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JNCHC

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council

Forum Essays on
"The Value of Honors to its Graduates"

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Journal

OF THE National Collegiate Honors Council

THE VALUE OF HONORS TO ITS GRADUATES

JOURNAL EDITOR

Ada Long

University of Alabama at Birmingham

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CONTENTS

Call for Papers.....	viii
Editorial Policy, Deadlines, and Submission Guidelines.....	x
Dedication to Anne N. Rinn.....	xi
<i>Editor's Introduction</i>	xiii
Ada Long	

FORUM ESSAYS ON "THE VALUE OF HONORS TO ITS GRADUATES"

<i>Interdisciplinary Survival</i>	3
Paul Ewing, University of Toledo, 1967–1970	
<i>Connections</i>	7
Andy Walker, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, 1977–1981	
<i>The Lexicon of Honors Education</i>	9
Laura Barrett, LIU Brooklyn, 1979–1983	
<i>Honor-ing Parenthood</i>	13
John Major, Ohio State University, 1980–1984	
Non Magis Sed Melior, "Not More, but Better".....	17
Teri Grieb, Columbia College, South Carolina, 1989–1993	
<i>Why Honors Matters</i>	21
James A. Keller, University of Delaware, 1989–1993	
<i>Me, Snoop, and Rich Old People, or Intersectionality and its Impending Effect on Paradigm Shaping and Life Trajectory</i>	23
LLeweLLyn Cooper, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 1992–1996	
<i>My Honors Experience as Authentic to My Life</i>	27
Ayesha Ahmed, Northeastern Illinois University, 1996–1998	
<i>A Safe Place to Explore: The Value of Honors in Higher Education</i>	29
Mary Beth Messner, Youngstown State University, 1996–2000	

<i>An Honors Lifetime Love of Learning</i>	33
Eric W. Miller, West Virginia University, 1996–2000	
<i>Supportive and Impactful Honors Education</i>	37
Sara McCane-Bowling, Eastern Kentucky University, 1998–2002	
<i>Valuing Diversity</i>	41
Michelle Panuccio, Youngstown State University, 1998–2002	
<i>Finding My Better Self and the Strength to Dream: The Impact of the Honors Experience</i>	43
Lia M. Shore, Georgia Perimeter College, Dunwoody Campus (now Perimeter College of Georgia State University), 1998–2000	
<i>There and Back Again</i>	45
Jennifer N. Dulin, Texas A&M University, 2001–2005	
<i>Expensive Mistakes: How Hitting Career Rock Bottom Showed Me What I Really Learned in Honors</i>	51
Pepper Hayes, Westminster College, 2001–2005	
<i>The Secret of Honors Education: Driven by Discourse, Depth of Disciplines, and Dedication to Diversity</i>	55
Merry Benner Chiu, Adelphi University, 2002–2006	
<i>From Honors Student to Honors Coordinator</i>	59
Kathryn M. MacDonald, College of New Rochelle, 2002–2006	
<i>The Spark of Reimagination</i>	61
Corey D. Clawson, Utah State University, 2003–2004, 2006–2009	
<i>Ten of Ten, Would Recommend</i>	65
Jamie Beason, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 2004–2008	
<i>Honorary Family</i>	69
Joshua and Brandi Mulanax, Rogers State University, 2007–2011; 2010–2014	
<i>Forging an Honors Bond</i>	73
Taylor C. Bybee, Utah State University, 2008–2015	

<i>Honor in Failure</i>	77
Mark Donovan, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, 2008–2014	
<i>Citadels of Interdisciplinarity</i>	81
Colin Christensen, Emory & Henry College, 2010–2014	
<i>Question, Discover, Apply, Disseminate: My Journey from Honors Student to Educator</i>	85
Heather Ness-Maddox, Middle Georgia State University, 2010–2013	
<i>Interdisciplinary Education Equips People to Face Unique Challenges</i>	89
Claire Guthrie Stasiewicz, University of New Mexico, 2011–2015	
<i>Gadgets and Gizmos</i>	93
Seth Blanton, Rogers State University, 2012–2016	
<i>From Jersey Shore to AP Lit Teacher</i>	95
Ashley Gerstle (née Offenback), Penn State University, 2012–2014	
<i>More than an Academic Challenge—A Sense of Belonging</i>	99
Mary Anne Matos, Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, KS, 2012–2016	
<i>Achieving Excellence Through Experiential Learning</i>	103
Eli Pemberton, Monroe College, 2012–2014	
<i>Staying Connected</i>	105
Jonna Nunez, Community College of Baltimore County, 2013–2015	
<i>Reflecting on Community: A Vision for the Future</i>	107
Tambria Schroeder, SUNY Brockport, 2013–2017	
<i>The Value of Honors: Defined by Quality and Cost</i>	111
Christopher Kotschevar and Nicholas Arens, South Dakota State University, 2014–2018; 2013–2017	
<i>Southern Appalachian</i>	115
Sean Collier, Emory & Henry College, 2014–2018	

<i>Finding Community, Support, and the Importance of Detours</i>	117
Grace Anne Cunningham, Texas A&M University, 2014–2018	
<i>Rooted in Relations:</i>	
<i>Honors and a Relation-Based Approach to Learning</i>	121
Emma Labovitz, Appalachian State University, 2014–2018	
<i>Honors Lessons Learned Outside the Classroom</i>	123
Chloe Salome Margulis, LIU Post, 2014–2017	
<i>From Community Service and Advocacy to a Life of Civil Service</i>	127
Autumn Barszczowski, Point Park University, 2015–2019	
<i>A Bridge to Belonging</i>	131
Angeline Best, University of Iowa, 2015–2019	
<i>The Honors Connection:</i>	
<i>Openness and Empathy</i>	133
Samantha Bronow, Oklahoma City University, 2015–2019	
<i>How Honors Hoisted Me to DC and a Public Health Career</i>	135
Emily McAndrew, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, 2015–2019	
<i>Honoring the Whole Person:</i>	
<i>Indigenous Wisdom and University Honors Programs</i>	137
Joseph Gazing Wolf, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, 2016–2018	
<i>Skill and Community Development through an Honors Education</i>	141
Samantha Koprovski, William Paterson University, 2016–2020	
<i>Is Honors Worth the Extra Effort?</i>	145
Quimby Wechter, University of Hartford, 2017–2020	
<i>Finding My Place</i>	149
Daphne Watson, Northeastern Illinois University, 2019–2021	

PORTZ-PRIZE-WINNING ESSAY, 2021

<i>Refusing Erasure:</i>	
<i>Nugent, Fire!!, and the Legacies of Queer Harlem</i>	153
Samantha King-Shaw	

RESEARCH ESSAYS

<i>“Best of Both Worlds”: Alumni Perspectives on Honors and the Liberal Arts</i>	191
Angela King Taylor, Kelsey Daniels, and Molly Knowlton	
<i>Dutch Honors Alumni Looking Back on the Impact of Honors on their Personal and Professional Development</i>	221
Arie Kool, Elanor Kamans, and Marca V. C. Wolfensberger	
<i>Perfectionism and Honors Students: Cautious Good News</i>	237
Jennifer S. Feenstra	
About the Research Authors.....	251
NCHC Publication Descriptions and Order Form.....	253

ON THE COVER

The cover images, courtesy of Chloe Margulis, show her journey from high school to her current career as a patent attorney. A long-distance runner and versatile athlete, she participated in two Partners in the Parks adventures.

Motivated by extreme challenges, she will be running the New York Marathon this year and training for longer races. An alumna of the LIU Post Honors Program, Chloe has an essay in this volume titled “Honors Lessons Learned Outside the Classroom.”

CALL FOR PAPERS

The next issue of *JNCHC* (**deadline: September 1, 2022**) invites research essays on any topic of interest to the honors community.

The issue will also include a Forum focused on the theme “Honors Beyond the Liberal Arts,” in which we invite honors educators to examine the NCHC’s exclusion and inclusion of preprofessional honors programs within its community. We invite essays of roughly 1000–2000 words that consider this theme in a practical and/or theoretical context.

The lead essay for the Forum (available at https://cdn.ymaws.com/nchc.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/docs/pub_board_essays/Who_Owns_Honors.pdf?utm_source=Direct&utm_medium=Informz&utm_campaign=Bulk%20Email) is by K. Patrick Fazioli of Mercy College. In “Who Owns Honors?” Fazioli points out the historical role of the liberal arts as the cornerstone of honors, starting with the introduction of honors into the United States in the early twentieth century and continuing through and beyond its statement of the Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program. He cites evidence in NCHC publications and conference sessions of the minor role within the organization of preprofessional honors programs, and he advocates strategies to increase outreach to such programs. Fazioli acknowledges the arguments that have prevailed over the years for privileging the liberal arts, and he respects the value and often the validity of such arguments. Nevertheless, given the NCHC’s emphasis on inclusion and diversity, the absence of professional programs seems antithetical to its mission. Further, now that the number of preprofessional students is far outnumbering liberal arts majors in American higher education, excluding the professions seems especially short-sighted. He concludes by suggesting strategies for outreach to preprofessional honors programs and students.

Contributors to the Forum on “Honors Beyond the Liberal Arts” may, but are not obliged to, respond directly to Fazioli’s essay. Questions that Forum contributors might consider include:

- What would be the advantages and/or disadvantages of including a preprofessional track (or tracks) at NCHC conferences?
- What strategies have your (or other) liberal arts/college-wide honors programs adopted to better serve the unique needs of their preprofessional students?
- What models have worked successfully on your campus in integrating the humanities, sciences, and professional programs in areas outside of honors, and how might these models be adapted to the context of NCHC?

- What part, if any, is NCHC playing in how preprofessional honors programs develop their curricula and co-curricular experiences?
- Do you agree that the NCHC should broaden its focus beyond the liberal arts and, if not, why?
- Should the NCHC follow the lead of an organization like Phi Beta Kappa, which privileges the liberal arts as a way of awarding them prestige while the professions award status and income?
- Given the decreasing popularity and status of the humanities in contrast to the dramatic rise of the professions in higher education, should the NCHC acknowledge and reflect this contrast?
- Is there an inherent difference between university-wide honors programs and disciplinary (including preprofessional) honors programs that justifies a continued focus on the liberal arts in the NCHC?
- Should honors programs expose all their students to the liberal arts, perhaps especially the humanities, as fully as possible and not dilute them through a shared focus on the professions?
- What pedagogies and values do preprofessional honors programs share with honors programs that foreground the arts, humanities, and sciences? What are the differences?

Information about *JNCHC*—including the editorial policy, submission guidelines, guidelines for abstracts and keywords, and a style sheet—is available on the NCHC website: <<http://www.nchchonors.org/resources/nchc-publications/editorial-policies>>.

Please send all submissions to Ada Long at adalong@uab.edu.

NCHC journals (*JNCHC* and *HIP*) and monographs are included in the following electronic databases: ERIC, EBSCO, Gale Cengage, and UNL Digital Commons. Both journals are listed in Cabell International's Directory of Publishing Opportunities.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC) 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, discussions of problems common to honors programs and colleges, items on the national higher education agenda, research on assessment, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education. Bibliographies of *JNCHC*, *HIP*, and the NCHC Monograph Series on the NCHC website provide past treatments of topics that an author should consider.

DEADLINES

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

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We accept material by email attachment in Word (not pdf). We do not accept material by fax or hard copy, nor do we receive documents with tracking.

If documentation is used, the documentation style can be whatever is appropriate to the author's primary discipline or approach (MLA, APA, etc.), employing internal citation to a list of references (bibliography).

All research based on data from human subjects should include IRB approval or other ethical review from your institution.

All essay submissions to the journal must include an abstract of no more than 250 words and a list of no more than five keywords (not repeating words in your title).

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

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

Essays in the Forum for Honors should be roughly 1000–2000 words long.

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

DEDICATION



Anne N. Rinn

In the early 2000s, Anne N. Rinn produced seminal scholarship on the origin of honors education in the United States. In 2003, she published “Rhodes Scholarships, Frank Aydelotte, and Collegiate Honors Education” in the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC 4.1)*, followed three years later by “Major Forerunners to Honors Education at the Collegiate Level” (*JNCHC 7.2*). In these essays, she focused primarily on Frank Aydelotte, President of Swarthmore College, who in 1922 started an honors program based on his experience as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. The primary methods he promoted in honors were tutorials; active learning rather than lectures; academic independence; individual responsibility for reading; and the seminar method. Rinn points out that Aydelotte’s program is commonly considered the foundation and progenitor of honors in the U.S. and that its values and methods started to spread quickly across the country. Having provided this important history to the honors community, Rinn is one of the most-cited honors scholars in the history of *JNCHC*.

Since that groundbreaking early work on the origin of honors, Rinn has gone on to an important career focused primarily on gifted children and adults, often branching out into a broad range of related topics. She has

published over fifty articles in refereed research journals; she has given at least as many if not more conference papers; she has written numerous editorials and encyclopedia entries; and she recently published the monograph *Social, Emotional, and Psychosocial Development of Gifted and Talented Individuals* (Routledge, 2020).

Rinn has also had a distinguished career as a faculty member and administrator, most recently at the University of North Texas (UNT), where she is Professor of Educational Psychology, Interim Chair, and Coordinator of Graduate Programs in Gifted and Talented Education. She is also Director of the UNT Office for Giftedness, Talent Development, and Creativity. She has won the College of Education Faculty Service Excellence Award and also its Faculty Research Excellence Award.

We are grateful for Anne N. Rinn's many contributions to the NCHC, especially her scholarship on the origins of honors in the United States, which has served as an important resource for many future honors scholars and which gives us the inspiration and occasion for this issue's 100th Anniversary Forum on "The Value of Honors to its Graduates."

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Ada Long

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

In 2015, while celebrating the 50th anniversary of the National Collegiate Honors Council, we published a Forum on “The Value of Honors” (*JNCHC* 16.2), with essays by 39 college and university presidents that had been solicited by honors director and deans who were NCHC members. This year is the 100th anniversary of Frank Aydelotte’s introduction of honors education into the United States from England, so we again called on honors administrators and also faculty to solicit essays, this time from former honors students, on “The Value of Honors to its Graduates,” and we are publishing 44 responses. Both the presidents and the graduates represent all regions of the country and all types of institutions, from two-year and liberal arts colleges to research universities.

In my remarks about the presidents’ statements of “The Value of Honors,” I wrote that their institutions “differ in their admissions and retention criteria, curricular requirements, methods of selecting faculty, extracurricular opportunities, scholarship offerings, and fundraising goals. From all this diversity, though, emerges remarkable unanimity about the value of honors in higher education.” What the presidents valued were critical thinking, community, access and diversity, active learning, innovation, institutional advancement, pride, and transformation, along with “interdisciplinary teaching and learning, leadership opportunities, and lifelong learning.”

Except for “institutional advancement,” primarily a presidential priority, the 44 former honors students also demonstrate “a remarkable unanimity.” They echo all the presidents’ values and much more, including authenticity, respect, a sense of belonging, self-confidence, excitement, and fun. Better than a list of all the abstract values that graduates describe in their essays, a few of their voices below show both their diversity and what they have in common:

Being part of the UHP gave me the green light to transform my fairly standard university education into something that was authentic to my life.

—Ahmed

The true value of these programs is that they act as rock tumblers. They bring together individuals—rocks gathered from fields and streams and beaches and mountains—and tumble them against one another in an environment which promotes a sense of shared

humanity and a desire to see the beauty in the world and in other people.

—Donovan

[The honors program] helped me to clarify what it meant to be a Crip-loving, ‘Pac-quoting disciple of Christ in a Black Gangster Disciple neighborhood who gave space to LGBT spokespersons and Far-Right advocates in the city where Dr. King was jailed.

—Cooper

An honors program also encourages boldness and creativity. There is no hiding in the back of a 15-person class. It is time to step up, maybe make a mistake or two, but keep going. That’s what you’re here for, right?

—Keller

If honors programs are going to be anything, they must be places where wisdom is the highest value. Are we pursuing the wisdom to see each other as whole beings, to become people worthy of honor, or are we cogs in the wheel of institutions that have prided themselves on whom they exclude rather than whom they include? Wisdom, seated on the throne of compassion, those are the people who shine a light in an otherwise dark world.

—Gazing Wolf

Within the Honors Program, I found more than academic challenges and leadership opportunities—I found friends, people who cared about me beyond my grades, a sense of belonging, acceptance and understanding, a place that felt like home—and where I found my next steps.

—Matos

A philosopher no less than John Lennon reminded us that “Life is what happens while you’re busy making other plans.” At sixty, I find myself less focused on what those plans *were* than what my life *is*. Time and again, I return to Honors Semesters, now nearly forty years ago, grateful to have a set of tools that continue to help me excavate the world around me *and* to have passed them along.

—Major

Energized by student attention and creativity, professors shared their passions for their own areas of study. Such energy is contagious. Student enthusiasm reawakens enthusiasm in instructors and thereby enriches the honors community.

—Messner

The program was not a competition but a place where being at the top of your game was table stakes, and together we made each other stronger. I doubt I knew it at the time, but the idea that people are always doing their best stuck with me.

—Panuccio

I'm grateful to all honors programs that prioritize the value of community and teach students like me how to bring that value to life every day. I'm also grateful, on this 100th anniversary, for the opportunity to reflect as it affords us a critical moment of clarity on our past, present, and future. Our experiences in honors programs nationwide and across the years connect us as a community and, whether we realize it or not, these types of connections exist all around us. We must dare to seek them out.

—Schroeder

[H]onors gave me a sense of rootedness, a sense of place. A sense of the Earth's place in time and of our species' place in the story of life on Earth. A sense of Western culture's place in the history of humanity and of our nation's place in that culture. A sense of my place as a citizen of our republic, my responsibility to my local community, and my responsibility to my professional community. That sense of place, of connectedness across time and location, is sometimes burdensome but always comforting—and it makes apathy impossible.

—Walker

[B]eing an Honors Scholar provided me a pass, a sort of permission, to explore ideas and better understand what I thought, while providing connections to challenge and reinforce those thoughts and ideas. I became a part of a community of people who were just as intimidated by the power of their own minds as I was, yet we continued to show up and do the work that never really felt like work. All the while, we lifted each other up, filling sagging sails with the winds of our encouragement.

—Watson

[Honors is] simultaneously challenging and nurturing

—Wechter

A reader could compare these essays by region or institutional type, but here they are organized to focus on chronology. The essays are ordered from the earliest attendance in honors to the most recent, with years of admission progressing from 1967 to 2019. The NCHC has gone through a lot of changes

since its inception in 1965, but just a quick scan of the titles suggests a continuity in the value that students have found in honors throughout the past half-century.

* * *

One of the primary themes to arise from the graduates' essays is that the sense of community among a group of students engaged in learning and focused on doing their best leads to a shared commitment to academic excellence. Moving now to a stunning example of such excellence by an honors student, one who has now recently graduated, we can see demonstrated the high quality of this important value.

Each year the NCHC sponsors Portz Prizes for the finest research essays written by honors students submitted during that academic year, and occasionally one of these essays is so outstanding that it belongs in the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* along with research essays written by honors faculty, administrators, and scholars. In 2021, such a Portz Prize winner was Samantha King-Shaw, graduate of Washington State University, for her essay "Refusing Erasure: Nugent, *Fire!!*, and the Legacies of Queer Harlem." In a rigorous, in-depth analysis, King-Shaw compares Richard Bruce Nugent's story "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" from the Harlem Renaissance with Marlon Riggs's film *Tongues Untied* of the late 1980s. King-Shaw shows how the work of Nugent and Riggs, separated by more than six decades, constitute "queer interventions in the larger movement toward racial equality, making visible racial and sexual oppression and positing connections between racial justice and queer liberation." She shows how "each artist subverts dominant racist and heteronormative ideologies in mainstream society and Black communities." Combining sophisticated background research with original textual analysis and insightful cultural investigation, King-Shaw shows that both authors "rejected racial uplift politics that excluded representations of queer identity from Black cultural production" and "disrupted the dominant discourses that invalidate, erase, and kill queer Black communities." In addition to learning about the strategies, consequences, and influences of defying cultural norms, readers will learn about two important artists and about a dynamic literary tradition that has remained largely invisible to most audiences.

* * *

While research skills and academic excellence—such as demonstrated in Samantha King-Shaw's essay—ranked high among the benefits that graduates found crucial to their honors experience, few alums mentioned that such assets were beneficial to them in the early stages of their career or in getting

a job. These benefits were, however, crucial to them once they got a job—in both the performance and enjoyment of their work—and at least as important to them in the quality of their personal lives. These perceptions are relevant to the two research essays that follow, both of which examine how much, if at all, graduates think that the values of honors facilitated their competition in the job market. This research foregrounds and complicates the role that honors programs play in helping students enter and succeed in the job market.

In “‘Best of Both Worlds’: Alumni Perspectives on Honors and the Liberal Arts,” Angela King Taylor of the University of Missouri, Kelsey Daniels of International Literacy and Development, and Molly Knowlton of Drexel University describe their qualitative study based on interviews of 16 recent honors graduates at an unnamed university. Their study aim was “to build a deeper understanding of the extent to which skills acquired through the liberal arts curriculum of an honors college help alumni reach their first destination post-graduation.” After discussing the learning objectives of this honors college—“intellectual engagement, critical reasoning, disciplinary methods, communication skills, intercultural competence, interdisciplinary inquiry, and research competence”—the authors describe the importance that employers assign to each objective, in general indicating a positive sense of the objectives but a more negative impression of how well honors students apply them on the job. In their interviews of the recent graduates, the authors found that, like employers, most of the 16 interviewees valued the objectives but expressed mixed feelings about their application to job performance: while the honors college students “obtain liberal arts skills that help them reach their first destinations, they are often unable to articulate, recognize, translate, and apply the liberal arts skills they have acquired to their career settings—especially non-academic ones.”

