rather than a recognition of an actual state. We can all list characteristics which we would like or expect those special students to have who are worthy in our estimation of the designation “honors.” These expectations, I submit, are often informed by our own experiences as honors students ourselves or in association with others, when we were in college, who were considered to be honors students by official or by general agreement. It is quite another matter, however, to be able to detect, directly or indirectly, the presence of those qualities which constitute the character of an honors student; they may or may not be readily evident and, it seems, very often are not so. In my admittedly anecdotal experience, so-called objective criteria for judging the quality of students fail quite miserably when it comes to predicting success in honors curricula.

The Scholastic Aptitude Test fails to account for that imagination, creativity, and curiosity which I believe are integral to the personality of a true honors student; and high school grade point averages are often more indicative of the quality of the school and/or the teaching-to-the-test instruction which seems to characterize so much education at that level than they are of the quality of the student. As for Advanced Placement work, there are times when I feel that the number of Advanced Placement courses a student has taken is inversely related to that individual’s potential for success in honors education. I say that for a particular reason. I would posit breadth of interest and commitment to ongoing learning in a wide variety of areas as major indicators of a good honors student. More often than not, I have found that students have taken Advanced Placement work to avoid broadening their experience in college and to facilitate narrowing their college curriculum to those areas in which they feel academically secure or which they feel will advance their professional or vocational agendas for college.

As in so many other areas, elimination of the negative is often more useful than accentuation of the positive in the attempt to identify promising honors students. The process may be facilitated by looking for evidence of characteristics which might **disqualify** someone for honors work, i.e., it may be easier to tell who is not qualified to do honors work than to tell who is. In vetting a candidate for admission to an honors college or program, I recommend, for example, looking and listening carefully for phrases like “get out of the way” in reference to subject areas in which Advanced

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Placement work has been taken. The original intent of the Advanced Placement Program, after all, was to afford students an opportunity to do more advanced work in subject areas offered in the Program rather than to avoid having to take courses in them to satisfy general or distribution requirements in college.

I would say that aptitude for honors depends at least as much on attitude as on accomplishment and furthermore that the presence of the latter without any indication of the former is not a good sign. The problem is, of course, that achievement can be quantified much more easily and so is more readily recognizable than is attitude; therefore, it is very tempting to emphasize achievement almost to the exclusion of attitude. As Director of the Honors College at a public institution which went from foundation to Phi Beta Kappa status in 31 years, I often said that the presence of curiosity is virtually the only personal characteristic necessary for determining a good honors prospect. Once a certain minimally requisite level of intellectual ability has been identified by whatever measure you please—and I would say that, between SAT scores and grade point averages, the latter are more useful in this regard—curiosity would be the only criterion necessary for granting a student admission to the Honors College. Give me the applicants' curiosity quotients, and the rest will be easy. Once, I asked a colleague in Psychology whether there was any way of measuring curiosity. He replied that the only thing of which he knew was a curiosity segment on a particular personality inventory; he was quick to add, however, that the results from this instrument were not terribly reliable where curiosity is concerned.

Here are some other characteristics which I would say indicate a good honors prospect—or, perhaps, I should say that a poor honors prospect can be eliminated by an apparent lack of these characteristics.

Study time—How much study time is the student used to expending on school work? Is he or she reluctant to talk about this? This does not mean that honors requires nerdishness—nerdishness too often goes hand in hand with narrow focus. There should be enough time for the honors student to stop and smell the intellectual roses he or she meets along the curricular way. A propensity to heed the injunction “Carpe diem,” whether it emanates from the pen of Horace in a textbook or from the mouth of Robin Williams on the wide screen, is definitely an asset for an honors student. But anyone who does not take seriously the need to have available at least three to four hours outside of class for every hour in class is probably not a great prospect for honors.

Academic purpose—Why is the student coming to college or university? If the answer to such a question is couched in emphatically vocational or professional terms, beware. This is not to say that honors students should be expected to be less practical about the more immediate value of a college education, but only to say that the honors student realizes that there is more to life than making a living. In broader terms, he or she recognizes the need for quality along with quantity and knows that the latter without some concern for the former can result in having plenty of nothing, but not in the positive sense of the Gershwin lyrics. The issue of academic purpose is summed up in the motto of the Honors College which I directed—Learning for living, not just for making a living.

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Honors purpose—Why does the student want to participate in an honors program? Be wary of answers to this question that are heavily laced with references to the large number of honors courses taken in high school or the large number of AP courses taken or membership in the National Honor Society or listing on an Honor Roll or Principal's Role. Why do I say this? I have sometimes posited a quirky question: "Who put the 's' in honors?" Here is something of an answer. What you do not want to hear in response to the question "Why do you want to be admitted to an honors program?" is a mere recitation of past accomplishments. Certainly, some confirmation of ability is necessary; but, as already stated, ability alone does not an honors student make, although ability alone may make an "honor" student. I like to say that the "s" in "honors" stands for "student," or more properly, the Latin verb "studeo" from which the English word "student" comes. Among the possible meanings of this verb are "devote oneself to," "apply oneself to," and "be interested in." Honors students have an *interest* in learning, which they see both as an ongoing process and as an end in itself, not merely as a means to something else. Of course, this does not mean that a promising honors student must give evidence that he or she conceives of some grand intellectual plan for the rest of his or her life. But, there should be some indication that, like a mountain climber who climbs a mountain simply because it is there to be climbed, the student wants to know things simply because they are there to be known. Without evidence of that interest, what you may have is a good honor student; but you may be taking a risk by accepting him or her as a good honors prospect.

Communication skills—It is, of course, quite necessary that honors students be adept communicators. Such must be the case both in the written and in the oral medium. Candidates for honors work are generally required to demonstrate written proficiency; in the case of my Honors College, a separate, additional application from the one for admission to the university is required. Part of this application is a composition on one of four specific topics. This composition has been the heart of the Honors College application and is a clear demonstration of proficiency in writing.

Unfortunately, proficiency in writing does not necessarily represent a concomitant proficiency in oral communication; and it is all the more surprising that oral communication skills should be neglected in considering students for admission to honors since one of the hallmarks of honors education is generally taken to be small classes in which students are required to do much more speaking than in regular courses.

I can remember an instance in which the Honors College rejected the application of a young man who had a 1400+ SAT score and had passed AP English in high school with a score high enough to exempt him from the university's composition requirement. His Honors College essay was, however, very poorly written. When I sat down with him and went over the essay, all he could say was "But, I wrote this while I was taking AP English." His evident failure to make an appropriate distinction between performance on a test and what that performance is *supposed* to show—and I emphasize "supposed"—should have disqualified him for honors even if his composition were well written.

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On the other hand, there was the young woman who attended an inner-city high school not noted for its academics; her SAT scores were mediocre, not to say “poor,” but her composition for the Honors College application showed sophistication of thought and a facility for its expression. A personal interview revealed not only that she was quite capable of having produced the application essay but also that she could express herself eloquently in person. Upon admission to the Honors College, she “took off” intellectually and academically and accomplished a broader curriculum than did many College members whose “objective” admission credentials were much more impressive. Two years later, history repeated itself. The young woman’s younger sister applied to the Honors College under the same circumstances—unimpressive high school background, unimpressive SAT scores, but quite impressive application essay. Again, a personal interview produced the impression of a curious intellect and expressive eloquence. Again, admission to the Honors College was followed by a burst of academic energy and accomplishment—with one significant addition. By the time the younger sister graduated, our campus had been awarded a charter to shelter a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa and had installed the chapter; and the younger sister was among the first group of students to be elected to Membership in Course in our chapter.

Admittedly, these anecdotal cases represent dramatic, exaggerated situations. But, as a student of the didactic nature of ancient Athenian drama, I can attest that dramatic exaggeration can be effectively and practically instructive.

There are, I submit, a number of additional values which should be part of the character of a good prospect for success in honors. Let me list just a few.

An understanding of the difference between “needs” and “wants”—Many honors students receive a considerable amount of merit-based scholarship aid. In addition, those who qualify may receive need-based aid. Such students should be willing to devote the vast majority, if not all, of their time to their studies. They should be serious, in a way in which many other students are not, about taking intellectual advantage of the opportunities afforded by college. They should be willing and eager, for the time they are in college, to become professional students; being students is what they are doing for a living. Unless it is absolutely necessary to support their education, they will not seek employment and certainly will never allow such employment to encroach on their studies. A student with scholarship aid that pays for tuition, room, board, and expenses should not be working at any more than a minimal job and should never allow the hours of such a job to prevent him or her from taking a particular class. A true honors student knows that such outside employment serves to satisfy a want rather than a need. Of course, I do not mean that honors students should not have jobs to support such incidental expenses as entertainment. But, certainly, a student who is receiving an award which includes full tuition, room, board, and expenses should not plan to be working at a full-time job.

Patience—An honors student should have the patience to defer, if need be, the satisfaction of wants and the patience, at all times, to listen to and to consider seriously all sides of an issue.

Appreciation of diversity—An honors student should understand that the world is culturally diverse and that technology has made unavoidable a daily contact with

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that diversity. He or she appreciates that this diversity both imposes a responsibility and confers a benefit on those who live in its midst: the responsibility to be tolerant of others' ways of thinking and of doing things and the benefit of an opportunity for personal enrichment by learning from others and thereby possibly improving one's own way of thinking and of doing things. This appreciation of diversity implies both a commitment to be reasonably conversant throughout life with what is going on around the world and an awareness of and an ability to use the media available to facilitate that conversance. Flowing from this appreciation of diversity should be a certain degree of altruism, i.e., with regard to Aristotle's dictum that it is natural for humans to live not as hermits but in association with others, success in such living necessitates a consideration of "the other" and, consequently, a resignation of self-interest to one degree or another.

Recognition that life consists of more than mere physical existence—This characteristic has various manifestations. An honors student appreciates the difference between the concepts of "concrete" and "abstract"; she or he knows that an idea can provide as potent a motivation to action as physical force does. She or he appreciates that only a portion of life is spent in seeing to the security of physical existence and that there are more or less human ways in which to account for spending the balance of life that is at one's disposal, i.e., one's leisure time. Such a student may not be able to recite the etymology of the word "school," i.e. the Greek term "scholē" meaning "leisure"; but this student appreciates to some extent what the late Mortimer Adler meant in 1988 when he interpreted the phrase "liberal education" as studies pursued by one who is "free from having to get his hands dirty" all the time to stay alive. The student both knows that an unexercised intellect is as susceptible to atrophy as is unexercised muscle tissue and believes in living as if she/he could have composed the slogan "A mind is a terrible thing to waste."

Recognition of the distinction between means and ends—For example, does the student see that ideally the performance of an act is most successful when it not only produces the intended result but also gives the performer him- or herself a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment from the very act of performance? Why has the student chosen the professional goal which he/she has chosen? Does the student evidence a sense of intrigue with what the chosen profession involves? Whether or not the student has chosen a professional goal, what questions does he/she feel it is important to answer by way of making such a choice?

Understanding the concepts represented by the terms "rights," "privileges," and "responsibilities"—For an immediate example, does the student understand that membership in an honors program or college is a privilege? What rights and responsibilities does the student understand to be connected with that privilege? Can the student appreciate his/her association with the honors program or college as a paradigm for life as a citizen or family member?

How, then, can a good honors student be identified if the usual criteria do not address or do not address satisfactorily the characteristics suggested? I submit that firsthand communication with the candidate for honors, i.e., an interview, is the most useful means by which to make such an identification. To paraphrase a well-known expression made by the esteemed Justice Potter Stewart, "I may not be able

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objectively to detect the qualities of a good honors student, but I know when I am talking to one.” What types of questions are useful in such interviews? Again, while it may be difficult to describe these questions in the abstract, I can give several examples from my own experience:

Ask the student to give an impromptu interpretation of something relevant to some point in the conversation. For example, if the conversation turns to a discussion of materialism, the Gershwin lyrics noted above might provide an opportunity for the interviewee to demonstrate his/her interpretive ability. Incidentally, also, such an exercise may provide some indication of the candidate’s general store of knowledge. Does the name “Gershwin” or the title *Porgy and Bess* “ring a bell”? It is not necessary that any particular piece of knowledge be part of the candidate’s store; but if it is, there is some reason to think that you have both an interested and an interesting student in front of you. (Given the apparently pervasive lack of concern for history on the part of the generation recently and currently of an age to be applying for admission to honors work in higher education, I have had occasion to be impressed as one or another student in conversation has shown familiarity with such individuals as Emma Goldman or Harry Hopkins.)

Ask the student how he/she uses solitary spare time, i.e., what activities occupy time not devoted to satisfying physical needs (e.g., sleeping, eating), to required activities (e.g., schoolwork, job), nor to group activities (e.g., sports, playing in a musical group). It is promising if an answer involves reading and/or writing. If watching television and/or listening to music is part of an answer, probe further for the type of material enjoyed. Does the candidate like to watch quiz shows such as *Jeopardy* or to do crossword or acrostic puzzles?

How does the candidate feel about issues of reason and emotion and of utility and aesthetics? For example, what reaction does the student have to the fact that the conveniences and luxuries of a modern automobile (e.g., CD player, automatic windows and door locks, aesthetic appointments like rally stripes, availability of various engine options) may make its price two to three times what it would be for a simple, utilitarian mechanism which efficiently and safely transports passengers from point A to point B? Or, is nourishment a matter simply of physical survival, i.e., is a diet of simple, inexpensive foods, limited in variety and modes of preparation, a universally acceptable form of human nourishment? What accounts for the fact that so many people, aware though they may be of the dangers of smoking, continue to smoke?

How does the candidate feel about the fact that, despite the availability of public transportation in many instances, people still fulfill their transportation needs and wants with their own vehicles which are becoming increasingly expensive to operate?

What are the candidate’s thoughts on the situation in which ailment-curing and life-saving procedures and substances are available only to those in certain economic circumstances or in which bottom-line corporate economics dictate that such procedures and substances shall not be available at all?

How does one reconcile a sports figure’s signing a contract for \$252,000,000 with an elderly gentleman’s sleeping under newspapers at the entrance to the Charles Center Metro Station in Baltimore in winter?

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It has been demonstrated that economical mass production of portable, easily assembled and disassembled shelters for the homeless is possible. What answer is there to the objection that pursuing such production serves to perpetuate homelessness?

At one time or another time during my tenure as Director of the Honors College, I believe I touched on each one of these issues in conversations with candidates for admission to or with members of the College.

I am aware that time and distance are the enemies of requiring an interview for admission. Honors programs/colleges seem generally to be too woefully understaffed to make a personal interview with each applicant feasible. Location of honors operations at schools which attract applicants from a geographically wide area makes the travel to attend such interviews impractical. Technology can compensate to some extent for these difficulties, e.g., telephone interviews can be held with students who are applying from a distance. Honors faculty can be enlisted to do interviews on campus at the crucial time of year when applications are numerous. Honors alumni can be enlisted for the same purpose or, in the case of alumni at a distance from the campus, to interview in their own localities. In the last analysis, students who cannot be interviewed in person can be asked to address in writing some key issues that might arise in the interview. But, in view of the amount of meaning conveyed by body language, every effort should be made to accomplish a face-to-face meeting with the candidate.

In sum, again, while this approach to identifying the promising honors student may lack the science and objectivity of SAT scores or grade point averages, it does recognize that there are more things relevant to the process of such identification than can be dreamt of in any fixed, descriptive methodology.

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SAM SCHUMAN

Teaching Honors

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Jay Freyman's discussion of "What is an Honors Student?" sent me off on the somewhat quirky tangent of asking, "So What is an Honors Teacher?" Even quirkier, my musings led me to the conclusion that the best answer was provided by John Lennon and the Beatles: "all you need is love."

I'll return to John Lennon in a moment, but first let me follow Professor Freyman's example, and begin with a couple of disqualifiers.

Honors faculty members do not need to be the most popular instructors on campus. That is not to say that there is an inverse relationship between successful honors teaching and popularity. (Although I remember to my horror discovering when I became Honors Director at the University of Maine several eons ago that the program had somehow become a dumping ground for the most unpopular teachers on campus, whose department chairs and deans realized they could pawn off on the Honors Program problem faculty members whose classes were perennially under-enrolled!) Sometimes potentially splendid honors faculty can be women and men who are especially rigorous, for example, and have a reputation for being highly demanding—not always a path to all-campus popularity. Sometimes, too, they can be a bit eccentric in ways that might be off-putting to some students, but charming to the best students. Conversely, while it is certainly not always the case, at least sometimes rather shallow faculty members who are skilled classroom performers can achieve a kind of popularity that does not correspond to the lasting quality of instruction they are offering. The best honors instructors will be popular with honors students, but honors students' pantheon of great teachers will not always conform to that of the entire student body.

Honors faculty do not need to be devoted to the Socratic, discussion, or seminar modes of instruction. I think there is a general assumption that all honors classes need to be interactive, and indeed, most are. But great lecturers can be wonderful teachers, too. Particularly at small colleges where the usual mode of instruction is discussion, an occasional brilliant lecturer can be a splendid addition to the roster of honors teachers. It does seem to me that virtually all fine honors teachers will find some means of inviting and responding to students' questions—honors students probably want and need to be questioners. But I've come to believe that not all honors classes have to involve pedagogical give-and-take. Great teaching can happen in virtually any pedagogical venue, and when it does, it can be great honors teaching.

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What, then, *do* great honors teachers have in common? Let me, as it were, “get back” to the Beatles.

I think that honors teachers need to love their subject matter, and they need to love their students, and they need to love bringing them together.

The first is surely obvious. It is hard to imagine a fine teacher who is teaching something she or he doesn't care, and care deeply, about. Show me a literature teacher who does not read novels or plays or poetry or short stories in her spare time, and I will show you someone whose Shakespeare class I don't want to attend. Conversely, show me a statistician whose enthusiasm over a page of numbers cannot be curbed, and I'll show you a math course worth taking. As I think back to my undergraduate days, the teachers whose classes I remember most distinctly were inevitably those whose passion for their subject matters was most intense.

But one can love one's material and channel all that love into the solitary work of the research scholar. Great researchers can be great teachers, but only if they genuinely care for the students they are teaching. In my quarter-century of academic administration I have noticed an interesting trend: as faculty members age, some of them grow to dislike students while others come to like them more and more. It is easy, when one is 25, to interact with pleasure with students who are twenty. For many it is more difficult, and for some it is impossible, when the gap is thirty or forty years rather than a half-dozen. Those are the faculty members who complain, ever more loudly with each passing year, that today's students are inferior to yesterday's, that they don't know how to read, they are afraid to work, they don't respect their professors, that they lack intellectual curiosity. It can be difficult to resist the temptation to point out to such complainers that maybe part of the problem is that each year they grow a year further from their students and that bridging the growing gap is really more their responsibility than that of the students. On the other hand, I know many faculty members in their 60's and 70's (and 50's and 80's, too) whose affection for college-age people grows stronger with each passing year. For these teachers, each new year brings a deeper appreciation for the enthusiasms, the franknesses, the conventions and the pure teachability of the young. These are our best honors teachers. In honors programs at larger institutions, faculty often have the opportunity, usually reserved for small college professors, to know students over multiple academic terms, to watch them grow and develop, to see the seeds planted in the first year bearing fruit in the fourth.

Finally, fine honors teachers love serving as matchmakers between material about which they are passionate and students of whom they are fond. They are the teachers who come out of a good class as high as a kite and with more energy than when they went in. They are the faculty members who enjoy being called “teachers” as well as “professors” or “faculty members.” They are the teachers who want to know what becomes of their students in five or ten or twenty-five years. They are teachers who, when they get a friendly e-mail from a former student who is now a teacher herself, will glow for days. They work at teaching, and

SAM SCHUMAN

work hard, and despair when it does not go as well as they want, and exult when it goes better.¹

It might be argued that I am describing fine teaching, honors or not. By and large, I plead guilty: as a general rule, I believe that fine honors teachers are fine teachers anywhere, that great teachers elsewhere in the curriculum will excel in honors courses. Conversely, really bad teachers teach really poorly everywhere, alas. In addition to the two characteristics I've already specified (knowing students over time; offering ample opportunities for questions), I do think that there are a few traits somewhat more characteristic of honors teaching. Honors courses and honors teachers tend to ask students to assume a larger proportion of the burden of teaching themselves than in equivalent courses elsewhere in the curriculum. I've observed that there seems to be a slightly higher willingness to experiment with new and different pedagogies among honors teachers and that they tend to keep experimenting throughout their careers. And honors teachers tend to push students to move beyond the confines of the syllabus more often, perhaps, than their non-honors counterparts—to read the extra book, write the extra paper, investigate the unassigned problem. There are, then, a few significant idiosyncrasies and particularities in teaching honors students, but by and large fine honors teaching and fine teaching are very close kin.

“What is an Honors Teacher?” She or he is a person with some brains and some skill, but mostly someone who is in love with teaching.

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¹ A small caveat. If a college is rightly defined as Mark Hopkins at one end of a bench and a student at the other, you still need the bench. For fine teaching, including fine honors teaching, to happen, there must exist an institutional culture which permits, or at the very least does not preclude, such work. Such a culture must, for example, recognize that there is legitimate reason to offer honors instruction to students with above-average talent or motivation. It must not punish faculty members for teaching small classes at the undergraduate level. It should not regard honors instruction as uncompensated overload labor. It cannot react negatively to faculty members who appeal to particularly strong students. And, finally and quixotically perhaps, there must be an institutional culture which gives to honors faculty and honors students the time and the space to work with thoughtful reflection, to teach and to learn with focus and intensity, to create an environment of contemplation at least sometimes removed from the constant turmoil of life, including academic life.

LEN ZANE

Honors as an Adjective: Response to Jay Freyman

LEN ZANE

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

As an ex-honors program/college CEO, the question raised by this Forum—“What is an Honors (fill in the blank)?”—got me reminiscing about the old days. In some sense the best answers are the obviously circular answers. An honors student is a student participating in an honors program. An honors curriculum is the curriculum required to graduate with honors and is made up, obviously, of honors courses. The people teaching those courses are by necessity honors faculty. But how can an honors course be identified? Well, it is one populated by honors students that meets some curricular requirement of an honors program and is taught by an honors faculty member!

Getting slightly more serious, the expression “honors student” always made me uncomfortable and still makes me uncomfortable since there are many students on campus who can legitimately claim to be “honors students” of one sort or another who have no connection whatsoever with the honors program. (To avoid using up all the slashes on my computer, I will dispense with the awkward program/college and use program generically.) Consequently, I assiduously avoid that expression and instead talk about students participating in honors. I was even more uncomfortable with the expression “honors faculty,” an appellation guaranteed to infuriate some colleagues on campus. So instead we had faculty who were teaching honors courses as part of an honors curriculum.

You may not have noticed, but I have narrowed down the set of questions that I am prepared to address. The adjective “honors” ought to be applied primarily to courses and curriculum. In fact, I would argue that it is the curriculum that should be dominant and define an honors experience. An honors curriculum is designed, in principle, to take some students from somewhat unformed freshmen to plausibly intelligent and thoughtful seniors. Therefore, I would suggest that the criteria listed by Jay Freyman in his article “What is an Honors Student?” seem like a wonderful set of outcome objectives for an honors program as opposed to set of admission requirements. Then the question becomes, “What sort of honors program, and especially honors curriculum, would move students, willing and able to participate in honors, toward becoming more “honorable” according to Jay Freyman?”

Of course it is possible that a different set of objectives could be used as a guide for developing an honors curriculum. Also, I am using “curriculum” in a very general sense. For example, the curriculum could include public service, cultural events, or campus lectures. I am assuming these decisions are being made by an inclusive

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group of faculty from across campus, who can now be called upon to help develop the specific courses that constitute the pedagogic part of the curriculum.

As part of developing those honors courses, the faculty will be led naturally, or coaxed if necessary, to consider the question, “What is an honors course?” This allows different institutions to come up with criteria designed to meet the specific needs of the students on that campus and also the particular set of objectives decided upon at the start of the process.

After the curriculum is decided upon and courses developed, the questions about “honors” faculty and students become important. How are faculty selected to teach the courses in the honors curriculum? How do students become participants in the honors program? My suggestion is to fall back on the objectives of the program, the curriculum, and the criteria established to define an honors course. I will deal with the faculty first since it seems a little irresponsible to recruit students into a program before knowing who will be teaching the honors courses in the curriculum. Faculty can be recruited, volunteer themselves, or be coerced to teach an honors course with the *a priori* understanding that they agree to abide by the criteria established to define an honors course. For example, if it has been agreed that there will be no multiple-choice question examinations and that all classes should have a writing component, then the faculty selected to teach honors courses need to be bound by those criteria. The faculty selected to teach the honors courses are not “honors faculty” but instead faculty who will be teaching courses in the honors program.

The idea of selecting students based on how well they already meet the outcome objectives of the program seems a little backward. Instead, my strategy would be to emphasize the programmatic features of honors, including objectives, along with some type of statistical summary of the academic preparation expected for participants. I also certainly encourage the use of a separate application form for honors and some sort of writing sample as a way to establish a minimal level of student interest. If a student can't fill out an application and write an essay or short story, he or she should not be encouraged to participate in honors. After that, I was always most comfortable with allowing students basically to self-select into honors. Admittedly there were times when a student was denied immediate admission into honors because of especially weak high school credentials. But our program allowed students to enter honors after completing their first semester, thus giving the student the opportunity to prove how little I knew about predicting a student's performance in college.

If the value of an honors program is measured by its impact on a student over four years of participation, it seems to me that students with the least honorific characteristics as freshmen may be the ones who gain the most from interacting with a robust, broad, and challenging honors curriculum. The assumption being made about students, like that made for faculty, is that students entering the honors program accept the objectives of the program, which for me means they are open to the possibility of growing during their undergraduate years. That willingness to be part of the honors community on campus becomes the primary criterion used to select participants.

In parting, I would like to remind readers that it is much easier to see things clearly and unambiguously, though still possibly incorrectly, when your mind is not

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cluttered with the day-to-day details of actually running an honors program. So with that, I will amble back to my rocker to resume my role as an ex-CEO of an honors program.

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VINCE BREWTON

What Honors Can Do

VINCE BREWTON

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA

Since becoming honors director at a small regional institution in March, I have had more than a few opportunities to reflect on what honors might be and what it is not, or should not, be. When Dail W. Mullins, Jr. writes of “balancing tensions” between meritocratic and egalitarian tendencies, it is a reminder that honors education is not a single linear pursuit as outsiders often conceive it, “working with the best and the brightest” (what could be easier or more straightforward!), but involves a reconciliation of opposites that is fundamental to paradox. Most of us arrive in our profession with an outlook similar to the colleague of Sara Hopkins-Powell who said that “teaching is the most important work in the world, and we do it one student at a time.” College teaching, however, is already a serious compromise with this sterling premise since, as a matter of institutional organization, we teach classes, sections, labs—not students. Prefaced by sound justifications, honors programs introduce a drastic selectivity into the dynamic of who might constitute the “one student” even before we begin to struggle with the business of teaching her or him. This conflict is only one of many involved in thinking through the honors process and administering a program based on consistent principles.

So far I have found it difficult to unravel the paradoxes in my own mind and at my own institution, where some departments lack faculty to staff their current required courses. In this context, how do I ask for a concentration of resources to meet the needs of a few, albeit important needs, if the needs of the many are not being met? Often at the places where I have taught I have found myself clinging tenaciously to the two or three or four shockingly bright and curious students in a class who make it all worthwhile. What kind of response should I expect when I, to invoke an art metaphor, ask my colleagues to relinquish their private collections for the national gallery?

There are, of course, powerful contradictions operating at the level of the individual honors student as well. An honors director I once worked for emphasized above almost all else that we would not “coddle” honors students or encourage their already well nourished sense of “entitlement,” a term that has lent itself to the cadre of young people—“The Entitlement Generation”—that is our current responsibility. It goes almost without saying that in the recruitment portion of our jobs we do contribute something to those feelings of entitlement, which perhaps we should expect given our fawning attention. Jay Freyman’s essay politely suggests that we exclude these and other students from our programs in the first place. But even if we have applicant pools strong enough to turn some away, others will undoubtedly slip through

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Freyman's screening methods, leaving us with a fresh contradiction in how to address the needs of students in honors programs who do not match our expectations.

It seems fairly plain that honors programs originated at least in part out of a desire to duplicate a mostly mythical undergraduate experience believed to be the provenance of some of our oldest and most elite institutions. Having set out to imitate programs at schools that lay claim to being "the best" for undergraduate education, I wonder if honors programs have not evolved into a very different animal altogether. To compete for the pool of students certified by grades and test scores as the very best, honors programs go heavy with bells and whistles, the academic equivalent of inducements used to recruit college athletes. We employ all the catch phrases Mullins found in his research, making great claims about our "innovative" teaching (as if we could always control how our courses are taught), "advanced" and "enriched" academic offerings (easier said than done), small classes (by no means an unequivocal good), intensive use of technology (also by no means an unequivocal good), individual research projects (a "perk" students are often eager to trade in), field trips, high-priced speakers, and desperately creative alternative assignments. That is what we say about ourselves at any rate, and, in doing so, have we defined honors as well?

I suppose I ought to come out more strongly in favor of all these good things that now pretty much mark off honors from non-honors courses at our institutions. Certainly, they are not harmful as features of our educational practice. But while these and other ingredients make up honors as we aggressively market it today, I would venture a guess that they did not characterize much of what was excellent—"one student at a time"—in our own experience as undergraduates. We were taught by faculty prepared for their work by a lifetime of learning, men and women deeply involved in the life of their disciplines but not distracted by research from the welfare of their students. Prolonged immersion in texts, laboratory, and fieldwork was compounded with questioning, experimentation, writing, and explication, followed by more criticism and questioning. The maxim about "commitment" applied to that experience: when it comes to eggs and bacon, the chicken is involved but the pig is committed. Pig-like dedication from scholar-teachers formed most of us years ago, but even as I write this I realize the paradox in that we cannot simply say so. Something sexier seems to be required.

Let me hasten to add that this is not an anti-technology screed. We have an ethical duty to outfit our students for survival in an economic climate changing brutally fast. Reading *Origin of the Species* with our students is hardly enough. Yet while I wish every classroom I taught in were "Smart"-er than it is, I still find myself conducting a lot of chalk talk even when I have other tech resources at hand. It is not the technology that makes it good teaching, nor will the latest technologies do as a substitute.

Often our eagerness to out-do, out-tech, out-gadget, and out-hype the competition does something to incubate the usual honors pathologies: an expectation of the "A" grade and other special privileges as if they were rights and a cavalier attitude toward the hard work of learning. Honors students are often among the least well-adjusted participants in campus life socially and emotionally. It may be that these are

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not the students we want to exalt with the special status we used to recruit them in the first place.

Candor requires that I stress these contrary perspectives, but at the same time the last six months' work of putting together an honors program has led to some encouraging discoveries. I have observed that faculty—"innovative" and otherwise—find new professional energy when offered an opportunity to work with honors students. Maybe we all need fresh pretexts to drop the guise of Paolo Freire's teacher who "knows" and resume the role of teacher-student that all good teaching demands. The honors program on our campus was in some sense an administrative initiative; ironically, through involvement in the start-up of the program, many faculty have begun to let go of their cynicism toward administrative means and ends and have embraced a guarded optimism about the remarkable potential of the university. While I share some of Emerson's disdain for "badges and names," at the two universities where I have worked in honors I have seen that a new honors program becomes an emblem around which institutional energies organize to support academic improvements that serve the entire learning community. In short, finding a harmony among some if not all of these discordant elements has been very satisfying.

Take them all in all, a fully accessorized honors program is a fine thing, but serious study, serious teaching, and serious inquiry are the basis for an excellent education, call it what you will. If we promise them a laptop or a summer abroad to get them on campus, we had better be prepared to deliver something more substantial once they are here. Ultimately I am reminded if we are to make any headway with the paradox of teaching one student at a time when our funding entities would rather we teach one hundred at a time, and online at that, we must start out by trying to make a difference to one student at a time doing the things that honors can do.

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DANIEL PINTI

Is, Ought, and Honors

DANIEL PINTI

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Somewhat uncomfortably, I confess that the question “What is Honors?” rings a bit too Platonic to these ears. I hardly feel qualified to describe “Honors” in terms of its timeless, disembodied, ideal Form, although I suppose the shadows on the wall of my own humble cave are recognizable enough. Honors at Niagara University has as its primary purpose to enrich the academic experience of NU’s most talented students, and we try to do so by weaving coursework and individual research opportunities into each student’s curriculum in order to enhance both the general education and the major programs. We put on a burgeoning undergraduate research conference every year. We recently revised our curriculum to offer our students a wider array of Honors courses. We devote a great deal of well-spent energy to advising our students, helping each to find a way to make the Honors experience truly complementary to his or her overall academic work.

Honesty, however, prompts me to describe NU Honors further. Our Honors population is rather too large for the amount of resources our school can devote to it, to the detriment of that very population. We lag behind many honors programs in our ability to foster a true sense of community among our students. We’d like to have a first-year seminar but, for various reasons, we can’t, and the very flexibility we offer our students is both a strength and a weakness. I do not mean to belabor the point. Like many (all?) honors programs, the Honors Program at Niagara might well have to answer the question “What is Honors?” with “Honors at my institution is *not all it should be*.” The desire (not to say need) for greater resources in the form of release time, staff, space, financial aid, and so forth is one keenly felt by many an honors administrator, including myself. It is the painful tension between “is” and “ought,” between what we are as a program and what we feel we ought to be.

Of course, such a tension is hardly unique to honors programs. Every major program from accounting to zoology wants a bigger budget; every administrator, however successful, knows the frustrations of visions unrealized. I would suggest, however, that this tension, if not exclusive to honors, is peculiarly characteristic of it because it is the tension most acutely felt in individual terms by our honors students themselves—those earnest, driven, overachieving persons for whom academic pressures are especially intense. There is a parallel between a desire for excellence within an honors program and a desire for excellence within an honors student—and, more to the point, a parallel between the anxieties such desire can produce. In that respect, how many of us were once where our students are now? How many of us are still there?

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We probably cannot help but define “Honors”—that is, honors for each of us, honors in each of our respective, irreducible experiences—partly in terms of what it is not, in terms of acknowledging the is/ought tension with which we live. The questions that must follow, though, are of great importance. How do we keep that tension from being paralyzing, even destructive? And are we best serving our students if we manifest that same tension in how we teach in and administer our (their) program? Perhaps each honors program simply ought (such a difficult word to escape!) to do what it can to *be more fully* what it is, with less energy and certainly much less angst given to what it (supposedly) ought to be. Please do not misunderstand: I am not advocating acquiescence. I am not arguing we should each settle for whatever status quo we have. But it is worth reminding ourselves that, while honors administrators, faculty, and staff are called to foster academic excellence, we are not committed to burdening ourselves with unrealizable expectations, much less to pursuing change for its own sake.

The point is that maybe the best thing we can do in honors—for honors to be most fully what it *is*—is to focus more of our energies on “educating” students in the etymological sense of that word, leading out of them their truest selves, guiding them away from the distractions and pressures that seem to be so necessary for self-definition and fulfillment in our culture but that in fact are stifling, even debilitating. We can teach them the value of choosing to do fewer things and doing them more fully, even contemplatively. Maybe what our students most need to hear from us, see in us, and learn is that they already have what they need to become themselves. I have in mind here the ruminations of Maria Lichtmann in her book *The Teacher’s Way: Teaching and the Contemplative Life* (Paulist Press 2005). Lichtmann contends that:

Paradoxically, seeing our teaching as contemplative means seeing that we already have everything we need. Such an awareness contradicts the striving, overzealous, achievement-oriented attitude we are trained in and then pass on to our students in one form or another. This statement, ‘You already have everything you need,’ speaks of grace, of presence, of a foundational, ontological, and ultimately transformative love. Most of us probably never heard this kind of affirmation in our training. If anything, we were told to do more, produce more, keep striving for perfection. We have been victims of the out-of-balance perfectionism of patriarchy. (8)

As an honors teacher and administrator, I find Lichtmann’s book an invitation to intense reflection. I don’t mean to imply that students cannot and should not grow intellectually during college and (in part) by means of their honors experiences. Rather, my point is that if our programs can foster a certain “inwardness” in our students—the purpose of which is self-understanding, not mere solipsism—then we might be doing them a very important service indeed. We and our students live with and within the governing “oughts” of competition and perfectionism, but honors need not be the place to replicate and reinforce them. We can “accept” each student in a way that goes far deeper than a congratulatory letter welcoming her into the program.

I know this suggestion may sound counterintuitive to many of us, even antithetical to what honors is all about. But if I *were* to imagine a transcendent, ideal essence

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of “Honors,” central to it would be its capacity to be transformative. We simply do not offer the possibility of transformation to hyper-ambitious, even perfectionist students who have been formed by a culture of unreflective acquisition if all they get from us is more of the same. As Lichtmann asks, “In an academic world characterized by increasing discord, alienation, faculty burnout, student consumerism, and an overall market mentality, where does one find the temple of renewal?” (16). Why should we and our students not find it in honors? If we “ought” to do so—and increasingly I am coming to believe just that—then my most fundamental challenge as an honors administrator is to figure out how to make that possible in terms of where we are, who we are, and who I am. Admittedly, what I am sketching in this brief reflection is neither a predetermined strategy nor a handy solution, but a concept, and perhaps a path.

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SRIRAM KHÉ

A Way of Life

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The question “What is Honors?” could not have been posed at a better time for me: earlier this summer, I took up a new responsibility of directing the Western Oregon University (WOU) Honors Program while only in my fourth year at the university. Work has commenced at WOU to prepare for the accreditation process, which is also a wonderful opportunity to think about questions such as “What is Honors?”

The simple answer to the question is that honors is a way of life. Faculty and students in honors understand that inquiry and learning happen everyday in a continuous mode and not just in discrete courses or lab sessions. Sometimes they are formally conducted in classrooms and libraries; they happen while pursuing other activities such as watching movies or hiking in the woods or having dinner table conversations. I do not mean to suggest that honors faculty and students are the stereotypical “nerds”; I merely wish to emphasize the point that honors people are aware that learning opportunities exist everywhere and that they *think* about things mundane and profound.

Of course, learning in honors does not mean the same as, say, majoring in geography. By its very nature, honors is not a field of study. Instead, honors faculty and students come from a number of different disciplines. This also means that honors offers valuable opportunities for students and faculty to interact across disciplines. The result is that years after graduation honors students will not be the ones at dinner parties to proudly pronounce that they hated science or philosophy or the arts. Instead, they will be the ones who will be able to engage in meaningful and intelligent conversations about many intellectual subjects. An ideal honors program, therefore, should be able to develop in students a way of life where learning happens all the time. In this sense, the ideal honors student will be like the ones that Jay Freyman describes: “Honors students have an *interest* in learning, which they see both as an ongoing process and as an end in itself.”

Dinner table conversations with friends and family are places where there is potential for people to interact as people, with minimal conscious references to professions and degrees. In such contexts, discussions related to a movie such as “Bend it Like Beckham” will evoke from honors students not only images, story lines, and details about actors but also ideas that might range from the physics behind the trajectories of the footballs kicked by Beckham to the transformation of Britain by globalization or the role of religion. A movie no longer is only a movie, and honors becomes a way of life.

It has occurred to me that “What is Honors?” was not asked any time in the interview process for my position as Director. Neither had I ever paused to think about it. I suppose “What is Honors?” is one of those questions that never come up because

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somehow such academic initiatives are taken for granted and, therefore, may warrant only a Bart Simpson-like “duh!” as a response. In fact, I would argue that if we have not systematically thought about the question, it is only because in our work there is an implicit understanding of honors.

Ironically, the description of the WOU Honors Program is totally unlike anything I have attempted to articulate here. The program website boasts that we “challenge the intellectual life of students” through an “interdisciplinary curriculum” in a “learning community.” Of course, as Dail Mullins observes, these do sound like phrases churned out by a computer that is programmed to generate such AcademicSpeak. The immediate task for me, and possibly for directors at other universities, is to make explicit in the brochures and websites the implicit understanding of honors with which we approach our work.

As I think more about these issues, I begin to realize the parallels between what I am attempting to articulate as a response to “What is Honors?” and my personal and professional commitment to multi- and inter-disciplinary learning. My undergraduate degree is in electrical engineering, and my graduate degrees are in urban and regional planning. I have taught in geography and economics departments, and the faculty colleagues I closely interact with are often outside my “home” department or division.

Interestingly enough, the backgrounds of former directors are vastly different from mine: the immediate past director is a cell biologist, and former directors include an anthropologist and a humanities professor. When we recently celebrated twenty years of the Honors Program at WOU, I do not recall there being any explicit discussion of what Honors is. It was evident, however, that the nuts-and-bolts details of “What is Honors?” have gone through an evolution. In the process, each director has brought to the program unique approaches to every component of the program, including curriculum changes, student recruitment, and student activities. While the specifics have significantly changed, the underlying connecting thread appeared to be one of honors being a way of life.

This does not in any way mean that faculty and students outside of honors programs do not perceive education *à la honors*. Some faculty whose values resonate with those of the honors programs self-select themselves to become participants in honors. However, many faculty and students may not even know about honors programs in their universities, where they can constructively engage with like-minded people. The challenge then is not only to cultivate honors as a way of life but also to draw in people who may otherwise not know about such environments within their campuses.

Ultimately, whatever the brochures or websites may say, perhaps the often unstated answer to “What is Honors?” is simple and is not about grades or the thesis or preparation for graduate school or anything else that may be listed in glossy brochures or colorful websites. Honors is simply a way of life.

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BEBE NICKOLAI

In Praise of Silence

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“Listen . . . with the ear of your heart.”

—The Rule of St. Benedict

I thought I was ready for her, a sophomore in my honors rhetoric class. I have been teaching the honors rhetoric class for almost twenty years. Yet every semester I revise my syllabus for the class as I realize that honors students can handle even bigger challenges—more difficult readings, more demanding writing assignments.

This semester, I again chose a new textbook, *Lend Me Your Ears*, edited by William Safire. The text includes 233 speeches to interest and challenge these students. I gladly abandoned the *College Writing* books that repeat what most honors students learned in high school.

But early in September, I found myself asking again, “Who is an honors student, and what will I learn from her this semester?”

This semester, she has taught me to let her choose from many rhetorical situations for her writing so she can work with me to design assignments that capture her imagination and let her go where she wants to go. I have to offer her the possibilities of depth and breadth because sometimes she wants to explore one place and other times she wants to range freely among many places. Based on what I have learned from her, here are my new “guidelines” for the first assignment in this class:

Choice #1: Write an essay *or* a speech on an issue that is important to you. In your composition explain why this issue is important. *Consider* presenting objections to your position. The composition *may* focus on a concern about society, religion, education, health, business, law, the environment, politics, *or* policies.

Choice #2: Write an argumentative speech *or* essay based on values. You *may* decide to ask others to live up to higher principles, respected traditions, *or* even new values *or* complain that they have not done so. Your composition *may* take the form of a tribute, sermon, eulogy, *or* commencement speech. You *may* wish to develop your main point with anecdotes and examples.

This semester, she has also taught me to turn more of the class over to her and her classmates. She has shown me that, if I give her an example of how to do a rhetorical analysis of a speech and give her many speeches from which to choose, she can present an engaging presentation to the rest of the class. She talks about rational appeal, emotional appeal, and ethical appeal. She talks about the writer’s tone. She keeps her classmates’ attention.

She has taught me that my syllabus is not a map to be followed but a suggested path. At the beginning of the semester, I thought I was going to teach an honors class

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on American rhetoric, but the student found speeches by Mussolini and Karl Marx in our textbook and said, “I want to analyze these speeches.”

How could I say no? Now I’m thinking about changing the title of my “American” rhetoric class.

Then she said, “I want to look at the speech Al Sharpton made at the 2004 Democratic Convention. I know it’s not in our book, but I can get everybody a copy.”

My honors student’s passion has gained my respect, so we are studying not just American rhetoric but international rhetoric, not just the speeches in the textbook but speeches students find in their much larger world. Revisions of my syllabus now appear regularly.

Her questions about assignments have pushed me in directions I had not considered. When we discussed writing a persuasive speech based on values, she asked, “Does it have to be serious?” I answered, “No,” and the class launched into a discussion about how to write satire, how to use exaggeration, how to present the opponent’s point of view in a satiric speech, and how to include factual information in effective satire. This conversation was not part of my lesson plan.

Although she thrives in the classroom setting, our one-on-one conferences about her writing have been most enlightening—for me. My honors student has been more critical of her writing than I have. “I don’t think this is the best word,” she said critically. “I don’t think I said this very clearly,” she moaned. I told her that she didn’t need a certain comma. She tenaciously defended it: “I want it there for emphasis.” I tried to convince her that the structure of her sentence was good and that the conjunctions were perfect, that the sentence flowed beautifully without the comma. She was not convinced—and that’s good.

Of course, not all students in my honors courses have the courage to push the boundaries of my syllabus and assignments; so one challenge for me has been how to nurture in other students her thoughtful and critical attitude.

First of all, I have tried to encourage her courageous challenges and to make sure that other students have the opportunity to appreciate her gifts. When she was brave enough to write a speech that included fragments, I brought the fragment-filled paragraph to class as an example of writing that fits an author’s humorous tone. Other students said they had been taught never to write fragments. She grinned and sighed in relief that this often banned sentence structure was once again an option for her.

When asking students to critique each other’s writing, I gave her paper to a student who was still struggling to find his voice. When he told her that he was having trouble answering the ten questions on my carefully designed peer editing form because her essay was “different,” she advised him, “Realize you don’t have to textbook every single question. You won’t lose points or anything if you don’t give the teacher the answer she expects. You just have to get around the questions.”

Yet I believe the most important thing I have done to nurture a critical attitude in my class is to impose a moratorium on my mouth. When a courageous risk taker starts pushing the boundaries, I *try* not to answer immediately. This semester students have seen me standing in silence more often than ever before. They have seen that a moment of silent thought can result in “untraditional” answers.

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Yes, in my honors rhetoric class, I have learned about silence from this honors student who is quite assertive, quite sure of what she wants to get out of her education, quite willing to devote extra time to finding and exploring her passions, quite willing to bend unnecessary rules, quite open to many answers and many possibilities.

She is a student with many talents, many gifts, and, therefore, many responsibilities. In my writing class I want her to learn about challenging herself while respecting others. I want her to learn to trust and to question. I want her to learn about literary traditions and the importance of creativity and originality. I want her to be dedicated to her work and free to explore. I want her to reflect on human nature and take courageous action. I want her to ground her confidence in a spirit of humility, a spirit in which she acknowledges her own gifts while appreciating the gifts of others.

So I listen to her.

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A Student like Me

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Jay Freyman suggests that we often define “honors” (and, I suspect, many other things) based on our own experiences and observations as undergraduates. He then provides us with a valuable means of uncovering those diamonds in the rough and shading our eyes from those sparkling cubic zirconia who may have the resumés but lack the drive to take full advantage of the honors experience. This selection process has become even more complicated by the intrusion of parents who act as brokers for their students and who, despite our best efforts to thwart them, sometimes overshadow the stellar qualifications of their students with their unabashed boosterism. We’ve all had the experience, moreover, of regretting an admission or scholarship decision and finding ourselves trying to turn the zirconium into a diamond. Can honors be the alchemy that inspires these students to work up to the potential of their high school grades and test scores?

As a product of one of the premier public universities in the country, but an honors program dropout, I cannot help but reflect back on my own experience as precisely the type of student that Dr. Freyman encourages us to avoid: smart but unmotivated, creative but not curious, and, more than anything else, bored by the typical undergraduate curriculum but unwilling to do anything about it. I write not only of myself but of the dozens of reflections of this profile I have seen in my classes, and I wonder how to engage these students who have potential but have not shown evidence of appreciating it.

I have learned to pay special attention to those students with ACT scores over 30 and GPAs considerably less than a 4.0. My gut tells me not to admit them, that they lack the work ethic and discipline needed to truly excel in college. Yet their opposite, the 26 ACTs with perfect grades, are often students who excel at “playing school” but who likewise will not be the ones who get their research published or garner prestigious scholarships. Like Dr. Freyman, I look for those students who show that something extra, but I also realize that, as the dean of honors at a state comprehensive university, I am competing against many other deans and directors who covet this same pool of students who will be a joy to teach and will do our program and university proud.

One of our former university presidents was fond of saying that it was easy to teach at Harvard. Similarly, if my college were populated solely by the students that Jay Freyman identifies, I would have a considerably easier time of it. What I have, however, is a lot of students such as I was—having high scores and grades but lacking ambition—and many students like the two groups described above. In addition, we do have a respectable number of students who present the ideal honors profile: smart, curious, searching, ambitious. Within a total honors population of some 600 students, identifying which students are which type and which need what kind of academic challenge and inspiration is a difficult task, yet this undertaking is what constitutes “honors” at a public comprehensive university.

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Teaching and advising lie at the center of a truly successful honors program. The small classes we work so hard to protect allow teachers truly to get to know their students. I would argue that those teachers, and additionally honors advisors, require the same values Jay Freyman outlines for the honors student.

- Honors faculty must be able to relish the success of others over their own. If the teacher has an ambitious research agenda, he or she must also be willing to take the time to research those students he or she teaches. Rather than letting research encroach upon teaching, effective honors faculty help students find their own passions and include the students in their own research where appropriate.
- Honors faculty should exhibit patience, listening to student concerns and hearing what the student is saying, even if the message is not contained in the words the student utters. Patience is even more important for the honors advisor, who should look beyond the expressed interests of the student and into those activities which will truly energize and enlighten even the most recalcitrant of advisees.
- Honors faculty need to recognize the diversity among their students. Ethnic, gender, and cultural diversity are often recognizable, but diversity in learning styles, background, motivations, and goals are not always so clear. Not every student will find our disciplines as fascinating as we do, so we must try hard to make them relevant and engaging.
- Dr. Freyman's point about means and ends is particularly apt when reflected back upon faculty. Do we relish teaching or do we just want our students to reach a certain level of performance? Our success as honors faculty should be measured not by the grades we give but by whether students discuss the subject matter of our classes in the residence halls or even in the bars. How many of our students tell their parents about what they are studying in their class or bring a book home to share with Mom?
- Do our faculty recognize that teaching in honors is a privilege and do they relish the challenge of inspiring the sullen 32 ACT student as much as they enjoy the student who willingly revises a paper until it is truly a masterpiece?

The student is ultimately responsible for what she or he learns, and as Dean I tell the students to make their classes relevant, even if their teachers do not do them the favor of making this connection easy. The true honors experience is transformative, regardless of the raw material we start with. We may not be able to make the cubic zirconium into a diamond, but we should be proud to wear it nonetheless.

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Honors: When Value-Added is Really Added Value

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Sometimes I look at the responsibilities and demands placed on me in my current position and cannot believe I haven't cracked up yet. In this era of accountability and "show me the data," institutional assessment directors like me are constantly bombarded with challenges that require quick, critical, divergent thinking, analytical reasoning, effective speaking, and, to some extent, creative writing. As both a professor and administrator at a state university, I live and breathe producing evidence that we as an institution are having an impact on student learning. When I was growing up, I never imagined I would end up being an assessment guru or an accreditation expert; however, I did feel in my bones that I was going to do something big and make a difference in this nation. There was a period in my life when I lost sight of that calling to be passionate and charged up in an effort to support the greater good. I was very close to taking a different path. What changed my course and bolstered my knowledge and skills to a level that surprised me—and surprised everyone who knew me prior to my higher education adventure—had to do with a little house that sits in the middle of Portland, Maine. The Honors House.

In 1992, I was a professional waitress. I was actually quite good. I had the natural Maine charm and hard work ethic that allowed me to care for my one-year-old, work fifty-five hours a week taking customer orders, and still smile at the end of a day with quarters in my pocket. My husband was a custodian with dreams of becoming a famous musician, some day casting aside the mop and Borax for a twelve-string and recording studio. Unfortunately, the economy for Maine was not stable and there were cutbacks and significant loss of hours. We had no insurance. We could barely afford rent. We depended on recycling cans and bottles to put fuel in our vehicle, which resembled something out of *The Flintstones*. At one point, I had to go to the local food pantry in shame when my bank notified me I was below the zero balance. I was happy to have bread and Velveeta. I remember being so cold that winter, unsure if the chill was from the Maine wind coming in through the thin walls, circulating around our ankles, or from the fright that came with the knowledge of a new baby on the way. I also remember vividly the time I sat in the kitchen, staring down gravely at two applications: one for the University of Southern Maine and one for welfare. It was humbling indeed. I was not college material. I had been told that several times or had heard often enough that "she would be so smart if she just applied herself." I was going for that latter comment, and did "apply myself" that very night.

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I started the university as a full-time student, eight months pregnant, working twelve hours a week as a work-study recipient and two night shifts waiting tables. My General Psychology 101 exam put me into labor; still, I was able to give birth and get back to class in one week, earning my first A on an exam since elementary school! I had serious motivation to succeed. I did not want the university to kick me out—not when I could earn an Associate’s degree and actually be an office assistant or substitute teacher! I had no study skills or strategies to deal with test anxiety, but I quickly learned time management, organization, and how to capitalize on my own volition in order to make it work. I had to study around the clock to deal with a math learning disability which I was embarrassed to share with people and to put information into my thick skull, but whatever I did seemed to work. At the end of my first year, I had a 3.91 grade point average. I was thrilled that the university could not make me leave at that point. One advisor suggested that I apply to the University Honors Program, which I thought was ridiculous. I would never make it. An honors student? Me? That was laughable—but this advisor kept up her encouragement, assuring that it was a program for people like me: driven, intellectually curious, hard-working . . . these were descriptors that had never been associated with me before, so I decided to humor her and apply for the USM Honors Program.

I didn’t make the first cut. I was on a waiting list for the Honors Program, which I reminded the director about several times later. I had to write an essay, go through an interview, produce transcripts, and the like. They almost didn’t let me in since admission was only open to 40 and almost 80 had applied. I never asked why I didn’t make the first cut, but I think it had to do with my interview. I was admitted for some reason and started later my sophomore year. I began to frequent the Honors House, a place seriously in need of a good paint job and scrubbing but filled with magic of biblical proportions. After getting over the initial feeling of dread that came from the increased workload, inability to write effectively, and constant anxiety that they were “going to find out that I really wasn’t smart,” I settled into working with a student cohort of twelve led by some of the most engaging, challenging seminar leaders one could ever hope for. Once I started resisting the need to prove myself (so they couldn’t kick me out of this place either) and began to open my mind to the world of Honors, interesting things began to happen. I saw the world for the first time. I experienced the complexities and striking similarities of cultures, ancient worlds, scientific reformations, postmodern ideas, theories, and governing bodies. It was one of those experiences when you try and try so hard to adjust your eyes to see the shape of something familiar within a kaleidoscope of images, like with a Dali painting . . . you try and try to separate figure from ground to see the hidden or covert image that everyone else is seeing, but you don’t get it. You just see the obvious. At first. And then suddenly, BAM! You see it! You get it! The hidden image leaps out of you, almost taking you aback with its force. And you can never look at the image the same way again, and it gets more difficult to see it in the same old way. It’s like when Plato’s character emerges from the cave into the realm of knowledge and can never go back again once he has seen the light in the *Parable of the Cave*. That’s what Honors did for me. It opened up a cortical fold of my brain in a way that made me see the world through a completely different lens. It woke up a passion and a newfound commitment within

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my heart to becoming a change agent in this world. Honors armed me with new tools and methods that would make me a warrior in my thinking, speaking, and writing.

As I went through the Honors sequences and thesis with my cohort, I realized that I was no longer doing this academic endeavor for that Associate's degree, steady paycheck, or to make sure I could provide health insurance for my daughters. I discovered that now that I had entered into the "realm of knowledge," I had been given a gift. I had been given an opportunity to be active and to fight for what I believe in, to speak for those with no voice and to write for those who cannot. I had often been struck by the stark inequalities in this country, particularly in areas of wealth, education, and access to knowledge. I became active in the areas of social justice, civic engagement, democracy in education, alternative learning methods, and recognizing diverse learning styles and abilities. I had experience in all of these areas as well as being a poor kid who had received an opportunity to earn a degree thanks to loans, scholarships, grants, and a family who watched the babies while I was in class. I knew it was my mission to move forward. I recognized that an associate's was not going to do it, and I owed so many people for their investment in my sorry self that it was time to get a bachelor's and an additional license to speak my mind—a doctorate.

There were many people who did not think I could do it. Yet, my Honors cohort and teachers never doubted it for a moment. An Honors education was not about GPA, GRE scores, or getting into Harvard. An Honors education meant providing students with learning opportunities that would take them as far as they could go as social, moral, and politically engaged citizens—with the tools and motivation to do whatever they desired to do in life. This could be equally defined as pumping gas or serving as a CEO—if you were happy and satisfied with your place in life, you were successful. An Honors experience was building a community of scholars and bringing together very different people through discourse to discuss a common theme using relevant literature to ground the conversations. Honors was not about being smart or performing better than our peers. It was about connectivity—to each other, to our families, to our community, and to global society. It was about not being afraid to try new things or work with new ideas; it was about digging deeper into a concept or message even when it was uncomfortable or downright impossible to understand. It was about admitting our failures and recognizing our humanity. It was, and it is still today. It served as the building blocks for the new path I carved out for myself. It was the scaffold I needed to discover who I was as a unique contributor to this world and what talents I could bring to the table of life.