A quantitative research study in the Netherlands came to different conclusions: namely, that most businesses there were unfamiliar with honors programs and that an honors education did not substantially increase a student’s success in attaining a job. In “Dutch Honors Alumni Looking Back on the Impact of Honors on their Personal and Professional Development,” Arie Kool, Elanor Kamans, and Marca V. C. Wolfensberger present the results of a longitudinal, cross-sectional survey of 79 graduates of extracurricular honors programs, called Honors Talent Programs, at Hanze University of Applied Science, Groningen. In the survey conducted from 2017 to 2021, the respondents acknowledged the importance of learning goals like the “ability to look beyond boundaries” and “ability to show initiative and guts” to their

professional and personal development, but they were “uncertain about the role of the honors certificate in their applications for jobs.” The nine learning goals of the Honors Talent Programs resemble those of most honors programs in the U.S. and are like those described in the previous essay. In evaluating the effectiveness of the learning goals, graduates rated them all “on or above the midpoint of the scale,” with “the ability to look beyond boundaries” and “the ability to show initiative as well as courage” as most important to their personal and professional goals. The authors suggest, however, based on their results, that “a useful addition to the honors programs would be to provide some training in the way alumni can use honors during an application. Alumni do mention the positive effect of honors on networking and projects in the work field, but it is not evident that they learn to present themselves favorably during applications.”

Both research studies suggest that joining an honors program in order to increase the likelihood of getting a job after graduation is a risky business. This suggestion substantiates the stated objectives of most honors programs, which typically focus on the values described in the 44 essays by graduates in the Forum: values like critical thinking, sense of community, diversity, active learning, interdisciplinary studies, lifelong learning, and personal transformation—values that lead to personal and professional satisfaction but not necessarily to a job.

The final essay in this issue of *JNCHC* has a more peripheral but nevertheless relevant connection to the Forum on “The Value of Honors to its Graduates.” Many of the Forum essays describe the authors’ initial doubts and anxieties upon joining an honors program but then the transformation of that stress into confidence once they joined a community of supportive and like-minded peers. In “Perfectionism and Honors Students: Cautious Good News,” Jennifer S. Feenstra of Northwestern College did a comparative study of two kinds of perfectionism—maladaptive evaluative-concerns perfectionism and “more adaptive personal-strivings perfectionism”—in honors and non-honors students. Based on a quantitative assessment of 147 college students, 27% of whom were honors students, the study determined that both honors and non-honors students evinced roughly the same signs of evaluative-concerns perfectionism, in which students base their sense of self-worth on how they perceive themselves to be judged by others and resulting in anxiety and stress. However, honors students showed greater signs of personal-strivings perfectionism, “which involves setting high standards for oneself and being strongly motivated to reach those standards” and is associated with “high well-being and lower stress.”

While Feenstra's study did not examine the precise causes of this higher degree of adaptive perfectionism among honors students, the Forum essays might suggest that it arises from the sense of acceptance and belonging that so many honors graduates consider to have been a key value of their honors experience. Remarkably absent from the essays by honors graduates was a recollection of feeling pressured or judged by their teachers or peers; on the contrary, the consensus was that they felt motivated and supported in their honors community—a consensus that should encourage honors administrators and faculty to feel pride in their personal commitment to cultivating their students' well-being, not just while they are in honors but throughout their lives.

Journal

OF THE National Collegiate Honors Council

**THE VALUE OF HONORS
TO ITS GRADUATES**

Interdisciplinary Survival

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; academic motivation; University of Toledo (OH)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 3–5

In 1966, the University of Toledo Honors Program encouraged students to create their college curriculum. As a result, I created an interdisciplinary major in Russian studies. When confronted with different disciplinary approaches, goals, and values, students must think outside the boxes. Interdisciplinary studies generate critical thinking, flexibility, and creativity.

Russian language, history, and political science raised questions about the relationships between culture, political theory, and historical outcomes. The two-semester Honors seminar in Russian and Soviet literature (in translation) provided a point of contrast with the first book of *Anna Karenina* for third-year Russian. A translation must transcend both languages. Translators work as artists, not as machines.

The M.A. in European History came next. In my thesis, *The Martyrs of Westminster: Burton, Bastwick, and Prynne*, I argued that the Court of the Star Chamber's 1637 inquisition of these men resulted in the abolition of this kangaroo court by the Long Parliament in 1641. Again, critical thinking, creative thinking, and flexible thinking contributed to the formation of the thesis, not to mention its research and writing.

A major interdisciplinary breakthrough came in 1987. The Department of Language and Literature at Jackson Community College in Jackson, Michigan, hired me as an adjunct to teach two sections of English composition. Then they added Conversational Russian and Introduction to Philosophy to the repertoire. Except for Russian, all my courses lay outside the undergraduate major and the M.A. in European History. Juggling such a teaching load would have been impossible without an interdisciplinary background.

In 1989, an ad appeared in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* for a full-time Liberal Studies Instructor at Yavapai College in central Arizona. The ideal candidate would team-teach Western Civilization and Connections courses—one-hour, team-taught interdisciplinary courses on issues of current interest. For example, the program offered “Connections: AIDS: A Modern Plague.” Ernest Boyer’s “making connections across disciplines” both drove the creation of Connections classes and stood at the core of the outcomes desired by the Liberal Studies program.

After I applied, several professors interviewed me via a conference telephone call. Then, one challenge remained before I earned an in-person interview in Arizona—design a Connections Course on a topic that serves our curriculum. I had 48 hours.

“Rings of Fire: Paradigms of East-West Thought” flashed through my mind. Considering the countries and cultures on opposite sides of the Pacific Rim, my course focused on five areas: history, literature, philosophy, technology, and art. It would examine the differences between Eastern and Western philosophy; for example, the nonlinear approach of Buddhism as compared with the rigid logic of Aristotelian categories. Students would compare 19th-century American westward expansion with the simultaneous Russian expansion eastward. Wild West meets Siberia! The art module would feature Japanese woodblock prints and Renoir paintings, Chinese opera and Wagner, Kabuki theater, and classical ballet. The goal of “Rings of Fire” was to develop a synthetic, cross-cultural, and interdisciplinary way of thinking to meld the best traditions of both civilizations. I got the job.

When I started teaching at Yavapai in 1989 as a full-time professor, interdisciplinary heroics commenced. The program featured six instructors team-teaching Western Civ I, II, and III. The director required that I deliver full lectures on topics outside of my discipline of history, for example, Aristotle, Scholasticism, Modern Japan, modern physics, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and existentialism. To resurrect the defunct college newspaper, another professor and I created “Connections: The Media and Society.” Finally, I taught “AIDS:

A Modern Plague” with a biologist and a social historian. Before I retired, I taught that course by myself—a one-person interdisciplinary professor.

However, the most difficult challenge I faced at Yavapai occurred outside the classroom. The Faculty Grievance Committee required me to preside over a 30-day grievance process. I called the social historian who chaired my search committee and asked him, “What do I tell them?” He advised, “Do not tell them anything. Instead, ask them how they would like to proceed.” With that sage counsel, I initiated the process. A satisfactory outcome awaited both the grievant and the administration.

My honors education, graduate school experience, and teaching at two community colleges demanded interdisciplinary thinking. Such thinking generated the critical, creative, and flexible capacities that ensured my survival. However, and more importantly, the existential crises facing humanity are connected—the war in Ukraine, COVID, and climate change. The world needs interdisciplinary survivalists to cut the Gordian knot. The future depends upon it.

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Connections

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; humanistic education; University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (TN)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 7–8

“It is sweet to think I was a companion in an expedition that never ends.”

—Czeslaw Milosz

I went off to college confident that I knew what I needed from higher education and just how I would put it to use. I had not yet learned of *hubris* and was afflicted by the arrogance of youth, born of ignorance. Fortunately for me, grown-ups had designed the required curriculum that, along with a scholarship, was part of my honors program, and I was blessed with the classic liberal core curriculum and the Great Books tradition. Having wiser, better educated minds in control of many of my curricular choices—combined with a requirement to attend all performances of the local symphony, opera, and ballet—transformed me and continues to enrich my life even now, in retirement. The honors curriculum set me on a lifelong course of seeking not just “the best that has been thought and said,” but also the most beautiful that has been created and done. It opened my eyes to treasures I had been blind to, that give me joy to this day.

Learning by the Socratic method taught me how to make a rational argument, how to engage in civil argument without demonizing those I disagree

with, and to honestly face my own errors. It gave me an attitude of toleration and moral humility that our culture desperately needs to regain. It honed my reasoning skills at least as much as designing and analyzing lab research in the field of my major.

Honors taught me of the Great Conversation across the centuries and made me feel an emotional connection to thinkers, writers, and artists long dead and even to those who don't yet exist but will study the same classic works long after I am gone. I learned that the issues I was thinking about as I entered adulthood—questions of suffering, death, justice, meaning, and value—have been universal to human beings since prehistory and have been wrestled with by some of humanity's greatest intellects. Some of the proposed answers to those questions seemed ridiculous and some valuable, but sorting through both good and bad honed my thinking and broadened my horizons. Instead of a cold abstraction, *humanity* became a warm and embracing idea. Instead of a story disconnected from and irrelevant to me, the history of Western civilization became my story. I realized I was part of a much greater whole.

Perhaps most fundamentally, honors gave me a sense of rootedness, a sense of place. A sense of the Earth's place in time and of our species' place in the story of life on Earth. A sense of Western culture's place in the history of humanity and of our nation's place in that culture. A sense of my place as a citizen of our republic, my responsibility to my local community, and my responsibility to my professional community. That sense of place, of connectedness across time and location, is sometimes burdensome but always comforting—and it makes apathy impossible.

Honors did for me what higher education was always intended to do, at least before it became nothing more than the pathway to a good job: it made me a better and more complete human being than I would have been without it.

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The Lexicon of Honors Education

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; first-generation college students; Long Island University, Brooklyn (NY)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 9–11

The word of the year, as my LIU Brooklyn Honors Program peers and I would identify it in 1979, was “juxtaposition,” not a word I was very familiar with before entering college but one that was tossed about with abandon by professors in my first-year seminars (including Bernice Braid, director and co-founder of the LIU Brooklyn Honors Program) and that would become a close friend by my spring essay on *Madame Bovary*. Seeing things in relation to each other would prove to be an important feature in my education. As a first-generation college student, I had little forewarning about what college would hold in store. My selection of an undergraduate institution was pragmatic, chosen primarily because of a generous scholarship and proximity to home, where I continued to live during my undergraduate years. Uninspired reasons perhaps, but the outcome proved fortuitous. Those team-taught seminars in literature, history, and philosophy, capped at 16 to encourage robust participation, were the single most important part of my undergraduate education. The courses, which met consecutively thrice weekly, shared a theme and kept pace with each other, marching through historical periods, allowing us to see the connections among the disciplines and demonstrating how ideas

manifested in events and artistic creation. Once a month or so, three cohorts of students met together along with six professors to discuss the places where these disciplines overlapped, but to be honest the imbrications were ever-present, encouraging the students to see how ideology erupts in art and vice versa.

When I returned to work at that same Honors Program in 1988, after a brief foray into public relations, the word of the year was “experiential” in anticipation of the third United Nations semester hosted by LIU Brooklyn. City as Text™, the world as laboratory, encourages an exploration of place as a work of art, requiring students to distinguish between what they expect to see and what is really there and facilitating their understanding of the effects of their own presence on the landscape. The opportunity to teach a few interdisciplinary electives eventually sent me in the direction of a graduate program where I would study the relationship between the visual arts and literature, looking at photographs, both imagined and actual, in American novels since *The House of the Seven Gables*. I was by then primed to investigate the ways that art shapes and is shaped by culture and clear in the knowledge that literature cannot be studied in a vacuum.

By 1998, in a culmination of all my experiences in honors programs—as student, assistant director, and teacher—the word was most definitely “interdisciplinary,” as I began a tenure-track position at Wilkes Honors College, a campus 40 miles from its founding institution, Florida Atlantic University. Instead of touring classrooms and visiting the library during my interview, I watched bulldozers overturn soil on a large plot of land in a yet-to-be-developed community. The buildings were over a year from completion, and students would not cross the threshold for another 18 months, but five faculty would create the curriculum whose distinction would be interdisciplinary education. We interviewed students whose imaginations were up to the task of the campus’s blank slate. Like the founding faculty, they were thrilled by endless possibilities, the absence of traditions and customs that might interfere with new ideas. My colleagues and I created a curriculum that relied strongly on team-taught classes and linked courses designed to talk to each other through chronologically linked readings and common meetings. It didn’t replicate my first-year seminars (though not for lack of trying on my part), but it did capture the spirit of curiosity, investigation, and collaboration that I experienced in my undergraduate career. The absence of departments in that institution created an environment conducive to intellectual engagement. The corridor that housed my office was home to faculty in

anthropology, biology, history, philosophy, political science, psychology, and physics, and our team-taught classes were often the result of hallway conversations and early evening debates.

So many of the principles and techniques of honors education have permeated higher education as best practices—flipped classrooms, first-year seminars, team-teaching, learning communities, all espousing the belief that cohorts exposed to a spectrum of perspectives are better able to see and respond to the world. Honors education requires an understanding of context, placement, perspective, and interconnections, all of which contribute to the ability to read a text or a room.

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Honor-ing Parenthood

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; place-based education; Ohio State University (OH)—Honors Program

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As I write this essay, I am a few weeks from turning sixty. The sudden appearance of this moment on my horizon has taken me by surprise, to say the least. I ask myself where all that time went, oscillating between disbelief that I'm neither that younger version of myself that lives on in my imagination nor the version of myself that I'd dreamed I might become. The round number provides an opportunity to hit "pause," to grapple with how *here* came from *there*, to assess where some forks in the road happened, the influences that impacted who I became.

One of those forks arrived spring semester 1983. Chosen to participate in the Puerto Rico Honors Semester, I found myself living on a dormitory floor in Río Piedras with around three dozen students—a mixture of mainlanders from honors programs around the country and local students from honors at the University of Puerto Rico. That semester had its "complexities," perhaps a euphemism for difficulties, though of the sort that need not always be considered pejorative. For reasons of program design, classes were taught in English, which made it possible for students like me (with no Spanish language) to attend but, quite appropriately, was not well-received by UPR students unhappy studying their rich cultural and political history in a colonial language.

Nonetheless, *together* we travelled to nearly every quarter of the island, not on an exercise of “sightseeing” or “tourism” but on experiential forays. I use the word “foray” here quite intentionally, sharing as it does a French root connecting it to the word “forage.” Those adventures were our guided but collective expeditions for a food of understanding. Observations that began through individual eyes were tested, enlarged, and refined through our engagement with each other, not only in the classroom but, quite often, in spirited discussions that lasted well into the night.

Much less than any specific text we encountered or in-class presentation, I remember how excited and engaged I felt about that Honors Semester. A few months later, a group of us had a mini-reunion at that year’s NCHC Conference in Philadelphia. There, as part of the programming on offer, I attended one of the City as Text™ exercises, glimpsing in the process some of the magic that made my semester in Puerto Rico come alive. Hooked, I repeated the Honors Semester experience the next year at Long Island University in Brooklyn.

So, a few years later, relocating to London with two, then three, young kids in tow, it seemed a given to parent using the methods that inspired me. Together, we dove headlong into explorations aimed at reading the “text” of the city that was our new home. On school holidays and over summer vacations, we organized itineraries around threads that co-mingled history, art, music, and literature. An hour of sketching J. M. W. Turner’s “Fighting Temeraire” at the National Gallery led us outside to Trafalgar Square and a gaze at Nelson’s Column before heading to see Nelson’s grave in the crypt at St. Paul’s. We visited the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, hunting down artifacts that gave a context for the sailors who comprised the crews of ships like HMS Temeraire, took a walk along the Thames imagining an earlier time, then headed home on the Underground, spending some of our ride discussing how to fit together the pieces of the elaborate puzzle we were creating collectively.

If anything, what my honors experience provided was a belief that learning is best done *collaboratively* and *in place*. My children, as with my colleagues in my honors semesters in Puerto Rico and Brooklyn, arrived at these moments together at different ages, with varying interests and talents. Bit by bit, with this project and others, we mapped the layers of London’s complicated cityscape, guided by questions more than answers, appreciating the unique perspective that each could contribute.

But we also experienced the power of situated learning—treating “home” with the fresh and inquisitive eyes of an explorer. Like Michel de Certeau, we came to see that “Space is a practiced place.” The raw material of geography, with its empty shells of buildings and its vacant arteries of boulevards, became transformed through inquiry into lived *spaces* with specific histories, patterns of interaction, and *senses of being*. The process of excavating those spaces . . . well, it offered fun for them and me.

A philosopher no less than John Lennon reminded us that “Life is what happens while you’re busy making other plans.” At sixty, I find myself less focused on what those plans *were* than what my life *is*. Time and again, I return to Honors Semesters, now nearly forty years ago, grateful to have a set of tools that continue to help me excavate the world around me *and* to have passed them along.

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Non Magis Sed Melior, “Not More, but Better”

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; experiential learning; Columbia College (SC)—Dr. John Zubizarreta Honors Program

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The year was 1989. I had moved from a rural community in Michigan to South Carolina to attend Columbia College, a private, liberal-arts women's college. The culture shock and adjustment were equal parts exhilarating and unnerving. I was welcomed by the warm, Southern charm of campus and was nurtured, personally and academically, by the close-knit community of the honors program.

I had a rich college experience in general, but being an honors student changed the entire trajectory of my career and shaped me personally, instilling confidence, motivation, and purpose. The indelible mark stemmed from the program's motto: *Non Magis Sed Melior*, “Not More, but Better.” The program was intentionally grounded not in the quantity of coursework but in the quality, delivering a deep academic experience that challenged students to reach their highest potential as scholars and leaders.

I enjoyed many honors courses distinguished by intimate learning environments and professors with unparalleled enthusiasm for teaching excellence.

Oftentimes, classes were as small as five students, held not only in traditional classrooms but also outside on the lawn, in common areas on couches, or even at McDonald's. I was inspired by an English professor's exuberance that rivaled Robin Williams's impassioned character, John Keating, in *Dead Poets Society*. He, too, encouraged each student to "make her life extraordinary." The value of an honors education is embodied by developing lifelong skills and forging personal bonds with students and professors alike. These features are arguably the threads of the tapestry of honors programs across the country and the hallmarks of distinction that draw students to honors.

Participating in honors conferences opened my eyes to a larger world and whetted my appetite to want more, to dream bigger. While at my first conference, we shuttled around the streets of Fells Point—a historic, waterfront neighborhood in Baltimore—to experience the ethnic culture and diversity. We dined in an authentic tapas restaurant where our honors director instructed the server to speak to us only in Spanish. To this day, tapas remain one of my favorite fares. During that trip, I would have neither predicted that a few years later I would return to those streets as a graduate student at George Washington University nor imagined that my profession would take me to conferences around the world. Not more, but better.

Non Magis Sed Melior especially came to life for me in honors biology. I had dreamed of becoming a lawyer since the age of ten. I charted my academic path based on recommendations for getting into law school. However, to meet my science requirements for graduation, I enrolled in honors biology. During captivating lectures on the fundamentals of genetics, the professor went beyond the textbook to bring in recent publications in the field. Instead of moving on as the syllabus indicated, she embraced our interest and dug deeper with us, challenging us to think of the emerging possibilities of how these findings may impact science and healthcare. My intellectual curiosity was piqued. Then, she arranged a fieldtrip to a rare, at that time, degree-granting genetic counseling program to attend a private lecture and tour the laboratories.

The time was contemporary to the discovery that some forms of early-onset familial breast cancer are heritable, which ultimately led to the cloning and sequencing of the BRCA1 gene. Women who were taking drastic preventive measures with prophylactic double mastectomies or who were living under a cloud of dread awaiting their fate became empowered to make informed decisions about their health. Concurrently, the gene for Huntington's disease—a rare, inherited neurological condition—was discovered. A

classmate would be confronted with whether she wanted to be tested. For me, the power of genetics was unleashed. One professor, within the freedom of an honors course, urged us to explore and be challenged. Not more, but better.

I changed my major to biology and focused my honors project on a genetic survey of the student population. I was later awarded my PhD in genetics. Fortuitously, I have been able to meld my pre-law interests with my passion for science throughout my career. From my postdoctoral experience at a life sciences startup to a biotechnology company to a research-intensive, top academic medical center, I have been able to succeed at the intersection of science and business, developing a rewarding career leading research operations, administration, and strategy. In my current position, my impact is greater by enabling the research of many scientists than if I had stayed in the laboratory. Not more, but better.

Reflecting on my journey in 2022 makes my achievements seem ordinary, given where we stand in education and science today. But as I rewind thirty years to put my growth into perspective, I realize that my experience in an honors program grounded in interdisciplinary, collaborative, and experiential learning; empowerment; and leadership was quite extraordinary—indeed, not more, but better.

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Why Honors Matters

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; communicative competence; University of Delaware (DE)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 21–22

In 2022, I turned half-a-century old. I have a loving family, good friends, and a really interesting career at a large law firm. By any measure, I am a lucky man.

So how, over these fifty years, did I get here? Supportive parents, who were also public-school educators, are unquestionably the foundation. A good law school education? No doubt, that also helped. But time and again, when I think about the inflection point for my personal and professional path, it was my time at the University of Delaware. To be more precise, it was the university's Honors Program.

When I started at the university, all freshmen Honors students were tucked into the least-new dorm at the least-close edge of campus, literally on the other side of the train tracks. I presume we were placed there because the administration assumed we wouldn't complain, and we'd be studying a lot, anyway. These were not entirely inaccurate assumptions. We did not complain, and we did study hard, but I have some news. Honors students are also fun. They are interesting. They are engaged and engaging. Particularly at a larger university, immediately being connected with a community of intelligent, thoughtful, and *fun* people is an amazing thing.

By facilitating this community, an Honors program encourages learning in a most important and unique way. You can be authentic to who you are—it's okay to study really hard, and if that is all you want to do, knock yourself out. Nobody will judge. If you want to work hard, but play hard too once in a while, that also works. "Be true to thyself," and all that. It is incredibly important—particularly at the stage in life when the rational part of your brain is still developing—to know that there is a community of like-minded folks who will support you. And this support will carry throughout your lifetime—it becomes part of you.

An honors program also encourages boldness and creativity. There is no hiding in the back of a 15-person class. It is time to step up, maybe make a mistake or two, but keep going. That's what you're here for, right? I emerged from the Honors Program a much more confident, poised, and *prepared* person. I cannot emphasize the preparation piece enough. If you want to shine among a carefully curated group of top students, in small classes, with brilliant faculty, you cannot fake it. Know your stuff and be prepared to explain it. This mentality certainly has served me well in the courtroom, in my personal life, and within organizational leadership.