I went on to earn a master's and a doctorate. I discovered my own key to the world of social justice, and, building on my Honors thesis in engaged learning and strategic processing of information, began to work in the field of education. In my research and teaching, I have been working with pre-service and in-service educators, identifying and strengthening best practice efforts in teaching and learning. Eventually, I was fed up with high-stakes testing environments and some aspects (well, many aspects) of *No Child Left Behind*, so I saw that as the path I needed to pursue: assessment and accountability. I now practice and write about positive assessment and using data through democratic engagement to develop effective programs and experiences for students and other stakeholders. I still can't believe it's

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me. Seriously, I am that Maine girl at heart, often having those last minute thoughts of “What if they find out I’m really not smart?” just before going to give a national speech or submit a journal article. As I consult on critical state department projects that have statewide implications for all in-service and pre-service teachers, or make recommendations about how to change statewide assessments to ensure greater reliability and validity, I think back to that moment with the two applications side by side, sensitive to the fact I have a duty to support those in poverty, who do not have equitable access to the most basic needs in life or who cannot write to express their souls. I make sure my work is perfect so that I represent those people in a way they deserve. I have walked in those shoes. I know that I was lucky to have shoes.

This me, this new me, is a product of an honors education. During a time when there are significant budget cuts and penny pinching, honors programs are often on the chopping block. Honors is a luxury or a place for the elite. In my career, I know full well that there are serious pressures for honors programs to show the “value-added” nature of their curricula and to demonstrate that their programs do indeed make a difference. If one wants to keep funding or garner grants to support the honors mission, evidence of impact must be available for decision-makers. Well, I consider this short essay to be an example of some very key qualitative data that will soon be triangulated with reams of other mixed-methods data in support of the powerful impact an honors education can make. I am one person and one voice. But I do the work of an army, and my voice is strong. These two critical pieces that are essential to serving as a social change agent came from my honors preparation, and I will be the first one on board to work with honors to build a culture of evidence that shows this nation that honors makes a difference. I may be just one data point in the honors assessment system, but I am not done with my impact—not even close.

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LAURA BENDER HERRON

Redemptive Memory: The Christianization of the Holocaust in America

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There has been a considerable debate among historians concerning the role of the Holocaust in the American collective memory. Since the watershed year 1993, when the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opened its doors on the Mall in Washington, DC, and the film *Schindler's List* debuted, the level of awareness of the Holocaust in the public mind has been at an all-time high in the United States. The question at the heart of this academic discussion is how Americans have come to identify so strongly with an experience that occurred over sixty years ago, on foreign shores, to a group of people to which most Americans have no obvious connection. This being the case, the question has been asked whether the Holocaust can be part of the American collective memory at all.¹ This essay will contend that incorporation of the Holocaust into American consciousness has indeed taken place, albeit decades after the event, and that, furthermore, the religious belief system of the majority of Americans has played a central role in this development.

Although the last decade has witnessed an increase in secularization, the United States is still a nation in which over three quarters of the citizens identify themselves as Christians while just over one percent identify themselves as Jewish.² Although there were many non-Jewish victims of the murderous Nazi campaigns, the fact

¹ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Mariner, 2000) 4.

² *American Religious Identification Survey*, 2001, Graduate Center of The City University of New York, http://www.gc.cuny.edu/studies/aris_index.htm. This study was directed by Ariela Keysar, Ph.D., a Research Fellow at the Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Center of CUNY. It indicated that, between 1990 and 2001, the percentage of the sampled adult population that identified themselves with one or another religious group had dropped from 90 percent to 81 percent. The percentage that identified themselves as Christians had dropped from 86 percent to 77 percent. This may seem to be counterintuitive because the actual number of respondents reporting religious affiliation has increased overall. The number of respondents reporting their affiliation as Christian increased from 151,225,000 to 159,030,000, and the number of respondents reporting affiliation with other religions increased from 5,853,000 to 7,740,000. The total U.S. adult population, though, increased from 175,440,000 to 207,980,000 in this period. As a percentage of the population, the number of respondents reporting religious affiliation substantially decreased. Percentage wise, the top three groups gaining members were Evangelical Christians, Non-Denominational Christians, and those professing no religion.

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remains that the vast majority of those marked for deportation and death were targeted solely because they were identified as Jews by the Nazi state.³ Rather than addressing the significance of the Holocaust to the Jewish minority in America, this work will seek to explain the way in which this event has been woven into a Christian metanarrative in American public life. It will examine how it has been appropriated from its context as a Jewish catastrophe perpetrated by Christians and reconstituted as a saga of Christian heroism and a test of “true Christianity.” Through critical analysis of the use of metaphor and imagery in Holocaust representation, it will examine the functions of this approach as both a theodicy and as an agent of triumphalism.

History is different from collective memory. The very basis of collective memory is the ideological agenda, the common point of view that binds together the group. The goal of collective memory is not objective scrutiny of the past but reinforcement of an existing belief system. It necessarily relies on a mythology that validates group identity and explains common experiences.⁴ Sometimes this mythology is rooted in truth, and sometimes it is counterfactual. Collective memory is essentially ahistorical. In contrast, history is the product of scholarly comparison of collective memory with factual evidence. It detaches the myth from the event and endeavors to construct an impartial narrative.⁵

Collective memory manifests itself in various forms of public expression. Film, literature, and museum exhibitions all articulate the agenda of a cultural viewpoint through representational choices of both inclusion and exclusion. However, the act of representation involves two interpreters, a creator and a viewer. While the creator may intend to convey a particular narrative, the viewer is free to dismiss or emphasize selectively aspects of this narrative in accordance with his own worldview. This essay will examine how both interpretive parties have contributed to a prevalent undercurrent of Christian thought in American Holocaust memory. It will assert that the ironic cost of incorporating remembrance of the destruction of the Jews of Europe into the cultural consciousness of an essentially Christian nation is that the historicity of the event has become increasingly relegated to the confines of academic circles and alienated from the public realm of the American collective memory.

For a nation in which the majority of citizens are at least nominally Christian, the Holocaust frequently functions as an illustration of the human relationship with God. There is a paradox to be reconciled, however. Because Christianity is considered by its adherents to be the one true faith, the Jew continues to remain the “other,” the unconverted, the unsaved. He is both the competitor in the true path of righteousness and the antithetical nonbeliever against whom Christianity has defined

³ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* student ed. (New York: Holmes and Meyer, 1985) 27.

⁴ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. Lewis Coser (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992) 175-176. Also see Peter Novick's comments in *The Holocaust in American Life*, 3-6.

⁵ Wolfgang J. Mommsen, “Moral Commitment and Scholarly Detachment: The Social Function of the Historian,” *Historians and Social Values*, eds. Joep Leerssen and Ann Rigney (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2000) 45.

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itself.⁶ As Richard Rubinstein puts it: “the fate of the Jews has been a primary datum used to prove the truth of Christianity from its inception.”⁷ Christian doctrine also professes, however, that all people are children of God and that a Christian must love his neighbor as he loves himself.⁸ The paradox, then, is one that involves the very core of Christianity. According to Mark Gammon, “The great question for Christian theology is ‘How could a good and just God let his chosen people (Christians) perpetrate this crime or stand by and let it happen?’”⁹

This is a thorny question for Christians to address because it requires identification with the victimizers rather than the victims. In *The Drowned and the Saved*, Primo Levi wrote of “the tendency, indeed the need, to separate good from evil, to be able to take sides, to emulate Christ’s gesture on Judgment Day: here the righteous, over there the reprobate.”¹⁰ How is it possible, then, for Christians to reconcile the foundations of their faith with the atrocities perpetrated by their coreligionists during the Holocaust? The annihilation of the Jews of Europe turned the tables on the dogmatic “good versus evil” equation of Christianity. By dint of the extremity of their mass victimization, Jews assumed the role of the righteous; their Christian persecutors became the reprobates.

The necessity of reconciling this juxtaposition is especially imperative for American Christians, for two specific reasons. The first is that the United States is home to the largest Jewish population in the world outside of Israel. The Holocaust has become a touchstone of Jewish identity in the United States, and its memorialization is prioritized accordingly by Jewish religious and community organizations. Although Jewish Americans constitute a small minority, many have achieved great success in both business and higher education. Their vocal efforts have allowed remembrance of the Holocaust to receive wide attention and support within a gentile majority that might otherwise be inclined to consider the coordinated slaughter of millions of European Jews as simply part of the catastrophic cost of the Second World War.

The second reason is that Americans, in general, are particularly inclined to define right and wrong, guilt and innocence, in moralized, black and white terms. It is especially imperative, therefore, for members of a faith that promotes the emulation of the loving image of Christ to align the actions of the truly faithful with the side of righteousness. The Nazi perpetrators also present, as perceived paragons of absolute evil, the opportunity to sanctify the heroic behavior of Christians who opposed them as symbolic of “true Christianity.” The American Christian viewpoint

⁶ Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1995) 59, 63.

⁷ Richard Rubinstein, *The Cunning of History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987) 2-3.

⁸ *The King James Bible*, Book of Matthew 22:37-39. “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

⁹ Mark E. Gammon “Our Failure to React: Method in Christian Moral Theology After the Holocaust,” *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, eds. Elisabeth Maxwell and John Roth (Oxford: New York, 200) 703.

¹⁰ Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Vintage, 1989) 37.

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toward the Holocaust, then, incorporates both defensive and pedagogical components. It diverts or assuages guilt, and it instructs believers on the rectitude of authentically “Christian” behavior.

This is not to say that there are no Christian leaders, theologians, or other individuals who have endeavored to examine critically the tenets of their faith, attempting to detect and remove antisemitic doctrines that have historically provided the basis for actions against Jews. Three examples of such organized attempts are the revisions of Roman Catholic doctrine expressed in the 1965 Vatican II declaration *Nostra Aetate*, the 1994 *Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community*, and the Committee on Church Relations and the Holocaust of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Attempts to expunge explicitly antisemitic passages of Christian text are one thing; the question of a Christianization of collective memory, is quite another. Most gentile Americans have very little knowledge of the historical event of the Holocaust, nor do they know anyone whom it directly affected. For them, the event holds primarily symbolic moral significance. The interpretation of its meaning arrives through the conduit of religious thought with which it must be reconciled. There are several representational motifs prevalent in popular film and literature that reflect the formative influence of the Christian metanarrative.

The first is a universalization of the event. Popular representations tend to paint, in broad strokes, an image of a Manichaean struggle between good and evil that imparts universal moral lessons about the nature of humanity. They often downplay the intrinsically Judaeophobic core of the Nazi *Weltanschauung*.¹¹ By sublimating the religious roots of both Nazi ideology and the anti-Jewish prejudice of the masses,¹² they instead cast the story of the Holocaust as the definitive cautionary tale of “man’s inhumanity to man.”

An example is the often-quoted words of German pastor Martin Niemöller:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade-unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade-unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.¹³

¹¹ Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 261.

¹² John K. Roth gives a most concise explanation of this: “...apart from Christianity, the *Shoah* is scarcely imaginable because Nazi Germany’s targeting cannot be explained apart from the anti-Jewish images (‘Christ-killers,’ willful blasphemers, unrepentant sons and daughters of the Devil, to name only a few) that have been deeply rooted in Christian practices. Existing centuries before Nazism, Christianity’s negative images of Jews and Judaism—supported by the institutions and social relationships that promoted those stereotypes—played key parts in bolstering the racial and genocidal antisemitism of Adolph Hitler and the Third Reich.” “What Does the Holocaust Have to Do with Christianity?” *The Holocaust and the Christian World*, eds. Carol Rittner et al. (New York: Continuum, 2000) 6-7.

¹³ Quoted in Michael Berenbaum, *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust As Told In the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* (New York: Little, Brown & Co. 1993) 41.

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The impact of this quotation stems from the fact that Niemöller was himself imprisoned in a concentration camp in 1938 for his opposition to the National Socialist regime. It epitomizes one of the major moral lessons conveyed by universalization: the responsibility of the bystander to intervene in defense of the oppressed. It is only a partial truth, however. It would appear from these words that Niemöller's culpability was a product of his inaction.

In itself, Niemöller's stance seems viable for those attempting to extract moral lessons from history. It is a question of conscience upon which all those seeking to be their "brother's keeper" can reflect. Niemöller stands as the repentant Christian who discovered his error only by being forced to walk in the shoes of those that he failed to defend. There is another side to the story, however. In 1933, Niemöller was a self-professed antisemite who supported the Nazi party. He demonstrated, with his 1934 break with the German Christians (*Deutsche Christen*) over the "Aryan Clause," that his anti-Jewish convictions were primarily of a religious nature.¹⁴ Niemöller, and those like him, were therefore not simply silent bystanders but causative agents in the destruction of the Jews.

The actions and inactions of Martin Niemöller do not constitute a simple story. That it is often presented as such demonstrates a basic fallacy of universalization. Seldom are all the facts included in an appeal to an audience that may not be completely receptive. Rather, these facts are sacrificed so as not to dilute the potency of a message that has greater odds for acceptance by a particular group. In this instance, universalization results in ahistoricization because, in greater context, Niemöller's words take on a different meaning. The appeal of this simplification for Christians, however, is that it imparts a moral lesson in keeping with their faith that does not question the tenets of the faith itself.

In contrast to those Christian bystanders who stood aside and did not act during the Holocaust were those who risked their own lives to intervene. Their stories are emphasized in the second theme in American representation, that of rescue and redemption. These are the most popular stories among audiences because they satisfy the desire for clear-cut heroes and, usually, for a triumphant ending. Although these films and books are for the most part historically accurate in their portrayal of events, their disproportionate prevalence results in a skewed picture of the overall response by Christians. In truth, these rescuers were exceptional in their actions, not representative of the majority. Thus, their appeal seems to indicate a desire to find hope within tragedy or to detect a glimmer of humanity in a sea of barbarity. The appeal is compelling, but these representations also bear a subtext with a different agenda.

In these portrayals, Jews are seen as passive sufferers whose only salvation is through the Christ-like intercession of the rescuer. Jewish resistance is largely ignored as the terrorized victims go, as in the Book of Jeremiah, "like lambs to the slaughter."¹⁵ Redemption does not come only to the Jews in these stories. It is sometimes the rescuer who is redeemed as well by overcoming temptation or weakness through faith. The most notable example is Oskar Schindler, who will be discussed

¹⁴Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1996) 34-35.

¹⁵*The King James Bible*, Jeremiah 51:40.

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at length later. The role of the Jews in this kind of narrative is not only to function as the objects of salvation but also to be witnesses to the acts of their saviors.

It might be argued that, of course, Christians were in the best position to be rescuers. After all, they were not the ones being hunted like animals across Europe, forced into ghettos, and murdered with bureaucratic efficiency. To feature their heroics is not to be untrue to history. In response, two points must be made: The first is that the significance of an act of resistance is directly proportional to the duress that one is under while committing it. Jewish resisters performed many acts, both great and small, to defy their fate. To understand the enormity of their sacrifices, however, one must be able to grasp fully the reality of their experiences. This understanding is almost, perhaps completely, impossible for people who were not there. On the other hand, it is much easier to place oneself mentally in the stead of an Oskar Schindler because his role is at least imaginable.

The second point is that there is another side to the story of the Christian rescuer. The very exceptionalism of his or her actions serves as a stark reminder that so many Christians who could have also aided the victims of the Holocaust chose not to do so. The decision of Steven Spielberg, the Jewish American director of *Schindler's List*, to make a film featuring a Christian hero has been roundly questioned and criticized in academic-historical circles even as it is praised in the broader public discourse. It was stated at the beginning of this essay that there are two interpretive parties for every representation, the creator and the viewer. While it is difficult for an observer to ascertain Spielberg's exact intentions, it may be assumed that he wanted to make a film about the Holocaust that an audience of mostly Christian Americans could connect with, both emotionally and intellectually. The overwhelming success of his film proves that he accomplished his goal. Perhaps his choice was partially the result of insight into what his audience could and would identify with. It is also possible that the film was meant not so much as a tribute to Schindler as an indictment of the behavior of others.

In returning to the depiction of Jews as eternal victims, one finds the third theme of American Holocaust representation, transcendence of suffering. In this specifically Christian construct, one finds the pain of human beings metaphorically linked with the passion and death of Christ. In light of the inescapable presence of evil and sorrow in the world, as symbolized by the Holocaust, there is a search to understand a divine plan that will make sense of it or will give it value. The predominantly Christian idea that deeper truths may be gleaned from the atrocities of the Holocaust is antithetical to the thoughts expressed in the testimonies of many Jewish survivors, who more often speak of the absolute senselessness of their experiences. Sometimes they even speak of the search to find meaning in their pain as if it were a blasphemy in itself, almost a justification for the perpetrators.

Christian theodicy regarding the Holocaust involves two central themes: the power of faith to transcend misery and the role of the Jews as God's "long-suffering chosen people."¹⁶ Both serve to highlight and reinforce Christianity as the true path

¹⁶Michael R. Steele, "Christianity, the Other, and the Holocaust," *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, eds. Elizabeth Maxwell and John Roth (New York: Oxford, 2001) 194.

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to salvation. In both themes, there is an intrinsic supersessionism. The power of faith is highlighted in rescue literature such as *The Hiding Place* by Corrie ten Boom. It is not the prayers of the Jews, though, that are answered. Rather, it is the prayers of the Christians who put their trust in Christ as he put his faith in God, the father, at Gethsemane.

Philip Gourevitch wrote an article in 1995 for the *New York Times Magazine* entitled "What They Saw at the Holocaust Museum."¹⁷ It gave an interesting insight into why Christians might believe that Jews are God's chosen people while having suffered so greatly. In it, he recounted a conversation that he had with class of eight- and nine-year-old children and their teacher at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The children were on a field trip from their apostolic Christian school in Baltimore. Gourevitch asked the children and their teacher why they thought that God could have allowed so many people to be killed unjustly. One boy declared, "They didn't pray." Gourevitch replied, "Many did pray, right to their deaths." A little girl said, "Then they weren't believing." It was the response of their teacher, however, that was most revealing. She said, "I believe that the Jews are God's chosen people. But they don't recognize that Jesus Christ is the messiah, that He came already. If they had, I think that the Lord could have heard their prayers a lot more. In a way, they were praying to a God that they didn't really know."¹⁸

What was the lesson that the children took from the museum that day? It was certainly not one that the creators of the exhibits intended. Rather, it was a lesson shaped by the religious view of the world that they already possessed before ever walking through the doors. It was not to question what beliefs the murderers held that would cause them to commit such crimes. Instead, it was the victims that they blamed, people who seemingly brought their destruction upon themselves by worshipping the wrong god.

Critics have questioned whether the Holocaust Museum serves as no more than a titillating "chamber of horrors" for a public that is far removed from the events that it documents, a kind of pornography of violence. This may be true of some people, especially the young who have had little personal experience of tragedy or anguish. I believe that most people, however, come to the museum for the same reason that they watch films such as *Schindler's List* and read books like *The Hiding Place*. They are trying to understand a greater truth about life, about the nature of humanity, and to make sense of a world in which such pain can coexist with love, beauty, and their image of an omnipotent and merciful God.

In discussing collective memory, historian Peter Novick states:

To understand something historically is to be aware of its complexity, to have sufficient detachment to see it from multiple perspectives, to accept the ambiguities, including moral ambiguities, of protagonists' motives and behavior. Collective memory simplifies, sees events from a single,

¹⁷ Philip Gourevitch, "What They Saw at the Holocaust Museum," *New York Times Magazine* (February 12, 1995): 45.

¹⁸ Gourevitch, "What They Saw at the Holocaust Museum," 45.

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committed perspective, is impatient with ambiguities of any kind, reduces events to mythic archetype. Typically, a collective memory, at least a significant collective memory, is understood to express some eternal or essential truth about the group—usually tragic.¹⁹

Keeping this in mind, one finds that the most significant aspect of the Holocaust for most Christian Americans is not an understanding of the reasons why it happened but rather the fact that it happened at all. Its primary meaning is derived not from critical evaluation of the political, cultural, and religious factors that combined to cause this unprecedented catastrophe but rather from an existing metanarrative that it reinforces. Upon examination, several of the most popular and familiar American Holocaust representations can be shown to illustrate this point. The film *Schindler's List*, Corrie ten Boom's memoir *The Hiding Place*, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum are the examples that I have selected because of their popular and accessible status.

SCHINDLER'S LIST

Based on the 1982 Thomas Keneally novel, *Schindler's List* won seven Academy Awards, including those for Best Picture and Best Director, in the year of its release. It has subsequently been utilized frequently as part of the history curricula of American high schools and has been screened by a large number of religious and community organizations across the country. It may be contended, although arguably, that the film is the single most important work of popular Holocaust representation ever in the United States. At the very least, its influence is commensurate with other influential works such as *The Diary of Anne Frank* and the 1978 NBC miniseries *Holocaust*.

Spielberg's *Schindler's List* is an epic piece of storytelling. To the viewer, it appears so authentic, so seamless, that it seems akin to stepping back fifty years into a different place and time. Shot almost entirely in black and white, it gains credibility with audiences by evoking memories of actual films and photographic images familiar to the public.²⁰ According to Gary Weissman, this was the filmmaker's intention.²¹ With the addition of sound, though, Spielberg added an important element to the images. Sound lends a sensory immediacy to the viewing experience, rendering authentic footage comparatively sterile and remote.²²

¹⁹ Novick, 3-4.

²⁰ Geoff Eley and Atina Grossman observe that the use of monochromatic imagery "reduces distance: our images of the Holocaust are constructed in black and white, whether from newsreel or photographs, and the film resonates with this existing archive of representation; it places us immediately into that place of memory." "Watching *Schindler's List*: Not the Last Word," *New German Critique* 71 (1997):47.

²¹ Gary Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004) 161.

²² The soundtrack of the film is an integral part of its emotional appeal. From the staccato of machine guns to the strains of Mozart, it leads the viewer to anticipate and experience feelings of fear, suspense, and relief with the characters. Miriam Bratu Hansen discusses the displacement of image by sound and its effect at length in "Schindler's List is Not Shoah," *The Historical Film*, ed. Marcia Landy (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2001) 208-210.

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Many Americans have seen U.S. Army Signal Corps film documentation of liberated concentration camps. Included in films such as *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961), this footage has been widely available for years.²³ The experiences of viewing the actual aftermath of the Holocaust and of watching an artfully depicted representation evoke different responses, however. These films compete with each other as sources of understanding and memory. One of the main differences between the two is the degree of empathy that the images engender. *Schindler's List* was specifically created to have a powerful emotional impact on audiences and, to judge by public reactions, it has succeeded. To watch *Schindler's List* is almost to feel as though one actually witnessed the depicted events.

What is problematic is simply that *Schindler's List*, both the film and the novel, are works of fiction. The story is based on real events, but it is far from historically accurate. There is absolutely no doubt that events depicted in the film, such as the liquidation of the Krakow ghetto, occurred. What makes both the film and the novel upon which it was based fictional is that these events did not occur exactly as depicted. This is not simply “splitting hairs”—there are significant divergences from the historic record. Keneally composed his work from a limited number of oral and written accounts by surviving “Schindler Jews” or *Schindlerjuden*. Not only were some witnesses who declined or were unable to participate necessarily excluded from both the novel and the film, but also the recollections of some witnesses may have been given more weight than those of others.²⁴ Working with witness testimonies has natural limitations, but certain elements were purposefully altered. One example is that the character of Itzhak Stern, who is central to the storyline of the film, was actually created as a composite of several individuals from the novel.

Such liberties taken with the narrative of events are important because, in the film, they amount to an interpretation of an interpretation. The truth has been changed, through both emphasis and exclusion, to suit the requirements of the story that Spielberg wished to tell and of the audience to whom he wished to tell it. His message is apparent. One need only look to the publicity materials of the film to see it proclaimed clearly: “Whoever saves one life saves the world entire.” With this redemptive message as a starting point for analysis, one may begin to evaluate how Spielberg rendered his subject matter intelligible to his audience through a series of familiar tropes.

His target audience is easily identified through his choice of a protagonist: a Christian hero for a largely Christian audience. The viewer experiences the action of the film as seen through Schindler's eyes. Schindler occupies a privileged position because he is not a potential victim but rather a bystander who has the luxury of choice in his responses. Therefore, his decisions are not based on his physical

²³ See *Death Mills*, Dir. U.S. War Department (Signal Corps), 1946 as an example of such newsreel footage along with *Judgment At Nuremberg*, Dir. Stanley Kramer, RoxLom Films, 1961, MGM/UA Home Video, 1989. For a detailed discussion of the footage that has been made available since the end of the Second World War, see Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999) 5-26.

²⁴ Weissman, 152-156.

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survival but rather on the rectitude of his moral compass. The plight of the *Schindlerjuden* is not the central focus of this “Holocaust” film. It is merely the background to a titanic clash between good and evil. Schindler’s soul is the prize to be won or lost on this battleground.

Although “Schindler’s List” is mainly a story of rescue and redemption, all three major themes of Holocaust representation are present. It is a complex film because it relies on a web of interwoven myths. The major characters transcend their particular stories and are symbolic of greater truths about humanity as a whole. The struggle between good and evil is universalized through the clearly defined but unequal triangle of perpetrator-victim-bystander. On this field, the perpetrator and the bystander are considered equals while the victims are relegated to the status of hapless witnesses. In this film, there is a misleading characterization of the power equation between the perpetrator and the bystander. The emphasis on Schindler’s charm, virility, and wiliness exaggerate his power and status.²⁵ He seems to possess a strength that the Jews, as well as others around him, do not. This imbalance of power is critical because it emphasizes the ability of the individual to make a stand for good. Schindler is not only able to make a choice, but he must do so.

Omer Bartov characterizes Schindler’s role in a slightly different light.²⁶ He writes that Schindler complicates the perpetrator-victim-bystander equation because he does not neatly fit into one of these categories. He begins as a perpetrator, a Nazi war profiteer. He moves into the role of bystander as he comes into direct contact with the Jews. Then, by his actions on their behalf, he runs the risk of becoming a victim himself. I believe that, although Bartov may be technically correct, the role of Schindler as a bystander is overwhelmingly emphasized in the film. He is never shown committing any acts that lead to victimization, nor does he ever seem to be in imminent danger. The closest that he comes to becoming a victim is the brief stint that he spends in a German jail for kissing a Jewish girl. Schindler is portrayed as an opportunist masquerading as a Nazi. In this way, the notion of him as a perpetrator is undermined. In the language of the film, there are only three distinct types of roles, and they are mutually exclusive: the hero/bystander (Schindler), the villain/perpetrator (the Nazis), and the victim (the Jews). Bartov’s interpretation gives a more nuanced, and perhaps, more honest picture of Schindler’s character than I believe the film actually contains.

Bartov also contends that it is the power of choice that moves Schindler from one role to another: “Because Schindler chooses to act, and because by making this choice he assumes a new identity, he belies the assertion that his (bystander) world denied one the freedom of choice and the choice of identity.”²⁷ This amounts to a refutation of the denials of complicity by Germans who claimed that they were

²⁵ Daniel R. Schwarz comments, “Schindler’s characteristic chutzpah becomes almost magical, as if it were a biblical figure who can create miracles and suspend history.” *Imagining the Holocaust* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1999) 232.

²⁶ Omer Bartov, “Spielberg’s Oskar,” *Spielberg’s Holocaust*, ed. Yosefa Loshitzky (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997) 44.

²⁷ Bartov, 44.

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helpless to render aid to the Jews by the overwhelming strength of the Nazi machine. In this instance, I agree with Bartov, but with a caveat. As a historian, he is analyzing this narrative on two levels: both the actions of the real Oskar Schindler and the representation of these actions that are contained in the film. I believe that his statement is applicable to the real Schindler but that Spielberg's character is drawn in far simpler terms. In a sense, this portrayal does a disservice to the actual man because it makes his choice to aid Jews seem far easier and more clear-cut than it is in Bartov's scenario. I would characterize the shift in Schindler's actions in the film as one that moves from detached neutrality to positive engagement. While many may view neutrality as a condition that places one in the category of perpetrator, here it is shown as one of the two choices of the bystander: acquiescence to or resistance of evil.