Finally, I must mention writing and communication. I am writing right now. We all write and communicate with people literally every day, for a good part of the day. Even if the technologies have changed since 1993, it is as important as ever to be a clear writer and a persuasive communicator. Survey courses have their value, no doubt. But whether an English major, a chemical engineering major, or some uniquely brilliant hybrid of both (not this guy), you need to say what you mean, explain why you are saying it, and have this practice become muscle memory. An honors program allows for individualized attention to, and focus on, the writing and communication process. When I now sit on the hiring side of the table, and I see that someone is an Honors graduate, I know that they will be a strong communicator. And I know that goes a long, long way towards success.

So, that's all I have for now. Thanks for the opportunity to share the importance of Honors in my life. It mattered. It matters.

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Me, Snoop, and Rich Old People, or Intersectionality and its Impending Effect on Paradigm Shaping and Life Trajectory

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; *VIBE* (periodical); University of Alabama at Birmingham (AL)—University Honors Program

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The UAB HP transformed me.

It really started with an article—two articles—in a *Vibe Magazine* I was given by the HP Director. The September 1993 issue included two people—one of whom I did not previously know existed—who would change my paradigm. As a 21-year-old from North Birmingham, I was all about Snoop Dogg, 2Pac, and hard-core hip hop, and that article about the old dude would have to wait.

I was given the magazine by two people for two very different reasons: Dail Mullins wanted me to have it because Snoop Dogg was on the cover. Snoop was a rapper and more importantly to me a Crip and one of my heroes for both reasons. Ada Long, the HP director, shared it for the article about Cornel West, who would replace Snoop in my pantheon of people I wanted to

be. The gift of that magazine says as much about my experience as an honors student as any other.

I entered the UAB Honors Program with the clear focus on changing the world through journalism, and I nearly did it. While in the UABHP, I became the section editor of the university's award-winning newspaper, the editor of the HP newsletter, and the co-editor of the university's student magazine. It was not these experiences but the lens that I developed through my HP experience to understand the experiences that make me who I am and will be.

The world when I entered UAB was a much simpler place than it was when I left. Or at least one of us was much simpler. My paradigm, perspective, and purpose were all radically shifted during my HP experience, and I am thankful that I had no idea what college was supposed to be, or I might have ruined it. My HP sojourn was a process without a clear product in which I learned that the process is at least as important as what it produces. The context of my time in honors might be helpful for clarification:

In the fall of 1992 or around that time: Four officers were acquitted (and later indicted) in the Los Angeles beating of Rodney King, and violence erupted in Los Angeles; Caspar W. Weinberger was indicted in the Iran-Contra affair; the courts cleared the Exxon Valdez skipper for an oil spill; and the US Supreme Court reaffirmed the right to abortion—all issues that would be front page on any news blog today—but my main concern then (as now) was a local murder and whether it even mattered to people on the other side of town. That leads back to the *Vibe Magazine*; in that issue I learned a concept that still haunts me: intersectionality. To my knowledge, the word never appeared in the issue, but it was written all through it. Intersectionality helped me to understand why I was nearly kicked out of an African American Literature class for the same subject I was encouraged to talk about in a British Literature class—Race—and it also helped me understand some of the conflicts I had with fellow Christians when talking about Jesus that we never had when talking about religion. It helped me to clarify what it meant to be a Crip-loving, 'Pac-quoting disciple of Christ in a Black Gangster Disciple neighborhood who gave space to LGBT spokespersons and Far-Right advocates in the city where Dr. King was jailed.

That other old dude in the *Vibe* magazine was Cornel West, and during my time in the UAB HP, I would meet Dr. West, Black Panther Bobby Seale, soon to be Massachusetts Governor Duval Patrick, Ralph Nader, and many other movers and shakers, but without the UABHP experience, they would have just been mostly rich old people using big words with little meaning.

Instead, they were like guideposts on my road to Understanding myself and the world into which I was maturing.

The U.S. was headed in the opposite direction from that for which my HP education was preparing me: I learned in a multicultural and multicontextual environment, and I now teach in a context that is divisively unilateral. Not only my HP education but the full experience—seminars, gatherings, fellowships, and colloquia—positioned me to transform a world that is pressing me to conform and choose a side. During my time since graduation—nearly 20 years—I have served in AmeriCorps, the U.S. Army, and Teach for America in that order, and each organization in its own way pushed me to conform, as organizations are wont to do; the contrast between these experiences and my undergraduate education showed me the value of the HP process of developing the ME in me. In the HP, I learned that I could be both/and rather than either/or, even when either/or was more comfortable. I now teach, lead, minister, and counsel in a nation that appears to make either/or a matter of life and death while both/and looks like hypocrisy rather than an attempt to build community. In the HP, I was transformed from the inside out, and now that is the work I attempt to do every day, one person at a time.

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My Honors Experience as Authentic to My Life

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Northeastern Illinois University, 1996–1998

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; Muslim American students; Northeastern Illinois University (IL)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 27–28

I watch the news and cannot help but think that the more things change, the more they stay the same: Some people can't pay their bills, some children can be cruel, tensions can become an exploding tinder box. There was a summer when the city of Chicago set up cooling centers to combat record-breaking summer heat. A child had pushed another child out of a Chicago Housing Authority high-rise over a candy dispute. Proposition 187 had pitted neighbor against neighbor in my home state of California, and a million black men heard the clarion call and marched to the capital.

Having Indian immigrant parents meant that Urdu words like *susral* (in-laws) and *jahez* (dowry) were a part of my family background, and moving to Chicago was the next natural progression in my life.

I had transferred into the elementary education department at NEIU partly because I wanted to understand American public education from all angles. The American Muslim community I was a part of had a love/hate relationship with the idea of public education while also almost deifying teachers. Joining the University Honors Program provided legitimacy to my need to explore my roots fully. I had already recognized parallels between American Puritans and the puritanical revivalism around my community. This was years

before 9/11; American Muslims were a blip, a curious aberration, if anything, in the larger mainstream society.

I proposed a Case Study of the Full-Time Islamic Schools in the Chicago-land area (there were only three at that time) to a professor in the education department, Craig Cunningham, who almost seemed to revel in telling students he was a Harvard law school dropout. He worked tirelessly to point me in the right direction when it came time to decide on an inquiry, methodology, and thesis. We met on a regular basis to determine how my University Honors thesis should proceed. He provided invaluable pointers and actually read my drafts.

Being part of the UHP gave me the green light to transform my fairly standard university education into something that was authentic to my life. It allowed me to engage in writing and research that was beyond the scope of my classes. I delivered my first-born soon after I graduated from UHP and NEIU. I am grateful that this is a part of my history.

Today I work for the Youth Academy at College of DuPage among other things.

A Safe Place to Explore: The Value of Honors in Higher Education

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; student engagement; Youngstown State University (OH)—The Sokolov Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 29–31

Like many students who join Honors programs in college, I was first introduced to honors classes in high school. As someone who was identified as “gifted and talented” in elementary and high school, I was regularly at the top of my class academically as a child and adolescent. This earned me favor with both my parents and teachers, but it often alienated me from my peers. When you’re “that kid who always knows the answer” or “that kid who always gets an A,” you can be scorned by your peers rather than admired. While some individuals may thrive from this attention, I, like many others in similar situations, grew uncomfortable and tried to downplay a desire to learn and achieve in my effort to fit in with my classmates. Even within those high school honors classes, the competition for class rank and the implications for scholarships and college applications usurped the potential for camaraderie.

Honors programs in higher education present a different opportunity for high-achieving gifted and talented students. With the pressures of class rank and competition removed, the divide between students evaporates. Honors programs at this level allow students of similar abilities and interests to

connect and thrive together. There is a purity and authenticity to relationships which stem from these higher education honors programs because participants unite around common goals: the exploration of academic topics in greater depth, the desire to partner with others to serve their communities, the quest to challenge existing constructs and change the world.

It has been over twenty years since I became part of such an honors program, but the opportunities presented to me by joining my honors program have shaped my entire life, both personally and professionally. In lieu of feeling ostracized as an honors student, I discovered psychological safety with my peers in the honors program. In this group of high achievers, a love for learning became commonplace. Being surrounded by other students who enjoyed scholarship and research empowered me to delve into those subjects that interested me and, moreover, to share my academic passion with my peers. This honors community ignited a sense of excitement about the vast academic opportunities available. The respect and hunger for learning in each member of the program encouraged a pursuit of academic excellence focused not on personal achievement but rather personal fulfillment. Belonging to such a community removed previous barriers, such as the desire to fit in, and allowed me more fully to embrace my love of research and learning. As an undergraduate, I took specific honors courses, but I also had the ability to create my own honors projects and coursework in partnership with my professors. This freedom to explore topics of interest in greater depth with instructors made a lasting impression. While I majored in English, I took several honors courses pertaining to art and music. I spent an academic quarter analyzing a Beatles album. I took a geology course where I composed a collection of poems based on a local park. Being able to personalize learning and explore topics through projects resonated with me and my peers, and we witnessed a unique response from our instructors. Energized by student attention and creativity, professors shared their passions for their own areas of study. Such energy is contagious. Student enthusiasm reawakens enthusiasm in instructors and thereby enriches the honors community.

Belonging to such a community impacted me professionally. I've explored both corporate and healthcare work environments but find myself ultimately most comfortable in higher education where a focus on learning and research is valued. Within my department, I strive to cultivate a sense of community where we learn from each other and share resources. I created a social bookmarking group for my colleagues, where all are welcome to share resources. I encourage my employees to make time for professional development, and

together we explore common reads as a way of researching how new ideas can impact our work. Encouraging others to explore those specific areas of interest that appeal to them and to share their findings with others strengthens our team and ultimately creates a learning community. The elements of my honors program which had the greatest impact on me, a community where an appreciation of learning and achievement generates ongoing enthusiasm in oneself and others, are those that shape my world as a professional educator. I am grateful to be a product of an honors program, and I believe it has made me a better individual both personally and professionally.

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An Honors Lifetime Love of Learning

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; educational attainment; West Virginia University (WV)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 33–35

It was the welcome letter from the Honors program director that drew me in.

I was hesitant to attend a large school, and West Virginia University was a big place. Even though being a Mountaineer ran deep in my family, I was drawn to smaller settings, with a desire for a more intimate education and close colleagues to converse and grow with. I wanted to know my professors and they me. But my skepticism that I could achieve this in Morgantown diminished when I read my acceptance letter from the Honors Director: “Honors courses are different: classes are smaller and the discussion level is high.” With this reassurance, I embraced the Honors program and the first great value I would enjoy throughout my collegiate years: being part of an intimate learning environment surrounded by peers, faculty, and administrators who cared deeply about learning, growing, and community.

It was students teaching Honors orientation that led me to love teaching and learning with others.

Honors orientation courses were taught by Honors upperclassmen. When my chance to teach such a course arrived, I leapt at the opportunity

and immediately fell in love with teaching. I loved planning a course of instruction and influencing the discovery path of others. Years later, that experience proved pivotal in achieving my first faculty position, which beget the second, and then the third. Student teaching was one of many opportunities uniquely available within the Honors program—and with benefits far beyond an undergraduate career. Bespoke opportunities for growth experiences are the second great value of the Honors program: the ability to leverage unique avenues for growth, achievement, and fulfillment, both while on campus and beyond.

It was the sense of discovery that led to a lifetime love of learning.

Everything about the Honors program—the intimacy of academic exploration, the deeply involved faculty, the community of fellow students living, learning, and growing together—created an experience in which I came to love learning itself, for the simple joy of discovering something new and achieving insights previously unknown. This love and joy of learning didn't fade after graduation; rather, it pushed me to continually seek out new and more challenging learning opportunities; in the two decades since I left WVU, I have completed four additional degree programs. I wholly credit the Honors experience with giving me the inspiration, energy, and dedication to continually pursue learning even while managing other life events. Thus, the third and greatest value of an Honors program lasts a lifetime: a love of learning.

As I reflect on the value of Honors over the course of my careers, no other collegiate activity or program had as great an influence on my life as the Honors program. I chose WVU to participate in a special Honors community of students, one that incubated passion, discovery, and intellectual exploration; it was in this special community that I felt at home and welcomed. I explored incredible Honors opportunities uniquely curated for us: opportunities that offered value to me not only while on campus but also after I had matriculated. And Honors fostered in me a love of lifetime learning that has rewards for both my personal and professional pursuits.

Honors doesn't conclude with a cap and gown.

Honors endures, and the value of Honors perpetuates as graduates enter the world and carry their Honors experience with them. Honors graduates can create communities wherever they go and stay engaged in an intellectual network that welcomes all in discovery and growth. Honors graduates create new opportunities for others, allowing others to stand on their shoulders,

just as they once stood on others. And Honors graduates inspire others to continue learning, just as they do themselves.

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Supportive and Impactful Honors Education

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; first-generation college students; Eastern Kentucky University (KY)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 37–39

Most honors students arrive at college as academically motivated high-achievers. Rigorous honors coursework no doubt serves to sharpen these students' skills even further. But is it the rigor of coursework that transforms honors students into change agents in society? My experience in honors is that academic rigor alone is hardly the most important determinant of the long-term differences that honors education makes in the lives of students. Instead, the magic of honors comes from the ways in which challenging content is delivered in classroom and community settings that are energetically interactive, reflective, and supportive. Intentionality in building supportive educational as well as social communities propels honors programs and honors colleges to meaningful and transformative student development and long-term societal impact.

Many of us enter college with limited worldviews, restricted by minimal exposure to differing viewpoints and an absence of self-awareness and capacity for genuine and deep reflective thinking. For many if not most students, interactive learning in honors inevitably challenges biases and narrow worldviews. Most honors units emphasize diverse perspectives and challenge preconceived thought patterns through a foundation of core honors

coursework, enhancing students' critical thinking and breadth of engagement with other worldviews. Insightful discussion and targeted content aimed at broadening and deepening appreciation of diverse perspectives are central to the honors experience. Rigorous content without critical thinking and diversity appreciation may lead to advanced performance on some assessments, but it does not by itself prepare students for living a fruitful and inclusive life. Knowledge without perspective is incomplete.

As a first-generation college graduate, my experiences in honors fundamentally shaped who I have become over the twenty years since graduation. Luckily, my honors program was designed with all the beneficial characteristics noted above. I stepped onto campus sheltered, naïve, and incredibly timid. I had left my family to come to college and was wonderfully met with an unexpected new honors family on campus. I obtained housing in the honors residence hall where returning honors students instantly welcomed and guided newcomers like me. We immediately met enthusiastic faculty in classes where we debated views of philosophers previously unknown to us and evaluated human rights issues across various nations. From day one in honors, I found myself a member of a welcoming academic community that supported student development and emphasized faculty and student-peer connection and community. The bonds made with professors led to deep discussions about life goals and altered my plans for future educational and professional pursuits. They were not just my teachers; they were mentors and supporters. These days, as I am a professor myself and trainer of future education professionals, my honors experiences more than two decades ago continue to shape my current professional life. I attempt to build a similar supportive educational climate that is coupled with academically stimulating content. The concept of creating positive, safe, and supportive educational climates is interwoven across the courses that I teach, and it is my hope that my students will emphasize such importance in their future roles as school psychologists.

The impact of honors in my life extends far beyond my experiences in honors classrooms. Many honors units (including the one that I attended) offer cultural opportunities ranging from arts events to transformative study away and study abroad experiences. In my honors program, I especially recall participation in our traditional annual honors "cultural trips" (to New York City one year and New Orleans another) as landmarks in broadening my perspectives. So were my trips to and presentations at NCHC in Orlando in 1999, Washington, D.C., in 2000, and Chicago in 2001. Extending their reach

beyond the classroom, effective honors units help students become more invested and connected with peers and professors. Done well, honors education inspires lifelong academic reflection, connects students within networks of mentorship (as mentees and eventually mentors themselves), develops diverse perspectives, and produces well-rounded graduates. Through our honors communities, we achieve far more than we ever could alone.

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Valuing Diversity

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; collaborative learning; Youngstown State University (OH)—The Sokolov Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 41–42

In 1998, when I entered Youngstown State, I had never heard of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), which is now considered to be one of the most critical investments a company can make in building toward success. Just because the focus had not come yet, though, does not mean that the principles were not impacting people's lives, including mine. At the core, an honors program exists to allow students who are academically strong access to additional resources, courses, and opportunities to test their strengths and push themselves further. This criterion naturally allows for students from a wide variety of backgrounds to come together with common goals. No one is required to participate in honors, and this self-selecting nature of the program allows students to know that everyone there is not only capable but also choosing to work harder, to do more, and to be their best, which is a unique starting point for building relationships.

The honors program at Youngstown State University was the first place where I was introduced to a program that spent time identifying and valuing students with a wide array of backgrounds, identifying similarities, finding common ground, and encouraging us to be our authentic selves. Prior to the honors program, I had an experience like most people in high school, seeing one right way to be, one right way to dress, talk, think, and though I was academically successful, I never felt like

I really understood quite how I fit or saw who I was as “good enough” for whatever social expectations I imagined to exist. When I moved into the honors dorm and entered the honors program, I suddenly found myself being a member of a community where we were all valued, regardless of whether we were passionate about theatre, math, music, or teaching. We all were recognized for having strengths that, if applied, could make the world better and make honors complete. The program was not a competition but a place where being at the top of your game was table stakes, and together we made each other stronger. I doubt I knew it at the time, but the idea that people are always doing their best stuck with me.

Throughout my professional career, I’ve always been driven by trying to find ways where my strengths could add value. In the last several years, as I’ve moved into more senior leadership roles, the best part of my job is learning about the unique backgrounds of my team members and finding ways to leverage those strengths for the improvement of the team in total. I work in IT, but I’ve hired and developed resources with backgrounds in art, history, philosophy, and more because I know that there are incredibly talented people in all disciplines, and I’m interested in hearing their stories and learning more about the value that they know they can bring to the team. Being part of the honors program helped me to see that I had something special and unique to contribute, but that there were also a lot of other very talented people around me who had something different, and equally valuable to give. It helped me to see my peers as resources, knowing who to go to because they were the expert in something where I needed help, and knowing I’d be willing to serve in the same capacity for others who needed my strengths. This exercise, recognizing my own value, valuing, rather than feeling threatened by others who were equal, or stronger than I was, and leveraging each other for both social and educational development were key to my experience in the program.

Today, DEI is a core focus of so many organizations, including mine. My foundational experiences of looking across a group of peers and knowing that each of us was different, unique, talented, and valued has paid dividends. When I build teams today, I’m not looking for a single set of skills, I’m looking for a complete set of team members who complement each other and push each other to be their best. That is what it feels like to be part of an honors program: everyone is strong—everyone works hard—and everyone has the same goal—to do good work and have fun, together.

Finding My Better Self and the Strength to Dream: The Impact of the Honors Experience

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; self-actualization (psychology); Perimeter College (GA)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 43–45

Honor.

It flows throughout the thread of life and shapes a path at every stage. It serves as an inner compass that navigates through growth and identity to find the destination of a better self. My experience as an honors student represents an important part of this journey and established a foundation of intrinsic values that continue to guide me through my professional and personal landscape. Looking inward today, I recognize these values in the mosaic of my belief system and how they became a driving force in my ongoing evolution as an individual. By honoring the values of critical thinking, continuous improvement, self-trust, and maintaining an active voice, my path remains anchored in wonder and discovery as I pursue my continued development.

Critical thinking represents the cornerstone of my methodology for evaluating situations and information in both personal and work settings. Cultivating this skill was a consistent theme in my honors classes and offered

the opportunity to explore diverse subjects and concepts. I gained new insight into the complex congregation of thoughts, ideals, and actions through a thorough examination of literature enriched by open and engaging discussion. This also strengthened my research skills with an enhanced ability to analyze and synthesize information to ascertain its validity, relevance, and connection. Honors instilled the drive to know more and remain fully informed so that I am prepared to make mindful decisions while proactively assessing for bias or misunderstanding.

Another important lesson that inspired me was discovering that perfection in one attempt is not the important objective. Continuous improvement offers a more empowered way to accomplish a goal or project and strengthens perception of the self. One simple phrase imparted during an honors class that I still embrace today embodies the beauty of this concept: writing is rewriting. For the trajectory of my writing skills, this changed everything and soon infiltrated many other parts of my life. Discovering that I learn more and expand my skills and knowledge by continuously evaluating and identifying ways to improve has removed the fear of the unknown and helped me understand that transformation and growth are the true objectives of the journey.

As my honors education continued to unfold, nurturing self-trust became a necessary focus that enabled me to challenge myself and stay strong in my views while engaging with others. This also gave me the control to let go of restrictive boundaries and make time for visionary and strategic thinking. Staying safe in what I know and neglecting to make time to envision new goals prevent me from creating a blueprint that transcends the day-to-day rather than mapping out a strategy for removing limitations and believing in myself without fear of failure. This encouraged me to dive into my ideas and interpretation of a subject with full conviction and commitment, trust the integrity of my argument or analysis, and go beyond my comfort zone.

Gathering these values together leaves space for the last and most influential. The paramount importance of an active voice and how this encompasses far more than action and the selection of words transformed my approach to communication. This guiding principle awakened me to the power of listening to the meaning of each word and understanding the driving force behind it. Modifying the intention and reception of a phrase by changing a passive expression into one of action was a revelation to me. In addition to improving my writing and communication skills, this guidance deepened my understanding of the economy of words and how it can help me fine-tune what I share with and comprehend from others.

The honors experience had a profound impact on me and shaped the arc of my future. It offered a great mirror that empowered me to see into myself, identify my beliefs, and enhance my understanding of the world around me and my role in it. The core values that honors introduced anchor me in a formative foundation as I continue my pursuit of personal and professional growth and excellence. Together, they weave a thread throughout my life that reveals the most valuable lesson of all: how to find my better self and foster the strength to continuously learn, serve, and dream.

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There and Back Again

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; undergraduate research; Texas A&M University (TX)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 47–49

I am fortunate to have experienced the Texas A&M University Honors Program in two unique capacities: first as an undergraduate (2001–2005) and now as a faculty member (2017–present). Both experiences have been tremendously enriching in different ways. As an undergraduate, my experience in the Texas A&M Honors Programs nurtured my growth as a scholar, encouraged independent thought, and allowed me to gain experience in scientific research, which started me on my path to becoming a scientist. As a faculty member, I now have the amazing opportunity to pay it forward by mentoring my own high-achieving undergrads, both in the classroom and the laboratory.

I was intimately involved with the University Honors Program all throughout college. As a freshman biochemistry major, one of the very first classes I attended was the Honors Life Sciences Learning Community. This was a small group of students who met weekly to talk about current topics in biochemistry, learn about cutting-edge research in the department, read scientific papers, and discuss issues relevant to college students such as building good study habits. This was my first toe dipped into honors, and I never looked back.

Over the next four years, I took a variety of honors coursework within my major (biochemistry, molecular genetics, microbiology) as well as interesting electives outside my major (English: *Art or Trash?*; sociology: *The Marriage Institution*). These courses allowed me and my peers a whole new level of engagement with the subject matter. They had a lot in common: small class sizes, in-depth discussions based on contemporary and classic literature, and writing intensive assignments. The professors made special efforts to ignite class discussions that left us with a deeper understanding of the material than we would have gained in a non-honors course. These small, engaging classes also allowed us to forge lifelong friendships. Some of my closest friends from the Honors program went on to do their PhD work at top institutions and have now settled all over the world, from California to Washington, D.C.; from the United Kingdom to Abu Dhabi. These classmates now serve in leadership positions in academia, medicine, and government.

I became involved in laboratory research as a freshman and quickly fell in love with it. After gaining enough experience to become entrusted with my own independent project, I joined the University Undergraduate Research Fellows program. This program allowed me to delve into the process of writing my own research thesis—a precursor to the scientific manuscripts and PhD dissertation that would come later. Beyond the writing itself, the program allowed me to attend several workshops on scientific writing and presentation skills as well as a seminar series in which each Research Scholar presented their research project in an oral presentation. I vividly remember my voice shaking as I nervously presented my findings in what was my first oral scientific presentation ever. I look back very fondly on that time as it was my introduction into the world of scientific research. I never looked back, and I shifted my career plan from medical school to graduate school due in large part to my experience with honors.

Fast forward 12 years through a PhD and postdoctoral fellowship. In 2017, I landed my dream job as a tenure-track Assistant Professor in the Texas A&M Department of Biology—my academic home. In the past 5 years, I have mentored a total of 27 undergraduates in my lab, over half of whom have been involved with honors and undergraduate research in some capacity. This includes honors research credits, honors writing intensives, 5 Undergraduate Research Scholars theses (and counting), participation in the Undergraduate Research Ambassadors program, and competition in university-level and national awards. My students are serving in leadership positions and engaging in peer mentoring through the honors program. They are learning how to

write research theses just as I did, and they are winning awards for their oral and poster presentations. I am privileged to watch these students come in as freshmen and become shaped through their involvement in the diversity of Honors activities over the next four years before they spread their wings and leave for medical, graduate, or professional school.

Participating in Honors as a student, and now as a faculty member, has shown me how much the opportunities afforded by the program fuel personal and professional growth, giving students opportunities that would not have been possible otherwise. Without the life-changing experiences of the honors program, I would certainly not be where I am today.

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Expensive Mistakes: How Hitting Career Rock Bottom Showed Me What I Really Learned in Honors

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; psychological resilience; Westminster College (UT)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 51–53

Twenty years ago, I was an honors student with a very well-rounded course schedule and a résumé full of interesting extracurricular activities and leadership experiences. Unfortunately, for me, “well-rounded” translated to “directionless,” and I had no idea what to do after graduation. That’s when I made my first mistake: I crowdsourced the decision.

I asked nearly everyone I knew for their opinion and the feedback was unanimous: go to law school. I can see why. If you had asked me at the time, “what is the benefit of an honors education?” I would have told you that the honors program trained me to think analytically, made me a stronger writer, and increased my intellectual capacity. In short: it was the perfect proving ground for a future lawyer. So, why not?

It turns out that law wasn’t for me. I won’t go into the long list of reasons why, but I can tell you that I realized this incompatibility on my very first day of law school. Because I wasn’t a quitter, I stubbornly saw it through to the

end. Then I took the bar exam. Then I practiced law for five years, bouncing around from job to job, trying to find something that felt right . . . digging myself into a deeper hole with every next step. That was my second mistake: not being able to recognize a sunk cost and move on.

So, after almost ten years of this downward spiral, I finally summoned the courage to climb out of the pit of despair that was my legal career. On that upward climb, I discovered the true value of my honors education.

My path up started with self-reflection. I realized that I didn't thrive in honors because I was smart. I thrived because honors provided a place where I could bring my authentic self to the table every day and collaborate with an energetic and diverse group of students who were just as curious and creative as I was. So, if you ask me now about the value of my honors education, I will tell you that it taught me to seek out or create the kind of environments I just described.

Armed with that realization, I started a new career search beginning with the "where" not the "what." I found an organization that values diversity and authenticity, and I plugged myself in where they had a need; this required mastering an entirely new skill set in finance and operations, which was no problem thanks to my "well-rounded" background. I absolutely love my job and I rely on the skills I learned in honors every day.

Westminster's Honors College recently solicited feedback from alums about the value of honors. (Many were very happily practicing law, I should add). I read through all forty reflections and saw common threads on how honors grads use their skills in the workplace.

One of the most prominent themes was a sense that we can confidently navigate diverse or cross-disciplinary spaces. Alums used their experience in interdisciplinary honors courses to seek out different perspectives, gather information across various sources, and come up with "out of the box" solutions.

The respondents also cited the diversity of the honors community and how the conversational nature of the classes gave them practice asking questions and listening to opposing viewpoints. They also learned to interrogate their own assumptions and biases, which is critical for collaboration and consensus building.

I collaborate with almost every department at my company and I can confirm that these skills were some of my most valuable takeaways from honors.

Nearly every alum in the survey credited honors for improving their communication skills in some way. Obviously, praise for the writing skills

we mastered topped the list, followed by gratitude for learning how to speak succinctly and precisely. Alums also shared a deep appreciation for the way that honors helped us find our voices and taught us how to have meaningful conversations.

A good number of the responses credited honors with instilling in them a true joy for learning and self-reflection, or, as one alum put it: “self-honesty.” They understand their values and, like me, are living purpose-driven lives.

I don’t regret the path I took to get here, although given the price of law school tuition, it was an expensive mistake. What I do regret is that, for too long, I thought being smart, analytical, and having the ability to read philosophy tomes for ten hours straight were the most valuable skills in my toolbox. My honors education prepared me for so much more than that and I’m grateful that I’m finally able to put it to use.

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The Secret of Honors Education: Driven by Discourse, Depth of Disciplines, and Dedication to Diversity

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; diversity in education; Adelphi University (NY)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 55–57

The Dean of my undergraduate Honors College disguised a very clever secret right in plain sight of his students. What we thought to be a well-rounded, four-year education was, in reality, so much more: a carefully cultivated undergraduate program that propelled us into an engaged adulthood driven by meaningful discourse, appreciation for a breadth and depth of disciplines, and an unyielding dedication to diversity.

My honors educational setting was marked by seminar-style classrooms that were notably divergent in aesthetics and engagement from other classes on campus. The energy upon entering an Honors class session was palpable—whether you wanted it to be or not. There was no lying low in a back row. Each student was a valuable voice contributing to conversation that simultaneously amplified each other's learning and required us to get uncomfortable. Our education taught us to see beyond a traditional didactic dynamic and become learners whose intellectual curiosities were driven by discourse.

This discourse, though, was never simply performative or isolated to one class's roundtable. In fact, the more meaningfully engaged we became with our peers in any one class discussion, the greater we could translate our interpersonal understandings into broader contexts. We frequently found ourselves in different seminar courses with familiar classmates, which allowed us to both continue and expand our mutual learnings into other disciplines. We could seamlessly intersect the psycho-social principles learned in Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination with discussions of ancient classic texts or character tropes and representation in children's media. These interdisciplinary discussions weren't limited to students, however. Frequently, our in-class conversations spilled into hallway conversations between our various professors and deans who found common ground in the Honors College as well. We witnessed curious, thoughtful exchanges of ideas between these scholars and perhaps learned as much from them in those moments as we did in their classrooms. The breadth and depth of course topics, accompanied by their respective thought leaders, available to us within the walls of the Honors College was deliberate and fostered a true appreciation for diversity.

"Diversity" is a, well, diverse word in this case. There might be nothing so impactful to an Honors education as diversity—of courses, cultural experiences, and community. Classrooms were full of thought exchange, but the relationships and contexts created therein blossomed in the learning experiences outside of our Honors College building. We were required, though happily so, to engage in cultural events to supplement and enrich our education, and our lives. The various theatrical performances, ballets, operas, symphonies, art exhibits, and lectures we had the opportunities to experience broadened our personal proclivities and brought to life the magnitude of the world beyond our campus. Reciprocally, that very same worldly magnitude came to life within the diverse community of Honors students right inside our campus.

Our community of students was incredibly, beautifully diverse not only in various American identities, but in a coalescence of cultures from around the world. Classmates from Ukraine, India, Jamaica, Poland, El Salvador, Bulgaria, Israel, Trinidad, and others brought global experience to life in real time. It always amazed me, and sometimes even shamed me, to hear the various worldviews that my peers contributed to our classroom discussions. While our hometown experiences differed wildly, we all found our way to the same roundtable at which we now sat, eagerly seeking the shared experiences of our diverse education. The world never felt simultaneously so big and so small as inside an Honors College classroom.

This very duality brings me back to our dean's well-kept secret, which is now so plain to see. We enrolled in what we knew would be an engaging, enriching, four-year undergraduate education, but we could not possibly know how deeply impactful the lessons we learned during that time would be on our lives. Years after graduation, I can look around my own communities of peers and recognize those who have engaged in thought-provoking roundtable discussions, those who were challenged to find meaningful intellectual intersections, and most importantly, those who were immersed in a microcosm of our big, complicated, but beautiful world within their own classrooms. I believe that no matter where we find ourselves today, our Honors education has given each of us the foundation on which to confront life with drive, dedication, and an ever-present desire to engage deeply.

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From Honors Student to Honors Coordinator

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; transformative learning; College of New Rochelle (NY)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 59–60

Every time I begin a new semester, I often think about how my honors professors began their classes. There was a palpable excitement in their voices as they discussed how we would explore the given subject through a variety of lenses, uncovering nontraditional perspectives and allowing the conversation to flow freely. I remember the conversations continuing among my fellow honors students long after the class ended. The interdisciplinary seminars I took as an honors student continue to inspire my teaching today.

The coursework in my honors program pushed me to embrace research and academic writing. My honors professors instilled the practice to always “dig deeper,” going beneath the surface level of any given subject. I took many classes that transported me to other worlds, be they Ancient Greece, 90s hip hop, geopolitical landscapes, or the deep writings of authors like the Woolf sisters, Plath, and Austen. Worlds that can easily be forgotten made my education exciting.

Today, I not only strive to lead my students in interdisciplinary explorations and to bring the same sense of adventure in uncovering new knowledge, but I also get to run the day-to-day operations of the honors program at the college where I am now employed.

I sometimes reflect on how the honors student became the honors coordinator, especially since a career in academia was never my original aspiration. But my honors mentality always stuck with me. The rigor in research and investigation served me well when I worked for *Reader's Digest*. When I did enter academia as an adjunct professor, I discovered the joy in seeing students grow intellectually. The pathway to my current position unfolded naturally after that. Given where I am now, still in honors, but as the administrator, I feel like I can relate well with my students. I remember the struggle in achieving academic excellence (that perfect 4.0 GPA) and the frustration in fully grasping a difficult concept. I remember attending and presenting at an NCHC conference for the first time. I've been in their shoes.

But I also remember when my professors gave me critiques and encouraged me to focus on ways to improve and grow and *not* to focus the grade on the assignment. When I was in college, I thought the measure of my success came from “earning the A.” I can now say, many years later and after investing over a decade in running an honors program, the value of honors isn't about perfection, mastery, or elite status . . . it's about always taking on the challenge and learning as much as you can along the way. I seldom ever think about my final GPA from college because the string of As isn't what has contributed to my success but the skills honors taught me and the resiliency honors built in me. I think about how my professors always pushed me further and farther; I attempt (not always successfully) to push myself in the same ways now.

I love my job—partly because I get to lead students in their honors journeys but also because my job reminds me to be an honors student all times. And while my honors program no longer serves students since my college is now closed, I have not forgotten the lessons my honors professors taught me. My honors experience continues today, and I feel privileged to lead honors students and watch them embrace challenges and surprise themselves with what they can accomplish. The value of honors came from my professors and their courses. They taught me to always step up to the task at hand and to know that the outcome isn't about the “A”—it's about how you transform along the way.

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The Spark of Reimagination

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; Utah State University (UT)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 61–63

Each experience was a thrilling opportunity to reimagine the world. The honors program at Utah State University presented my peers and me with challenge after challenge to envision the world through new eyes. Journalism historian Mike Sweeney offered perspectives for understanding global conflict and everyday communication in his Propaganda, Persuasion, and Censorship honors seminar, offered in 2003 as the U.S. was attempting to justify the decision to engage in the Iraq War. In Carol Dehler's historical geology course, the Rocky Mountain backdrop of our campus was transformed from a static outdoor playground for skiers and hikers into a rich and complex billion-year record documenting life, upheaval, and metamorphosis in its fossils and sediments.

With each of these experiences, I realized that I had entered college more naïve than I'd thought, and the world grew in small increments. Understanding geologic time gave my world more depth. Learning about the role of the media in uncovering the horrors of the Vietnam War brought nuance and dread to my world. A rich diversity of ideas, encounters, and approaches to life that I'd only begun to conceive began to take shape. At that point in my

life, I had barely left the state of Utah, but I would soon find myself in Brazil volunteering as a Mormon missionary, taking a leave from my studies like many of my peers.

My honors experience primed me for two years of exercises in empathy as I witnessed poverty and violence on a scale that I'd previously understood only in the abstract. I reimagined the world again as I recognized my privileges of food and shelter security as well as relative safety from gun violence. I was also confronted with my complicity. "I will not listen to a colonizer whose people have decimated the native Americans and now massacre the Iraqis," a stranger shouted one day at me and a fellow missionary in the street. We ignored the man at the time, but I dwelled on the encounter daily for years, recognizing the need to incorporate his perspective—on the trajectory of U.S. history, from colonial times to Vietnam to the present—into my own understanding. The episode demanded reimagination to a degree I wasn't prepared for at that moment; however, my honors experience would provide a means of reprocessing the world when I found myself faced with such difficult truths.

Upon my return to USU and its honors program, I was surprised to open one of my American literature textbooks, Elizabeth Bishop's *The Complete Poems*, and discover a group of poems set in Brazil that illustrated in detail community life in the favelas, street dogs, and violent scenes from the country's colonial past. Disarmed by this coincidence and the poetry's resonance, I approached the professor, Anne Shifrer, after our first class to discuss Bishop and what I found so striking about her work. That discussion quickly turned into a mentorship when she agreed to become my honors thesis advisor. We explored together how Bishop's experience in Brazil impacted her work and how she understood her sexuality—at a time when I felt quite isolated as I attempted to understand my own.

The USU Honors Program was more than a laboratory of ideas or reimagination; it was a world-building experience. As I gained greater understanding of sexuality, colonialism, research, and more, I was able to accept the truths that had shattered my narrow reality and to reformulate my world: "U.S. history is problematic." "I am gay." Professor Shifrer convinced me that my own experiences and perspectives had value to reshape the understanding of others. Thanks to her guidance, I was asked to present my work at a conference celebrating Bishop's one hundredth birthday alongside scholars who had studied the poet for years.

A decade on, I still conceive of my research as world-building—and I agreed to share my passion for such exploration with current USU honors

students as part of The Honors Passion Project alumni presentation series this past year. As a literary history scholar, I am using digital methods to develop a network map of 19th- and 20th-century queer writers. Using a tool I developed to search for mentions of these figures in relevant archival documents, I am slowly bringing into relief an understanding of the networks they formed to address their individual senses of isolation through their correspondence, translation of one another's work, and instances of collaboration. By visualizing this history, a better understanding of queer community and resilience will emerge.

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Ten of Ten, Would Recommend

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; authentic learning; University of North Carolina at Charlotte (NC)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 65–67

I sit on the Honors College Advisory Board at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, my alma mater, where I participated in the Business and University Honors Programs from 2004 through 2008. My first draft of this essay was written before listening to a current honors student describe how University Honors is impacting their life. In that moment, I quickly realized that what they were saying was precisely how I felt as a student, so I threw my first draft out the window (which is typical for me as I'm often throwing produce out our kitchen window to feed the wildlife), and started over.

I was reminded of the three values that have matured within me over time that were undeniably planted and/or watered heavily by the honors program I participated in as an undergraduate: critical thinking, citizenship, and exploration.

Critical thinking is likely the low-hanging fruit of this reflection. It's the default of what many expect an honors program to endow upon its students. Classes are smaller, professors hold a higher standard, and students rise (or sometimes don't) to the challenge. In general, regardless of which program, college should be teaching *all* of its students this skill. But for me, the program I went through truly taught me to think outside of the box I was prescribed

during my previous 18 years on Earth. These courses and assignments showed me that I could think for myself and, equally as important, that I could change my opinion when new information is introduced. I still think back to my realization in honors War and Peace that the two aren't at diverging ends of a pendulum but rather that they overlap . . . severely.

Next up is citizenship. My program required volunteerism and, at the time, it was admittedly a check-the-box behavior. I wasn't against it, but I thought there were enough *other* people around that the community didn't need my help in improving things. My favorite and most-repeated service activity was collecting leftover, untouched food from the dining halls and driving it to the soup kitchens downtown. Part of our responsibility was to unload the food, which is when I would interact with their staff and volunteers. I asked questions and quickly learned, thanks to my newly acquired critical thinking skills, that there *aren't* enough other people helping and that, *yes*, they needed my help. Volunteering soon became the box I was happiest to check. Today, my partner and I are raising our son to understand that there aren't enough people stepping up, and if you see something that needs doing to improve your community, do it yourself. It's easy to assume that your city has it all under control, but they probably don't. They need people to step up. To help. To vote. To do things that *contribute* to society.

And lastly, exploration. My honors program required that we explore our city, which in my case was (and remains) Charlotte, North Carolina. Arts & Society was one of the classes that will forever be in my memory as what unlocked my appreciation of art, photography, and theater. It forced me to see and experience parts of my city that I would almost certainly still be overlooking to this day. Instead, I quickly realized there was a *vast* realm about which I knew close to nothing. I was a business major with a competitive streak that was great for sports and academia, but that didn't allow time for what I thought were "extras." I'm grateful these many years later that I was *required* to experience multiple plays, take pictures of the city for my portfolio, and attend an art exhibit and listen to the artist describe their work. I saw a whole new side of life I otherwise wouldn't have had time for, and I will be forever grateful. Today, when I encounter something new and peculiar, my default reaction isn't judgment, but rather I think, "Perhaps I simply don't know enough about it." I think this response roots back to this experience where I learned to lean in and explore before locking in my opinion.

Today, both in the workplace as an analytics professional and at home as a mother, these three values, critical thinking, citizenship, and exploration,

have remained permanent fixtures in my ethos. Together, they grant room for healthy exploration and maybe even failure, and they ultimately encourage a mindset of curiosity and bravery over echo chambers and fear. If this were a Google review, I'd say, "Ten of Ten, Would Recommend."

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Honorary Family

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Rogers State University, 2007–2011; 2010–2014

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the authors reflect on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; mutuality; Rogers State University (OK)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 69–71

It's a crisp, cool morning as the campus begins to show signs of life. Above the tittering birds and soft breeze, laughter can be heard echoing across the grounds. The sounds are coming from the self-proclaimed “nerd herd,” an eclectic group of honors students shuffling along the sidewalk to their morning classes. The conversation ranges from serious discussions regarding an upcoming biology test to light teasing about pranks pulled in the dorms. Despite, or perhaps because of, their complex array of ethnicity, majors, and ages, their interactions portray a chemistry seldom seen among such a large group of people. Their relationship can be best described with one word: “family.”

Family is a multifaceted concept that can be interpreted in numerous ways. The overall construct typically refers to a group of people who share a bond with one another. Within this group are many distinct types of relationships. In our honors family, those relationships were based on respect, rivalry, and shared growth. Though we came from different corners of the world, breaking away from the only familial ties we'd ever known, the honors program nurtured and bound us together to form a new family dynamic. The environment created by this web of interactions culminated in forming a substantial part of our character and our role in future relations.

Respect is often considered a foundational element in group settings, be it in the classroom, office, or family. Honors taught us to examine not only what it takes for someone to earn respect but how to earn the respect of others. By design, honors courses force students from various cultures and backgrounds into a room together to discuss challenging topics. Discussions among such a brilliant group of young minds on topics such as social issues often lead to raised voices, fervent opinions, and sometimes even tears. In a normal setting, this may cause students to completely shut out differing opinions. The honors seminar, however, pulls students a step further by taking these differing views in stride and using the conversations as a catalyst to conquer unconscious bias, expanding typically narrow views of what it takes to earn respect. Rather than respecting an individual simply because we agree with their opinion or trying to earn respect by bending their viewpoints to match our own, admiration can instead be garnered through the meeting of minds, appreciating the wealth of knowledge and varying perspectives others have to offer. While a family may not always see eye-to-eye, the ability to understand and respect differing opinions creates a deep bond of mutual respect.

With a foundation of respect established, honors students continue to build family bonds through healthy rivalry. All honors students entered our program with the same minimum requirements, many enhancing their résumé with an overabundance of accomplishments. While this could be intimidating, it also meant that most honors students harbored a certain amount of competitive spirit. The program fostered this innate desire for success through different forms of competition: maybe an overt challenge, such as an academic group project to determine what is happiness; or a physical sporting event like the Honors Olympics; or even laid-back events involving board games. Often, it manifested as a passive quest to build one another up by improving ourselves in and out of the classroom. Even when the intent behind this sibling rivalry was less altruistic, just as many blood-bonds may be, the family was still stronger for it as it cultivated a shared growth.