The immorality of the Nazi state is personified in SS *Hauptsturmführer* Amon Goeth, the commandant of the Plaszów slave labor camp. In many ways, he is Oskar Schindler's antithesis. The idea of Goeth as Schindler's negative image is reinforced in the film with the visual juxtaposition of both men shaving. They are alike in some ways, but opposite sides of the same coin. They both fulfill hedonistic desires with multiple women, good food, and wine. Yet Schindler's relationship with women is romanticized while Goeth's is violent and tawdry. Schindler is suave where Goeth is base.

The clearest example involves the manner in which each man encounters Goeth's Jewish maid, Helen Hirsch, in her cellar refuge. Schindler approaches her with chaste sympathy. Goeth is frustrated, menacing, and cruel. This interaction exemplifies one Christian interpretation of the relationship between the genders, in which the woman is a dependent creature and the righteous man is obligated to respect and cherish her but still to hold the greater measure of power. It can also be interpreted, as Judith Doneson has done, as a "feminization" of the Jew in relation to the Christian protector. Doneson writes,

. . . the prevailing vision that informs Holocaust films is rooted in the popular theology that views the Jews as condemned eternally for rejecting Jesus as the Messiah but whose continuing existence is necessary as witness to Christian doctrine as well as to test the qualities of mercy and goodness incumbent upon a good Christian. This takes shape in the alliance of the weak, passive, rather feminine Jew being protected by a strong Christian/gentile, the male, signifying a male-female relationship.²⁸

Helen is different from the other women in the film. She is objectified because the only quality that defines her is her beauty. She is not a wife, nor a mother, nor a daughter. She is the perfect victim because she is both a temptation and a test, and nothing more. When Schindler saves her, with no thought of personal gain, the audience sees clearly that his motivation is simply that of goodness and mercy. He sees beyond her beauty to her humanity. Goeth, on the other hand, is so obsessed with the

²⁸ Judith E. Doneson, "The Feminization of the Jew in Schindler's List," *Spielberg's Holocaust*, ed. Yosefa Loshitzky (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997) 140.

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desire to possess her that he would rather send her to her death than allow Schindler to save her. In the end, though, even her beauty is not enough to mitigate his greed, and he sells her life to Schindler.

Amon Goeth is, in many ways, a symbolic character even though he was a real man. His name, coincidentally, is one peculiar indicator of this: Amon (Ammon) was the chief god of the ancient Egyptians, the enslavers of the ancient Hebrews. The surname "Goeth" bears a striking resemblance to that of that of the beloved German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The name of Schindler's nemesis places him, then, as the modern German incarnation of the ancient foe of the Jewish people. It alludes to the centuries-old persecution of Jewry as a "normal" state in which the Holocaust was the extreme example.

In one scene, these men sit on the balcony of Goeth's villa above the camp, seeming almost god-like as they look down on the mere mortals whose lives they both hold in their hands. It is from this place that they decide the fates of the Jews in the camp, Goeth doling out random death with a rifle and Schindler making deals to redeem "his" Jews. There, Schindler explains to Goeth that inflicting just punishment is different from exercising power: "Power is when we have every justification to kill, and yet we don't." He tells the story of a criminal who deserved to be punished but instead was pardoned by the emperor. Schindler attempts to convert Goeth, to convince him that there is power in mercy. Goeth, though, is ultimately unable to overcome his nature and to pardon the Jews. The evil that he represents is absolute and unchangeable. This portrayal belies the truth that there is identification possible with the perpetrators. It denies the ambiguities in human nature that allow men and women who lead perfectly normal, decent, and productive lives in other ways to commit atrocities by deluding themselves that they are justified.

Much has been written about the two church scenes in the film. The first scene, in Krakow, in which Jews are involved in black market trading while passing as worshipping Catholics has been seen as an allusion to the stereotype of Jews as greedy profiteers. The scene does seem reminiscent of the New Testament story of the moneychangers in the Temple.²⁹ Although Schindler solicits their help rather than chastising them, most of the traders "slink away" for fear of discovery. What is more striking about the scene, however, is the depiction of the Catholic Church as a sanctuary. All that the traders need do is remove the yellow star, the symbol of their Jewishness, from their clothes as they enter and then anoint themselves with holy water, the water of baptism, to find refuge.

This symbolism is disturbing on several levels. The first level involves the idea that Jews could find sanctuary within the Christian Churches of Europe during the Holocaust. The Catholic Church, in particular, was so intent on self-preservation that any refuge or protest offered came from individual Catholics and clergymen rather than from the institutional Church itself. To suggest otherwise is to cater to those who would rather not deal with difficult questions of bigotry, corruption, and antisemitism

²⁹For a detailed discussion of this symbolism, see Sara R. Horowitz, "But is it Good for the Jews?" *Spielberg's Holocaust*, ed. Yosefa Loshitzky (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997) 125-126.

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within a faith that professes love and tolerance. The second suggestion is that Jews could have saved themselves by casting aside the religion of Judaism and embracing Christianity. Countless secular and converted Jews were murdered because of Nazi racial classifications. Their “degeneracy” was thought to be in their blood and therefore unalterable through a change in confession. Whether sincere or not, conversion was no panacea. The third suggestion, and perhaps the most troubling, is the depiction of Jews donning the mantle of Christianity as a subterfuge. Many Jews, desperate to evade death through any means possible, did attempt to pass as gentiles. Here, though, “passing” is not presented as a matter of life and death but rather as a means to monetary gain. The subtle implication is that, though he might appear outwardly as Christian, a Jew could not change his internal Jewish (and manipulative) nature.

The second and very brief church scene takes place after Schindler returns to Brinnlitz with “his” Jews. He enters, genuflects, and kneels in the pew behind his wife, Emilie. He whispers, “No doorman or maitre d’ will ever mistake you again. I promise.” His redemption is complete. He has undergone a transformative experience by discovering his true path through the suffering of others. While the scene in the Krakow church had Schindler conspiring with Jews to purchase illicit goods, now he is once again one of the faithful, the prodigal son returned.

The next scene contains perhaps the most outright supersessionism in the film. It is a Friday night near the end of the War, and the sun is setting on the Brinnlitz munitions factory. Schindler approaches one of his workers, a rabbi, and chides, “Shouldn’t you be getting ready for the Sabbath?” As the rabbi’s face lights up with surprise and gratitude, Schindler, the savior, has not only restored the keeping of Shabbat to the *Schindlerjuden* but has also become their teacher. The flickering flames of the Shabbat candles glow in color as hope reemerges in the bleakness of despair. In the next scene, Schindler’s personal sacrifice becomes clear as it becomes apparent that he has bankrupted himself to save his workers.

Shortly thereafter, news of the German surrender reaches the factory. Schindler gathers workers and guards together onto the factory floor and delivers what has been referred to as his “Sermon on the Mount” in which he “teaches a doctrine of forgiveness and a renunciation of violence.”³⁰ As Schindler stands above and before the assembly, as a holy man addressing a congregation of followers, he leads them in prayer in memory of the murdered Jewish people. He speaks of a “We,” as though he has become one of them. Yet, as he makes the sign of the cross and folds his hands in prayer, he is not one of the Jews, the victims. He is the savior and they are the redeemed.

Schindler’s final scene, in which he escapes with his wife, is one created purely for closure and effect.³¹ Sobbing, he demonstrates his humility in the face of the

³⁰ Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle: U of Washington P, 2001) 154.

³¹ Historian Tim Cole observes, “This final scene—where the playboy and manipulator Schindler weeps over the realization that he could have done more, and then flees westward with the wife whom he has pledged faithfulness to—doesn’t fit with the Schindler shown to us during the course of the film. Nor does it fit with the Schindler of history. As a number of Schindler Jews have noted, the Schindler of history simply made a speedy getaway just prior to liberation, with his wife and mistress.” *Selling the Holocaust* (New York: Routledge, 1999) 80.

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knowledge that he could have done more. His remorse and confession are a salve to the Christian conscience. He is a good man, a “true Christian,” who did what he could to help at great personal cost to himself. His repentance, like Niemöller’s, deflects closer scrutiny of the actions of Christians within the larger context.³² As Gammon notes, “In suffering with the Jews after the fact, [Christians] avoid the need for confession and repentance for the Church’s multiple failures.”³³ After all, Schindler is not remorseful that he failed to act but that he failed to act enough.

The epilogue to the film is an ode to the triumph of good over evil, and much more. To the strains of “Jerusalem of Gold,” the Schindler Jews leave the camp, destined for freedom, while Amon Goeth is hanged for his crimes. The location then morphs into present-day Israel as the surviving *Schindlerjuden* make a pilgrimage to Schindler’s grave on Mount Zion in remembrance and tribute.³⁴ The inaccuracy of this patently Zionist conclusion has best been summed up by Omer Bartov:

Thus, a relatively minor, and quite extraordinary case, has been transformed into a representative segment of the “story” as a whole, obliterating, or at least neglecting the fact that in the “real” Holocaust, most of the Jews died, most of the Germans collaborated with the perpetrators or remained passive bystanders, most of the victims sent to the showers were gassed, and most of the survivors did not walk across green meadows to Palestine . . .³⁵

Every single one of the Jews that the audience has come to know during the film has survived. Yet “the six million” remain nameless and faceless. As Stalin is said to have remarked, “A single death is a tragedy, but a million deaths are a statistic.”³⁶ There is never any real sense of loss, except in the abstract. To focus on loss rather than on survival would be to deny the hope with which Spielberg infused his film.

Based on a historical novel, *Schindler’s List* has gone further toward portraying the horrors of the Holocaust than any American popular film so far. Its scenes of graphic violence, fear, and brutality stop short of the unimaginable reality, but it is debatable how far they can and should go. Spielberg has created a vision of the Holocaust that leaves his audience still able to sleep at night, confronting it not head-on but rather from an angle that renders it less blinding. He has created a filter through which Christian Americans not only can but also want to make a connection with the event. To tread any closer to the truth is perhaps so threatening that the audience would avert its eyes.

³² Mintz writes, “Instead of Christianity’s being charged with evasion of responsibility during the war, or even being held accountable for laying the doctrinal groundwork for the murderous rage against the Jews, Christian faith is depicted in the film as a force that makes for deliverance.” Mintz, 154.

³³ Gammon, 703.

³⁴ Cole, 87.

³⁵ Bartov, 46.

³⁶ This quotation is popularly attributed to Joseph Stalin, possibly as spoken to Winston Churchill at the 1945 Potsdam Conference. In his memoir, however, Churchill makes no mention of this remark. Winston Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953).

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Schindler's List, then, does not question the myths of the Christian world but reinforces them. Its status as a "historical" narrative is buttressed by not only the care for authenticity with which it was made but also the good intentions of the filmmaker. Spielberg's Shoah Foundation is his testament to the importance that he places on memory of the Holocaust. Therefore, for many people, Spielberg's Holocaust is the "real" Holocaust. He has allowed them to "feel" it more, to understand it better, and to come to satisfactory conclusions about its meaning. Unfortunately, the truth that they can bear to look at is not the truth at all.

THE HIDING PLACE

For thus says the Lord of hosts, 'After glory He has sent me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.'³⁷

Among the Christian denominations in the United States, there is a growing segment for which the Holocaust holds special significance, the Evangelical Protestants (particularly the ultraconservative Fundamentalist movement).³⁸ Following from a literalist hermeneutics, many Evangelicals hold that the fate of the Jewish people has been and remains part of a divine plan. In the case of the prevalent premillennialist exegesis, Jews have been under divine discipline since the fall of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., which began the Diaspora, or exodus from Palestine.³⁹ This discipline is thought to be the result of refusal to accept the great truth of Christianity—that of Jesus Christ as the messiah. While triumphalist in the dogma that God has made a new covenant with Christians that defines the singular path to eternal salvation, premillennialist Evangelicals also believe that the original covenant that God made with the Jewish people is still in force. The Jews remain God's original "chosen people." According to this interpretation, the first duty of the "true Christian" is to proselytize Jews and to convert them to an acceptance of Jesus Christ as the messiah. Conversion attempts are viewed as acts of brotherly love and concern for their future in eternity. Christians must preserve and protect unconverted Jews as well so that they may fulfill their role as the excluded witnesses in the eschatological process of salvation.

³⁷ *New American Standard Bible*, Zechariah 2:8.

³⁸ *American Religious Identification Survey*, 2001, Graduate Center of The City University of New York, http://www.gc.cuny.edu/studies/aris_index.htm. In utilizing the umbrella term "Evangelical," as differentiated from Mainline Protestants, I am referring to those sects whose members claim to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, tend toward a literal interpretation of scripture, and who claim a "born again" experience. They fall into the most conservative category of American Christianity.

³⁹ Hal Lindsey, *The Road to Holocaust* (New York: Bantam, 1989) 30-31. Lindsey, author of the 1970 best-seller *The Late, Great Planet Earth*, writes in the Christian literary genre of Biblical prophecy interpretation. *The Road to Holocaust* is an excellent source for understanding the postmillennialist viewpoint regarding Jews because it is, basically, a defense against the postmillennialist Dominion Theology movement, which is patently antisemitic. For an in-depth review of this book, see Stephen R. Haynes, "Hal Lindsey, *The Road to Holocaust*: A Review Essay," *Fides et Historia* 24:3 (Fall 1993): 111-129.

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Within the vast body of Holocaust narrative, no work has approached the exemplary status that Christian rescuer Corrie ten Boom's 1971 memoir *The Hiding Place* holds among Evangelical Christians.⁴⁰

Ten Boom, who died in 1983, was a member of the evangelical wing of the Dutch Reformed Church. This sect is distinct from other branches of the Dutch Reformed Church in its philosemitism, holding Mosaic Law in higher esteem than Christian sects that fault Judaism for depending on law rather than faith for salvation.⁴¹ During the Second World War, ten Boom lived with her sister and elderly father above their watch shop in the Dutch city of Haarlem. Devoutly religious, the family became active in the underground, aiding Jews and hiding many in their home during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. In early 1944, the family was betrayed and arrested, although the Jews hidden in the house at the time were able to avoid detection. Within days, ten Boom's father, Casper, died in Scheveningen Prison. Her nephew, Kik, also perished, and her brother, Willem, a Dutch Reformed minister, later succumbed to an illness contracted while he was interned. Ten Boom and her sister, Betsie, were deported to Ravensbruck where Betsie died of disease shortly before Corrie was released.

The experiences of the ten Boom family hold dual significance for American Christians. In *The Hiding Place*, ten Boom asks, "How should a Christian act when evil [is] in power?"⁴² The implications of ten Boom's story, in relation to this question, are broadly relevant to all Christian denominations in that they compose a model for living the values of faith, love, charity, and forgiveness. Here, the event of the Holocaust is subsumed into the category of generalized evil. As one author has written of this memoir, "After years of suffering and sacrifice, the heroine's faith remains unshaken. This then is the central message [of ten Boom's story] whose Christian framework appears to exceed the Holocaust, which emerges as a historical accident or religious trial."⁴³

⁴⁰ Lawrence Baron, "Supersessionism Without Contempt: The Holocaust Evangelism of Corrie ten Boom," *Christian Responses to the Holocaust*, ed. Donald Dietrich (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2003) 119. According to Baron, *The Hiding Place* "has sold over four and one-half million copies." He places it in the top three best-selling books about the rescue of Jews during World War II. Baron also cites Rhonda Renee Gamble as the source of his statement, "In 1997 it became the only Holocaust memoir ever to make the top 10 list of best-selling Christian books in the United States." Gamble, "Evangelical Representations of Corrie ten Boom," Masters Thesis, 1997, San Diego State University.

⁴¹ Baron, "Supersessionism Without Contempt," 124-125.

⁴² Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizabeth Sherrill, *The Hiding Place* (Washington Depot, CT: Chosen Books, 1971), 71.

⁴³ Esther Fuchs, "Gender and Holocaust Docudramas: Gentile Heroines in Rescue Films," *Shofar* 22.1 (2003): 86. Fuchs' comment was in reference to the 1973 film *The Hiding Place*, which was produced by the evangelist Billy Graham and was based on ten Boom's memoir. Her exact wording is "After years of suffering and sacrifice, the heroine's faith remains unshaken. This then is the central message of the film whose Christian framework appears to exceed the Holocaust, which emerges as a historical accident or religious trial." Although Fuchs notes that the Graham film takes liberties with the original text, I believe that her quoted observation holds true of both representations.

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What seems to be most strongly appealing to mainstream Christians is ten Boom's ability to maintain her faith sincerely in the face of both her own persecution and the loss of her family. She relates that, upon learning of her father's death, she prayed "Dear Jesus . . . how foolish of me to have called for human help when You are here. To think that Father sees You now, face to face!"⁴⁴ Throughout the memoir, ten Boom constantly affirms that she was able to find such meaning, at the time, in her suffering. Part of this meaning seems to be that she felt it gave her opportunity to bring spiritual rather than physical salvation to those around her. She relates that, during her entire imprisonment, she continued to proselytize fellow prisoners.

Despite her constant striving toward a theodicy to explain her experiences, ten Boom had difficulty finding sense in the deaths of those whom she considered good and innocent. Once, an interrogator asked her, "What kind of God would let that old man [her father] die here in Scheveningen?" She remembered and was reassured by her father's typical answer to difficult theological questions: "Some knowledge is too heavy . . . you cannot bear it . . . your Father [God] will carry it until you are able."⁴⁵ By affirming her ordeal as part of an unknowable divine plan, ten Boom effectively diverts moral judgments away from the actions of the perpetrators and onto the reactions of the victims and bystanders. By replacing an examination of human motivations with a mystical explanation, both ten Boom and her Christian readers sidestep the real issue that Casper ten Boom died not because he was a devout Christian but because he helped to save Jews who were targeted for murder by the citizens of essentially Christian nations.⁴⁶

Ten Boom's story, like that of Oskar Schindler, vindicates Christianity in hindsight by spotlighting the righteous exceptions. Christianity is portrayed as a force for salvation rather than for destruction. It denies contradictory evidence cited by authors such as Michael Berenbaum, who writes:

Religious practice measurably influenced the behavior of the perpetrators and the response of the bystanders. There was a direct correlation between the intensity of religious practice and the percentage of Jews killed in an occupied territory. Where Christians were most devout—Poland, Slovakia, and the Baltic countries—the percentage of Jews killed increased . . .⁴⁷

To use the story of the ten Boom family to make generalizations about the behavior of European Christians during the Holocaust is to ignore specific factors that may have caused them to act as they did. K. Alan Snyder of Regent University has made one such attempt. He writes:

The history of purges and other acts of discrimination in Christian Europe . . . has led to deep suspicions in some that the attitude of evangelicals toward Jews may not be as altruistic as it appears, or that at least their views are

⁴⁴ Ten Boom, 157.

⁴⁵ Ten Boom, 163.

⁴⁶ Steigmann-Gall, 261-262.

⁴⁷ Michael Berenbaum, "The Nativization of the Holocaust," *Judaism* 35 (1986): 456.

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tinged with a certain condescension for a race of people who have rejected their Messiah. [T]hose suspicions can be tested on the ten Boom family.⁴⁸

First, the ten Booms were citizens of a nation, Holland, that had a long history of religious tolerance. Although antisemitism existed in the Netherlands, it was relatively mild compared to levels in other European countries.⁴⁹ For instance, the Dutch churches, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, officially protested Nazi anti-Jewish policies and deportations in 1942.⁵⁰ As has already been stated, the ten Boom family also belonged to a denomination that was particularly philosemitic. There seems to have been especially strong institutional remonstrance in the defense of converted Jews.⁵¹ How much of this was caused by actual affinity for Jews and how much was the result of other factors such as nationalist, anti-German sentiment remains to be thoroughly researched. The point here is that there are several reasons the attitudes of the ten Boom family cannot be viewed as representative of the attitudes of European Christians as a whole.

Along with ten Boom's universalized message, there exists, concomitantly, a particularized, Evangelical reading in which the event of the Holocaust is of principal importance. Here, the theodicean weight of the narrative rests on the triad of Jewish victimization, Christian faithfulness, and Nazi ungodliness. At the center of this triad is scripture, the "word of God." Each group's relationship to the center explains its relationship to the other two members of the triad. Evangelical Christians such as Corrie ten Boom believe that the Old Testament (The Tanakh or "Hebrew Bible") and the New Testament (its fulfillment) are equally valid in stature as divinely inspired works and must both be accepted. The Jews, the original "chosen people," received the word as expressed in the Tanakh and have remained committed to it. Yet, by not accepting the New Testament as truth, they remain outside the completeness of revelation embraced by Christians. It is this incomplete understanding that they believe has resulted in the dispersion and persecution of the Jewish people throughout history, which can only be resolved through conversion.

⁴⁸ K. Alan Snyder, "Corrie ten Boom: A Protestant Evangelical Response to the Nazi Persecution of the Jews," *Neopolitique* (October 1999): 6-7, http://www.neopolitique.org/Np2000/Pages/Essays/Articles/Ten_boom-oct'99.htm, Accessed January 31, 2005. *Neopolitique* is a student publication of the Robertson School of Government at Regent University. His original quotation reads: "The history of purges and other acts of discrimination in Christian Europe, however, has led to deep suspicions in some that the attitude of evangelicals toward Jews may not be as altruistic as it appears, or that at least their views are tinged with a certain condescension for a race of people who have rejected their Messiah. This paper cannot be expected to deal with all evangelicals, but those suspicions can be tested on the ten Boom family."

⁴⁹ Dienke Hondius, *Return: Holocaust Survivors and Dutch Anti-Semitism*, trans. David Colmer (London: Praeger, 2003) 18-19.

⁵⁰ Lawrence Baron, "The Historical Context of Rescue," *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe*, eds. Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliner (New York: The Free Press, 1988) 37.

⁵¹ J. Presser, *The Destruction of the Dutch Jews*, trans. Arnold Pomerans (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1969) 22-23.

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Lawrence Baron points out that ten Boom, in her later writing, quoted a converted Jew who had said in a speech, “It is true that Israel missed God’s target and was, for a time, set aside and dispersed among the nations. But the day will come when they will fall at the feet of their Messiah in true repentance and live!”⁵² Evangelicals such as ten Boom, then, view Jews as brothers in faith who will eventually find salvation by accepting the truth of Christ. The theme of martyrdom that runs powerfully through ten Boom’s work suggests that she believed that Christian sacrifice would be necessary to bring about this day of Jewish enlightenment. In her memoir, she recounts her Christ-like willingness to die not only to save Jews physically but also to serve as a witness to them of the truth of her beliefs. At one point, she recounts that she acted in conscious emulation of the passion and death of Christ: “I had read a thousand times the story of Jesus’ arrest—how soldiers had slapped Him, laughed at Him, and flogged Him. Now such happenings had faces and voices.”⁵³

The image of Jews as incomplete Christians is personified in *The Hiding Place* by an apostate Jew, Harry de Vries. It was in him that ten Boom saw the potential of the Jewish people fulfilled. She related that “he had become a Christian, some forty years earlier, without ceasing in the least to be a loyal Jew. ‘A completed Jew!’ he would tell us smilingly. ‘A follower of the one perfect Jew.’”⁵⁴ De Vries is ten Boom’s example of how a converted Jew could be brought into the fold of Christianity and achieve even the sanctity of martyrdom through adherence to Christian tenets. He was a member of the underground, married to a gentile woman. When speaking of the danger to himself and his wife that he perceived, although he was a convert, he said, “It is not for ourselves that we mind, we are Christians, Cato [his wife] and I. When we die we will see Jesus and this is all that matters.”⁵⁵ While he was speaking of the concern that he had felt for his two dogs that would be left behind, implicit in his words is the sentiment that he felt assured that he would achieve a transcendence of death as a Christian that would not have been his as an “incomplete Jew.” After de Vries was eventually arrested, he said to ten Boom, “I shall use this place—wherever they’re taking us. It will be my witness stand for Jesus.”⁵⁶ He had been arrested with his wife in a raid, but she had been released when it was discovered that she was not Jewish. Ten Boom never heard from him again. So, Harry de Vries, who was determined to be a witness for Christ as he was taken away, died because he was also a Jew.

Ten Boom’s assessment of Harry de Vries, as well as her belief in the necessity of conversion for Jewish salvation, reflects a profound ambiguity in the attitudes of Evangelical Christians toward Jews. On the one hand, there is a deep respect and brotherly affection based on a perceived shared history as the “people of God.” However, it

⁵² Quoted in Baron, “Supersessionism Without Contempt,” 122. Originally quoted in Corrie ten Boom, *Father ten Boom: God’s Man* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1978).

⁵³ Ten Boom, 195.

⁵⁴ Ten Boom, 73.

⁵⁵ Ten Boom, 72.

⁵⁶ Ten Boom, 95.

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is *the potential of the Jews* to fulfill divine intentions that provokes a continued engagement concerning their welfare. More than the Jewish people of the present, it is the Jews of the past who lived in the time before Christ and the Jews of the future who will become enlightened through conversion that are worthy of Christian admiration and protection. It is for their sake that Christian mercy and tolerance must be shown to those who are both the descendants and the progenitors of a fulfilled Jewish people.

There is another reason that Evangelicals who rely on a literal interpretation of scripture profess such philosemitism. It is based on two seemingly contradictory beliefs. The first, as previously mentioned, is that Jewish suffering, especially during the Holocaust, is a self-inflicted wound resulting from a failure of both faith and understanding. It is essentially the will of God to punish them. The second and conflicting belief is that those who mistreat the Jews will also be punished.⁵⁷ The fact that these two beliefs can be held at the same time—that the Nazis committed evil (and “un-Christian”) acts but that the Jews “deserved it”—can be found in the attitudes that Philip Gourevitch encountered when conversing with a Christian teacher and her students at the Holocaust Museum.

To say that ten Boom believed that Jews had “missed God’s target” does not necessarily lead to a conclusion that she was antisemitic. She seems to have practiced what Baron has termed “supersessionism without contempt.”⁵⁸ In her recorded words and actions, it is virtually impossible to find evidence of derogatory opinions about Jews or Judaism. Rather, she appears to have thought that Judaism and Christianity had more beliefs in common than in conflict. In fact, in many instances she speaks with both respect and affection for Jewish friends and their faith. Her family seems to have emphasized proselytizing through the example of how they conducted their lives. It appears that they believed that, by living righteously, they could attest to the validity of their religious beliefs.

In *The Hiding Place*, ten Boom recalls an experience in which she and her father witnessed the roundup and deportation of Jewish men, women, and children from a marketplace in Haarlem. In her recollection, Casper ten Boom referred to the scriptural passage of Zechariah 2:8 in his phrase “the apple of God’s eye”:

‘Father, those poor people!’ I cried... ‘Those poor people,’ Father echoed. But to my surprise I saw that he was looking at the soldiers now forming into ranks to march away. ‘I pity the poor Germans, Corrie. They have touched the apple of God’s eye.’⁵⁹

Casper ten Boom’s words allude to the special relationship that he believed that the Jews had with God as the first “chosen people.” One wonders, then, what meaning American Evangelicals derive from these words.

There is a tendency among scholars to view Christian supersessionism and proselytizing of Jews as patently antisemitic. Yet, if ten Boom’s line of reasoning is accepted within the Evangelical audience, it is possible to imagine that feelings of doctrinal superiority can exist without hatred or even dislike of Jews or Judaism. This

⁵⁷ Lindsey, 2-3.

⁵⁸ Baron, “Supersessionism Without Contempt,” 119.

⁵⁹ Ten Boom, 68-69.

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reasoning may be illustrated through a simple example: One may warn a friend not to make a mistake, but the friend may choose to ignore the advice because he does not see the merit in it. If he is subsequently harmed as a result of his own actions, is the friend then worthy of contempt? Are his beliefs? In this case, the answer would be “not necessarily.” The friend may have simply made an honest error from which one hopes that he will learn. His beliefs may be meritorious, but flawed. In the context of describing the murder of European Jewry during the Holocaust, this reasoning is surely offensive to many people. It certainly does not view Judaism as an equally viable path to salvation with Christianity. Yet, without the element of contempt, it is difficult to label this attitude as antisemitic.

Evident also in Casper ten Boom’s words about the Nazis is an attitude similar to that held toward the Jews: that of pity for those who have refused God’s calling but also recognition that they are human beings who have the potential for salvation. In their case, however, they have not merely come under divine discipline but have turned to evil as the result of rejecting scripture entirely. In turning to Corrie ten Boom’s depiction of the Nazis, one finds repeated suggestion of what Yaakov Ariel calls “[a] major element in the evangelical understanding of the Holocaust.” It is that the Nazis were not only non-Christian antisemites but were actually anti-Christian as well.⁶⁰

Examples of Nazi rejection of the Old Testament are more pronounced in ten Boom’s memoir, although she does not note whether she sees this rejection as the cause or the effect of their hatred of Jews. She gives a specific example, however, in which the rejection of the Old Testament and antisemitism are intertwined. Prior to the invasion of the Netherlands, a young German apprentice and member of the Hitler Youth, Otto, came to work at the ten Boom’s watch shop. His first morning, he attended the family’s morning Bible study with the other employees but, from then on, declined to attend. When he was asked why, ten Boom recalls that he replied “he had seen Father reading from the Old Testament which, he informed us, was the Jews’ ‘Book of Lies.’” She then recounts how her father, without derision, responded, “I was shocked, but Father was only sorrowful. ‘He has been taught wrong,’ he told me. ‘By watching us, seeing that we love this Book and are truthful people, he will realize his error.’”⁶¹ The ten Booms did not dismiss Otto for his antisemitic words, instead attempting to win him over by example and displays of kindness. He was finally let go, however, for physically abusing an elderly watchmaker.

In another incident, this time occurring during the raid on her home, ten Boom again writes of Nazi disdain for the Old Testament. Her nephew, Peter, says, “But if they learn that Uncle Willem was teaching this morning from the Old Testament, it could make trouble for him.”⁶² Barring other previous incidents, the experience with the German apprentice apparently gave the ten Boom family ample reason to believe that the Nazis were very much opposed to the Old Testament because of its Jewish origin.

⁶⁰ Yaakov Ariel, “The Faithful in a Time of Trial,” *Journal of Religion and Society* 3 (2001), <http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2001/2001-8a.html>, Accessed July 11, 2004.

⁶¹ Ten Boom, 58.

⁶² Ten Boom, 134.

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In regard to being anti-Christianity, ten Boom bases her characterization of the Nazis foremost on her belief that she was behaving in a manner that was correct for a Christian. That she was arrested and imprisoned with her family for doing so amounted in her mind to persecution of Christians for their faith. In fact, when recalling how a Protestant minister refused to harbor a Jewish child out of fear for his family's safety, ten Boom gives the impression that she felt that his behavior was decidedly hypocritical.⁶³ The fact that anyone, regardless of motivation, would have received the same punishment, or worse, does not appear to have occurred to her. She also fails to acknowledge that Christians of her particularly philosemitic beliefs were in a minority and that, on the whole, a religion with a long history of persecuting Jews did not appear to mandate that its faithful should risk their lives to save them.

There are two other minor incidents in the book that ten Boom describes to emphasize her perception that the Nazi regime was opposed to Christianity. The first occurred, again, during the raid on her home. As a Gestapo officer was beating her in order to obtain the location of the hidden Jews, she cried out, "Lord Jesus, protect me!" With that, the infuriated officer paused and threatened, "If you say that name again I'll kill you!"⁶⁴ The second incident occurred in Scheveningen Prison. Her family had sent her a package with four small booklets containing the New Testament gospels. A cellmate warned her, "They catch you with those and it's double sentence and *kalte kost* [bread ration alone] as well."⁶⁵

Small as these incidents were, they can be pinpointed, by those so inclined, as factual evidence to back up ten Boom's contention that she was persecuted because she was a Christian. It is true that ten Boom took the actions that she did because of her faith, but, if she had hidden or assisted Jews for any other reason, she would have borne the same punishment. Thus, one cannot say that the Nazis were motivated to punish her because she was a Christian. That she "suffered with the Jews," though, is vital to her in exonerating Christianity of blame for the Holocaust. If authentic Christians were victimized, then any faith that the perpetrators professed would be rendered a "sham Christianity."

Although *The Hiding Place* is the memoir of a woman who lived through the Holocaust, it is a story told from the periphery, a universalized "passion play" in which the forces of evil are overcome through faith and courage. It is a tale with a miraculously bottomless medicine bottle and a prayer circle in Barracks 28. There is a purposeful naiveté to the narrative. Questions that might be too difficult to answer are never posed. The story is sanitized and suitable for family consumption. The people that die are old and ill, finding peace before breathing their last. The great trials of the concentration camp come in the form of black lice and overflowing toilets. It is a comfortingly myopic story that Christians can feel good about. Corrie ten Boom's Holocaust almost seems to make sense.

⁶³ Ten Boom, 99.

⁶⁴ Ten Boom, 129.

⁶⁵ Ten Boom, 146.

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A few points are worth remembering. Ten Boom herself never saw the fires in the East. She never wore a yellow star. She never experienced the filth of the ghetto. Perhaps her world did make sense to her because she was free to make choices in it. How might she have responded to the cry “Where is God? Where is he?” had she stood beside Elie Wiesel to witness the slow and agonizing murder of a young child?⁶⁶ For herself, and for all Christians who seek to understand the Holocaust through her words, would she have answered as Wiesel did, “Where is he? Here he is—He is hanging here on this gallows . . .”? Ten Boom’s story is hers alone. Yet, by Christianizing the Holocaust, she has distilled its meaning into a parable about salvation that both displaces the centrality of Jewish victimization and excuses it as an anomaly within Christendom.

THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

To most Americans, the Holocaust Museum is the nation’s “Jewish museum.” The B’nai B’rith Klutznick Museum, housing the capital city’s largest collection of Judaica, is only a few blocks away, but only about fifty thousand people visit there annually.⁶⁷ The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is where approximately five thousand visitors a day, mostly non-Jews, come to understand what is, in their view, the quintessential Jewish story: a catastrophe. At the same time, however, it is a museum that was created to tell not just of Jewish victimization but also of American virtue. To facilitate maximum inclusiveness and acceptance, the museum has been created in a way that does not appear too “Jewish.” This is a place that documents the “Holocaust” rather than the “Shoah.”

The museum was dedicated on April 22, 1993, but it had taken fifteen years to become a reality. The President’s Commission on the Holocaust was created in 1978, under Jimmy Carter. Carter, an evangelical Christian, was in conflict with many in the American Jewish community at the time because of his perceived lack of support for Israel. Edward Linenthal writes that Carter’s staff suggested that the creation of the commission would be an appropriate fence-mending gesture in commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of Israeli independence.⁶⁸ The museum was chartered by an Act of Congress in 1980, the same year that the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, the successor to the President’s Commission, was formed. In the two years in between, a struggle began to choreograph the museum’s complex dance of “Jewish memory” and “American memory.”

As Sara J. Bloomfield, the director of the Holocaust Museum, puts it:

What makes our exhibitions so powerful . . . is that the history of the Holocaust is fundamentally about human nature and the entire spectrum of

⁶⁶ Elie Wiesel, *Night*, trans. Stella Rodway (New York: Bantam, 1960) 61-62.

⁶⁷ Stephen J. Whitfield, “Reflections on Peter Novick’s Holocaust in American Life: Two Perspectives,” *Judaism* 49.4 (Fall 2000): 484.

⁶⁸ Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum* (New York: Penguin, 1995) 18.

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human behavior, from unimaginable evil to extraordinary goodness. It is about us and what it means to be a human being.⁶⁹

The contrast between good and evil seems so clear in retrospect. In the United States, World War II has been popularly termed “The Good War.” Nowhere is the evil against which this nation fought more clearly defined than in the Holocaust Museum. Yet, the Nazi war against the Jews has only become America’s war in hindsight. Like Schindler and Niemöller, America looks back, in this museum, as the righteous bystander who regrets that he did not do enough.

Alan Mintz has suggested that the increasing importance of the Holocaust in American public discourse is partially the result of a changing national paradigm in which events such as the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement have led to a culture of self-doubt. He writes:

The critique of the justness of American society and its use of power opened up the prospect of seeing America not as a shining example to the world but as a country that caused suffering at home and abroad... In this context, it is not surprising, then, that the Holocaust eventually became the ultimate analogy for reflecting on the evils humans have inflicted upon other humans.⁷⁰

If this is true, and the current fascination with the Holocaust is a manifestation of American national angst, then it is a discomfort that is linked, inexorably, with religion and the politics of faith.

One reason for the bond between religious belief and fascination with the Holocaust is that American religious leaders were in the forefront of addressing issues of social justice in the second half of the twentieth century. Jewish leaders, in particular, gained an increasingly authoritative voice in speaking for the conscience of the nation. Emerging from the great wave of international antisemitism that peaked during the War,⁷¹ American Judaism underwent a self-conscious renewal, and Jews asserted their religious identity with increased confidence. The popular recognition of Judaism as America’s “third faith” was heralded by the publication of Will Herberg’s *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* in 1955. Jonathan Sarna writes that this book “provided a vocabulary, an explanation, and a new set of boundaries for the restructured American religion that had by then been developing for half a century.”⁷² The relative pluralism of American society made room for a definition of “Jewishness” in a religious context, superseding the secular concept of “peoplehood” that seemed divisive and “un-American.” The view that Jews and Christians were linked by a

⁶⁹Sara J. Bloomfield, “Exhibition Acknowledgement, Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race,” 2004, *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/deadlymedicine/catalogue/>, Accessed February 28, 2005.

⁷⁰Mintz, 10.

⁷¹Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1994) 150.

⁷²Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004) 276.

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common biblical foundation and, therefore, a common value system gave rise to the new conception of the United States as a country with a “Judeo-Christian” heritage.⁷³

The 1960’s was a pivotal decade for American Jewish empowerment. Although the majority of gentile Americans seemed more comfortable with emphasizing the religious side of the dual nature of “Jewishness,” the sense of “peoplehood” among American Jews grew along with an increasing identification with the state of Israel. Of significant impact was the televised trial of Nazi war criminal Adolph Eichmann that began the decade. His capture in Argentina by Israeli agents and his subsequent trial and execution by Israeli courts for crimes against the Jewish people opened up a discussion of what had been a marginalized subject in the United States: the Nazis’ attempted extermination of European Jewry.

In 1967, the victory of Israel in the Six-Day War coincided with the active involvement of Jews in the American Civil Rights Movement. At the same time as the Jewish State appeared to be countering centuries of victimization, American Jews were taking a stand alongside another group with a long history of persecution: African-Americans. The organization of the Civil Rights Movement emerged from the black churches in America and Jewish activism from the synagogue. The most visible Jewish advocate was Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel who, in a 1961 speech to the national Conference on Religion and Race, “link[ed] the black struggle to the biblical Exodus. . . .” An iconic image of the famous 1965 civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama shows Heschel linking arms with his friend Martin Luther King, Jr. and other black activists.⁷⁴

Two trends that shaped the future of American Holocaust memory grew out of the events of the 1960’s. The first was a growing acknowledgement of Jewish victimization during the Holocaust. It has been argued that, as opposed to the Jewish inclination to view the Holocaust as the culmination of centuries of antisemitism, most Americans considered it “history’s worst act of racism.”⁷⁵ Jews are more apt than non-Jews to trace the roots of the Holocaust to a history of antisemitism; however, because of the tendency that emerged among non-Jewish Americans in the mid-to late-twentieth century to view “Jewishness” as a religious categorization rather than an ethnic or racial one, I believe that it is more prevalent to consider the Holocaust to have been an act of religious persecution. The main point of contest has become the nature of the persecutors.

The second trend stems from this acknowledgement of Jewish victimization. During the Civil Rights Movement and through the Vietnam years, American Jews cited their own history of persecution as their motivation to advocate for other oppressed groups. In this sense, the Holocaust became the universalized example of “man’s inhumanity to man,” thus leading to a unique emphasis on its significance among American Christians, based primarily on the contingencies of recent American history. In a nation that now considers itself to be rooted in a

⁷³ Sarna, 267.

⁷⁴ Sarna, 311.

⁷⁵ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, “Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 5.1 (2002): 96.

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Judeo-Christian tradition and that views the Holocaust as an act of religious persecution, it follows that the murder of European Jews can be seen as decidedly “un-Christian.” Therefore, the Holocaust Museum, which documents this event of such far-reaching religious significance, walks a fine line between universalization and particularism. The Jewish tragedy of the Holocaust must also be everyone’s tragedy. American Christians must be able to own it as well. For this to occur, the museum exhibitions must tread lightly when addressing the religious antisemitism that made this catastrophe possible.

The first thing that the visitor sees upon stepping off the elevator into the permanent exhibition is a large photomural of American troops at the Ohrdruf concentration camp. They are gathered around a pile of charred human remains, and the visitor, as a fellow witness, completes the circle. Perhaps from an impulse to move forward into the exhibition or perhaps because they feel loathe to appear voyeuristic, few people seem to stop and reflect upon this image. It is symbolic, however, of the mandate of the museum: to witness, to remember, and to learn. This mission is evoked in the words of Deuteronomy 4:9 inscribed on the wall of the Hall of Remembrance:

Only guard yourself and guard your soul carefully, lest you forget the things your eyes saw, and lest these things depart your heart all the days of your life. And you shall make them known to your children and to your children’s children.

The act of bearing witness is the core of the museum. Yet, in the representational decisions involved in the exhibitions, current political and social concerns factor into the equation. Because of the prioritization of telling the story of the Holocaust to a great number of people, it is told in a manner that most will be disposed to accept. As Henry Greenspan has observed about chronicling survivor testimony, the substance of the story is sometimes deemed secondary to the act of bearing witness.⁷⁶

One of the many controversial issues that the museum deals with is the role of Christian antisemitism in the Holocaust. In his 1995 book, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum*, Edward Linenthal discusses in detail the debate over how much of the story of Christian complicity should be addressed. He documents that, from its opening, the approach within the permanent exhibition has been one of caution and restraint. The topic is taken up in a brief film, *Antisemitism*, that “traces religious persecution of Jews through the Middle Ages and the Reformation.”⁷⁷ It locates the source of this Christian hatred toward Jews in the New Testament gospels that charge all Jews, past and present, with responsibility for the crucifixion of Christ in the phrase “Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us and on our children.”⁷⁸ Linenthal also points out, however, that in the

⁷⁶Henry Greenspan, “Imagining Survivors: Testimony and the Rise of Holocaust Consciousness,” *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, ed. Hilene Flanzbaum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999) 59.

⁷⁷Linenthal, 226.

⁷⁸*The King James Bible*, Matthew 27:25.

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film “that story is historically removed from the present.”⁷⁹ It is also a story that Christians of the present are able to distance themselves from by referring to late-twentieth-century apologetics such as *Nostra Aetate*.

One component that is specifically lacking in the exhibition is a thorough discussion of both the actions of the Christian churches in support of the National Socialist regime and their failure to act in opposition to it. Another is the fact that the crimes of the Holocaust were largely perpetrated by those who considered themselves Christians, about ninety-five percent of the German population during the Nazi years.⁸⁰ References to both of these topics are scarce, appearing only in the “Nazi Society” section that features a photograph of Protestant Reich Bishop Ludwig Müller giving the Nazi salute along with text that reads, “Even the Christian churches fell under Nazi influence, and many Protestant and Roman Catholic officials openly supported the regime.”⁸¹ This is a rather ambiguous and cursory acknowledgment of Christian reactions that ranged from the self-serving indifference of the institutional Catholic Church to the enthusiastic collaboration of the *Deutsche Christen*.⁸² It fails to make the link between the Christian doctrine discussed in the film *Antisemitism* and the actions of those that adhered to it.

The reasons for these omissions stem from that aspect of collective memory that Maurice Halbwachs said “distort[s] the past in the act of reconstructing it.”⁸³ If most Americans, as I have argued, currently view the Holocaust as an act of religious persecution, then to implicate millions of practicing Christians as perpetrators comes perilously close to implicating the tenets of their faith as well. The danger of alienating the American Christian public was recognized by members of the museum council from early on. Because the museum is a public building built on land donated by the federal government and is supported by a combination of private and government funds, the circumvention of certain contentious issues in its exhibitions has been deemed necessary to maintain public support.

A number of the theologians and scholars who have been most vocally in favor of including information on Christian complicity are affiliated with the museum’s Committee on Church Relations and the Holocaust. Among them, Dr. John Pawlikowski of Chicago’s Catholic Theological Union, a longtime member of the Museum Council and current chair of the Church Relations committee, has advocated a more vigorous, but sensitive approach.⁸⁴ Like other council members, he has been cautious about turning people against the museum and causing it to be perceived

⁷⁹ Linenthal, 227.

⁸⁰ Steigmann-Gall, 261-262. Also, Robert P. Ericksen, “Assessing the Heritage,” *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, eds. Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999) 22.

⁸¹ Linenthal, 226.

⁸² Gunther Lewy, “Pious XII, the Jews, and the German Catholic Church,” *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, eds. Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999). Also Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-4.

⁸³ Halbwachs, 182.

⁸⁴ Linenthal, 226-227.

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as “anti-Christian.”⁸⁵ “You have to remember,” he says, “that at first, we didn’t know if anyone would come.”⁸⁶ As museum attendance has proven such a concern unfounded, the politics of funding has become an important issue affecting the content of the exhibitions. As a government institution, the museum is dependent on the goodwill of politicians and bureaucrats who influence the budgeting of resources. According to Pawlikowski, after twelve years, the sheer volume of visitor traffic at the museum has caused it to begin to “wear out,” and these resources are becoming even more critical for its maintenance.⁸⁷

An issue that has not been quite so contentious is the emphasis on stories of the rescue of Jews by Christians. The redemptive accounts of these exceptional individuals are highlighted throughout the museum, starting with the name change of the section of 15th Street in front of the museum to Raoul Wallenberg Place. Yet, there have been those who felt that the emphasis on these incidents of rescue is misleading. One of these critics is the British filmmaker Martin Smith, an early director of the exhibition department. Like Pawlikowski, Smith believed that there should be a greater stress on the role of Christians as perpetrators. He objected to the plethora of displays of Christian rescue, saying that it was “much more likely that you would be saved by a communist or a socialist than a Christian.”⁸⁸

The exhibition narrative of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is, like *Schindler’s List* and *The Hiding Place*, a form of historical representation. It expresses a subjective point of view that is tempered by many factors, but greatest among them is its constituency. The driving force behind its creation was the memory of the murder of six million Jews and millions of others who, as the Commission put it, “as night descended . . . were swept into this net of death.”⁸⁹ Despite its necessarily universalizing tendencies, this narrative remains the core of the museum’s mission as a witness: to remember those victims and to tell their stories. What is sometimes overlooked by commentators is the ultimate goal of any witness: to be believed. In light of this goal, there is another consideration that influences inclusion and exclusion of controversial elements within the museum narrative: Holocaust denial.

It must be remembered that 1993 was not only the year that *Schindler’s List* debuted and the museum opened its doors. It was also the year that Deborah Lipstadt published her influential book *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*. As a result, she was sued for libel by David Irving, whom she had accused of being a Holocaust denier and a right-wing extremist. Though Lipstadt was vindicated in a judgment that took six years to reach, the incident underscored the reality that, especially regarding the Holocaust, traumatic memory is often contested memory.

⁸⁵ Linenthal, 226.

⁸⁶ Interview with John Pawlikowski, March 2, 2005, Kent State University.

⁸⁷ Interview with John Pawlikowski, March 2, 2005, Kent State University.

⁸⁸ Linenthal, 227.

⁸⁹ President’s Commission on the Holocaust, “Report to the President,” September 27, 1979, Government Printing Office.

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In the first chapter of her book, Lipstadt expresses her own concerns, shared by Holocaust survivors and, undoubtedly, by other historians of the Holocaust:

Denial of the Holocaust is not the only thing I find beyond belief. What has also shocked me is the success deniers have in convincing good-hearted people that Holocaust denial is an “other side” of history—ugly, reprehensible, and extremist—but an other side nonetheless. As time passes and fewer people can personally challenge these assertions, their campaign will only grow in intensity.⁹⁰

The museum is meant to be a bulwark against such denial. Yet, the threat of it continues to loom in the background, especially as American support for Israel remains a religiously and culturally divisive issue. As the creation of the state of Israel is often popularly portrayed as the Holocaust’s “redemptive ending,” it stands to reason that those who seek to discredit Israel might attempt to do so by discrediting the memory of the Holocaust itself. The inclusion of material that American Christians might find offensive or difficult to accept might well be considered by some to be encouraging disbelief.

Conclusion

Collective memory is difficult to measure. Only its reflection in popular representations and memorials hint at what a culture, as a whole, believes and values. There are also many exceptions, individuals who do not necessarily subscribe to the majoritarian viewpoint. There may be two primary causal factors that precipitate this divergence. The first is the possession of detailed and broad-based knowledge of factual evidence that precludes the acceptance of a core mythology, as is evident in the reluctance of most scholars to accept the dominant Christian narrative of the Holocaust in America. An example is John Pawlikowski, who as a Roman Catholic priest and theologian would seem to have reason to view the event through this lens, yet he does not.⁹¹ A second reason may be that an individual who possesses a strong, contrary belief system would have little motivation to accept a mythology that strengthens a competing metanarrative. The possibilities here are too numerous to catalog, but this group would certainly include most non-Christians.

The facts remain, however, that the majority of Americans identify themselves as Christians and that most have little detailed knowledge of the history of the Holocaust. What they do know is often based on representations tinged with a Christian viewpoint. The power of the Holocaust metaphor has been pointed out by Peter Novick, who gives many examples of interest groups who have employed it. Abortion opponents, animal-rights activists, and gun-control advocates are among many who have equated perceived societal evils with what many people consider its absolute measure.⁹² When most Americans use the word “holocaust,” they are referring, in fact, to “the Holocaust.”

⁹⁰ Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin, 1994) 3.

⁹¹ Interview with John Pawlikowski, March 2, 2005, Kent State University.

⁹² Novick, 241.

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Novick has also argued that American Holocaust memory may be fleeting for a number of reasons, but he cites one significant factor that would counter this possibility: its institutionalization in the Washington museum.⁹³ As I have shown, however, factors outside the realm of scholarly inquiry influence the historical narrative of the museum. One may question, then, if there is a danger that the practical-minded exclusion of certain information from the museum will serve to strengthen the popularly “acceptable” history of the event and inadvertently make it more difficult for current and future historians to challenge this narrative. When memory is institutionalized, it tends to become accepted as the definitive version of the story.

One must then ask what it is that Christian audiences are so averse to confronting in the Holocaust narrative. I would argue that it is the roots of antisemitism in the exclusivity of Christian eschatology. The “heroes” of the Holocaust that Christians have chosen to lionize, such as ten Boom and Niemöller, did not oppose Nazi extermination policies because they accepted Jews as moral equals. Rather, they rejected racial classification as an impediment to conversion and salvation. A further example is Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Protestant minister who was executed for his role in the von Stauffenberg conspiracy to assassinate Hitler. Bonhoeffer’s convictions stemmed from the same supersessionism, the same belief in the “potential” of the Jewish people. In the 1933 Bethel Confession (*Das Betheles Bekenntnis*), he conveys this clearly:

God abundantly shows God’s faithfulness by still keeping faith with Israel after the flesh, from whom was born Christ after the flesh, despite all their unfaithfulness, even after the crucifixion. It is God’s will to complete the salvation of the world, which began with the election of Israel, through those selfsame Jews (Rom. 9-11). ..The church has received from its Lord the commission to call the Jews to repentance and to baptize those who believe in Jesus Christ to the forgiveness of sins (Matt.10:5f.; Acts 2:38ff., 3:19-26).⁹⁴

The exclusivity of the Christian doctrine of salvation necessarily maintains the image of the Jew as the eternal “other.” The characteristics attributed to this other have ranged from confusion and ignorance to demonic malevolence. Bonhoeffer’s view is one interpretation of scriptures, acceptable to many Christians because it preserves the core of theological identity, the “New Covenant” in which Christians become God’s elect. At the same time, it also allows for the continued existence of the Jewish people, with whom Christians share a common biblical heritage. It is not the only interpretation, however. Another maintains that Jews have been witness to the Christian messiah and have rejected him, therefore rejecting God. To those who retain this view, the rejection of God and alignment with evil are synonymous.

⁹³ Novick, 276.

⁹⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Wilhelm Vischer, “The Bethel Confession,” *A Testament to Freedom*, eds. Geoffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1995) 136.

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Daniel Goldhagen claims that the latter view evinced such a potent hatred of Jews in the Christian population of Germany that it led to a widespread fever of “eliminationist antisemitism.”⁹⁵ It may be more comfortable for Christians to believe Goldhagen’s theory than to acknowledge that both views could have played a part in the exploitation of mass insecurity and resentment. A susceptibility to anti-Jewish propaganda did not necessarily require a deep-seated hatred of Jews but perhaps only a suspicion that they were somehow different. In a discussion of the work of three noted scholars of this subject, Christopher Browning writes, “Above all, they accept that the fanatical anti-Semitism of the party ‘true believers’ was not identical to the anti-Semitic attitudes of the population at large, and that the anti-Semitic priorities and genocidal commitment of the regime were not shared by ‘ordinary Germans.’”⁹⁶ If these “ordinary Germans” did not, in general, hate Jews in the sense that they desired their physical elimination, then one must ask why they participated in or turned a blind eye to their deportation and murder. It is true that the Jews were made scapegoats for German fears and woes, but was it not also the case that, for some, the “unsaved” were simply not worth saving?

If a Christian were to recognize Judaism as an alternative, equally viable path to salvation, could he then still conceive of himself as a Christian? Herein one finds an irony of looking to the Holocaust for examples of “true Christian” behavior. Though brotherly love may be a key tenet of Christian doctrine, so too is the conviction that salvation can only come through belief in Jesus Christ. Americans look to the actions of Christian rescuers and martyrs to define the righteousness of their faith and yet ignore the complicity of Christian perpetrators that might contradict it. One finds in the New Testament, the sacred text of Christianity, condemnation of the Jews for their unfaithfulness, and the history of Christianity is rife with examples of anti-Jewish persecution. The Holocaust, an event of merely sixty years ago, was the most cataclysmic crime ever committed by Christians against Jews. In light of these facts, do not multiple definitions of the “true Christian” emerge?

It remains to be seen how the American public perception of the Holocaust will shift, if at all, as historians continue to probe such questions. The preservation of the entrenched metanarrative may be too crucial to Christian identity to allow a more critical assessment. What is certain, however, is that as long as the American narrative of the Holocaust is edited, abbreviated, and recast to fit current agendas, it must be consigned to the realm of myth. Perhaps this is inevitable for a memory that has been borrowed from another place and time.

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⁹⁵ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* (New York: Vintage, 1997) 43.

⁹⁶ Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004) 388-389.

Research Essays

JAMES P. HILL

What Honors Students Want (And Expect): The Views of Top Michigan High School and College Students

JAMES P. HILL

CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

ABSTRACT

Often missing in an overall assessment of honors is a broad, comparative analysis of what top academic students want and expect from college and more particularly from an honors experience. Limited case studies or theoretical research articles analyzing how honors students think or perform may overlook or undervalue this important voice in the honors discourse. This article, although in some respects also just a larger-scale case study, has a broader perspective than many similar studies of honors students. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the expectations of prospective and current college honors students. This study also compares the views of Central Michigan University (CMU) Honors students with honors-eligible CMU students who chose not to join the CMU Honors Programs. While many practical applications can be derived from this information, it seems clear that the aspirations of honors and of its student constituency are mutually reinforcing, making it imperative that the voices of these top students be clearly heard in the honors discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Every year, somewhere on a campus in America, the role or impact of an honors program or course of study is being examined or re-examined. The cause may be budget concerns that trigger administrative scrutiny of smaller-sized honors classes; or it may be student and/or faculty concerns about inequality or elitism, questions about lack of diversity and seeming segregation, or focus on measurably distinctive or positive learning outcomes resulting directly from an honors program. More recently, the discourse has been expanded to include the issue of movement from an honors program to an honors college.

Regardless of the underlying rationale for this regular evaluation of honors, the same questions seem regularly to reappear, albeit in different venues or perhaps

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masked in different terms. Certainly, periodic assessment of honors is an important function. However, in this information age where quantification is valued, one reason for this constant probing may be the need for more comparative, “hard” data studies on issues of honors recruitment, retention and graduation (e.g. Cosgrove, 2005) to justify what every honors administrator knows in his or her heart - that honors is an inherently positive student educational experience that benefits not only the students but the institution as a whole.

Sometimes, for a variety of reasons, honors programs do not fully explore the views and expectations of honors by a key constituency—the students. We examine how they learn and how they differ from non-honors students, but often we do not invite them to participate directly in the discourse about honors expectations (and delivery).

So what do current and incoming honors students think about and expect from honors programs? To approach honors assessment from a student perspective and enhance the quantitative aspects of honors discourse, the CMU Honors Program explored the views of some of the top high school and college students in the state of Michigan. These data were gathered as part of our 2005 program review process. The goal of our program review, from a student learning assessment perspective, was to determine whether the CMU Honors Program was delivering the qualitatively different and challenging academic environment that it promises in its mission statement and whether CMU Honors students perceive this distinctive value.