Since graduating, the honors family has grown in every way possible. There are more graduates every year, and we remain in close contact with professors and prior classmates. So close that some, like us, have even married and brought about a whole new generation to carry on the honors legacy. Our success in all aspects of life can be attributed to not only internalizing those values of respect, rivalry, and shared growth but also to treating everyone we meet like family. Not one of us walked the path to success in isolation; we all grew together to form the “nerd herd” that will forever be a part of

us, continuing to better one another no matter where our lives take us. We began as strangers with diverse backgrounds, but through success and failure we were all able to learn, grow and build each other up in a way that allowed us all to walk across that stage as a family, with honors.

[Director's Note: Joshua and Brandi wed in 2013 after meeting in honors.]

Forging an Honors Bond

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Utah State University, 2008–2015

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; Ubuntu (philosophy); Utah State University (UT)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 73–75

Standing in line at the local fire station, my wife and I were waiting for our COVID-19 inoculations. The firefighters had been commissioned to administer the vaccines. Health department workers were examining paperwork, and volunteers were guiding patrons through the line. Looking around while trying to manage our children, I noticed a volunteer with a familiar-looking face, half-concealed by a mask. I had not seen the instructor of my first honors course in well over a decade, so, to confirm, I greeted her and asked, “What’s your name?”

She was indeed my former honors professor, and what followed was a short yet buoyant exchange in which I eagerly shared some updates, such as the major I had settled on in college, my current job, and my family status. I was excited to see her. That first honors course included honors students from a variety of disciplines, and as an engineering major, I was not expecting to build a strong connection with them or with the instructor, a linguistics professor. Yet her concern for each student coupled with her willingness to listen fostered camaraderie and conversation, both in the classroom and personally, and my self-imposed barriers quickly collapsed.

In my first and subsequent semesters, I participated in honors courses in disciplines ranging from English to engineering and covering everything from persuasion to partial derivatives. These courses, capstone projects, research, service, leadership, and other opportunities available to honors students provide invaluable preparation for the future. But as I reflect on my honors experience, I realize those were only the most obvious benefits. The real impact of the honors program is that it connects people with one another in meaningful ways. Honors introduced me to fellow students who became lifelong friends, fostered relationships with instructors who set high expectations for me and my peers, and forged bonds between high-caliber individuals eager to make the world a better place.

These are connections you remember. For example, one day in honors calculus, I began wondering about the mathematical relationship between the path of a bicycle's front and rear wheels. After class, I approached the instructor, who thought about my question and offered some ideas about it. This instructor eventually left our institution for a position at another university, and I lost contact with him. However, after some time, he emailed me: "I want to let you know that I still think about your question on the bicycle wheel paths," and he proceeded to list some relevant resources about the problem. Maybe it was an interesting problem to him, but what impresses me is that this honors faculty member remembered me as he sought to continue learning himself.

In the past several years, I have made an effort to participate in an alumni mentoring program through the Utah State University Honors Program. As I have mentored these honors students, I have been impressed by their eagerness not only to excel in their fields but to connect with me as a person. One connection even led to a mentee becoming a stellar member of my team at work. I look forward to seeing where other connections with these outstanding students may lead.

While honors programs are certainly not the only organizations that *can* foster such personal and professional connections, they are uniquely placed to facilitate interpersonal bonds because of their focus on the future and their high hopes and expectations for the individuals they serve. In my experience, both honors faculty and students seek not just learning but its transcendent meaning to humankind, fulfilling Herbert Spencer's often quoted idea that "the great aim of education is not knowledge but action."

For me, the value of honors education can be summed up in one word: ubuntu. The late Reverend Desmond Tutu explains, "Ubuntu . . . speaks about

our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality—Ubuntu—you are known for your generosity. . . . When you do well, it spreads out" (Rich).

Bonds forged in honors may change the world—or they may just change an individual or a community. Maybe an honors student will reflect the light received during their own honors experience as they mentor the next generation. Perhaps a math instructor intrigued about bicycle wheels will continue his role as an educator well past the end of a semester. Or maybe, just maybe, a bond will lead to a bright moment between an engineer and a linguistics professor as she generously volunteers during a pandemic.

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Honor in Failure

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; collaborative learning; California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (CA)—The Kellogg Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 77–79

I checked the spreadsheet in front of me again, frantically hoping by some grace or magic that the fifth entry I reviewed would somehow erase my mistake. I couldn't have possibly scrambled more than 1,000 application records, could I have? I poured through the files I had meticulously, even reverently saved over the last weeks. I searched, each click more desperate than its sister before it. Surely, one of these manilla-colored folders held redemption in its electronic depths. Lined up like soldiers at parade, each offered hope, anticipation, sharp anguish as its contents failed to yield the file that would allow me to unmake my terrible transgression.

At long last, the inexpugible fact of my blunder had to be faced. I steeled myself, gathering what courage I could muster, and knocked on our director's door. My eyes traced an agonied, defeated course along the floor before I wrestled my gaze to his face. Still, it took a moment before my mouth decided to speak. "Sir, I may have accidentally messed up the database."

The kindly mouth smiled. Eyes twinkled and the beginnings of crow's feet at their corners deepened ever so slightly as I was gestured toward a chair. "Let me tell you a story . . ." came the reply.

The yarn was over in a few minutes and likely a conversation that our director has long forgotten telling. I think about that interaction often, though, when I'm teaching or mentoring someone these days. "The moral of the story," he said, handing me a key to the filing cabinets where I would find paper copies of the files I had scrambled, "is 'we all make mistakes!' It's how we deal with them that counts."

I spent a week reconstructing the database, but the lesson in compassion, patience, and how to show grace to those who have made mistakes was well worth the work.

The Honors Program that I had the opportunity to experience was one of academic rigor, to be sure, but its true worth was to be found in the values that students and faculty engendered and encouraged in one another. University has always been a place of discovery: both discovery in the sense of personal formation and discovery in the sense of a broadening understanding of the world around us. This particular Honors Program elevated the pursuit of discovery to the status of a Virtue for its members at my college. Fascination, not just curiosity, was the normal response to other individuals or ways of life. Diversity was something that was desirable, and areas of personal growth and discomfort were often discussed candidly and with desire for understanding one another in the commons room.

Questioning the status quo, even if quietly and even if it did not result in any change, was understood to be of requisite importance for the future of our world. Passion, hard work, and persistence were understood to be non-negotiable traits for shaping ourselves into better people and helping those around us to do the same. Patience with others and with ourselves as well as the ability to show grace in the face of failure were often hard-learned skills.

The value that Honors programs provide to their students is often measured in terms of an academic leg-up or a chance to experience programs that students might not otherwise have access to. I'd like to suggest that this falls woefully short of capturing their importance in the world. The true value of these programs is that they act as rock tumblers. They bring together individuals—rocks gathered from fields and streams and beaches and mountains—and tumble them against one another in an environment which promotes a sense of shared humanity and a desire to see the beauty in the world and in other people. Simply tumbling rocks together isn't enough, though. Rocks alone won't produce much more than some dust and slightly smoother rocks at the end of the process. If, however, you add the right rocks, pour in some carefully chosen polishing compounds, and a specifically curated amount of agitation,

those rocks emerge as something that is beautiful in a new way. Honors programs act as those rock tumblers. They select specific rocks from wherever they can be found and place them together in just the right environment to create an environment where gemstones might be formed. The rocks emerge different and polished from the interactions that would not have otherwise naturally occurred. They shine, reflecting the beauty of those interactions to brighten the world around them.

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Citadels of Interdisciplinarity

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Emory & Henry College, 2010–2014

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; interdisciplinary approach to knowledge; Emory & Henry College (VA)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 81–83

As the demands of academic research galvanize disciplinary silos and market forces pressure students into increasingly specialized courses of study, honors education stands as one of the few remaining citadels of interdisciplinarity on America's college campuses. My experience as an undergraduate honors student was characterized by a community of deep intellectual richness committed to student-driven, collaborative, integrative and critical inquiry. Honors constellates diversity in tradition and method, from chemists to historians, future doctors to future lawyers, engineers that will go on to tend inventively to society's infrastructure and social scientists that will unsettle the familiar by deconstructing its social ones. The value of honors education is not limited to discrete professional, personal, or civic instantiations. Indeed, the value of honors education manifests in each, as the multi- and inter-disciplinary mode of inquiry it fosters informs how one discerns the world around them, orients their place within it, and conducts in concert their engagement in collective life.

One of the primary values of interdisciplinarity is the capacity to consider a problem from multiple perspectives, to adjust its valance, to weigh

competing types of evidence, and to locate, complicate, and unsettle the origin of a claim's persuasive force. Honors facilitates interdisciplinary, critical inquiry through coursework and community. It encourages a student-led learning experience that refuses to hedge too closely to one way of thinking. By allowing, for example, students to design parts of a course syllabus, honors coursework naturally takes on a trajectory that weaves students' interests. As a result, the typical honors course is one that builds out students' analytical toolkits by approaching a single topic from a variety of perspectives, ways of formulating research questions, standards of evidence, and commitments to worldly betterment. In a historical moment in which the dilemmas of modern society are characterized by their totalizing effects, the interdisciplinary view of and ability to engage with the world that honors instills has never been in higher demand.

Honors also accomplishes that instillation by way of fostering a community of individuals from diverse social, political, economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Such community was central to my experience as an honors student. From speaker series to seminars, formal dinners to informal bonfires, I enjoyed the fellowship and intellectual engagement of my peers within the honors community. In one such instance, I recall exchanging ideas with my cohort about our respective senior honors thesis projects in the autumn of 2013. I was writing about Second Amendment jurisprudence and rights to self-defense. I remember the sociology majors pushing me to consider the role of gender in claims to justified violence. I remember the history major who pointed me to several instructive texts. I remember the biology major pressing me to clarify the logical connection between my thesis and my evidence. And I remember the mathematics major, in whom I remain unconvinced there is a single humanist sympathy, imploring me to explain why the project mattered at all. It was a crucible of various perspectives all intersecting my project from different angles.

A project that was, in retrospect, initially a not-so-clever linkage of a few syllogisms matured to a critical inquiry of the socio-legal underpinnings of constitutional jurisprudence because of precisely those and subsequent similar interactions. I was fortunate to present and receive invaluable feedback on the project at the National Collegiate Honors Council annual conference, and I used the insights offered by fellow members of the honors community to later publish the work in the *Columbia Undergraduate Law Review*, serve as a panelist on CNN for firearms-related self-defense, and develop a prospectus for graduate school.

Today, I am a PhD Candidate in Jurisprudence & Social Policy at UC Berkeley and a Supervising Analyst with the Judicial Council of California, where I oversee the policy analysis and program implementation for court fines and fees reform—which is just a fanciful way of saying that I wake up every day and try my best to cultivate more equitable and humane criminal justice services. I owe my professional role now to my experience as an honors student then. As a public servant, I must remain attentive to the many interests that enjoin legal institutions, the competing policy goals that reverberate across them, and the trade-offs one aim may have for another. I work alongside data scientists and web developers, lawyers and policy analysts, legal aid groups and non-profits, judicial officers and bureaucrats of all stripes. My daily interactions are not unlike those with my honors cohort: a multiplicity of perspectives all intersecting from different angles the task of ensuring access to justice. As it turns out, the public interest does not hew to a single perspective—it is diverse in tradition and in method; if I am to serve it well at all, I will owe it to the collaborative and interdisciplinary inquiry that honors taught me to value.

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Question, Discover, Apply, Disseminate: My Journey from Honors Student to Educator

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; critical thinking; Middle Georgia State University (GA)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 85–87

My first honors course was Introduction to Psychology. I begrudgingly enrolled to fill an area. In high school, my psychology course was boring, but the honors course environment allowed me to read and critique research studies, analyzing the methods, the findings, the meaning behind the research. In high school I felt confident psychology would not be my major, but after the honors course I felt a passion for the discipline.

Taking other courses in our honors program, I was encouraged to apply course content to my interests, and my interest has always been stories, in any medium. In American Literature, I connected transcendentalism to *Star Wars*. As I took more psychology courses, I interweaved Jungian psychoanalysis with Little Red Riding Hood and principles of narrative therapy.

Our honors director encouraged me to present my work at state, regional, and eventually national honors conferences. In my honors program, I was in a continuous cycle of question, discover, apply, and disseminate. As a doctoral student, I find myself in this same cycle, honing the skills I learned from my honors experiences.

At NCHC 2012, I had the opportunity to present the work our honors program students were doing, and our honors director pointed me to works of John Dewey and introduced me to the science of pedagogy, the theory behind teaching practices. Later I would read some of these same works in an Epistemology of Learning course in my doctoral program.

During my first semester in a clinical psychology doctoral program that I would eventually leave, I started teaching part-time at my alma mater. Sitting in a neuroscience class, I designed the course material for an honors Introduction to Psychology course rather than taking notes on the lecture. If I could teach an honors course however I wanted, how would that course look? The answer was obvious. I would teach with stories.

I pitched a “Psychology of Superheroes” course and got the green light. Superhero stories drove class discussion. I assigned an Iron Man graphic novel to teach the big five personality traits. We watched an episode of *Gotham* to discuss mental disorders of Batman villains. Every semester I changed up the stories, but the concept was always the same: stories tell us something about humanity, so use stories to teach principles of human psychology.

I taught Superheroes for a few semesters and then changed the course topic to “Psychology of Video Games.” Stories within video games also illustrated psychological concepts, but now I was interested in a new pedagogical concept: gamification. Principles of game design keep players engaged and completing tasks for little or no tangible extrinsic reward. Could elements of game design also keep students engaged in their courses and completing learning tasks? As I did as an undergraduate in our honors program when I had an idea that interested me, I read journal articles on gamification, applied those concepts to my courses, and produced one of my favorite courses so far.

The last question on the final exam for Video Games offered a choice of two essay options, one of which asked students to design a video game using principles of psychology. One student, an IT major with a concentration in game design, chose both options. He wrote out his ideas on the back of his final exam. He knew answering both prompts would not boost his grade, but he described his theory-supported game because the opportunity to take what he learned in the course, apply it to his passion, and share his ideas with his teacher excited him.

When reading articles on gamification, I noticed the journals that published these articles: *Journal of Educational Psychology*; *Contemporary Educational Psychology*. I decided my next step in my academic career. I applied to an educational psychology doctoral program. I wanted to understand

research-supported teaching practices to help students question, discover, apply, and disseminate.

A passion for teaching has followed me since my undergraduate days in my honors program, just waiting for me to recognize it. How can educators best communicate content to students? How can educators light that spark of curiosity that will drive a student to find passion projects? How can educators help students apply what they already love and produce new ideas to share? And how can educators continue to do all this while the world, technology, classrooms, culture, and students evolve? I do not think researchers and educators have completely answered these questions. So, as I learned as an honors student, I continue the cycle: question, discover, apply, and disseminate.

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Interdisciplinary Education Equips People to Face Unique Challenges

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; integrative learning; University of New Mexico (NM)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 89–91

Earning an undergraduate degree feels decidedly common today. 42% of Americans hold an undergraduate degree, and about 62% of all high school graduates attend some college (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). What feels less common, however, is an education through an Honors College. As one of the first graduates to earn an Honors Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts degree from the University of New Mexico (something done by only a handful of students), I've had to explain what being an "Honors Major" means in every job interview, grad school proposal, and awkward small-talk conversation. Describing what Honors is and why it has value is an inevitable reality of pursuing an unusual degree path, and one I typically enjoy.

Earning a degree in Honors forces you to think critically about multiple disciplines, make connections between disparate fields (sometimes forcing professors from different colleges to get along on behalf of your research), and utilize new methodologies and theories. The value of a multidisciplinary

education can be a challenging thing to define, particularly in a nation where academia has long been divided distinctly by discipline.

Specialization has its benefits and has resulted in the majority of American scholarship produced in the past century. Specialization allows for more rigorous use of methods (because one is trained in a field's specific practices), and standards of research are easily regulated. Specialization, however, can come at the cost of the bigger picture or leave out important inputs and perspectives. In accepting the interconnected nature of the world, an Honors education bridges disciplines, making great strides and including varying points of view. Utilizing methods and literature from multiple disciplines is a challenge. One must read more, practice a variety of skills, and make tough decisions about which techniques are most pertinent to the ultimate research agenda. But in taking on these challenges, one can contribute in a much broader, applicable way. Disciplines often seem to believe they exist within a vacuum, but little in this globalizing world does.

In my undergraduate honors thesis, I was able to connect the fields of art history, psychology, and education to create and implement an arts curriculum to help high school girls communicate about difficult issues. My art history degree facilitated the creation of engaging projects embedded in the artistic history of the world and notions of beauty, while courses I took in educational psychology and curriculum development helped me connect with my students and measure outcomes of the course.

Now, I'm earning a PhD in cultural economics in the Netherlands. Although my program is offered through the School of History, Culture, and Communication, my research blurs lines between cultural economics, organizational theory, critical theory, philosophy, and sociology. This isn't a problem for my Dutch colleagues or advisors, who have encouraged the blending of methods and disciplines, urging that utilizing what is best for my particular project is the correct move, regardless of discipline.

Honors programs and colleges are allowing new researchers the incredible opportunity to try unusual combinations of methods, read more widely, and generally gain an understanding of the complexity of the world. Global problems and opportunities don't exist in a vacuum, so our educations shouldn't either. Being an interdisciplinary scholar is wonderful, but being an interdisciplinary human is even more so. Understanding the world (and one's role in it) from multiple perspectives makes one better equipped to face complex challenges. A background in Honors allows one to make decisions with the guidance of ideas from a multitude of perspectives.

Interconnected, complex challenges are the challenges we face today, and will face long into the future. Being equipped to handle these challenges is invaluable and necessary; an Honors education, focusing on collaboration and integration, provides us with the tools to successfully meet these challenges head on.

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Gadgets and Gizmos

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; philosophy of education; Rogers State University (OK)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 93–94

Life in honors largely took place in a lounge on the first floor of the Liberal Arts building. Students congregated after, before, and in-between classes, discussing life, school, love, food, and all things in between. Discussions veered into decisions—courses, graduate school, love, and food. That is to say, through its organization, location, and design honors, examined life fastidiously and fatuously. Honors provided community and guidance. It also introduced us to ideas, books, movies, and people that otherwise would have been absent from our educations. Many of the books have faded from my memory, but the people and ideas continue to populate my life.

Honors set schedules for its first-year students; otherwise, I was unlikely to have been in Phil 2001: Values and Ethics. Despite my physical presence, I did not eagerly examine or wakefully participate when exposed to the Socratic method in Values and Ethics at the early hour of 9:00am. Notwithstanding the sun-height induced limitations on my abilities, I knew the value and inversely appreciated the ethics of SparkNotes. I muddled my way through, blithely speaking with certitude regarding Socrates's, Plato's, Mill's, and Kant's ideas concerning the good life, as informed, of course, by close readings of the aforementioned notes and various blogs. Per my readings,

these great minds' ideas lined up neatly with mine; they shared my values and my ethics. I muddled through, assured in my rightness, but no closer to figuring out what the good life was.

It would be poetic to recount how I answered the final essay on the “unexamined life,” to explain what I got wrong and—much more importantly—all the ways I was correct, to reveal exactly what the good life is, and that I had figured it out by the end of the semester; however, I am not poetic, and the lesson, like long division and the importance of the active voice, took a number of years to penetrate. I also do not know what I wrote or what the good life is. As a different philosopher once suggested, paraphrased by a team of corporately employed writers: “I wanna be where the people are; I wanna see, wanna see them dancing” (*The Little Mermaid*, 1989). A close enough answer, I say.

The question of what the good life is has stayed with me for the past ten years, as I graduated, entered and finished law school, got married, moved. That is not to say I have an answer—I do not. Nonetheless, the questions themselves—is this the good life? will this bring me/us closer to living the good life?—serve as decision-making guides. Equipped with a guide star, I have a barometer with which to gauge decisions. The answers are sometimes simple, but mostly, like with that final essay question, it is the act of consideration that makes all the difference.

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From Jersey Shore to AP Lit Teacher

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; English teachers; Penn State University (PA)—Schreyer Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 95–97

My undergraduate experience was mundane, average, and boring. I excelled academically, a little too easily. I could skip the readings and ace my classes half asleep. It was a normal experience for me to write entire papers an hour before the due date and receive As. In one instance a professor publicly recognized me as having written the best paper in the entire class. I beamed with a shocked kind of pride, laughing on the inside because I knew at that moment that something seriously needed to change.

I sought out the honors program because I wanted an increased academic challenge for personal fulfillment and to differentiate my résumé. I never dreamed I would find an experience so transformational and inspirational, shaping my interests and still affecting my choices years later.

After acceptance into the program, I designed honors options to attach to my major classes, which customized my coursework to my academic interests and career goals. My honors options included an array of amazing opportunities: remediating projects for web publication, assisting with research for a professor's textbook, promoting his textbook through the planning of

campus-wide events, and creating press materials for print and web media, just to name a few.

In addition to the honors options, I took honors courses outside of my major. I anticipated the higher academic expectations and as a result was contributing a much bigger effort. I was still excelling, only now I was feeling challenged, engaging with the material, and learning more than ever.

My horizons were expanding not only academically but personally as well. I am thankful for the exposure to literature, art museums, and international trips I would not have gained otherwise. I was not a stereotypical or even traditional honors student. I did not seek out the program until my junior year of college. I had never taken AP or honors courses in high school, and I did not aspire to get an advanced degree. I was unfamiliar with literature, art, language, and other topics my honors peers could talk about all day. Before honors, my idea of culture was reading *Cosmo*, watching *Jersey Shore*, and obsessing over the latest diet trends. I still cringe when I think about how I mispronounced “Yeats” in front of a group of my honors peers.