There also was a timely enrollment management incentive for collecting this survey/study information identifying Honors students’ expectations. The 2005 CMU Honors freshman class of 450 admitted students is nearly twice the size of the class of 2004, creating a temporary resource strain on the Honors Program. If more resources were to be sought from the administration at a time of tight academic budgets, a demonstration of the value of Honors by current Honors students as well as top student recruits themselves would be a sound basis for seeking additional university support.

Accordingly, four large data gathering efforts were undertaken during the 2004-2005 academic year at Central Michigan University. The first two efforts involved 783 and 735 completed essays from top high school students throughout Michigan and from a few border states who competed in an essay competition for the university’s most competitive and lucrative scholarship, the Centralis Scholarship Program.

We first were interested in knowing what top students felt should be the most important factors to be considered for their admission to college. This information would have relevance for honors program admission as well, especially for honors programs that would like to broaden honors admission criteria beyond traditional GPA and standardized test scores.

We also were interested in knowing the added recruitment value of a university offering an honors course of study (beyond the obvious scholarship value). Accordingly, top high school students were asked to assess their perceptions of the value of high school advanced placement and college honors classes.

Over 1400 students were asked either to indicate how they thought colleges should admit students or to identify the merits and demerits of special high school

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advanced placement and college honors classes. Their essay responses were categorized and tabulated by CMU Honors staff and students.

The second data collection effort—web-based surveys—was conducted in early 2005 by an Honors faculty member and five Centralis students. It involved surveying 303 students in the CMU Honors Program as well as 233 CMU freshmen who were academically qualified and eligible but chose not to join the CMU Honors Program. The CMU Honors students were asked to assess the value of Honors, and the non-honors CMU students were asked why they did not choose to join the Honors Program.

Together, these data represent the responses of nearly 2000 high-achieving high school and college students. Summarizing the student responses to the Centralis essay questions and survey instruments, this article paints a picture of honors programs through the eyes of high-achieving students and provides some quantitative data which should be useful the next time an administrator or trustee asks, “Do we really need an honors program?” or “Why can’t we shuffle more students into honors classes?” It also shows the close relationship between the expectations of honors proponents and those of the top students they seek to recruit and educate.

ADMISSION AND ENGAGEMENT EXPECTATIONS OF PROSPECTIVE HONORS STUDENTS

Since 1990, Central Michigan University has sponsored a Centralis Scholarship Program to attract the top high school students. Currently, at least forty (40) such scholarships are awarded annually, with twenty (“Scholars”) being full-ride four-year scholarships—paying tuition, fees, room and board, and a book allowance—and twenty (“Golds”) being four-year, full-tuition scholarships.

The Centralis competition is intense, with approximately 1600 high school students (who must have a minimum 3.5 GPA to compete although most have significantly higher academic credentials) competing for only 40 scholarships. The candidates not only must possess high academic credentials but also must complete an extensive application process detailing their special talents and skills/service outside the classroom; they also must attend one of three essay competition days where they are given one hour to respond to an Honors-created essay question. The eighty semifinalists must then attend a separate interview day where they make several individual presentations to panels of faculty, staff, alumni, and current Centralis students. The average Centralis scholarship recipient has a GPA of 3.98 and an ACT score exceeding 31.

In the fall of 2004, it was determined that the topic of the essay for the Centralis competition would be one that probed potential Honors students’ expectations of college life. How did they want to be evaluated by their college/university of choice in terms of admission? Furthermore, what kind of higher education experience would they seek upon arrival on campus: seamless integration into the student body or selective engagement in a challenging Honors atmosphere with their academic peers?

Accordingly, two different questions were posed during the essay component of the Centralis competition: one question for the October competition and one for the

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November competition. A make-up December session for those who could not attend one of the first two sessions randomly used one of these two essays questions. The college admission question, posed in November and December, 2004, was as follows:

Standardized tests like the ACT and SAT are widely used as a primary basis for admitting students to colleges.

- a. Do you think a score on one of these tests is the best college admission evaluation for selecting incoming freshman, or do you think there is another measure or other measures which would be equally accurate in selecting qualified freshmen, such as grade point average, high school leadership and extracurricular activities, a formal essay, a personal interview, or some other measure or measures? Explain your answer.
- b. Devise what you think is the appropriate mix of admission standards or measures that a college should use when reviewing college applications, indicating the weight in percentages which should be attributed to each measure you select.

Not surprisingly, very few of the 783 essay respondents to this question indicated that the score on one of the two standardized tests was the best college admission selection basis for incoming freshmen (4% or 33 respondents). Most of the Centralis competitors were very well-rounded and had records of significant participation in a variety of non-classroom activities, making a single factor admission standard advantageous only for less well-rounded students.

However, what was interesting was the admission factors these students chose to supplement their standardized test scores. The table below summarizes the top six measures that at least one in three students chose in response to the first part of the question:

Table 1 Admission Factors Favored by High School Centralis Competitors

Measures	
GPA	81% (634)
Student High School Activities	71% (557)
ACT/SAT	66% (519)
Entrance Essay	47% (368)
Personal Interview	42% (330)
Leadership	35% (273)

The fact that over 7 in 10 high school students preferred to be judged in part by their high school activities belies the stereotype that many honors students do not consider themselves well-rounded individuals. The statistic that fewer than half of the

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students wanted to be judged by an essay or that only about 4 in 10 wanted a personal interview can be described two ways: either almost half of these students were very confident in their writing and speaking skills or more than half were not so. In any event, a desire among many high academic achievers for more individualized student admission evaluations is a boon for smaller colleges and a problem for large institutions, where a large number of personal student interviews are typically not feasible for mid-range honors students.

More specific information about the weight of these factors was provided in Part b of the question, where students assigned their own percentage weights to each factor they selected. Using the same factors presented in Table 1, students assigned the following average percentage weights:

Table 2 Average Percentage Weights Assigned to Each Admission Factor

Measures	
GPA	32.87% (489)
ACT/SAT	25.74% (505)
Entrance Essay	20.45% (344)
Student High School Activities	19.65% (289)
Personal Interview	21.98% (205)
Leadership	16.75% (64)

Note: There were 161 respondents who did not assign percentages to their choices and percentages exceed 100% since these are average weights given by those who identified the specific admission factor. The number in parentheses is the number of students who felt that factor should be included in some way in the admissions process.

It would appear that in this group of almost 800 students, although most agree that GPA and standardized scores are important considerations, the average weight of these two factors combined constitute less than 60% of what students feel is relevant for admission purposes. While small colleges and highly selective institutions may not find this weighting particularly significant, large public universities that rely more heavily upon these two major criteria may find it of interest, particularly the significant weight students believe should be given to the more labor-intensive essay evaluation and interview factors. Those honors programs wishing to broaden honors admission criteria to include less traditional criteria should take heart that broadening the number of selection factors may be welcomed rather than resisted by many potential honors students.

Also of interest was how few top high school students wanted letters of recommendation to be a factor in the admission to college. Only 58 of the 783 students surveyed listed letters of recommendation as a desirable admission factor; subsequently, when asked to give a percentage weight to these recommendations, only 37 responded with an average percentage weight of about 17%. Even though it is likely

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such letters would be easy to obtain for top students, these same students do not seem to feel the letters should be important admission factors.

The second essay question, posed to Centralis competitors in October and December, 2004, was as follows:

What are the merits and demerits of the following classroom scenarios:

- a. offering a small number of advanced placement classes in high school or special honors classes in college, both of which would be available only to outstanding academic students, or
- b. not offering any special classes for outstanding students in high school or college, but rather integrating these outstanding academic students throughout high school or college classes?

A persistent philosophical/political question that emerges is whether honors-only courses or programs are elitist and/or contrary to a central mission of public education to provide all students with equal educational opportunities. This question often is raised by professors or university administrators. However, what do academically high-achieving college-bound students think about the value of honors/AP courses?

In terms of student support for offering advanced placement classes and special honors classes, the students surveyed had a relatively easy time identifying eight distinct merits associated with such classes. (See Table 3).

Table 3 Merits of High School Advanced Placement and College Honors Classes According to Centralis Competitors

Merits (responses>100)	Number of Students Responding (735)
Challenging students to meet higher expectations	469
Working with students with the same level and speed of learning	249
Learn in a different way and in more depth	171
Receive positive peer pressure due to similar goals	152
Prepare for college (AP only)	142
More interaction with teachers/professors	122
Smaller class sizes	125
Enhanced career success	113

For those honors programs facing pressures to increase honors class sizes, it should be noted that a considerable number of incoming high school students (125 students) expected small class sizes and more student/professor interaction (122 students) in honors courses.

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Fewer students were able to identify the demerits of offering these special classes, with concerns about segregation and inferiority being the chief demerits. Table 4 identifies the five key concerns with AP/honors classes.

Table 4 Demerits of Offering AP and College Honors Courses According to Centralis Competitors

Demerits	Number of Students Responding (735)
Segregates students based on academic history	170
Loss of insight and diversity	83
Promotes feelings of inferiority for non-Honors students	56
Puts more pressure on AP/Honors students	48
More time/money to offer these special classes	33
Puts less advanced students at a disadvantage	25

Clearly, while there is some concern about the equality issue, the merits of the separate classes for top academic students significantly outweigh the demerits in the eyes of these 735 students.

When asked to identify the merits of not offering special classes and of integrating outstanding students with the rest of their classmates, only four merits were identified by more than 20 students in their essays. These four are identified in Table 5.

Table 5 Merits of Integrating all Students into Classes with no Separate Classes for Top Academic Students

Merits	Number of Students Responding (735)
Honors students could aid other students' learning	99
Students all have equal educational opportunities	60
Learning to work with diversity	59
Less successful academic students could become more successful	34

On the other hand, students were much better able to identify the demerits of integrating all students together in class. See Table 6 for a list of the key demerits listed.

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Table 6 Demerits of Integrating all Students into Classes with no Separate Classes for Top Academic Students

Demerits	Number of Students Responding (735)
Not as challenging for outstanding students, get bored	229
Learning of high achievers hindered	171
Will not realize their potential, hinders future success	66
Lack of motivation and poor work ethic result	53
Disruptive/poor learning environment	48

Note: Not all students answered the questions in tables 5 and 6.

Thus, it would appear that a significant majority of top high school students in this sample have bought into the specialized class concept in high school and are likely to continue to seek such classes in college honors programs. The concern about diversity and segregation, although acknowledged by about two in five students responding, was overwhelmed by those finding merit in offering special classes. Indeed, the final portion of the essay questions asked the students:

Which of these two scenarios in your opinion offers a better overall educational experience for the outstanding academic student?

As indicated in Table 7, an overwhelming majority of students favored the special AP and honors classes over the integration approach.

Table 7 Students Favoring AP and Honors Classes (Option A) Versus Those Preferring Integrating all Students Regardless of Ability (Option B)

	Number of Responses
Option A; Special AP and Honors classes	670
Option B: Integrate students	28
Did not choose an option	37

Thus, in the discourse about the value of honors, it would appear from the perspective of top high school recruits that honors courses are indeed a positive recruiting tool for universities to attract top students. The elitist arguments of honors skeptics are not as strongly felt by top students.

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EXPECTATIONS OF HONORS AND HONORS-ELIGIBLE COLLEGE STUDENTS AT CMU

As we turn from high school student admission expectations to college student expectations of honors programs, the question becomes how to develop a protocol that attracts qualified students into an honors program, challenges them to do their best, and retains them through graduation.

Those planning a new honors program/college, as well as many of those periodically reassessing their program/college protocols, often are faced with individual student requests for modifying honors requirements. Responding to student requests while maintaining the quality of the honors protocol can be a delicate balancing act. It can also lead to significant re-evaluation of the requirements.

At Central Michigan University, the Honors Protocol has four basic requirements: enrollment in a minimum number of Honors courses per year; one year of a foreign language at the college level; 120 hours of community service; and completion of a senior research project. During the spring semester of 2005, a representative sample of 303 CMU Honors students and 233 CMU Honors-eligible students (hereinafter referred to as QNE - qualified but not enrolled) were surveyed regarding their perceptions of the CMU Honors Program and its protocol requirements.

The survey results were used to determine not only the value CMU Honors students perceive that they derive from membership in the Honors Program but also the reasons that other Honors eligible (QNE) CMU students did not join the Honors Program. For enrollment management purposes, the survey was useful in devising alternative methods for controlling Honors Program size and increasing admission standards (a strategy already employed for the CMU Honors class of 2006). In addition, this information is useful for honors programs and colleges with declining honors enrollments as it provides insights into how to motivate and retain current students in honors colleges and programs.

Table 8 identifies nine Honors components which each student was asked to rate in terms of its value as a benefit of the Honors Program. One of these nine components, priority registration, is an advantage of many honors programs, and the survey showed that CMU students found it the most valuable benefit.

However, while CMU Honors and CMU QNE students both cite priority registration as a visible and valuable component of joining Honors, the responses to a subsequent survey question (see Table 9) as to the overall value of priority registration paint a different picture.

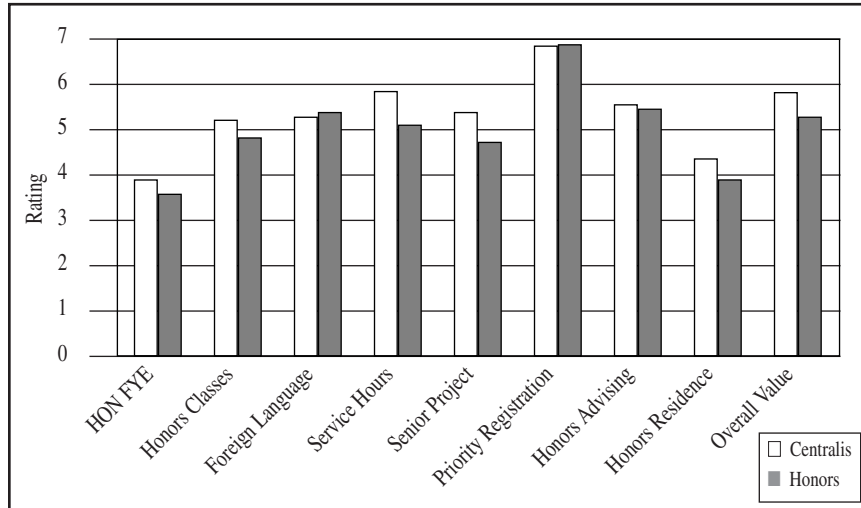
Here are the conclusions drawn by the author of the April, 2005, CMU report:

Although priority registration is an easily identifiable benefit of the program, correlations between ratings of overall value (of the Honors Program) and value of each of the program components reveals a very different pattern. In these results, priority registration and foreign language have the lowest correlations with overall value while the other core components of the program have stronger positive associations with students' perceptions of overall value. This suggests that while all students appreciate priority

WHAT HONORS STUDENTS WANT (AND EXPECT)

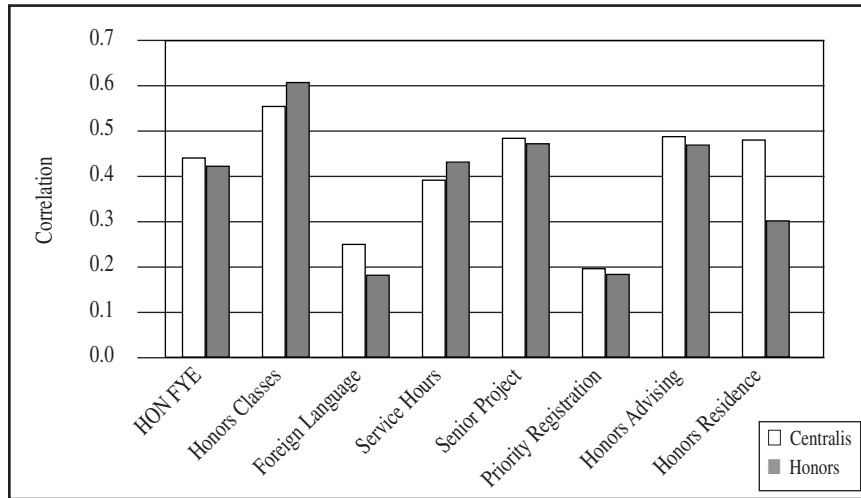
registration, they recognize that the major requirements of the Honors and Centralis protocols, especially required courses, are really what make the Honors Program valuable.

Table 8 Value of Honors Components: Mean Ratings by Group



FYE=first year experience Honors class

Table 9 The Significance of Honors Components: Correlations of Component Value with Overall Value



Thus, the CMU surveys suggest that, for honors retention purposes, attention to the honors course quality is more important than merely offering priority registration privileges for current honors students, contrary to the allegations of some critics that a primary motivation for joining an honors program is priority registration. The

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dominant interest in the educational versus privilege value of AP courses by top high school students in the previous Centralis portion of this paper confirms this primary student academic motivation and reinforces the value of honors.

As for hindrances that the CMU Honors Program creates for its students, the issues of Honors class conflicts and limitations on the variety of Honors classes available, as well as the stress of meeting specific protocol requirements (foreign language, research project, and timely graduation concerns), represented the only concerns identified by students. The student desire for flexibility in selecting Honors classes and meeting protocol issues indicates that manipulating protocol requirements may be an important tool for managing Honors enrollment without adjusting admission standards.

How do Honors students' perspectives differ from those of the QNE students at CMU? The 2005 survey indicated seven reasons students identified for their choice not to enroll in the CMU Honors Program; these are identified in Table 10.

Table 10 CMU QNE Students' Reasons for not Enrolling in the Honors Program

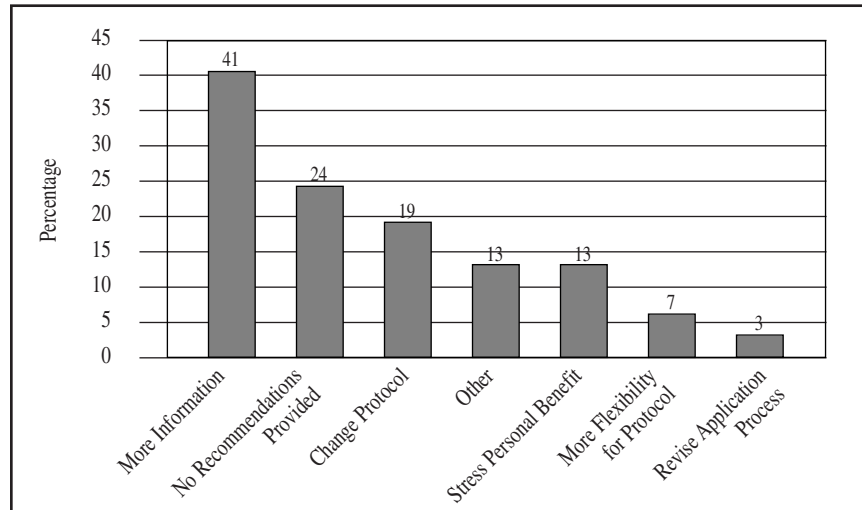
Avoiding the extra work/stress	31%
Concerns about the Honors Protocol	30%
Received little or no information about the Honors Program	15%
Miscellaneous/extraneous	15%
Conflicting obligations	15%
Unaware of own eligibility	8%
Did not want to complete Honors application	4%

The primary concerns of CMU QNE students relate to the stress of extra work, tougher classes, and meeting Honors Protocol requirements. However, an important and common theme throughout the CMU QNE survey (See Table 11) is lack of information, indicating that an informational campaign to explain the value of the program and dispel Honors Program myths could considerably increase the on-campus enrollment in the Honors Programs without changing substantive CMU or Honors admission standards.

It also should be noted, from residence hall questions posed in the survey, that an honors residence hall was not seen as a relatively important reason for many non-honors students to join the honors program. Coupled with recent studies concerning the controversial social impact of self-segregation in honors only facilities (Rinn, 2005), these findings need further exploration in terms of the overall value of building or designating an honors-only residence hall.

WHAT HONORS STUDENTS WANT (AND EXPECT)

Table 11 Recommendations for Improving Recruitment: Category Frequencies



CONCLUSIONS

What conclusions can we draw from these top student responses in order to clarify the role and value of honors, recognizing the regional limitations of the primarily Michigan student population sampled?

First and foremost is the overwhelming student recognition of the academic value of honors programs beyond the procedural privileges that arise from honors membership. Top high school and college students see the long range academic value of honors much as honors faculty and staff do, and this student support should be transmitted to the campus community to enhance the value-added image of honors.

Secondly, today's top students are very well-rounded academically and socially. Honors admissions standards should take this fact into account and not be limited to traditional GPA and standardized test measures.

Quality instructors and seminar-style classes are important student expectations of honors programs. These student expectations need to be communicated to the administration to counter arguments for increasing honors class sizes in the name of fiscal expediency.

There does not appear to be a strong anti-elitist feeling among top incoming high school students that would lead them not to join an honors program despite the selective and exclusive nature of the privileges available to honors students. Despite faculty arguments to the contrary, the elitist arguments against honors privileges do not resonate among these top students, even those who are not members of an honors program.

While the issue of lack of diversity was not addressed in the survey, honors programs simply are going to have to be more proactive to redress the racial and gender imbalance prevalent in honors. The fact that an overwhelming majority of students favor a wide range of admission standards in addition to GPA and standardized tests creates an additional incentive to expand honors admission criteria in order to address the absence of diversity.

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While students have concerns about the additional requirements and challenges that honors programs present, their concerns seem to focus on graduation requirements rather than the value of the honors requirements alone. Hence, student criticisms of honors have more to do with tweaking honors requirements to meet individual needs than weakening or eliminating these standards. And for those concerned about honors enrollment issues, it should be noted that informational campaigns and protocol adjustment can be effective tools for meeting enrollment goals without tinkering with admission standards.

This student input into the honors discourse should provide strong affirmation for honors proponents and the value of an honors education. The supportive voices of top students make them valuable allies in the effort to strengthen the role of honors on the nation's campuses.

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Comparison of the Academic Achievement of First-Year Female Honors Program and Non-Honors Program Engineering Students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare the academic achievement of first-year female engineering students based on participation, or lack thereof, in the honors program. A single research question was developed for this study: "Is there a significant difference in academic achievement of first-year female engineering Honors Program students and non-honors program students?" The problem for this study was that many students in the Freshman Engineering program at Purdue University believed that participation in an honors program damaged students' grade point averages with its challenging curriculum. This was especially true for beginning female students entering a traditionally male-dominated career field.

Data regarding first- and second-semester (thus also annual) cumulative grade point averages were collected for the 268 subjects. A t-test for independent samples was used to determine if a significant difference existed in grade point averages; the results indicated a significant difference in the academic achievement of the first-year honors and non-honors female engineering students. First-year female engineering students participating in the honors program earned significantly higher grades than first-year female engineering students who did not participate in the honors program for both semesters of enrollment. Results of this study concluded that enrolling in a more challenging curriculum did not negatively impact the academic achievement outcomes of high-achieving, first-year female engineering students at Purdue University.

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Freshman Engineering, recently renamed the Department of Engineering Education, is the entry point for all engineering students at Purdue University. Approximately 20% of all engineering students at Purdue are female, one of the highest populations of female engineering students in the country (National Science Foundation, 1999; Society of Women Engineers, 2001). Furthermore,

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approximately 10% of all freshman engineering students participate in the Honors Program, based on Honors course enrollment.

The Freshman Engineering Honors Program offers high-achieving students an opportunity to embrace and accept new experiences through a challenging curriculum and complementary co-curricular activities. Very little research has been published concerning high-achieving female college students within a traditionally male-dominated field. Therefore, this study was completed to analyze the relationship between gender and achievement at the higher education level.

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Historically, Freshman Engineering courses enrolled approximately 18-20% females; however, this trend endured an overall decline from 1995 through 2001. The Schools of Engineering at Purdue University sought to increase the enrollment of this underrepresented group. The Honors Program in Freshman Engineering desired to assist this effort by effectively recruiting, enrolling, and retaining a greater percentage of the highest-ability females. It was believed that attracting these students to a welcoming honors program that offered a supportive environment, a challenging, practical application of engineering concepts, and a realistic view of the engineering profession would accomplish this goal. No Freshman Engineering Honors Program research concerning the impact of honors curricula and female students was found in a search dating back to the inception of the program. A primary focus for this study was the females' discovery of their significant minority status upon entering Freshman Engineering. Informal conversations revealed that the female students, once they began attending classes, often had tremendous feelings of isolation in being a small fraction of their class population compared to the male population. Additionally, the females' relative lack of familiarity with technical computer applications, such as MATLAB and equations in Microsoft Excel, regularly placed them at a disadvantage to the males. The primary problem addressed in this study was the female students' hesitancy in enrolling in the Honors Program given so many new and complex transitional issues they had to face; they feared the challenging courses would result in a significant decline in their academic performance (grades) or that the years of being touted as "smart" were only an illusion.

One justification for the study was a regular occurrence of high-achieving females rejecting enrollment in the Honors Program, fearing that the challenging curriculum would damage their grade point averages. Other academically talented women, as stated by Noble and Smyth (1995), ". . . feel that they must choose between their academic talent and 'being found attractive and socially valuable'" (as cited in Nolden & Sadlacek, 1998, p. 106). We used this study to inform honors-eligible females of the true versus perceived challenges of enrollment in the Honors Program.

The Honors Program sought to provide a personally supportive and encouraging environment as well as a curriculum that was appropriately challenging. In *See Jane Win*, Sylvia Rimm (1999) stated, "Ideally women will be assertive enough not only to survive in what were formally male-dominated fields but also to modify those

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fields to make them psychologically more comfortable for both men and women” (p. 185). The program leadership attempted to establish this concept as the environmental norm. The program underwent enhancements that included the addition of more hands-on/application-based projects, visits to engineering industry sites, co-ed team assignments, and the promotion of a strong peer group.

FRESHMAN ENGINEERING HONORS STUDENTS AT PURDUE UNIVERSITY

Freshman Engineering Honors Program students were defined as those who earned a minimum 1360 SAT or 31 ACT, ranked in the top 10% of their high school graduating class, and voluntarily chose to participate in the honors program. Additionally, a few students who did not meet the minimum criteria for the Honors Program were permitted to petition into the program through a formal interview with one of the Honors Program directors. These students were informally considered for the program based on their level of motivation and desire for challenge. In the years selected for this study, approximately 160 students participated in the program each year. All females enrolled in Freshman Engineering but not in the Honors Program (regardless of qualification for the Program) were included in the “non-honors” sample.

Although the Honors or Honors-designated courses might have included accelerated or enriched components, the Honors and non-honors courses used the same texts and covered the same topics. An accelerated course was one that progressed at a faster-than-typical pace and/or included topics of a higher-level course, such as combining the content of two courses into one. Schiever and Maker (1991) state, “Enrichment refers to richer and more varied educational experiences, a curriculum that is modified to provide greater depth and breadth than is generally provided” (as cited in Davis & Rimm, 1994, p. 105). Often, both groups of courses were taught by the same instructor. Also, a few Honors-designated courses allowed enrollment by non-honors students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The topic of gifted students is one that has received substantial attention in the past; however, it primarily focused on elementary, middle, and high school students. This was substantiated by a 100-page annotated bibliography from the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (Logan et al., 1997). “The overwhelming weight of the literature on ‘gifted learners’ deals with the K-12 years; little attention is given to postsecondary efforts” (Robinson, 1997, p. 217). Few references were available concerning high-ability students in higher education. “. . . [D]espite the fact that most investigators are situated in institutions of higher learning—[they have] has not given much thought to gifted students in their own backyards” (234).