One honors literature seminar contributed immensely to my cultural expansion. Before this course I was uninterested in and even skeptical of literature, viewing it as useless to me as an aspiring entertainment journalist. Afterward, my perspective had been entirely changed, and I realized that the academic study of literature is worthwhile. Furthermore, it can be a catalyst for learning about any and every major or career. I was amazed how the works of Oscar Wilde, William Goldman, George Orwell, and even Shakespeare helped me learn about journalism in the present day (I later co-wrote about my experience in an article entitled “Why Study Literature?” published in *Rendezvous Journal of Arts & Letters: The State of the Humanities*).

My interest in literature was sparked so much I considered changing my career path to teach the subject. Seven years later: Life happened. I never accomplished any of my career goals, and I hit a rough patch in my personal life. I received an unexpected email about writing opportunities from Sandy, the honors coordinator and professor of that course. Her email brought back amazing memories from the honors program and caused me to reflect on my career as I updated her on the past seven years.

She reminded me of what I had said after taking her course: I want to be an English teacher. This timely reminder motivated me to seek a more fulfilling career, chase my dreams, and begin graduate study in English education. None of this would have been possible without my acceptance into the honors program: The higher level of academic engagement, customized approach

to learning, and incredible opportunities I found changed my life forever. Honors was the catalyst for my growth personally, academically, and professionally, during the program and many years later.

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More than an Academic Challenge— A Sense of Belonging

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; nontraditional college students; Johnson County Community College (KS)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 99–101

Johnson County Community College (JCCC) has a mission to inspire learning to transform lives and strengthen communities. And that is exactly what it did for me. My life was transformed not only by attending JCCC but by being part of the Honors Program.

I moved to Kansas from Brazil in 2011. I already had a bachelor's degree, so my intention was not to go back to school right away, if at all. I came across JCCC looking for ways to connect with my new community while I figured out my next steps. I started to volunteer on campus and, during one of my shifts, happened to run across a fair where several program representatives were available to talk to students about majors. Although this event was not meant for me, I felt compelled to talk to some of the staff and faculty anyway. The next thing I knew, I was enrolled and officially a JCCC student!

I was doing well in my classes and came across information about the Honors Program. I always thought college was meant for students straight out of high school. Being a bit older, having already been to college once, and not having studied in a few years, I almost ignored the Honors Program.

Thinking to myself “what am I even doing?” I reached out to the program director and set up a time to come in and talk. A part of me still felt like there was going to be a “but”: “But you’re too old.” “But your academic experience is from too far back.” Instead, I got a resounding “You’d be a great fit for this program and we’d love to have you!”

From that day on, I was supported by a variety of resources and opportunities that changed my life. I was able to participate in Honors contracts—additional coursework that allows you to deepen your knowledge of topics you find interesting. I was not only able to satiate some of my thirst for knowledge but also to connect one on one with professors who are still my mentors to this day. I received an Honors scholarship, which was crucial to my ability to remain in school during a time of financial instability in my life. I became an active member of the Honors Student Association (HSA), which organized fun events and opportunities for students to connect. I was able to meet other students, several who were the “traditional” students I pictured being part of the Honors Program but several more who were nontraditional like myself—reminding me that I was not alone in the unexpected twists and turns of life. The HSA made me feel a strong sense of belonging and community, and it gave me lifelong friends. I was also able to hone my leadership skills by becoming an HSA officer.

I had access to the Honors Lounge—a safe space to study, focus, and hang out with fellow honors students. But more importantly, I had the support of the various people who worked in the Honors office. They not only held me accountable to the academic milestones I had to achieve in order to be successful in the program but cared about me outside of my academic endeavors, too. They were there for me on days I was having trouble juggling life and studies, encouraged me when I thought I wouldn’t be able to achieve a goal, helped me find paths to success, and have kept in touch with me to this day.

It was finding JCCC’s Honors Program that helped me assuage my insecurities, academic or otherwise. It’s where I knew for certain that I was in the right place at the right time for what I needed to succeed in that phase of my life. Within the Honors Program, I found more than academic challenges and leadership opportunities—I found friends, people who cared about me beyond my grades, a sense of belonging, acceptance and understanding, a place that felt like home—and where I found my next steps.

The Honors Program made me love JCCC in a way I did not expect to, and it led me to seek out a career right here at the campus that welcomed

me and believed in me from Day One, even when—and especially when—I didn't believe in myself.

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Achieving Excellence Through Experiential Learning

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; academic achievement; Monroe College (NY)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 103–04

Coming from the small island of Trinidad, I had never heard of nor participated in experiential learning until I became a member of the honors program. Being given the opportunities to engage in experiential learning helped me further my understanding of many subject areas outside of my hospitality management major. Of course, honors also allowed me to thrive in an academically rigorous environment, but the value I received from honors came from the camaraderie, friendships, and lessons learned through experiential learning.

The two experiential activities that stand out most to me are my participation in the Northeast Regional Honors Council (NRHC) and the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) conferences. One of my honors classes, World-Changing Discoveries, was the inspiration for my research. Being able to cultivate projects from proposals to presentations provided two unique experiences. For both conferences, I explored technological advances that had nothing to do with my hospitality management major. The ability to

explore subjects outside my major kept me engaged throughout my time in college. The NRHC and NCHC conferences are still a highlight of my time in honors. But these events also allowed me to meet and interact with other students. This further expanded my intellectual capabilities and offered rewarding bonding experiences with my fellow honors colleagues, some of whom I consider lifelong friends.

Before joining the honors program, I did not think I would ever have the aspirations to attain my MBA. Because I was challenged during my undergraduate degree, I wanted to pursue graduate study. Further, the experiential learning components of the program fostered my ability to be open-minded. I continue to carry this with me as I pursue my MBA and in my career as a hospitality professional. Honors certainly instills excellence in academics for students, but the true value of participation in honors came from experiential learning—the ability to present at regional and national conferences, the chance to visit museums and other cultural sites in New York City, the opportunity to give back to the local community through volunteer activities, among so much more. These aspects of my honors experience are invaluable to me, and many of my best college memories come from these adventures. Even though I came to New York as an international student, I graduated with even more worldly experience thanks to the honors program. I continue to view every person I meet with open-mindedness, every new circumstance with curiosity, and every unknown opportunity with excitement.

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Staying Connected

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; transformative education; Community College of Baltimore County (MD)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 105–06

I'm submitting this assignment on its due date because I was unsure how far my writing has declined since college. I was afraid that preparing technical accounting memos all day had made me forget how to write about a real-world, non-seemingly-made-up topic rather than the five steps of revenue recognition or acquisition accounting. One thing is for certain—I still know how to write an intro and here it is: The things about Honors that I'm grateful for most are getting me to where I am today, giving me some of the most precious people in my life, teaching me how to be a real human with adult skills, and telling me the greatest, most necessary stories I've been told.

Honors sling-shot me from an average high school student all the way to where I am today, full speed, no stop. Our director, Rae Rosenthal, loves to say, "We don't just find honors students; we create them." I can attest to this statement. My goal at the community college was to get in, get average grades as I have my entire life, and get out. But what I got was an experience much more rewarding. I became a good student, straight As even, and invested more in the experience, paving me a path to a full-tuition scholarship to business school and landing a job at a global accounting firm. That was the dream destination of my high school self, and Honors was my ride there. Through

the smaller, more discussion-based classes and the handpicked professors, I was nurtured to be a true honors student: going to class with intention, doing my readings, contributing to discussions, and learning from my sixteen classmates, each with unique stories that shaped their analysis, thus mine. Turns out it's easy to excel when you're in an environment that facilitates going all-in.

It's also easy to excel when in a fun, accepting environment. Many of my classmates quickly became friends, and professors became mentors. As I write this, my friend Jei is putting her baby to sleep in our spare room. Our level of friendship has grown from honors classmates to having automatic access to each other's homes when in town. She and the rest of our batch are some of the friendships I hold tightest. The culture that Honors fostered extended to our relationships outside the classroom. It was a culture of learning, accepting, storytelling, and raising each other up. Honors, itself, is a network of students, professors, advisors, and alumni who offer *their* network, opening doors for all of us.

Honors also shaped us to be lifelong learners and leaders. The value it placed on credible sources, analytical thinking, self-reflection, and leaning in to others' analysis and reflection allowed us irrevocable, quality-learning skills. The college and community-wide opportunities Honors presented also allowed us to enhance leadership skills that have boosted me well beyond the dazzle they added to my résumé.

My view of the world was transformed in Honors. I'm certain a lot of agents contributed to this transformation, but the most distinct is how Honors taught me to absorb stories. The story of Jei growing up in Kenya that wasn't too different from how I grew up in the Philippines. The story of Dr. Rae building the Honors Program from a single file cabinet operation to a three-campus system. The story of Sagar immigrating from the mountains of Nepal. The stories of Traci and Glory and Jenna and Steve. The stories my women's studies professor compiled into a textbook. The stories of Angela Davis and MLK, Jr., and Malcolm X. All these stories are gifts, and they hold power. Power to transform us and, more importantly, power to connect us beyond our differences and beyond time. And that is what I'm grateful for most—connection.

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Reflecting on Community: A Vision for the Future

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; holistic education; SUNY Brockport (NY)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 107–09

Being asked to reflect on the values I gained from my honors experience has been such a privilege, and I hope that my words can serve as a reminder to all who read them that we should never underestimate the power of reflecting on our practice—whatever that may be, inside of academia or otherwise. Having completed my undergraduate career five years ago and wanting to be very intentional with my response, I sat with this question for a few days and thought deeply about all the rewarding experiences I had through SUNY Brockport's Honors College. After moving beyond some of the practical skills and values that I gained through the academic rigor of my coursework, there was one word that came to mind which embodies both a core pillar of my experience and a value that stays with me today: community.

The Honors College at SUNY Brockport has a holistic focus on both academic and experiential learning. In addition to becoming independent and critical thinkers engaged in complex research, we were expected and encouraged to become active and responsible citizens engaged in the world around us. It was this emphasis on being leaders and building community from the

local to the global level that made all the difference for me. We each had the flexibility to shape the paths that made the most sense for our future goals. For example, mine took me to Saint Petersburg, Russia, for a summer and to Washington, D.C., for an internship at the U.S. Department of State that later opened a door to start my professional career there. My path also featured a very honors-specific niche. Early on, I became involved in our Honors Club, which served as the social branch of our program, and the Honors Peer Mentoring Program, which was established and has been run by students since 2000. Looking back on these experiences has proved to be more formative than I could have imagined at the time.

They gave me a community, showed me what that meant and how to foster it, and allowed me to find myself. These extracurricular activities created a space for us to grow and lead as individuals and as a collective, build relationships, and support one another. Through the mentoring program, we provided guidance and reassurance to new students throughout their first semester. We facilitated discussions around the challenges everyone was facing and worked together, as peers, to come up with creative solutions. Through the social club, we learned how to collaborate across differences and bring our visions to life for everything from community service projects to soirees in celebration of our peers' scholarly achievements. In addition to forming friendships with one another, we had the opportunity to deepen our networks with various clubs and departments across campus and engage with members of university leadership on our experiences and hopes for generations of students to come.

As I transitioned out of my undergraduate career through my first job and now into my graduate studies, the value of community and all the skills needed to develop it have stayed with me and made a significant impact on how I approach life. Indeed, it is at the very core of my academic and professional focus on conflict transformation and social justice. Although the pandemic disrupted our sense of community in many ways, it also created an opportunity for us to reimagine what community can mean and look like. As I write this in late February 2022, it's hard for me to imagine what the world will look like by the time you are reading this. However, I know that we will always have the ability to choose a path of unity over division. To walk that path, we must urgently recognize our shared humanity, communicate and build relationships with one another across differences, listen to and really *hear* one another's hopes and fears, and find ways to work together toward a more peaceful, just and inclusive future. We need community.

I'm grateful to all honors programs that prioritize the value of community and teach students like me how to bring that value to life every day. I'm also grateful, on this 100th anniversary, for the opportunity to reflect as it affords us a critical moment of clarity on our past, present, and future. Our experiences in honors programs nationwide and across the years connect us as a community and, whether we realize it or not, these types of connections exist all around us. We must dare to seek them out.

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The Value of Honors: Defined by Quality and Cost

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the authors reflect on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; educational outcomes; South Dakota State University (SD)—Van D. & Barbara B. Fishback Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 111–13

Value, simply defined, is quality divided by cost. Cost, whether it be in terms of money, time, energy, or another expense, is relatively easy to measure. Conversely, quality proves challenging to measure, regardless of the context. Typically, measuring quality is pursued with the purpose of quality improvement, such as in manufacturing or healthcare, and/or for the purpose of comparison, as demonstrated by the ever-growing industry of consumer ratings and reviews. Thus, the question of what the value of honors education is requires us to define what the cost of an honors education is and, perhaps more importantly, how we define the quality of honors education relative to other higher education modalities.

In an honors education, cost may come in several forms and is likely dictated by the university. The largest costs that are likely most prevalent are

time and money. Some institutions may require a monetary investment into the honors experience while others may also include a credit requirement or other time investment. The university may institute myriad costs for a student to participate and engage in the honors experience, and it is up to the student to determine if the enhanced educational experience provided by honors is valuable enough.

Defining quality within an honors education is abstract in its nature, virtually independent between students. There is a plethora of measures which could be utilized to define the quality of a graduate's education. For the purpose of this paper, rigor, student growth, and subsequent job or graduate placement will be discussed.

In terms of rigor, honors students could perhaps best describe their pursuit in language reminiscent of John F. Kennedy: they pursue honors not because it is easy, but because it is hard. They expect that programs will challenge them and encourage students to challenge themselves and one another. Honors students often invite the struggle, and the struggle rewards them. Honors graduates have not only learned to live comfortably but ultimately to thrive in the uncertainty of the professional world. Honors programs live in the abstract, facilitating critical thinking and the pursuit of novel approaches to the grandest challenges.

The facilitation of a rigorous education ultimately leads to the second measure of quality: growth of the student. Challenging coursework breeds discomfort, and with discomfort comes growth. Discomfort stems from two major sources: the first-time failure or rejection, and wading into uncharted academic territory. One author remembers his first true academic rejection occurring with the submission of his honors capstone for publication. His work was rejected in its first submission. This humbling experience, while viewed as a failure in the moment, led to robust growth in his comfortability with utilizing rejection as a driver to pursue being better. Each author is trained in the hard sciences, pharmacy, and engineering. These fields require one to pursue both precision and accuracy, and they reward correct conclusions. Most often, one must know what the most right answer is, not what the absolute right answer is. For the authors, comfortability in a most right answer has proven to accelerate them in their pursuits as higher levels of professional work prove necessary to the knowledge of what is both known and unknown.

This leads to the final measure under discussion: job or graduate program placement. Each author carried on learning beyond graduation with honors

distinction. One pursued a Doctor of Pharmacy while another pursued his Master of Engineering and now a Juris Doctor. Both have proven to have successful early careers that are unique among many peers in their field. Having a PharmD enables practicing pharmacy in the context of patient care, but this author has shifted gears and successfully pursued a role with a national healthcare quality organization working to impact the quality of patient care. The other author has led a successful early career honing his expertise in patents, first working on the patent team for a major powersports manufacturer before transitioning to a role as a patent agent with a major law firm. These two stories are not uncommon in honors; countless honors colleagues have successfully pursued roles in nontraditional careers. Honors programs prepare students to be lifelong learners. Ultimately, graduates are spurred on to pursue the struggle associated with new challenges and to positively change the shape of the world along the way.

An honors education is valuable. Metrics can be measured, analyzed, and reviewed, but at the end of the day, you need to look no further than the impact a single honors student has on the world.

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Southern Appalachian

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Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; first-generation college students; Emory & Henry College (VA)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 115–16

I am a Southern Appalachian, first-generation college student from a small town—a place where folks are sometimes considered backwards, ignorant, and or even a bit “simple minded.”

Coming to Emory & Henry College, I was certainly among the lesser-prepared students in my honors cohort. I did not attend a Governor’s School, I did not have lessons with local college professors, and I did not meet the test-score requirements for the program. And while I was “in,” there was an unspoken doubt. Immediately, my education was questioned in its rigor and breadth. I know this doubt reflected the high academic standards of the program, but it also carried unspoken assumptions about the place I came from. I would spend the next four years working to dismantle this doubt, proving myself capable and succeeding where I felt I was expected to fail. Ultimately, the Honors Program facilitated this success.

Being an Honors Scholar carries with it a certain amount of prestige among college professors, and this designation removed the barrier-of-entry for me in many respects. I was able to take advanced courses earlier in my undergraduate career, which allowed for independent studies and research projects. I was able to propose, develop, and present an Honors Thesis on

a topic that would eventually persuade me to get a PhD in Acoustics. I was able to “honors contract” courses to cover material not taught at my college to better prepare for graduate school. I was even able to study abroad at the University of Cambridge.

I was an Honors Scholar and a Southern Appalachian, not only succeeding but thriving.

I hold these opportunities and experiences close to my heart, as they encompass both academic and personal growth. Gone was the imposter syndrome, the feeling of being less, compared to my cohort. In its place was the understanding that each student brings with them a skill set and knowledge base that, when put together, creates an environment for success and greater achievement than would have been possible alone. Being from my place, being of my people and they of theirs, we were able to form a cohort of Honors Scholars that grew in understanding through people from all places.

This alone is my greatest and most cherished takeaway from my time as an Honors Scholar. I was afforded the space to ask my questions, to pursue my goals with a foundation of people pushing me to succeed. It helped show me my value as a student, my value as a person, my value as a Southern Appalachian, first-generation college student from a small town—a place where folks are resilient, humble, and of incredible mind.

Finding Community, Support, and the Importance of Detours

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; interdisciplinary approach to knowledge; Texas A&M University (TX)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 117–19

In the early weeks of my undergraduate experience, I sat down with the Director of the Honors Program and told him I wanted to go to Oxford for graduate school, or an Ivy at the very least; then asked what I'd need on my résumé to get there. I was an ambitious but naïve 18-year-old. Fortunately, I found my way to the Honors Program at Texas A&M University, where I was supported, mentored, and shaped into a more well-rounded, open-minded individual.

My advisor did take me seriously during that first meeting, exemplifying the first value I gained at Honors: the value of listening to people and responding thoughtfully. He laid out a comprehensive list of accomplishments that a competitive résumé would have. But he also asked how I was acclimating to the Honors Living Community and encouraged me to explore all the extracurricular opportunities the Honors Program had available. After living in the community for a year, I applied to be a live-in peer mentor and Teaching Assistant for incoming freshmen. I discovered the importance of contributing to my community and a joy in mentoring. My relationships with

my students and the other mentors were enriching and lasting. When my students knocked on my door at all hours needing help with classes, an advocate, or a shoulder to cry on, I learned more about empathy and crisis management at 20 years old than many people learn in a lifetime. I found incredible support in the other mentors; we leaned on each other emotionally, academically, and socially. I learned the necessity and beauty of community building. An activity that was initially just a great addition to my résumé became an integral part of my life and a support system to this day.

As a member of a selective scholarship program within the wider Honors scheme, I was mandated to take a class every semester that had no relation to my major, Bioenvironmental Science. In classes like the Psychology of Superheroes and The Meaning of Life, I learned with and debated other students from different fields and points of view. Honors showed me the importance of an interdisciplinary approach and the value of engaging intellectually with people from varied backgrounds. Almost nothing I did and learned through this program had an immediate and obvious utility. The purpose was curiosity. This interdisciplinary outlook later served me in my career as an environmental consultant, where I would become fluent in new business markets with every new client.

With graduation looming, I decided I no longer wanted to apply to graduate school, at least not yet. My honors advisors and professors fully supported my decision to take some time off from school and work. In my experience, motivated, high-achieving people often feel significant pressure to accomplish. But the values I gained through the Honors Program allowed me to prioritize other aspects of my life when necessary: my mental health, my relationships, and testing out my professional goals.

After working for a few years, I was ready to approach graduate school. My advisor from the Texas A&M Honors Program was my first call. He talked me through the different programs I was considering, still making time for a student so many years later. He wrote my letters of recommendation and connected me to an A&M alumnus and Rhodes Scholar to help me on my application. I contacted the research professor I initially met through an Honors seminar before working in his lab for years as an undergraduate. He wrote a letter of recommendation and edited my technical essays. I learned the value of maintaining professional relationships and the impact a few hours of someone's time can have.

Currently, I am studying Biodiversity, Conservation, and Management at the University of Oxford. I employ the values I gained in the Honors Program

every day. I am an engaged, contributing member of my community, serving on the graduate student committee as the Sustainability Officer. I sought out an interdisciplinary graduate program, with a cohort of lawyers, biologists, and mathematicians. I strive to be a supportive peer, particularly with new hires at my job and peers at Oxford. Wherever my path leads, I know my academic, professional, and personal life will always be better for the formation I received in the Texas A&M University Honors Program.

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Rooted in Relations: Honors and a Relation-Based Approach to Learning

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; social emotional learning; Appalachian State University (NC)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 121–22

After graduating with my bachelors, I took a 6-month temporary job in Nepal working with a non-profit doing development research. While there I worked with a cohort of international and Nepali interns, and my fellow international expatriates continuously remarked on the ways life in Nepal bleeds into the streets. They pointed out that in much of the Western world, life is confined to our living rooms or patios, guarded by privacy fences. In Nepal, life has a less sterile rhythm. Neighbors always initiated greetings, offering Chia to be idly sipped over conversation. Life was inextricably intertwined, an increasing anomaly in the West as we retreat to the privacy of our single-family homes and, more recently, to the squares of our Zoom screens.

When my fellow international co-workers pointed this out, I was really taken aback by how I had never noticed this stark difference. Once they mentioned it, the difference was clear and prolific, but I couldn't shake why I hadn't noticed it. Then I realized that my most recent experiences in the U.S. hadn't been confined to backyard BBQs or insular experiences but were rooted in community. My undergraduate experiences and time at my school's honors

college were anything but isolated. Learning was fostered through conversation. Socratic style seminars encouraged dialogue. Friendships were made in the classroom and sustained once the semester had ended. We were encouraged to invest in our relationships with not only friends but also faculty. These relationships superseded academic needs by providing emotional support. In reflection, my time at Appalachian State University and as an honors college student for all four years was a time of interconnection, of relationships, and subsequent growth.