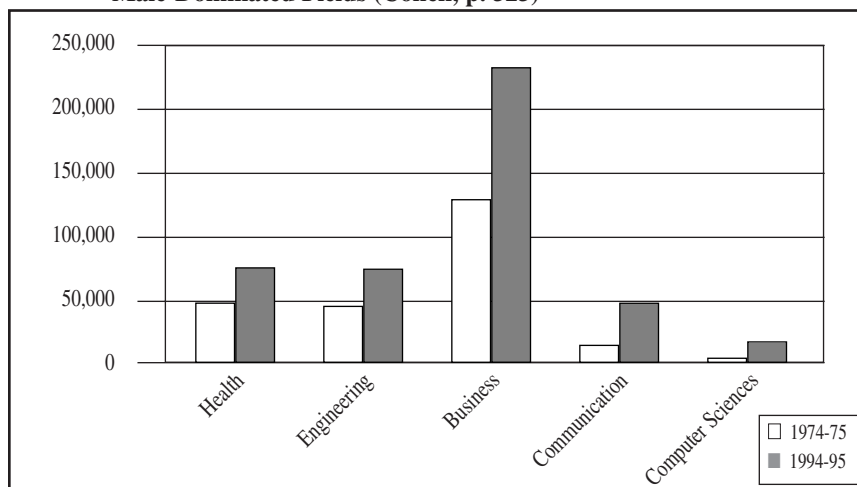
TRADITIONALLY MALE-DOMINATED CAREER FIELDS

During the launch of Title IX in the 1970’s, female college enrollment almost reached equality with enrollment of males. However, females’ enrollment in specific

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programs was still discriminatory; Title IX alleviated this situation. Barriers to females' matriculation into traditionally male-dominated fields, such as science, engineering, and technology, were removed (Cohen, 1998, p. 199). Notable increases in female degrees are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Historical Difference of Female Enrollment in Traditionally Male-Dominated Fields (Cohen, p. 323)



WOMEN AND ENGINEERING

Engineering historically and presently remains one of the most male-dominated fields with approximately 80% of bachelor's degrees conferred on men (Cohen, 1998). Gender played a large role in Purdue's Freshman Engineering Honors Program primarily because engineering had and still has one of the smallest female populations of all majors in higher education. Generally, engineering programs are approximately 85-95% male; ". . . males continue to predominate by a 6 to 1 . . ." ratio in expressing an interest in majoring in engineering (Davis & Rimm, 1994, p. 317). Likewise, only 2.7% of female college freshman planned to major in engineering, and only 2.4% indicated engineering as a probable career choice. The National Science Foundation reported that "Only . . . 4% of all Ph.D. engineers are women" (as cited in Davis & Rimm, p. 314).

HISTORY OF HIGH-ABILITY STUDENTS AND HONORS PROGRAMS

Literature addressing the historical background and current trends in post-secondary honors programs was limited in the 1990's. This phenomenon seemed ironic considering that "gifted adolescents become gifted adults" (Bireley & Genshaft, 1991, p. 187). "Surprisingly few statistics are available about the numbers of students or proportions of colleges involved" (Robinson, 1997, p. 228). A large segment of

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this research focused on prospective college students, admission requirements, and standardized test scores. This research was relevant to the Freshman Engineering Honors Program because it not only focused on the eligible program population but also distinguished differing types of high-ability students.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND SELF-ESTEEM

A major factor in the progress of females through higher education is how they interpret and internalize success and failure. “When girls bring home the A [grade], they attribute their success to effort. When girls get bad grades, they attribute failure to lack of ability: I’m just not smart in math [or science]” (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 96). Conversely, males attribute success to ability; failure is transferred to or blamed on others.

First-year females and males from the top of the class reported equal estimations of their own intelligence. “But by their sophomore year of college the women had lowered their opinions of their own intellect while the men had not. By the time these top students were college seniors, not a single female valedictorian still thought her intelligence was ‘far above average’ even though most were planning to enter graduate and professional schools” (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 159). Numerous researchers stated that these impacts “. . . may stem from stereotypes that may affect academically talented women more negatively than men [and that] include: fear of success, lack of assertiveness, avoidance of quantitatively-based majors and careers, and external vs. internal attribution of ability” (as cited in Nolden & Sedlacek, 1998, p. 107). “Although the women continued to earn high grades in college—slightly higher than the men, in fact—they saw themselves as less competent” (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 159).

“The first B grades . . . may signal a significant problem for the student who does not know how to study challenging material, how to resist the temptations of too much socializing, or how to ask for help. Rather than eliciting a sense of challenge, such a grade may elicit a sense of failure in a student who has never received such grades before” (Haas, 1992; Robinson, 1997, p. 224). This occurrence is typical in a first-year engineering program where students are faced with one of the most demanding and challenging curricula in higher education. This issue is compounded for female students who generally internalize failure (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

GENDER INEQUALITIES

National organizations have taken notice of gender inequalities, specifically in relation to curriculum. “The National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education has repeatedly noted that the National Education Goals [of 1991] cannot be met without specific attention to girls” (American Association of University Women, 1992). Females consistently earned higher test scores and grades than males in junior high levels, but this trend continuously deteriorated within the high school, university, and graduate school levels. Causes could include unequal prerequisite instruction, lack of role models, and gender bias of the tests. In *Failing at Fairness: How Our Schools Cheat Girls*, evidence was presented that bias in teaching grew with each level of

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education, becoming the most blatant in undergraduate and graduate courses (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

Sadker & Sadker (1994) stated, "Whether one looks at preschool classrooms or university lecture halls, at female teachers or male teachers, research spanning the past 20 years consistently reveals that males receive more teacher attention than females" (p. 118). Gender discrimination can still be found today in textbooks, teacher instruction, classroom interactions, exams, standardized tests, and scholarships.

Teacher/student interactions also displayed injustices. Instructors were more likely to call on male students and give them more structured and positive feedback. Professors ". . . make more eye contact with men, wait longer for them to answer, and are more likely to remember their names" (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p.171). Teachers were more likely to ask girls easier questions, give boys more time to answer, "protect girls from mistakes, avoid criticizing them, take care not to hurt their feelings, and reward them for dependency" (Horgan, 1995). "From grade school to graduate school, girls receive less teacher attention and less useful teacher feedback. This imbalance in instructional attention is greatest at the college level" (Sadker, Sadker, Fox, & Salata, 1994). These actions had strong detrimental effects on women. Female students were more likely to become voiceless, "...develop higher expectations of failure, and lower self confidence" (AAUW, 1992). In fact, "Women's silence is loudest at college, with twice as many females voiceless" (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 170).

As females became the majority collegiate population, some might have perceived the issue of gender discrimination to be resolved. Sadker and Sadker (1994) indicated the persistence of discrimination. "Girls are the majority of our nation's schoolchildren, yet they are second-class educational citizens. The problems they face—loss of self-esteem, decline in achievement, and elimination of career options—are at the heart of the educational process. Until educational sexism is eradicated, more than half our children will be shortchanged and their gifts lost to society" (p. 1).

WOMEN IN HONORS

Davis and Rimm (1994) discussed the high-ability female student population: "The education of gifted women has been a low priority throughout history, a matter that has led to wholesale female underachievement. Many gifted girls have been, and continue to be, systematically discouraged by peers, family, and sometimes teachers and counselors from using their talent in productive ways" (p. 313). Although there was slim research addressing the issues of gifted/talented/honors students at the higher education level in the 1990's, even less research existed concerning high-achieving/high-ability female engineering students. As Robinson (1997) stated, "Attention to the gifted learner at the college level represents uncharted territory and a new frontier" (p. 217). Research that did exist illustrated why proper support is necessary for high-ability female students (Maker, 1986; Perrone, 1986). Nancy Robinson (1997) stated, ". . . college women who previously have been in the most intensive educational programs for gifted students hold higher career aspirations. . . suggesting that the conjunction of educational support and career choice is a critical one" (p. 226).

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HONORS CURRICULUM

The Freshman Engineering Honors Program at Purdue University utilized designated courses employing both acceleration and enrichment. These courses were designed to accomplish the goals described by Robinson: “. . . combine elements both of acceleration—by teaching to higher order levels of conceptualization and discourse—and enrichment—by covering more material than is assigned in nonhonors courses” (Robinson 1997, p. 234).

SUMMARY

Research on women in higher education has focused more on differentiation between genders than on the challenges and successes of high-ability females. Therefore, this research study on Honors and non-honors female engineering students should not only aid honors program leaders and academic advisors in working with high-ability students but also supplement research concerning high-achieving women in higher education.

METHODOLOGY & PROCEDURES

The population for this study included all current first-year female engineering students enrolled in Freshman Engineering at Purdue University. This population generally accounted for 16-20% of the females enrolled in the engineering program.

For each of the two selected sample groups, grades and grade point average data were obtained from the Purdue University Office of the Registrar's historical database. The samples were categorized into two distinct segments encompassing the 2000-01 academic year. The first sample was the females participating in the Honors Program for both the fall and spring semesters. The second sample included females who were not participating in the Honors Program during the selected academic year. Non-participation in the program was traced to ineligibility or lack of interest. A third sample of females who either petitioned into the Honors Program or withdrew from it following the first semester was excluded from this study. It was determined that exclusion of this sample would provide more homogeneous results and therefore assist in determining future course placement policies and program eligibility requirements. At the time of this study, it was unknown why these females chose not to participate or why other females found participation in the honors program so important or meaningful.

Freshman Engineering Honors Program data indicated that 42 females participated in the Honors Program each semester. Non-honors females numbered 226 for the fall and 222 for the spring semester. The numerical differences in non-honors females for the two semesters were attributed to university withdrawals and changes in academic majors. The excluded sample of students who withdrew from or petitioned into the Honors Program consisted of seven students. In summary, the final sample for the fall term equaled 268 while the spring term consisted of 264.

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DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

Academic data for the selected samples consisted of grade point averages. All data were collected through the Office of the Registrar; therefore, the data were considered reliable. Data were collected for all first-year female engineering students and were categorized based on participation (or lack thereof) in the Honors Program for the fall and spring semesters of the 2000-01 academic year. Fall- and spring-semester grade point averages as well as cumulative annual GPAs were obtained for both samples.

Data were analyzed through the use of t-tests for independent samples and calculated with Excel spreadsheets. A two-tailed t-test for independent samples was used to determine if there was a difference in grade point averages of the two samples. The level of significance was established at the .05 level.

LIMITATIONS

Since Honors Program participants were required to enroll in only seven credit hours of Honors or Honors-designated courses, participation in the Honors Program could not be linked directly to overall academic achievement. Significant positive or negative academic impacts might in fact be attributed to enrollment in a general course. Also, some Honors-designated courses were open to enrollment of non-honors students, so the academic outcomes of those courses could not be directly attributed to Honors Program participation. Further, some students might have had the capability to be successful in higher-level courses, but because they were not eligible for the Honors Program, they did not have the opportunity to demonstrate that ability. Finally, students eligible for the Honors Program matriculated with higher standardized test scores and class rank than the vast majority of the student population. Therefore, it was assumed that those students' higher admissions data would potentially correlate to higher academic achievement in college regardless of enrollment in a higher-level curriculum.

RESULTS

The final analysis consisted of three t-tests for independent samples comparing the grade point averages of the two samples following their first and second semesters of enrollment as well as the cumulative average for the academic year in Freshman Engineering. Semester data were presented to determine if a single semester's curriculum would have an overwhelming effect on the cumulative results. The cumulative results from the 2000-01 academic year were tested. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the differences in grade point averages for Honors and non-honors students for the fall and spring semesters, as well as the cumulative academic year.

FALL 2000 TERM

For the first-year female Engineering Honors Program students ($n = 42$), the mean grade point average for the fall 2000 semester was 3.59 while the non-honors sample ($n = 226$) mean grade point average was 2.94 based on a 4.00 scale. At the

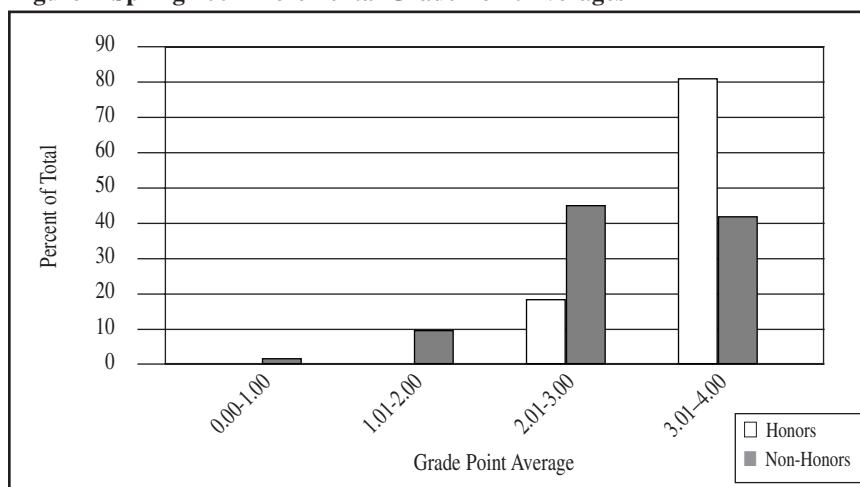
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.05 level of probability, the critical value of t was 1.9689 while the p value was 2.9969×10^{-8} . There was a significant difference in the academic achievement outcomes of first-year female engineering Honors and non-honors program participants.

SPRING 2001 TERM

For those first-year female Engineering Honors Program students ($n = 42$), the mean grade point average for the fall 2000 semester was 3.26 while the non-honors sample ($n = 222$) mean grade point average was 2.67 based on a 4.00 scale. At the .05 level of probability, the critical value of t was 1.9691 while the p value was 1.57261×10^{-5} . There was a significant difference in the academic achievement outcomes of first-year female Engineering Honors Program and non-honors participants during the spring 2001 semester (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Spring 2001 Incremental Grade Point Averages



CUMULATIVE ACADEMIC YEAR 2000-01

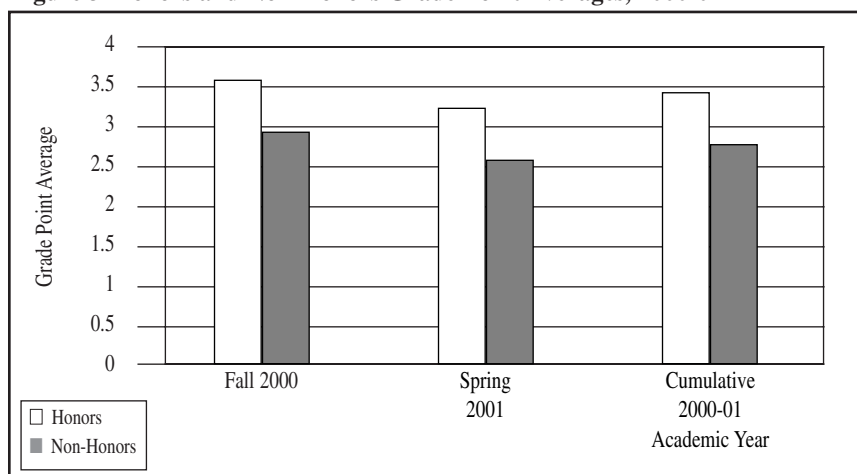
Regarding cumulative academic achievement results for the first-year female Engineering Honors Program students ($n = 42$), the mean grade point average for the 2000-01 academic year was 3.42 while the non-honors ($n = 227$) mean grade point average was 2.80 based on a 4.00 scale. At the .05 level of probability, the critical value of t was 1.9689 while the p value was 3.20945×10^{-8} . There was a significant difference in the academic achievement outcomes of first-year female engineering Honors and non-honors participants for the 2000-01 academic year (Figure 3).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a significant difference in academic achievement between first-year female engineering Honors and non-honors program participants. The literature concerning females in traditionally

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Figure 3 Honors and Non-Honors Grade Point Averages, 2000-01



male-dominated academic fields stated the females were typically an underrepresented population and were required to endure educational environments that catered primarily to male students. The body of research regarding higher education honors programs was relatively slight in the 1990's when the Purdue Freshman Engineering Honors Program was designing this study; the research then stated that high-ability students do need to be appropriately academically challenged in order to remain engaged in academic pursuits and to fulfill their intellectual, career, and life-long potential. Therefore, the results of this study aided the Honors Program leadership in expanding and enhancing program components based on gender needs. As Nolden & Sedlacek (1998) stated, ". . . there are differences between men and women that should be taken into account when developing programs for academically talented students" (p. 109).

As the results indicated, females participating in the Honors Program achieved at higher academic levels than did females who did not participate in the Honors Program. However, the higher academic performance cannot be attributed solely to Honors Program participation; it could at least be partially credited to those students' higher admission qualifications and likely superior academic preparation and motivation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further studies are needed to determine if those students who were eligible for the Freshman Engineering Honors Program but for whatever reason chose not to participate achieved at the same level as the Honors Program participants. Such a study could determine if engineering students who begin college with the same academic background and preparation achieve at consistently higher levels or if their new environment and peer group have a significant impact on their academic achievement.

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CONCLUSIONS

In addressing the stated research question, this study concluded that first-year female engineering students who participated in the Honors Program achieved at significantly higher academic levels than the non-honors participants. This was illustrated by the consistently higher semester and cumulative grade point averages of the Honors Program participants. The difference in mean grade point average for the 2000-01 academic year was 0.62, for the fall term 0.65, and for the spring term 0.59. Therefore, on average the first-year female Engineering Honors Program participants earned a higher grade point average than the non-honors students by more than half of a letter grade.

IMPLICATIONS

The results and conclusions of this study indicated that first-year female students who participated in the Freshman Engineering Honors Program had significantly and consistently higher grade point average ($> .50$) than non-honors females. While the study did not prove (and was not designed to prove) that the Honors Program was the cause of the higher grade point averages, it does imply that female students need not fear endangering their GPAs when they participate in the Honors Program.

The results of the current study provided valuable data to faculty, advisors, and students concerning the potential impact of participation in the Honors Program. As indicated through the literature review, late adolescent females too often fear risk-taking such as enrolling in a challenging curriculum of a demanding academic department at a world-renowned research university. These results provided faculty and advisors with credible evidence to assist high-ability females in deciding to enroll in the Honors Program.

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Characteristics of the Contemporary Honors College* A Descriptive Analysis of a Survey of NCHC Member Colleges

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INTRODUCTION

Every year the number of honors colleges across the country increases. Most of these new colleges emerge out of pre-existing honors programs, an origin that suggests that the change reflects an interest in raising the public profile of honors education at a particular institution. Sometimes this transformation entails only a cosmetic name change; other times, institutions take the opportunity to review what they are providing in honors education and how they might enhance it.

The Executive Committee of the National Collegiate Honors Council recognized that the NCHC ought to take a strong interest in this phenomenon. If an institution is simply gilding the name, then “honors college” becomes a devalued misnomer designed as a marketing strategy and intended to mislead potential applicants into believing that something new exists where, in fact, substance remains unchanged. Passive acceptance of this trend also does a disservice to those exceptional honors programs that resist playing the name change game because they deem that their program as it stands serves their institution well. Nonetheless, four-year programs at universities face increasing competitive pressure to enter the collegiate game.

Unfortunately, until recently the game lacked a referee. In the absence of some commonly agreed-upon criteria, honors administrators often found themselves in a weak negotiating position when asked, or required, to make the name change. If anything goes, then normal institutional inertia means nothing will change *except* the name.

* Over the spring and summer of 2004, the NCHC Ad Hoc Task Force on Honors Colleges constructed and distributed an extensive survey on honors college characteristics to 68 self-identified “honors colleges” affiliated with the NCHC. We received replies from 38 of those surveyed, three of which indicated they were incorrectly identified as a college. The relevant response rate, then, is 54%. We consider the results of this survey suggestive but not scientifically conclusive. The illustrative statistics in this draft are drawn from the survey.

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Similar concerns motivated NCHC to develop “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program” over a decade ago. Rumors of the conflict over these guidelines echo down the years and made people reluctant to engage in a similar debate over “honors college.” Unlike “honors program,” however, an honors college is a particular subset of the larger species and is neither relevant to nor desirable for all institutional settings. Nonetheless, those institutions that have made or are contemplating the transformation ought to be expected to make more than a rhetorical change.

Consequently, in November 2003, then NCHC President Norm Weiner reconstituted the NCHC Ad Hoc Task Force on Honors Colleges and charged it with the task of developing a draft set of “The Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College” for discussion at the 2004 National Conference in New Orleans.¹ This draft was accepted by the Executive Committee in November 2004 and formally endorsed as modified at their June 2005 meeting (see Appendix). The task force also reported on their survey of existing honors colleges affiliated with the NCHC and assessed the extent to which certain characteristics are widely shared among putative honors colleges. What follows is a preliminary descriptive analysis of the findings of this survey.

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS OF THE SURVEY

Our survey is limited in a number of ways that necessarily infuse our conclusions with a degree of tentativeness. The most basic issue involved determining our survey population. We considered trying to identify all the entities that are self-declared “honors colleges,” regardless of whether they were affiliated with the NCHC. Given our limited time and resources, this task proved daunting and ultimately impossible to implement. In addition, we concluded that even if we could identify something that would pass for the whole population of honors colleges, we should not give non-affiliated institutions a voice at this stage of our deliberations. We decided, then, to survey those NCHC members who were listed in the national database as possessing honors colleges.

While this decision gave us a manageable sample of 65 schools, subsequent problems arose in conducting the survey. First, the list was not accurate. Ultimately, we found that some colleges we knew to exist were not included on it. Others who were on it actually did not have honors colleges. And, finally, some of the contact information was incorrect. Through several iterations we addressed all of these problems to some extent, but still we know that we overlooked some affiliated honors colleges, and to these we apologize.

We ultimately surveyed 68 institutions, 38 of which replied. Three of these did not have colleges and were not included in our sample, leaving a total of 35 responses from

¹ The members of the committee are Cheryl Achterberg, formerly Penn State (now Iowa State); Gary Bell, Texas Tech; Jill Ghnassia, Western Carolina; John Madden, Cerritos College; Rolland Pack, Freed Hardemann; Peter Sederberg, South Carolina (Chair); and Peter Viscusi, Central Missouri State.

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an adjusted total of 65 surveyed colleges or a response rate of 54%.² Consequently, our 35 responses must be seen as a subset of a subset of a subset.

Second, our survey is hardly a perfect instrument. Its size, twelve pages, made it unwieldy and intimidating. We went through multiple revisions of this instrument, all of which made it longer. While initial drafts were designed to have easily quantifiable responses, the ultimate instrument included a fair number of open-ended questions that while providing rich information defy simple summary. We have gathered a lot of information, not all of it pertinent to our central mission of identifying common characteristics of self-described honors colleges. Though subsequent studies of this phenomenon may find this additional information interesting, some busy deans probably put the lengthy survey aside and never replied, despite repeated pleadings.

Moreover, though we pre-tested the survey on the committee members, we did not catch all the questions that turned out to be confusing to the respondents. In reviewing the responses, it grew obvious that some questions, especially the more open-ended ones, elicited non-comparable responses.

As primary author of this preliminary report, I focus on the information that is directly pertinent to the core mission of the task force—drafting the “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College.” I intend what follows to provide further context for our recommendations. Time constraints prevent me from doing any statistical correlations. On occasion, though, I will point out some that are obvious from inspection of the descriptive data. For example, larger universities tend to have larger honors colleges.

Our survey was divided into three major sections and a concluding set of “summation questions.” This report follows a similar structure.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND RELATIVE INSTITUTIONAL STANDING

Quality honors programs exist in diverse settings, and their particular characteristics reflect this diversity. When an entity describes itself as a “college,” however, it claims to be something more than a program, either directly or by implication. The recruitment rhetoric of most honors colleges often invokes the image of “the best of both worlds.” And what worlds are these?—typically a comprehensive research university and a small, four-year liberal arts college. The very word “college” summons up images of greater organizational complexity, programmatic diversity, physical identity, size, and resources than would be commonly associated with a “program.” In our survey, we wanted to test the validity of these implications.

Most honors colleges exist within the setting of a comprehensive university. To have an “honors college” at a four-year college runs counter to this obvious

² In 1992-1993, committee member John Madden surveyed 23 self-identified honors colleges for his 1993 NCHC report “What is an Honors College?” He had 19 responses. Of the 23 in his initial cohort, 16 remained on the 2003 NCHC list of Honors Colleges, and 10 of those replied to this survey. Of the other 7, 3 are no longer members, 2 are apparently “programs,” and 2 should have been surveyed.

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association, just as in the case of a small college re-labeling itself a “university.” Indeed, 91% of the respondents to our survey are part of a comprehensive university. The other 9% are at four-year colleges that have some graduate programs. Unsurprisingly, the universities vary in size and complexity. For example, the number of distinct colleges comprising the university ranges from 4 to 23, with a mean of 8.8.

Honors colleges, though, relate to their university setting in different ways as indicated by the answer to a question on their overall structure:

68.6%: Centralized “overlay” structure of university undergraduate programs.

14.3%: Free standing college, with own faculty and curriculum.

5.7%: Decentralized coordinating structure providing an honors core overseeing departmentalized honors.

11.4%: Other

A dominant form exists, but this does not mean other forms are not “legitimate” colleges. Questions arise, however, about the minority forms. First, can an independent college take full advantage of the resources of the wider university of which they are a part? Second, how much coordination actually exists in a decentralized structure? Do common standards, for example, exist across the confederacy of programs?

Even comprehensive universities vary significantly in the size of their undergraduate student body and the size of the honors college. Of our sample, undergraduate population size is distributed as follows:

< 10,000:	11
10,000-19,999:	9
20,000-30,000:	9
> 30,000:	6

Similarly, the honors colleges also vary in size. The range of total honors population extends from 150 to 2700; the size of the incoming freshman class ranges from fewer than 100 to 700. Distributions are as follows:

Honors College Size		Honors Incoming Class Size	
< 500:	10	< 100:	5
500-999:	13	100-199:	11
1000-1499:	6	200-299:	8
1999-	3	300-399:	5
>2000:	3	> 400:	5
NR:	1		

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We expected to find some common motivations for creating an honors college, and we did. For example, fully 80% of our respondents indicated they arose out of a pre-existing honors program, suggesting an institutional motivation to raise the public profile for what already existed on their campuses. Second, 25 colleges (71.4%) indicated that the primary initiative for establishing the honors college arose from the top administration. Third, confirming our impression that the trend toward establishing honors colleges is relatively new, 21 colleges (60%) have been established since 1993.³

In addition, substantive motivations for establishing a college were also widely shared. Among the dominant reasons given are:

- 100%: Recruit stronger students
- 91.4%: Improve overall campus academic quality
- 88.6%: Improve the quality of honors educational opportunities
- 85.7%: Raise the profile of honors within the institution

Other motivations, like fund-raising, curriculum innovation and the promotion of service learning, inspired around 60% or fewer of the respondents.⁴

Claiming the appellation “college” also implies a certain level of institutional status different from that of a program and equivalent to other colleges in a university:

- The administrative head of a college is a dean: 77.1%
- The academic rank of the head is full professor: 91.2%
- The head reports to the provost/academic VP: 82.8%
- The head is a member of the Council of Academic Deans: 82.8%⁵
- The head is a 12-month appointment: 82.8%

We also attempted to ascertain whether colleges reflected a greater degree of organizational complexity. This was one of our less successful queries. Responses were widely distributed. Unsurprisingly, it appears that organizational complexity reflects size, not the structural status of the honors college. Subsequent mining of our data, along with comparisons between large university honors programs, may confirm this hypothesis.

³ This means that nearly two thirds of the colleges we surveyed were not in existence when John Madden conducted his survey.

⁴ The motives mentioned in the 1993 Madden study were to promote cohesion in the curriculum; increase visibility for honors; showcase the university’s excellence in undergraduate education; facilitate independence; and provide more opportunities. His study asked an open-ended question, whereas ours provided a list. Given the different techniques, the responses appear fairly consistent.

⁵ Being a dean makes a difference. They all served on the Council of Academic Deans. The others didn’t.

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Some of the other attributes of a fully developed college within the contemporary university, however, are not so widely shared among our sample. For example, only 20 (57.1%) had an alumni organization, and even fewer (17; 48.6%) possessed a full- or part-time development officer. Due to the relatively recent emergence of most of these colleges, the lack of these two positions may not be surprising. Given that the motives for establishing a college often include seeking greater visibility and identity, we predict that the numbers sharing these characteristics will rapidly increase.⁶

Like most honors programs, honors colleges possess student honors councils (94.3%) and faculty oversight committees (88.6%). Interestingly, a significant minority of honors colleges (42.8%) co-exist with other honors-type programs. Commonly, national scholarship competition programs are housed within the honors college (74.3%). Other programs, like undergraduate research (48.6%), major campus scholarship programs (37.1%) and service learning (31.4%), are less frequently placed within the honors college. None of these characteristics appears to be strongly associated with honors colleges as opposed to honors programs in general.

One major motive for creating an honors college is to improve recruitment of top students; therefore, we might expect that attention would be paid to admission standards. All the respondents claimed total or significant control over admissions standards and processes. Fewer than two-thirds (64.7%), however, enhanced admission standards when they became a college and 22.9% do not have a separate application.⁷ These data point to a potential problem that anecdotal evidence suggests has occurred. Without tight control over the admission process and enhanced standards, the publicity push accompanying the inauguration of an honors college (trumpet flourish) may lead to a surge in enrollment that at least temporarily overwhelms available resources.

Finally, in this era of increased accountability, we expected to find that the performance of honors colleges, like other academic units, is increasingly assessed. Thirty colleges (85.7%) reported being assessed in terms of courses and faculty; 28 (80%) on the basis of student performance; and 20 (57.1%) on the basis of their advisement processes. Twenty-six colleges (74.3%) reported producing an annual report.