I think COVID has accelerated a trend that was already on the precipice, a world that retreats behind screens and is increasingly disconnected. As colleges have moved online, I worry about the reticence to return to classrooms as many have become accustomed to working from home. However, I think programs like the honors college will push against this trend through encouraging a relations-based approach to learning. My life has shown me time and time again that relationships are more than necessary but the premise of our humanity, our emotional landscape, and I am forever grateful for my honors experience in laying the foundations of this belief.

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Honors Lessons Learned Outside the Classroom

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; transformative learning; Long Island University, Post (NY)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 123–25

As an immature high schooler, I thought Honors would be a stamp of excellence on my résumé. However, I graduated Honors with a far more valuable gift—an education outside the classroom full of social and intellectual reflection and growth.

At my high school, self-worth and popularity hinged on which Ivy League you got into, so my eyes were never set on LIU Post Honors. However, I considered alternatives once I received eight rejection letters in the mail. Desperation to go to *any* college caused me to begrudgingly ink my name on the acceptance letter to LIU Post Honors. When I attended a meeting with the Honors Director, Joan Digby, she could feel my defeated attitude, but instead of giving up on me, Joan saw my potential to grow into a person with meaningful values and a healthy drive towards success. She looked past my arrogance and played into my desire for impressive résumé builders by listing what I could do in Honors: study abroad at Cambridge University, free travel and immersion in national parks, and graduation in three years.

This was not mere puffery. During my time in Honors, I found myself having philosophical conversations with prestigious professors while punting down the Cambridge River. I tested my physical limits backpacking in

the Sawtooth Wilderness Area with ten strangers, all honors students from around the country, and relying on them for my survival. I scrambled over volcanoes and scrambled away from cockroaches in Hawaii, again with honors students who were all strangers. And lastly, I graduated early as valedictorian candidate in computer science with an acceptance to a top-20 law school.

Honors unraveled the confidence I had in the classroom and exposed my vulnerabilities outside in the real world, teaching me lessons and skills that cannot be learned from a textbook. For example, backpacking the Sawtooth Wilderness Area was a major turning point in my life. I learned to trust people and my abilities to survive by overcoming the mental hurdles of hunger, coldness, and fatigue. I developed grit, which has helped me train for months on end and persevere through countless marathons, ultra-marathons, and 48-hour running challenges. Honors has helped develop the mental strength needed to balance and succeed simultaneously in my running endeavors and professional career.

A year from graduating college, I was challenged intellectually to choose a thesis topic that bridged the gap between computer science and law. I struggled because Google did not provide an easy answer. While Googling, I inadvertently fell down the rabbit hole of *Apple v. Samsung*, which exposed me to my version of *Alice's Wonderland*: the world of patent law. I knew in that moment that I belonged in the patent world and would make my professional career there. I wrote a hundred pages of patent law analysis and software engineering solutions to advance efficient, unbiased resolutions in patent cases. My passion brought me to present my thesis to a board of LIU trustees, publish my thesis in an international law journal, and write other articles on this topic.

Honors helped me reach another major turning point in my life: becoming a patent attorney. Being the only female student in the LIU Computer Science Program, I walked into law school with humble confidence that I could make it in an industry crowded by nerdy, male engineers. I knew I had the strength and grit to persevere in this professional world—and I did not have to be cocky or arrogant to make it. Two years out of law school, I am at a world-renowned patent law firm. I have my dream job, and every day I am reminded of the self-growth journey in Honors that helped me find my way to this career.

My life could have panned out a thousand other ways had I received one acceptance letter from the Ivies. However, thanks to Honors, *this is my life*. Although I did not see the potential for growth in myself, Joan Digby did.

She sold me on Honors, and Honors gave me the chance to grow into the person I strived to be. The Honors coursework was consuming and stimulating, but the best things about Honors were the countless opportunities to develop grit, mental toughness, courage, and humility. These characteristics have shaped me into a dedicated athlete, a passionate young professional, and a good human being.

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From Community Service and Advocacy to a Life of Civil Service

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; civil service; Point Park University (PA)—Honors Program

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 127–29

The value of an honors education goes far beyond a specific honors course or project as students gain valuable skills that impact both their personal and professional life. In the almost three years since graduating university, I still find that my honors education has impacted my outlook on life and how I approach various situations in my day-to-day life.

After graduation, I decided to pursue a career as a civil servant instead of pursuing a traditional public relations career. While I enjoyed communications work, I knew from my honors education that I wanted to partake in work that made a positive impact on the community.

During my time at Point Park University, my honors education allowed me to explore and learn about various social issues impacting my local community. From the moment I walked onto campus as an honors student, our director began educating us on the importance of giving back. We participated in community service projects and donation drives during our first-week orientation. My fellow students highlighted the organizations we

worked with by hosting these events and explaining the impact that these organizations had on the city of Pittsburgh and its surrounding areas.

When I attended my first regional honors conference, I realized that the value of giving back to the community extended far beyond the walls of my university and my city. Not only did the Northeast Regional Honors Council (NRHC) highlight the importance of the local community, it highlighted the social issues faced by people on a national and even international level. Through the research projects presented at the conference, students were able to share the issues faced by their local communities and discuss how those same issues impact other areas of the region and world. Of course, these same ideals carried over from my regional organization to the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC). On all levels of my honors experience, I was able to witness how people put effort into researching the impact social issues have on everyday life and proposed ways to give back to those affected communities.

The desire to continue giving back to my local community led me to apply for several city of Pittsburgh positions. I landed in my first role in the city in 2019 as a clerical assistant and was promoted to another department as a Personnel & Finance Analyst in 2021. After two and a half years of civil service, I've experienced what it's like to work with our local community and see the impact that our organization's services provide to our residents.

You would think that the projects presented at conferences end with the final presentation, but they don't. My own presentations based on feminism and the LGBTQIA+ community have given me a basis for understanding how to be inclusive and provide equity to minority communities. Not only that, the research has encouraged me to seek out where the processes I interact with on a daily basis may be lacking in equity and inclusion.

As a civil servant, I continue to strive for ways that best serve not only the public, but my internal communities as well. I want to ensure that we are best supporting the public as well as my fellow civil servants in the city of Pittsburgh. We strive to do right by our communities and make our processes as efficient as possible, without losing the integrity of our hard work and dedication.

Honors is not only about educating yourself academically, but civically as well. Not every human we come across is going to be well versed in academia, so we have to use that education to learn how to communicate with a diverse group of people. The values of diversity, advocacy, and the focus on

strong research allow us to grow into not only better students, but also better humans.

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A Bridge to Belonging

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; self-actualization (psychology); University of Iowa (IA)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 131–32

Growing up as a child of immigrants in a predominantly white community, I felt the tension of an identity crisis early on. I remember being the only Vietnamese person in my class and having to explain why my mom packed me rice for lunch instead of sandwiches. I remember not being able to make friends easily at school, instead seeking out other Vietnamese children down the street or playing with my cousins. Instead of my having doctors or lawyers as parents, my father worked at a meat packing plant and my mother worked at a nail salon. As I grew up, recognizing the differences between me and my peers became less of a choice and more of my reality. I am not ashamed of my background, but it created enough differences that I felt a divide between myself and my classmates. My own identity had become a barrier to belonging.

Because of my upbringing, I had a narrowminded view of what success in college looked like. I felt like I carried this enormous pressure on my shoulders to do well and succeed, which only manifested as self-doubt. I thought I should only focus on science classes and conduct basic science research. After all, I had never met another person with my background who went on to medical school—which was my goal. My first time on University of Iowa's campus, I attended the honors program welcome event. The first student I met was a pre-med sophomore named Anya. She told me about all the honors classes she was

taking, which ranged from the typical biology and organic chemistry to something I wasn't expecting, a class on the Beatles and one on women's studies. It was the first time I realized that my perception of education may have been limited as I never considered the other ways learning can present itself.

I was so used to honors classes being presented as advanced, exclusive courses that were faster and more challenging than traditional courses. However, I couldn't have been more wrong. My honors classes became portals that transported me to other areas of learning and education I had never thought to discover before. In my Honors Philosophy class, I was encouraged to volunteer at my local children's hospital and record weekly videos of myself discussing how I was processing the patient stories I was hearing and what I was learning about myself on my own path to medical school. In my Music, Madness, Disease, and Death seminar, I learned not only about the chemical structure of popular rock and roll drugs, but also about how rock and roll music reflected the deep turmoil that surrounded the social and cultural changes that preceded the 1960s.

These classes also grouped me with other students I wouldn't have had a chance to learn with. My classmates studied political science, chemical engineering, and creative writing. These classes weren't what I expected, but they are the ones that helped me learn the most about myself. It was eye-opening to be able to be in a room of like-minded, yet totally diverse individuals, many of whom I would have never met outside of my honors classes. To me, the beauty of honors lies in its mission: to cultivate a community of like-minded individuals with a curiosity and passion for learning. By focusing on our shared goals, I learned to see and accept the different facets of my identity as strengths instead of barriers to inclusion. What one student had trouble conceptualizing, another student could explain with ease. That's the beauty of diversity: there is never a shortage of perspective. As I progressed through college, the classes I took and the people I met diversified not only how I saw my education, but also how I saw myself.

Three years after graduation, I am a third-year medical student and the student body president of my medical school. My undergraduate experience in the honors program helped me not only meet my academic goals but was also formative in making me the woman I had always wanted to become. If I could tell my younger self something, it would be this: Open yourself up to the possibility that your differences deserve to be celebrated and seek out the opportunities to learn about yourself where you might least expect it.

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The Honors Connection: Openness and Empathy

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; liberal learning; Oklahoma City University (OK)—Honors Program

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I entered college as a performing arts major and graduated with a degree in economics, a rather seismic shift at face value. College is a time of great exploration and soul-searching, and while such freedom is exhilarating, it is often very stressful to sort through constantly evolving goals. Despite transitioning through three different majors, I was able to graduate in four years as planned, largely thanks to Honors.

The Honors program was my first introduction to college, and in my first few hours at school I met my fellow Honors peers, a small group of students from all over the country studying a multitude of topics from business and music to nursing and the humanities. After pursuing dance with a one-track mind for the first 18 years of my life, my eyes were quickly opened to the other avenues that were available to me. Curiosity was the first value that Honors instilled in me, and eventually led me to a career I never would have considered otherwise.

The Honors courses I was required to take opened my eyes to topics I had never been exposed to before: world religions, medicine & literature, and fascism & film to name a few. I was not particularly enthused about taking

some of these classes at first, but I left with transformative perspectives on the power of empathy, the importance of openness, and the value of challenging my own viewpoints. I learned that changing my mind when presented with new information is not a sign of weakness, but one of humility and strength. Given the fragile state of the world today, these truths have served me now more than ever.

Honors, at its very core, is about the commonalities of the human experience. No matter where we come from or what we have experienced in our separate lives, we are all deeply connected in our humanness. What makes us human is our ability to feel. I have learned in my adult life that the presence of one feeling does not mean the absence of another—it is possible to feel confident yet scared, deeply sad yet joyful at the same time. Honors taught me how to recognize my emotions and think critically about why certain things cause us to feel the way we feel. Intuition is powerful, and I learned to trust mine. That was why, when I took my first economics class and felt immediately drawn to the subject, I allowed my curiosity and intuition to take control and changed my major.

Economics seems like a far cry from the dance industry, but both dance and economics are rooted in human behavior and connection. Dance is a physical expression of the human condition, and economics is the study of markets, which are at their very root driven by the feelings and decisions made by the people within them. This sort of interconnection exists in every aspect of our world and is truly fascinating to think about. The point of honors is to learn to seek out this connectedness and use it as a tool to explore and engage with the world around us.

I now work at the largest privately held bank in the country as a financial analyst, valuing portfolios of mortgage-related assets, driving process improvement initiatives, and contributing to investment decisions that drive roughly half of the bank's \$30 billion asset base. If anyone would have told 18-year-old me that I would have a career in finance and that my success in that field would be largely owed to a combination of openness, humility, and creativity, I would have scoffed. Honors provided me with the tools to hone these values in my personal life, and they have since crossed over into my professional life in a way I never thought was possible.

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How Honors Hoisted Me to DC and a Public Health Career

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; transformative education; University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (TN)—Honors College

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In May of 2021, I moved to Washington, D.C. It was the middle of the pandemic. I had only been to D.C. once for a National Collegiate Honors Council conference. My partner was graduating law school and had just received a highly esteemed post-graduate fellowship in North Carolina. I was doing well in my global health job at Duke University. It would have been easy to stay static. Yet, we collectively came to the decision to move to a new place where we knew practically no one. I knew that I wanted to challenge myself and push my comfort levels to see what all was out there, professionally and personally. My experience in Honors literally gave me the exposure to this city and many others, but more importantly it gave me the tools and experience to bet on myself and try new things.

Like many, or maybe most, college students, I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do when I enrolled my first year. I knew I wanted to "do good," whatever that meant. As a freshman, I was convinced that I would do good by becoming a lawyer, despite having never met a lawyer. At the advice of many, I double majored in business management and Spanish. After an immigration

law internship my freshman year, I quickly realized that law was not the path for me. After a few trial-and-error internships in local entrepreneurship, non-profits, and academic research, I still wasn't sure how I was going to "do good." I stumbled on the field of public health and global health sort of by accident through my first job out of college as a research analyst at an institute that was part of Duke University. Despite the fact that my alma mater did not have a public health degree, through the culmination of Honors classes and experiences I got to exactly where I needed to be to "do good."

Although my classes in business and Spanish were important bricks in my academic foundation, I would not have gotten to where I am today without my Honors program. Honors gave me the opportunity to explore passions and rabbit holes with extreme gentleness and supportiveness. Through honors programming and funding, I was able to go to Hungary and Austria and make a documentary on the post-Cold War perspective of nationality; I was able to camp in a yurt in Brooklyn through Partners in the Parks; and I was able to research comparative Spanish and Russian literature. In opposition to the age-old question of when I was going to use any of that in "real life," I use these experiences every day. I gained radical empathy, an insatiable appetite and curiosity for new things, and the ability to see that no issue is clearcut.

Although the Honors experience is often criticized for its exclusivity and cliquishness, my experience exposed me to new thoughts and peers who challenged me and continue to shape the person I am today. Whether in seminars, conversations at parties, or heated late-night debates in our student center, my peers made me confront my implicit biases and limited real-world experience. Simultaneously, I learned how to be an advocate for both myself and my story and for those around me. And this didn't end when I graduated; the alumnae from my honors program continue to push me to be and do better every day.

My experience as part of the honors community shaped me to be the public health advocate I aim to be today. I ultimately was able to choose a career in public health because of the tools, exposure, and skill sets that Honors gave me, and I hope that more and more students can be exposed to this experience in the years to come.

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Honoring the Whole Person: Indigenous Wisdom and University Honors Programs

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; intercultural education; California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (CA)—The Kellogg Honors College

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Growing up in “Garbage City” on the outskirts of Cairo left little hope for a better life. Members of indigenous communities of Upper Egypt had been forcibly relocated to this landfill by the Egyptian government decades before my birth. These tribal communities were known in Egyptian culture as “the black savages” and “the trashy ones.” My parents were compassionate people of little means, and although rummaging through mountains of trash for food and shelter was often life-threatening, I was happy. Later I would come to learn that my “parents” were really my grandparents and that my real parents had left me shortly after my birth. Since then, my life has been a series of rejections, with rare life-altering exceptions. As a child from Garbage City, I suffered the double stigma of being a “savage” and living in abject poverty. People either avoided us because they considered us ignorant or they abused us because they considered us diseased. Indeed, life itself seems to have objected to my existence, having nearly died from malnutrition three times prior to turning five.

Some light through the darkness appeared when ranchers from Upper Egypt came to recruit homeless children for free labor. Al Salam Ranch lived up to its name, *Peace*, for it was where I first encountered plants and animals, beings who did not see me as ignorant or diseased. While other workers ostracized me because of my indigenous heritage, the rancher invited me to stay year-round because he noticed my dedication and care for the land. It was in this peaceful paradise that my love and curiosity for the natural world grew. When a humanitarian group came to our village, I met an older couple who would later become my adoptive parents. Our connection was rooted in our indigenous identity, my father being Lakota and my mother being a descendant of Black Seminoles. My parents' ranch at Standing Rock doubled as a shelter for humans and animals that had experienced abuse or neglect. While others in my Tribe treated me as a stranger and a half-breed, my parents affirmed their trust in me by asking me to manage the ranch and carry on their humanitarian work. It was in this haven that my passion for agriculture and concern for the vulnerable came to the forefront of my life's work.

Perhaps I was never destined to be an honors student, or so the rejection letter from the Kellogg Honors College seemed to imply. It made me question whether I belonged at the university at all. How could this be? I was an honors graduate from my community college, I had received the Student of Distinction Award, which was the most prestigious award on campus, and I had received all the highest awards from my academic department. I emailed the Honors Director, Suketu Bhavsar, and asked him what my weaknesses were so that I might improve as a scholar. Despite his incredible workload, he expressed confusion as to why I was rejected and invited me to meet with him. He informed me that my essay responses on the application fell below the 600-word limit and the committee therefore rejected me. I wondered, had they seen me work on this application after a 12-hour workday on the farm, working under candlelight in the tent I slept in at the time, would they have understood why I failed to read the instructions? Dr. Bhavsar, however, was confused because, to his mind, I had fully answered the questions without verbosity, which to him was the mark of a good scholar.

Like few that came before him, Dr. Bhavsar demonstrated that virtue that eludes most of us but is apparent throughout the natural world: wisdom. He was able to peer through institutional exclusionary "standards" to see my humanity, my potential, and the inscrutable journey that had brought me to his doorstep. Since then, this beloved mentor and I have shared many adventures and conversations, experiences that have enhanced my life's journey in

ways I am still discovering. If honors programs are going to be anything, they must be places where wisdom is the highest value. Are we pursuing the wisdom to see each other as whole beings, to become people worthy of honor, or are we cogs in the wheel of institutions that have prided themselves on whom they exclude rather than whom they include? Wisdom, seated on the throne of compassion, those are the people who shine a light in an otherwise dark world.

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Skill and Community Development through an Honors Education

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; self-efficacy; William Paterson University (NJ)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 141–43

My enrollment at William Paterson University was mainly informed by financial considerations; however, the value of the honors education I received in terms of skill development and educational outcomes has proven to be just as beneficial. Within the academic setting, I learned how to successfully collaborate with peers in the first-year honors cluster of general education courses, to cultivate a desire and curiosity to learn both inside and outside of my major discipline (political science), to take an interdisciplinary approach to research through honors sections of core curriculum courses, and to develop and stick to a routine through writing an undergraduate honors thesis. These are all important skills, but I also acquired social skills that have assisted not only in interactions with colleagues and peers inside academia but also in developing meaningful relationships with my communities and generating a support system that continues to sustain my life and future endeavors.

Of the academic skills I cultivated and developed through my honors education, the one most directly important to my success as a graduate

student is self-discipline and the ability to work independently. The Social Science Honors Track, which consisted of theory, methodology, and application courses in social science research, as well as independent studies with my honors thesis advisor, exposed me to the research process for the first time in a way that is consistent with the expectations of my graduate studies. I learned how to read and organize literature, distinguish between critical methodologies, choose research methods best suited to my research question and theory, and present my research in front of an academic audience. Importantly, each class and meeting developed my interaction skills with professors who taught courses and with my honors thesis advisor. The cultivation of the advisor/advisee relationship enabled me to meaningfully ask questions, learn from the experiences of my advisor, and accept critique with humility; these are all skills and values that I have taken with me in the graduate setting.

Through the Honors College, I also created and participated in communities inside and outside of the classroom that have acted as a support system. My fellow honors students understood and empathized with my struggles in courses and juggling work, school, and personal responsibilities. This connection over shared experiences turned into a community where we celebrated our victories together and comforted each other in times of struggle. The professors who taught honors courses also acted as a crucial structure of support. They took interest both in my research interests and ideas (which, despite changing frequently, my professors always took seriously and provided meaningful feedback) and in my life. My family and friends encouraged me every step of the way from taking my first honors courses to presenting my honors thesis, and the Honors College facilitated this connection through the Honors Award Ceremony for students who presented their thesis and other events where family members were encouraged to attend and cheer on the students.

Reflecting on my experiences in the Honors College at William Paterson University, there are two takeaways that stand out the most in my mind. First, much of the coursework, especially those courses geared toward the development of the honors thesis, prepared me for my graduate studies. The interactions I had with professors during this time were especially crucial for my personal and professional development. The desire to learn and to conduct research that I cultivated during my time as an honors student has remained a driving force in my life. Second, the support system that I created and that was facilitated through the Honors College has sustained my motivation to learn and create new supportive relationships in my graduate studies. Support and encouragement are just as vital to a successful and fulfilling education as

skilled professors and faculty. The skills and communities that the Honors College assisted in developing have helped me to continually aspire to be the best scholar, friend, sister, daughter, and colleague that I can.

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Is Honors Worth the Extra Effort?

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; transformative education; University of Hartford (CT)—Honors Program

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When many students think about participating in an honors program, their minds immediately rush to harder courses and more work. Frankly, many brilliant classmates did not pursue the honors program because they did not see the benefit. They failed to recognize the implicit value of pursuing a program that is simultaneously challenging and nurturing. Although I did not notice it each day, the honors program had a major impact on my college and professional journey.

My experience in the honors program highlighted the importance of flexibility. In my college's honors program, students could make standard courses into honors courses by developing an honors contract. Rather than being confined to the traditionally offered honors courses, this option allowed me the flexibility to delve deeper into subjects of interest. For the honors contract for my *Hunger: Problems of Scarcity and Choice* course, I volunteered at Foodshare, a local non-profit focused on eliminating food insecurity, and presented my reflections. This non-traditional classroom experience instilled the need for volunteerism, something I have integrated into my post-grad life. Without the flexibility of these contracts, I never would have had this opportunity.

The value of originality was instilled throughout my honors experience. When I was deciding on a focus for my final honors project, I remember being shocked by how open my advisor was to my ideas. I expected there to be strict guidelines, but rather I was able to create a project that aligned with my passions. I completed groundbreaking research to determine if axial rotation could be reliably measured in children with cerebral palsy. This involved creating an original device, testing children, analyzing data, synthesizing results, and eventually publishing the findings. This project never felt like additional work because I was genuinely invested in the research. I also gained meaningful leadership experience while managing a team of three research assistants. In the workforce, leadership skills and the ability to work well with others are essential.