RESOURCES AND FACILITIES

If we presume that an honors college presents itself to the world as something more than a program, then we should expect that the transition from program to college

⁶ At the South Carolina Honors College, we did not create a formal alumni organization until our seventeenth year; the assignment of a part-time development officer occurred two years later with the inauguration of the University's first major capital campaign.

⁷ The survey attempted to gather data on admission standards, and these revealed rather wide disparities. For example, minimum acceptable SAT scores ranged from "no minimum" to 1350. However, only three schools reported a minimum score of 1300 or above. High school GPA minimums also ranged from none to 3.6 (un-weighted). Fewer than two thirds of the honors colleges reported using essays (61.8%), letters of recommendation (57.1%), or activities/leadership (54.3%) in their admissions review process.

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would entail an increase in resources. In addition, echoing again the common recruitment refrain “the best of both worlds,” we might also expect that an honors college would possess an enhanced physical identity reflecting the notion that it replicates a small liberal arts college within a wider university setting.

The most obvious way of addressing resource issues is through the budget. Unfortunately, this was one of our less satisfactory questions. Our primary question inquired about the size of the *operating* budget, excluding any teaching faculty lines, but including staff. Some perceived this query as sensitive resulting in a “no response” rate of 22.8%. In addition, the data appear contaminated to some extent by non-comparable responses. Perhaps the best way of getting at something valuable is to look at the colleges’ *per capita* budgets where possible, recognizing we may be using two fuzzy numbers (estimated student population and estimated budget). In particular, some colleges clearly were including scholarships they support in their operational budget. When I could not break down a college’s total budget, I excluded it from the analysis. Consequently, the survey produces only 23 reports that may provide something equivalent to a *per capita* operating budget number.

The average per capita budget was \$596/student. The range was \$83 to \$1,855. Only four colleges had a per capita budget of over \$1,000; 8 had budgets of between \$500 and \$1,000; and the remaining 11 were below \$500. The largest per capita budget was reported by a college of 270 students, the smallest by a college of 600. However, the other three colleges reporting operating budgets of over \$1,000/student each had student populations exceeding 1000. Apparently some relatively large colleges enjoy significant support.⁸ Alternatively, relatively tiny budgets of some colleges raise the question of how they can live up to expectations created by their appellation.

Another, somewhat ambiguous, measure of resources involves faculty lines controlled directly by the unit. Obviously, a freestanding honors college will possess a significant faculty budget, and their own faculty will provide most of their courses. Twenty-one colleges have no faculty lines, and a number of those reporting faculty included adjunct faculty hires. Half of those reporting faculty lines also indicated that their own faculty covered 20% or less of their courses. The debate over relative benefits and costs of “owning” faculty versus drawing on the wider university for honors instruction exceeds the scope of this study. However, we should note that significant faculty lines inevitably involve an honors college in the promotion and tenure process.

In addition to the standard university budgetary allocation, an honors college may draw on two other sources of significant funding—college fees and endowment income/private donations. Only five colleges reported imposing fees on their students, ranging from \$15 to \$125 per semester. The two colleges with the highest fees

⁸ Madden reported two “super-budgets” of over \$2,000/capita and two others in the \$1,000 range. None of these four responded to this survey. My suspicion is that these high figures from 1993 reflect substantial scholarship budgets. For example, one college responding to our survey reported a budget that unadjusted for scholarships equaled over \$2200/student. Once scholarships were backed out, the number fell to \$368/student.

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generate over a quarter of million dollars a year. Given the current fiscal climate, we expect more honors colleges and programs to consider this option.⁹

Ironically, given the extensiveness of our survey instrument, we failed to inquire about annual fundraising and the amounts generated for the colleges. We did inquire about endowment. Twenty-five colleges (71.4%) reported at least a small endowment. Endowments vary significantly in size, ranging from under \$100,000 to over \$25 million. The distribution of those reporting endowment size is as follows:

- Under \$500,000: 8
- \$500,000 to \$1 million: 5
- \$1 million to \$5 million: 4
- \$5 million to \$10 million: 2
- \$10 million to \$25 million: 2
- Above \$25 million: 2

In recent years, honors colleges have attracted major gifts; indeed, sometimes the gift itself is the primary motivation for establishing the college. These figures do not tell the whole story, of course. For example, “naming gifts” to colleges are often heavily earmarked for merit scholarships. At least one college with an endowment of less than \$1 million was the indirect beneficiary of recent gift of \$20 million to endow a named merit scholarship program for non-residents. Moreover, a heavily earmarked endowment, while supporting critical activities like merit scholarships, may co-exist with relatively small operating budgets. Of the 22 colleges reporting the percentage of earmarked endowment income, 12 (54.4%) indicated that 90 to 100% of their endowment income was dedicated.

Our survey attempted to drill down a bit into the budgetary status of responding colleges. For example, 21 colleges reported compensating departments offering honors courses. Such compensation is generally viewed as a way of developing an honors curriculum that entails small-enrollment classes. The compensation budgets varied from \$20,000 to approximately \$1 million. The range of compensation per course ranged from \$800 to a high of \$7,000. Several colleges reported negotiating a sliding scale of compensation, presumably reflecting the difficulty of extracting a desired honors course from a unit. Unsurprisingly, compensation budgets tended to correlate with the size of the college. The three largest budgets of \$1 million, \$600,000, and \$400,000 were in colleges of 1700, 1100, and 1900 students respectively.

We also inquired about what other activities honors colleges supported out of their budget. The most widely shared services are:

91.4%: Student travel

77.1%: Student research

⁹ The South Carolina Honors College increased its fee to \$200/semester for 2005-2006 generating close to a half million dollars *per annum*.

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- 77.1% Publications
- 71.4% Student council activities
- 68.5% Honors course enrichment
- 60% Senior thesis expenses

One last budget probe attempted to ascertain to what extent the budgetary position had improved with the establishment of the college. We received a fair number of non-comparable or non-responses. Eight schools reported more than doubling their budget, but the time frames for doubling ranged from 3 to 40 years. Three colleges reported increases of between 50 and 100%, and another five reported increases between 25 and 50%. Seven colleges, however, reported increases of less than 10%, and one replied that its budget was actually reduced. This reported absence of budgetary support by nearly one-third of those responding raises troubling questions about the reality behind the rhetorical transformation from program to college in many universities.

The desire for increased visibility for honors, internally and externally, drives the transformation from program to college, and we expect that the transformation in name should be physically embodied on campus. Moreover, since honors colleges claim to offer the best of both worlds, those existing within universities with a significant residential undergraduate population might be expected to offer honors housing opportunities.

The physical plant of honors colleges in our survey substantiates these expectations, at least to some extent. Although only a minority (16) possess their own building and the others (19) reside in a suite of offices in a larger building, not too much can be drawn from this data. For example, being confined to a dilapidated house on the fringes of campus is not self-evidently better than a renovated suite in a centrally located building. Gratifyingly, none of our respondents indicated that they were located in "cave next to the boiler room." However, some attributes commonly associated with a "college" were not so widely shared:

- 45.7%: Honors student lounge/reading room
- 40%: Honors IT center
- 37.1%: Honors class/seminar rooms

Honors residential opportunities are widespread: 91.4% of the colleges reported having some residential component, and 26 (74.3%) indicated opportunities existed across all four years. The extent of these opportunities varied. For example, 11 colleges (36.7%) reported that fewer than 25% of their freshmen were housed in honors residences. Of the 28 reporting some housing opportunities for continuing students, 18 (64.3%) housed fewer than 25% of these students. We must be careful about drawing too strong a conclusion from these data because factors not accounted for in our survey, such as the percentage of the overall student population living on campus and the attractiveness of non-honors on- and off-campus housing opportunities, would affect honors residential demand.

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In conclusion, our respondents indicate that the transformation from program to college generally contributed to improved facilities. Of the 31 answering our summary question, 24 (77.4%) indicated a “great” improvement while 5 (16.1%) agreed that some improvement occurred. Only two reported “little or no” improvement.

Generally, then, as universities transformed their honors programs into colleges, they made some effort to “put their money where their mouth is.” However, we cannot ignore that eight of the colleges reported little or no increase in their operating budget. Is this a large or a small number? It depends on what’s being counted. Following Kenneth Stamp, we might ask whether “8” would be a large or a small number if we were counting beatings over a lifetime.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, REQUIREMENTS, AND RECOGNITION

Structure and resources, while important aspects of an honors college, are, after all, only means to an end. For many institutions the goal is recruitment success alone. If that can be achieved with merely a bump in publicity budgets, we suspect some universities have aimed no higher. We should, nevertheless, demand more substance behind the gloss of a new brochure. More should be expected from the students, and more opportunities should be provided to them. Remember, the comparison we invoke, implicitly when we label ourselves a “college” and explicitly when we use the common phrase “the best of both worlds,” is with a quality liberal arts college. Such a comparison should not be invoked casually.

The nature and quality of student experience are difficult to capture through our survey instrument; we can only approach it indirectly. Specifically, we asked how many honors courses were offered each semester; of these, what percentage were straight honors sections (not embedded in a larger non-honors course); whether they provided honors curricular opportunities across all four years; and, if so, what percentage of their total offerings were upper division. In this way we hoped to ascertain to what extent honors colleges offered more opportunities than a well-developed lower-division honors program.

Given the range in size of the participating honors colleges, we expected to find a significant variation in the number of courses offered each semester:

More than 100 courses:	5
75-99 courses:	4
50-74 courses:	4
25- 49 courses:	11
Fewer than 25 courses:	11

A better way of assessing the significance of honors course opportunities is to divide the total student population of the honors college by the number of honors courses offered per semester, providing a kind of “Index of Opportunity” (IO) somewhat akin to a student/faculty ratio. The variation remains significant, but now the

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data reveal that several of the larger honors colleges actually provide a fairly limited number of curricular opportunities for their students while one of the smallest, albeit a freestanding college, has the most. The IO distribution is as follows:¹⁰

Less than 10:	4
10 to 20:	17
21 to 30:	5
31 to 40:	6
More than 40:	3

Since lower is better in this case, some colleges are clearly offering a great many more curricular opportunities than others. Overall, though, at least 60% (21) seem to be doing quite well by this measure. Also significant in this regard, 24 (68.6%) report that at least 90% of the courses they offer are freestanding honors courses, not embedded sections.

We also expect that honors colleges should offer course opportunities across all four years, and a significant majority (82.8%) of our respondents do so. We also inquired, though, what percentage of their total honors offerings were upper division courses. Here the response was more mixed. Of the 29 schools claiming four-year opportunities, 14 (48.3%) indicated that 40% or more of their courses were upper level, but 9 (31%) offered 20% or less. When these nine are added to the six that reported no upper division offerings, we have evidence that a significant percentage of our total (15 or 42.8%) can make only a limited claim or none at all to comprehensive curricular opportunities.

Honors curricular opportunities come in a variety of flavors. Among the more popular are:

• Honors courses for general education requirements:	97.1%
• Honors senior thesis/creative project:	94.3%
• Honors independent study:	80.0%
• Special topic, upper division honors seminars	74.3%
• Special topic, interdisciplinary honors seminars	74.3%
• Honors individual “contracts” in regular courses	68.6%
• Undergraduate research courses:	62.8%
• Experimental honors courses:	62.8%
• Honors major/minor level courses:	60.0%
• Honors study abroad opportunities:	57.1%

¹⁰ A lower number is better, because dividing the total number of honors students by the number of honors courses/semester produces this index.

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- Special, lower division honors core: 57.1%
- Special topic, lower division, honors seminars: 48.6%
- Honors internships: 45.7%
- Service learning courses: 37.1%
- Embedded or honors increment courses: 37.1%

Honors colleges collectively offer a wide variety of opportunities, but again some colleges offer nearly the entire range while others do not. We are particularly interested in those opportunities that should flourish at an honors college within a larger research university—undergraduate research. Nearly all of the colleges (94.3%) reported directly supporting undergraduate research opportunities. This figure became somewhat less impressive when broken down into the numbers engaging in specific forms of support:

- Travel support to make research presentations: 81.8%
- Undergraduate research/scholarship recognition events: 69.7%
- Grants for senior thesis/project expenses: 63.6%
- Undergraduate research assistantships/fellowships 51.5%

Perhaps the ultimate indicator of collegiate status involves the conferring of degrees. With the exception of the freestanding honors colleges, most, usually all, of the students in the “overlay” honors college model earn their degrees from another unit, like Arts and Sciences or Business Administration. Only six of the colleges responding indicated offering their own degree as an option. However, three of these seemed confused by the question. Nonetheless, honors colleges seem uniquely positioned to foster interdisciplinary degrees, in particular, and might be encouraged to aspire to develop such opportunities.

Finally, as programs move to claim honors college status, they could also take the opportunity to increase what they expect from their students. We earlier noted that of the 34 schools responding to this question, 22 or 64.7% enhanced their admission standards. Unfortunately, we failed to inquire whether they also enhanced what was required to earn their particular honors distinction after the students matriculated

We did ask about current standards. Generally, the minimum GPA needed to earn the honors distinction ranged from 3.0 to 3.5, though one school reported a range of distinctions, with the highest requiring a 3.8. We had two unclear responses. Of the 33 remaining, a significant majority required a GPA above 3.25 (24 or 72.7%).

Most of us would agree, however, that the GPA is the least significant attribute of the honors distinction awarded by our programs and colleges. We believe our students earn their distinction by challenging themselves in more demanding honors courses and seminars as well as by other distinctive requirements. We approached this issue from a number of different angles. We inquired about the minimum number of honors credits needed to earn the basic honors distinction. Although not all answers were clearly comparable (for example, the free standing college is an outlier,

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requiring its students to take 85% of their work in the college), we are able to make several revealing comparisons.

First, excepting the freestanding college, the range of honors credit hours required for their distinction extended from 18 to 45, although a significant majority of respondents (24 out of 33 or 72.7%) require between 21 and 30 honors credits. Only three colleges require fewer than 21 honors hours, and six require more. We should recall, though, that the “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program” suggests that a fully developed *program* should require that 20 to 25% of the student work be in honors, and “certainly no less than 15%.” None of the honors colleges report fewer than 17%, although six fall below 20% required honors credits and another 15 fall in the 20 to 24% range. Nine colleges require 25 to 29% of their student’s work be in honors and four require 30% or more.

Second, we inquired what other requirements were associated with earning the primary distinction. This enabled us to identify some other common expectations honors colleges hold for their students. While hardly definitive, these additional requirements hint at some commonalities, though they establish no overwhelming identity:

- Senior thesis/project: 65.7%
- Honors selective seminars: 57.1%
- Core of specific courses (e.g., “great books” seminars): 51.4%
- Liberal education distribution of honors courses: 34.3%
- Service learning: 8.6%

Note that the most commonly shared requirement is a senior thesis or project (65.7%). How good a showing is this? Again, remember the implied comparison with a fine liberal arts college, most of which require a senior thesis or project to graduate.

SUMMATION AND CONCLUSIONS

In summation, we asked the respondents to identify the major consequences of becoming an honors college.¹¹ The following consequences were commonly identified:

- Enhanced stature for the head of the college: 85.7%
- Enhanced stature among the faculty 85.7%
- Enhanced organizational position in the university: 82.8%
- Enhanced recruitment: 77.1%

¹¹ Madden asked a similar question in his 1993 survey. He grouped the responses into three broad categories:

Respect, visibility, recognition, etc: 10 mentions.
Autonomy, power: 7 mentions.
Funding, recruiting: 7 mentions

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONTEMPORARY HONORS COLLEGE

- Improved facilities: 77.1%
- Increased budget 74.3%
- Enhanced academic programs and opportunities: 74.3%
- Enhanced standards of admission and retention: 60%
- Increased size of student body 57.1%
- Enhanced scholarship opportunities: 45.7%

Finally, we polled our survey population on three issues confronting NCHC. Given the importance of these debates, we provide the complete distribution of response:

Should honors colleges be expected to pay higher dues?

- Yes: 9 (25.7%)
- Maybe: 4 (11.4%)
- No: 21 (60%)
- NR: 1 (2.8%)

Should NCHC develop “The basic characteristics of a fully developed honors college?”

- Yes: 27 (77.1%)
- Maybe: 2 (5.7%)
- No: 5 (14.3%)
- NR: 1 (2.8%)

Should the NCHC accredit honors colleges?

- Yes: 11 (31.4%)
- Maybe: 5 (14.3%)
- No: 15 (42.8%)
- NR: 4 (11.4%)

So what can we conclude? First, though honors colleges come in a variety of sizes and shapes, by and large they represent a fairly distinctive subset of the overall membership of the NCHC. Second, this subset is growing in number, a trend likely to continue, even increase. Third, despite the presence of a minority of honors colleges that appear underdeveloped in comparison with their peers, most of the colleges surveyed reflect a pattern of emerging out of programs that were already fairly well developed and were then substantively enhanced on becoming a college. Fourth, the respondents strongly supported the idea that the NCHC should offer guidance as to what becoming an honors college might entail. Basically, I think the survey reveals

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that the transformation should mean more administrative status, more resources, more facilities, more programs and opportunities, higher admission standards, and higher expectations of students.

The survey, then, provides support for the Executive Committee's decision to endorse "The Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College." Their decision, I believe, will serve a number of purposes. First, it stands as our organizational recognition of a distinctive trend in higher education where the NCHC has a legitimate organizational interest, even obligation. Second, it provides guidelines for those institutions contemplating making such a change in announced status. Third, it embodies a set of criteria against which existing honors colleges can measure themselves and that they can use as leverage within their own institutions to gain additional support. Fourth, it will assist prospective students in making informed discriminations among the institutions they are considering. For all these reasons I think the NCHC has taken a significant step in its maturation as an organization by endorsing the "basic characteristics" appended to this essay.

APPENDIX

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF A FULLY DEVELOPED HONORS COLLEGE

An honors educational experience can occur in a wide variety of institutional settings. When institutions establish an honors college or embark upon a transition from an honors program to an honors college, they face a transformational moment. No one model defines this transformation. Although not all of the following characteristics are necessary to be considered a successful or fully developed honors college, the National Collegiate Honors Council recognizes these as representative:

- A fully developed honors college should incorporate the relevant characteristics of a fully developed honors program.
- A fully developed honors college should exist as an equal collegiate unit within a multi-collegiate university structure.
- The head of a fully developed honors college should be a dean reporting directly to the chief academic officer of the institution and serving as a full member of the Council of Deans, if one exists. The dean should be a full-time, 12-month appointment.
- The operational and staff budgets of fully developed honors colleges should provide resources at least comparable to other collegiate units of equivalent size.
- A fully developed honors college should exercise increased coordination and control of departmental honors where the college has emerged out of such a decentralized system.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONTEMPORARY HONORS COLLEGE

- A fully developed honors college should exercise considerable control over honors recruitment and admissions, including the appropriate size of the incoming class. Admission to the honors college should be by separate application.
- An honors college should exercise considerable control over its policies, curriculum, and selection of faculty.
- The curriculum of a fully developed honors college should offer significant course opportunities across all four years of study.
- The curriculum of the fully developed honors college should constitute at least 20% of a student's degree program. An honors thesis or project should be required.
- Where the home university has a significant residential component, the fully developed honors college should offer substantial honors residential opportunities.
- The distinction awarded by a fully developed honors college should be announced at commencement, noted on the diploma, and featured on the student's final transcript.
- Like other colleges within the university, a fully developed honors college should be involved in alumni affairs and development and should have an external advisory board.

Approved by the NCHC Executive Committee (6/25/05)

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Book Review

HALLIE E. SAVAGE

Book Review
How to Write a BA Thesis:
A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to
Your Finished Paper

(Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing)

By Charles Lipson. The University of Chicago Press, 2005. 402 pp.

HALLIE E. SAVAGE

CLARION UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

A hallmark of honors education is high-quality undergraduate research. For honors faculty and administrators, curricular planning that results in excellent thesis research can be a special challenge because honors students represent a wide range of disciplines and vary in competency and preparation for research. *How to Write a BA Thesis* meets this challenge. It is a well-developed, practical guidebook for accomplishment of honors and/or undergraduate research. The contents are built on a developmental continuum or time table beginning with the conceptual basis for a thesis. As such, it is applicable to one-semester projects as well as theses or other in-depth projects.

The early chapters of the book (1-4) define the process of thesis conceptualization. They describe:

- collecting ideas for a thesis;
- selecting a faculty advisor;
- generating guidelines for a proposal;
- starting a literature review for the selected topic;
- taking notes;
- refining broad ideas to generate a precise thesis topic.

Important topics discussed within this section are plagiarism, paraphrasing, and citations that avoid plagiarism.

The middle chapters (5-11) are organized according to the developmental progression of research. Specifically, once the project is conceptualized, the steps include:

- devising a research strategy;
- conducting focused research;
- planning the thesis in more detail;

BOOK REVIEW: *HOW TO WRITE A BA THESIS*

- dividing the overall topic into major sections of the paper;
- sorting research into sections;
- prewriting preparation;
- creating the first draft—everything except introduction and conclusion;
- drafting the introduction and conclusion.

Lipson encompasses both qualitative and quantitative research in the treatment of results. In Chapter 6, for example, he presents a rationale and methodology for case studies. He also describes visual treatments of data such as charts.

A unique feature of this book is the description of practical approaches to accomplishing research. Lipson describes typical barriers to undergraduate research in Chapter 13, and then, given these barriers, he outlines strategies for successfully overcoming them in Chapter 14.

The last chapters provide general suggestions for:

- a thesis time table;
- tips and reminders;
- frequently asked questions;
- what to do when you are done.

The final two chapters have special applicability to thesis defenses and, if necessary, finding a second reader. The appendices provide a wealth of information for students and new faculty advisors.

Lipson's book is an excellent, well-developed text for students in all academic disciplines. It will be useful to some graduate as well as undergraduate students and also to new faculty advisors. Another significant benefit is that it will facilitate faculty/student communication. The book accomplishes these goals in a highly readable format that includes summary text boxes highlighting important information and how to apply it. As such, it is an invaluable text for honors education.

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About the Authors

Vince Brewton serves as Founding Director of the Honors Program at the University of North Alabama and teaches American literature in the Department of English. His research interests have resulted in a number of publications on violence and identity in literature. Prior to coming to UNA, he worked in honors administration at the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College at Ole Miss.

Jay Freyman is Associate Professor of Ancient Studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, where he was also Director of the Honors College from 1991 to 2002 and is currently Historian of the Eta of Maryland chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. His scholarship interests lie in the areas of ancient Greek drama and of the nature and uses of liberal education. He teaches courses in Latin and Classical Greek from the elementary through the advanced level.

Gayle E. Hartleroad currently serves as Associate Director of Graduate Programs in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University. Previously, she served as the Honors Program Assistant Director and Academic Advisor in the Department of Freshman Engineering at Purdue University. She earned a Doctor of Education degree in higher education leadership from Nova Southeastern University.

Laura Bender Herron is currently completing her MA in History at Kent State University. Her master's thesis extends her exploration of Christian collective memory and the Holocaust, which she began with her undergraduate honors work. She plans to continue her studies in Modern European history, focusing on the history of the Holocaust, at the doctoral level.

James P. Hill is Director of the Honors Program at Central Michigan University. He is also a Professor in the Political Science Department and holds both J.D. and Ph.D. degrees. He specializes in administrative law and environmental issues as well as consulting on Native American casino development.

Bonnie D. Irwin is Dean of The Honors College at Eastern Illinois University. She is a Professor of English and has taught leadership, world mythology, and world literature. She earned her PhD in Comparative Literature at the University of California at Berkeley. Her research interests include the reception of the *1001 Nights* in American culture and the writings of Arab American women.

Jacqueline P. Kelleher recently left her position as the Assistant Dean in the Neag School of Education at The University of Connecticut to pursue a new adventure at the Western Oregon University. She is building their institutional office of research, assessment, and strategic planning. Additionally, she serves as an Assistant Professor in the College of Education, teaching courses in engaged teaching,

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learning, and assessment. She will continue to be involved working with honors students and making sure programs have the resources necessary to continue their magic. Dr. Kelleher speaks and consults nationally and internationally on assessment and accountability issues.

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Dail W. Mullins, Jr. is a retired biochemist, teacher, and honors administrator who serves as Co-Editor of the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* and *Honors in Practice*. He lives and works on St. George Island, Florida.

Bebe Nickolai is Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Maryville University St. Louis. She also teaches English and freshman seminar classes. She has won several teaching awards, including the Missouri Governor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. Her presentations at NCTE conventions have included "On Questioning" and "Imagining the Possibilities in Rites of Passage Stories." She enjoys the challenge of helping students to think about their writing.

Daniel Pinti is University Honors Coordinator and Associate Professor of English at Niagara University, where he teaches classical and medieval literature. He has published numerous articles on Chaucer, Dante, and other medieval writers, and his current research interests explore the intersections of literature and theology.

Hallie E. Savage is Director of Clarion University's Honors Program, teaches undergraduate research, and is Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. She is a member of the *JNCHC* Editorial Board, a co-Chair of the Publications Board of the National Collegiate Honors Council, and a member of the Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education Honors Directors.

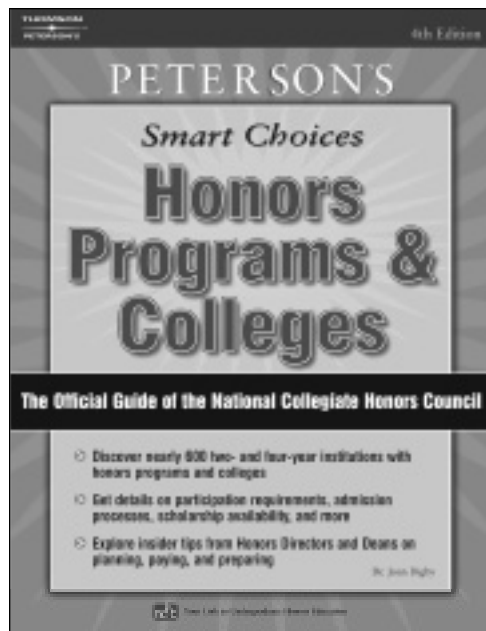
Sam Schuman is Chancellor of the University of Minnesota, Morris. He has served as Vice President and President of the NCHC, and chaired the NCHC committees on small colleges, program planning and long-range planning. Sam is the author of the *Beginning in Honors Handbook*, now in its fourth printing. He is also the author of the NCHC handbook *Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges*. His most recent book is *Old Main: Small Colleges in Twenty-First Century America* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

Peter C. Sederberg has been involved in honors education at the University of South Carolina for three decades. In 1975 he helped author the proposal for establishing an honors college out of the existing lower division honors program. As director of that program from 1976 to 1979, he implemented the proposal and oversaw the recruitment

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of its first admitted class in 1978. In 1994 he was appointed Dean of the College upon the retirement of William Mould. He retired from his position June 30, 2005 to return to his teaching and research in the Department of Political Science.

Len Zane is Professor of Physics, ex-Dean of the Honors College at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and past president of NCHC. He wrote this essay during the fall 2005 semester while visiting the University of New Mexico as the Garrey Carruthers Distinguished Chair in Honors.



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A Handbook for Honors Administrators by Ada Long (1995, 117pp.) Everything an honors administrator needs to know including a description of some models of Honors Administration.

Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges by Samuel Schuman (1999, 53pp.) How to implement an honors program, with particular emphasis on colleges with fewer than 3000 students (Second Edition)

Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning edited by Bernice Braid and Ada Long (2000, 101pp.) Information and practical advice on the experiential pedagogies developed within the NCHC during the past 25 years, using the Honors Semesters and City as Text[®] as models, along with suggestions for how to adapt these models to a variety of educational contexts.

Teaching and Learning in Honors edited by Cheryl L. Fuiks and Larry Clark (2000, 128 pp.) Presents a variety of perspectives on teaching and learning useful to anyone developing new or renovating established honors curricula.

Honors Composition: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Practices by Annmarie Guzy (2003 183 pp.) Parallel historical developments in honors and composition studies; contemporary honors writing projects ranging from admission essays to theses as reported by over 300 NCHC members.

Innovations in Undergraduate Research and Honors Education: Proceedings of the Second Schreyer National Conference (2004, 150 pp).

Assessing and Evaluating Honors Programs and Honors Colleges: A Practical Handbook by Rosalie Otero and Robert Spurrier (2005 96pp.) This monograph includes an overview of assessment and evaluation practices and strategies. It explores the process for conducting self-studies and discusses the differences between using consultants and external reviewers. It provides a guide to conducting external reviews along with information about how to become an NCHC-recommended Site Visitor. A dozen appendices provide examples of "best practices."

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