My classmates showed me the value of a supportive, rather than competitive, community. I assumed that a class of high-achieving students would result in competition and jealousy. To my surprise and delight, my classmates were focused on challenging each other and growing together. In the workforce, it is easy to get distracted by others' successes. This value grounds me in the significance of a supportive community and the desire to learn and grow with, rather than against, others.

My biggest takeaway from the honors program was openness. Openness in expressing what I wanted or needed. Openness to experiences and opportunities. My career journey has deviated greatly from my original plan. I planned to complete the Doctor of Physical Therapy program immediately following my three-year accelerated bachelor's degree. However, once I started taking courses and exploring other interests through honors contracts, I realized I was passionate about various topics. I was open with advisors regarding my career. I was open about my desire to explore other subjects, passions, and careers. I was open about my aspiration to complete a full research project for my honors project. I learned that being open usually results in opportunities and support. Through these experiences, I determined that physical therapy was not the field for me. My final honors project opened new doors in the neuromuscular research world which ultimately led to my first job. I worked as a Clinical Research Coordinator in the neuromuscular program at Boston Children's Hospital. The value of openness has followed me into my adult life also. I realized that I wanted to explore the business side of healthcare, which led me to my current role and pursuit of a Master in Business Administration degree. The twists and turns of my career trajectory are the result of my openness to new opportunities and experiences.

The honors program allowed me to learn and grow in a supportive community. I was given flexible learning options that afforded me the opportunity to explore passions outside my major. In addition, I was able to develop an original study, which sparked one of the many changes in my career journey. Looking back, the freshman-year me would have been baffled by how open I was in asking for what I needed and accepting new experiences. This evolution of character can largely be attributed to my experiences in the honors program, which proved to be meaningful in ways beyond academics.

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Finding My Place

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC); Northeastern Illinois University (IL)—Honors Program

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Each of us enters higher education with our own life experiences and beliefs. As a Black woman over forty, I was not your typical college sophomore. Returning to college full-time filled me with uncertainty, so unlike when I first began undergrad more than twenty years prior. A lifetime of highs and lows, failures and successes cultivated a certain fearlessness, yet I was unsure of where I might fit within the university culture. And then I was accepted into the University Honors Program.

“Scholar” was always a mantle I desired to carry. Although I’d spent my life exploring ideas and collecting knowledge on my own, being an Honors Scholar provided me a pass, a sort of permission, to explore ideas and better understand what I thought, while providing connections to challenge and reinforce those thoughts and ideas. I became a part of a community of people who were just as intimidated by the power of their own minds as I was, yet we continued to show up and do the work that never really felt like work. All the while, we lifted each other up, filling sagging sails with the winds of our encouragement.

My experience with Honors validated so many aspects of my identity that I hadn't realized I'd quieted. Over my life, I had found some personal success and stability. There was a certain pride I took in my achievements from my self-taught, Jill-of-all-trades-ness. But my passions, the subjects that got me on my feet and sucked into heated debates had no sustainable outlet. When I developed my first honors contract course proposal, I worried that my idea would be rejected by both my professor and Honors faculty because I didn't see anyone within my major and the small university circles in which I'd traveled discussing Blackness and media in the way I wished to explore. But when I finally opened my mouth and voiced my idea, I was met with encouragement and questions. There were so many animated conversations over the course of my tenure as an NEIU UHP Scholar, but there were also many challenges.

As a Communication, Media, and Theatre major and Mass Media minor, I believed my Honors Scholar status would challenge me to create and educate. Most importantly, I desired to be taught and led before I could lead and teach. The pushback I received during the development of my projects and thesis was deeply craved and welcomed. The team assembled provided a layer of accountability and critique that helped to refine my vision and my voice.

As I try to collect my thoughts into this essay, I've surprised myself by what I've accomplished as an Honors Scholar. My curiosity and passion have been activated, and as I finish my first term in graduate school, I'm more prepared than I'd given myself credit for. I have research. I have writings. I have video projects that demonstrate my calling to amplify authentic representations of Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) in film and television. My aim is to center BIPOC identities through the exploration of positive representations and fill the gaps in documentation and scholarly research in Media Studies. In our twenty-first-century society, I too must be able to present my work in a variety of media because I am a Scholar and a Creative Consultant. These are both vocations and callings.

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Journal

OF THE National Collegiate Honors Council

**PORTZ-PRIZE-WINNING
ESSAY, 2021**

Refusing Erasure: Nugent, *Fire!!*, and the Legacies of Queer Harlem

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Abstract: This study examines the work of two queer Black artists, Richard Bruce Nugent and Marlon Riggs, within the historical and sociopolitical contexts of the Harlem Renaissance and cultural backlash of the late 1980s. Through comparative textual analyses, the author explores fluctuations of Black queer cultural production during the twentieth century and considers how each artist subverts dominant racist and heteronormative ideologies in mainstream society and Black communities. Engaging tools from the fields of critical race theory, queer theory, critical legal studies, and cultural representations of race and sexuality, the author analyzes “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” and *Tongues Untied* structurally and historically, suggesting that both offer valuable strategies for survival in and resistance against an anti-Black and homophobic society. The works of Nugent and Riggs constitute queer interventions in the larger movement toward racial equality, making visible racial and sexual oppression and positing connections between racial justice and queer liberation. Moreover, positioning Riggs within the legacy of Nugent and the Harlem Renaissance points to the generative potential of radical and transgressive queer Black art.

Keywords: “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” (short story); Nugent, Bruce, 1906–1987; *Tongues Untied* (film); Riggs, Marlon, 1957–1994; Washington State University (WA)—Honors College

Citation: *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 2022, 23(1): 153–87

INTRODUCTION

The history of Black cultural production in the U.S. is one of struggle for self-representation and self-definition. Black artists and writers from Phillis Wheatley to Langston Hughes to Staceyann Chin have engaged in this

struggle and demonstrated the potential of art and literature to subvert the dominant ideologies that uphold and enable racial oppression and violence. Richard Bruce Nugent and Marlon Riggs were two queer Black artists who worked in different time periods, the Harlem Renaissance and the cultural backlash of the late 1980s. These two movements in a long history of Black cultural production are separated by distinct historical and cultural specificities but united by the ongoing struggles toward racial equality. The work of Nugent and Riggs constituted queer interventions in each of these larger movements, making visible racial and sexual oppression and suggesting connections between racial justice and queer liberation. Nugent's "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" is regarded as the first explicitly homoerotic work written by a Black man while Riggs's documentary-style film *Tongues Untied* illuminated the experiences of gay Black men in 1980s America. Each of these works subverted dominant racist and heteronormative ideologies in mainstream society and Black communities, demonstrating the radical potential of transgressive representations of Black queer identities and experiences.

The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s represented a moment of hope as well as an explosion of cultural production from Black artists and writers. Because negative representations of Black people in previous centuries had been designed to justify slavery and other forms of racial subjugation, prominent Black elites and intellectuals hoped to reconstruct and rehabilitate the race's image as the nation moved into the twentieth century. The representative figure of the "New Negro" would challenge the racist caricatures and stereotypes that continued to oppress Black communities, but this new definition of Black identity relied heavily on notions of race respectability and progress. A small group of young Black artists rejected these essentialist constructions of Black identity and created *Fire!!*, a quarterly for radical young Black artists. Among them was Richard Bruce Nugent, who, in 1926, published his "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" in the first issue. The artists of *Fire!!* complicated essentialist definitions of Black identity by highlighting aspects of Black lives and identities that were often dismissed and ignored by dominant Black publications because they did not align with racial uplift politics. The topics of sex and sexuality "had been completely left out of other representations of the New Negro" (Carroll 205), and Nugent's queer writing subverted race respectability through transgressive representations of Black experiences and identities.

Six decades after the Harlem Renaissance, writer and activist Joseph Beam, in his 1986 editorial for *Black/Out* magazine, declared that "Black men loving Black men is the revolutionary act of the 80s" (9). That same year, the iconic

symbol of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power—the equation SILENCE = DEATH underneath a pink triangle—first appeared on posters. The revolutionary potential of Black men’s love and the equivalence of silence and death are two themes that powerfully shaped Marlon Riggs’s *Tongues Untied*. His most widely known—and most controversial—work, the film focuses on the lives of gay Black men in 1980s America, illustrating their experiences of homophobia and racism within both Black communities and predominately white gay spaces. Using storytelling, spoken poetry, and performance, as well as drawing on personal experiences, Riggs disrupted the anti-Black and heteronormative discourses that erased and silenced queer Black communities. Though Riggs’s goal was not to shock the public but rather to affirm Black queer identities and experiences, the transgressive elements of *Tongues Untied* drew harsh public criticism and censorship.

Though they worked in different historical time periods, both Nugent and Riggs carved out creative spaces that affirmed and celebrated queer Black identities and communities that were often silenced and rendered invisible. Addressing subjects and issues that were taboo, these artists complicated understandings of race, sexuality, and identity, and they received public criticism and attack for their efforts. Responding to their specific sociopolitical realities, Nugent and Riggs made unique and vital contributions to Black queer cultural production. The influence of these artists reached beyond the queer community, highlighting strategies of survival in and resistance against a homophobic and anti-Black society. Considering these artists and their work alongside each other demonstrates how representations of Black queer subjects in transgressive art function simultaneously to affirm one’s identity and to critique one’s community from a place of love.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Harlem Renaissance remains an era of intense study, as the abundance of works concerning both the time and the geographic region attest. While some early studies, such as Huggins’s *Harlem Renaissance* (1971) and Lewis’s *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (1981), trace the history of the Black culture in Harlem and the pivotal events that led to the creative explosion of the Harlem Renaissance, others, like Gates’s “The Trope of a New Negro” (1988), emphasize the artistic and political facets of the period and the contemporaneous “New Negro” movement. These earlier works highlighted the impact of the Harlem Renaissance on Black communities and the U.S. culture at large, yet the influence of queer sexuality on the artists and the work they

produced was generally absent from the analysis. However, the excavation of this period in Black cultural history made possible the later “queering” of the Renaissance. While this study directly builds on the later work, the earlier foundational work made the queering of the Harlem Renaissance possible and makes legible the queer flourishing that followed. The flourishing can be broken into three (often overlapping) categories: works that consider the queer significance of *Fire!!*; works that incorporate the queer writers of the Harlem Renaissance into the existing Black literary canon; and works that articulate the importance and impact of specific queer artists and writers.

To(o) Queer Harlem¹

In his *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, Lewis explores the historical and cultural significance of Harlem, New York, during the first third of the twentieth century. Beginning in 1905, “the beginning of the end of white Harlem,” (25) and ending in 1935 with the Harlem Race Riot, Lewis examines various events, figures, and movements that contributed to Harlem’s becoming a symbol of a Black cultural “Renaissance.” Lewis delves into the effects of World War I on racial consciousness in America, the emergence of “New Negro” rhetoric, and conflicting ideas among Black intellectuals and leaders about how racial equality could and should be achieved. Conversely, Huggins claims that his *Harlem Renaissance* is not about the Harlem Renaissance specifically but rather uses 1920s Harlem as “a lens through which one might see . . . white men and black men unknowingly dependent in their work to shape American character and culture” (12). Huggins critically analyzes some of the art produced during this period but also explores “the Negro self-concept” “beyond the limits of Harlem in the 1920s” (11).

Prominent in these early works was an acknowledgment that the goal of improving race relations was a major impetus behind the representative art and literature produced by Black artists and writers. As Gates asserted, Black intellectuals aimed to “‘turn’ the new century’s image of the black away from the stereotypes scattered throughout the plantation fictions, blackface minstrelsy, vaudeville, racist pseudoscience, and vulgar Social Darwinism” (“Trope” 136–37). Similarly, Huggins mapped how Black leaders wanted to “stress black achievement rather than black problems, [because a] positive self-image . . . was considered the best starting point for a better chance” (5). While Gates later articulated that the Harlem Renaissance was “as gay as it was black” (qtd. in Christian 25), “The Trope of a New Negro” was more

¹After Gloria Anzaldúa’s “To(o) Queer the Writer—Loca, Escritora y Chicana” (1991).

concerned with class than sexuality. Likewise, while Lewis did briefly address Nugent within the context of *Fire!!*, the scope of the project was so vast that only a few pages were spared for his discussion of the magazine.

While publications such as Booker T. Washington's *A New Negro for a New Century* (1900) and William H. Croghan's *The Progress of a Race* (1920) emphasized progress and respectability in the name of racial uplift, *Fire!!*, a literary magazine produced by younger Black artists, had other, more transgressive aims. Carroll's *Word, Image, and the New Negro* (2005) clearly articulates the tension that existed between the young Black artists of *Fire!!* and the older generation of "New Negro" artists and writers. Carroll also argues that, in contrast to the focus of "New Negro" texts on the representation of the racial self, "the contents of the creative texts in *Fire!!* reflect an ambiguity about the significance of race" (192). While the subtitle of the magazine, "Devoted to Younger Negro Artists," illustrates that these artists did consider their racial identity significant, works included in *Fire!!* consider gender, nationality, sexuality, and ideology alongside race. The queer significance of *Fire!!* stems from its openness to the exploration of identity beyond race, particularly non-normative sexuality. Indeed, Hannah's "Desires Made Manifest" (2015) argues that because of the inclusion of "texts that depict various complexities of racial and sexual identity," *Fire!!* functioned as a "queer modernist manifesto" (163). Hannah identifies Nugent's "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" as "the most obvious instantiation of . . . sensual queer desire" present in *Fire!!* (173). These works establish the transgressive implications of *Fire!!* and of "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" in particular, but they also note that the short-lived magazine was quickly smothered.

Works that incorporate queer Harlem Renaissance writers into the existing Black literary canon form a necessary baseline from which in-depth analysis on specific queer writers and works can be conducted. Carbado et al.'s *Black Like Us* (2005), an anthology of twentieth-century lesbian, gay, and bisexual Black writers, is an example of incorporation focusing specifically on the queer element of the Harlem Renaissance. Resisting the dominant literary traditions that focus exclusively on either race or sexual orientation, Carbado and colleagues affirm the connections between sexuality, gender, and race. Frustration regarding the separation of race and sexuality in the literary canon is also forcefully present in Cobb's "Insolent Racing, Rough Narrative" (2000). Cobb analyzes the rhetorical strategy of rudeness employed by several queer writers of the Harlem Renaissance. By challenging "race criticism's sexuality amnesia," as well as the lack of "anthologized space devoted to race" within the queer literary tradition, Cobb attempts to "sketch the

formal possibilities for a black *and* queer literary aesthetic” (328–29). Nugent emerges as a noteworthy figure in both *Black Like Us* and “Insolent Racing, Rough Narrative,” and Cobb marks Nugent’s absence from the Black literary canon as significant.

Though scholars have largely neglected Nugent in comparison to some of his Harlem Renaissance peers, a small body of scholarship devoted to Nugent does exist. Wirth’s (2002) *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance* contains a selection of Nugent’s work. Through transcribed interviews and biographical information, Wirth closely examines Nugent’s life and work. Bauer’s “On the Transgressiveness of Ambiguity” (2015) and Christian’s “Enacting ‘Smoke, Lilies and Jade’ as Black Gay Print Culture” (2013) build from Wirth’s *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance*. Designating Nugent as “arguably America’s foremost Black aesthete” and situating his work within Western philosophy and twentieth-century sexology, Bauer analyzes the “deconstructive” nature of Nugent’s writing (1021). Bauer argues that Nugent’s strategically ambiguous approach to sexuality and race served to complicate the binaries of Black/White and man/woman that were prominent at the time. On the other hand, Christian turns to late twentieth and early twenty-first century film to evaluate Nugent, his artistic work, and its significance to both the Black community and the Black literary canon. Christian argues that the past existence of Black gay print culture, such as “Smoke, Lilies and Jade,” was essential to the later production of Black gay films. Christian briefly addresses Marlon Riggs and *Tongues Untied* as a necessary steppingstone between “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” and the films *Looking for Langston* (1989) and *Brother to Brother* (2004).

Harlem’s Queer Legacies

In contrast to the moment of hope represented by the Harlem Renaissance, art in 1980s America was created in the context of cultural backlash and the ongoing HIV/AIDS epidemic. Helen Molesworth has argued that these contextual specificities had a significant impact on the art of the 1980s, causing artists to work “in relation to the emergence of queer visibility brought on by the AIDS crisis” (19). Her *This Will Have Been: Art, Love and Politics in the 1980s* (2012) functions as a retrospective of the decade and challenges the dominant regard for 1980s art as “an embarrassment” (15). Weinberg’s *Art After Stonewall* (2019) is broader in scope, investigating two decades (1969–1989) to examine “the impact of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) movement on the art world” (10). Bost’s *Evidence*

of *Being* (2019) explores “the renaissance of black gay cultural production in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s” (4). Focusing attention on cultural formations in New York City and Washington, D.C., Bost identifies the factors that influenced the emergence of this renaissance and articulates the necessity of Black gay cultural production in resisting the erasure of Black queer lives from history.

A growing body of work examines the films and creative projects of Marlon Riggs, one of the most productive queer Black artists of the late twentieth century. Moon’s *Reel Black Talk* (1997) locates the artist within a larger anthology of Black filmmakers, highlighting the critical acclaim received by Riggs’s work alongside biographical information. Harper’s “Marlon Riggs: The Subjective Position of Documentary Video” (1995) constitutes a more in-depth examination of Riggs’s filmography than exists in the works mentioned above, with a particular focus on his “engagement with issues of critical subjectivity” (71). Examining the evolution of Riggs’s approach to filmmaking and the development of his work over his career, Harper argues that Riggs challenged the conventions of broadcasting and documentary as a medium. Both Moon and Harper emphasize Riggs’s contributions to the Black queer cultural production of this era.

Together, the growing body of secondary literature that places the work of queer Black artists at the heart of the Harlem Renaissance and the emerging criticism addressing the work of late twentieth-century queer Black artists map the relationship between the two and envision possibilities for building upon these legacies into the next century.

METHODS

In examining Nugent’s and Riggs’s multidimensional experiences as queer Black artists working in the U.S. in the twentieth century, I engage tools from a variety of fields to create a framework for the analysis of “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” and *Tongues Untied*, allowing me to map the rich and generative relationship between these two texts. Concepts and arguments from the fields of critical race theory, queer theory, critical legal studies, and cultural representations of race and sexuality allow me to mark the century as Black and queer by analyzing the texts structurally and within their historical contexts. The study of texts within texts is central to accomplishing this task: I analyze the representations of “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” and *Tongues Untied* within the Black press, in publications such as: *Fire!!*, *A New Negro for a New Century*, and articles from *Crisis*, *The Nation*, and *Ebony* magazines.

Delgado and Stefancic's *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (2017) provides some of the frames through which I analyze the work of Nugent and Riggs. In their deconstruction of stereotypes and racist images, Delgado and Stefancic introduce the concept of "empathic fallacy" (33) and demonstrate how narrative theory and counterstorytelling within the context of critical race theorization can disrupt racial projects (Omi and Winant 129). I apply the concept of the empathic fallacy to my analysis of the "New Negro" texts such as *A New Negro for a New Century* (Washington et al.) and "The Talented Tenth" (DuBois). The empathic fallacy, or "the belief that one can change a narrative merely by offering another, better one" (Delgado and Stefancic 34), illuminates the limitations of "New Negro" rhetorical strategies that appealed to notions of race respectability in the effort to "rehabilitate" the image of Black people in the U.S. This illumination informs my contrast of *Fire!!* with mainstream publications in order to consider the different goals and strategies of these texts.

Engaging narrative theory, Delgado and Stefancic note that beyond raising awareness about minority experiences within dominant groups, "stories also serve a powerful additional function for minority communities" (50), specifically the "valid destructive function" of counterstorytelling. I apply Delgado and Stefancic's theory that "attacking embedded preconceptions that marginalize others or conceal their humanity is a legitimate function of all fiction" (50) to "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" and *Tongues Untied* to map how both Nugent and Riggs engaged in this kind of attack through their transgressive works. I incorporate material in articles from *Ebony* magazine to illustrate some of the "embedded preconceptions" that Riggs successfully disrupted with *Tongues Untied*.

Arguments from Matsuda et al.'s *Words That Wound* (1993) map how Riggs addressed themes of racial and homophobic violence through his use of personal stories in *Tongues Untied*. *Words That Wound* addresses the issue of assaultive speech and the First Amendment through the lens of critical race theory. The project's clear articulation of critical race theorists' "embrace [of] the subjectivity of perspective" mirrors Riggs's subjective approach to the medium of documentary film (3). Matsuda's chapter, "Public Responses to Racist Speech: Considering the Victim's Story," argues in favor of "the authority of personal experience" (9), which I apply to *Tongues Untied* to map how the impact of the film is derived from its use of personal stories throughout. Additionally, because some scenes of the film employ racial and homophobic epithets and slurs, I incorporate Matsuda's reflections on the impact of assaultive speech on victims into my discussion of the film.

Hutchinson's "Ignoring the Sexualization of Race" (1999) and Valdes's "Queer Margins, Queer Ethics" (1997) provide critical tools for my examination of Riggs's critiques of anti-racist and LGBTQ+ activism. In "Ignoring the Sexualization of Race," Hutchinson expanded the "race-sexuality critiques of anti-racism and gay and lesbian discourses" (4), analyzing the sexual component of racial violence. Hutchinson argued that when anti-racist activism ignores homophobic racial violence and responds only to heterosexual racial violence, a "discriminatory and heteronormative model of racial justice" is created (5). Similarly, in "Queer Margins, Queer Ethics," Valdes claimed that it was urgent for critical legal scholars "to interrogate the racialized and ethnicized dynamics of sexual orientation identities and issues" (1297). Valdes argued that, if queer legal studies continued to neglect people of color from its inquiry, "the substantive insight and efficacy of our theorizing" might be diminished and that "such neglect may undermine the transformative potential of our work" (1298). Riggs refers to homophobic racial violence in *Tongues Untied* and addresses homophobia in anti-racist activism and Black spaces as well as racism in queer spaces, more broadly. I apply both Hutchinson's and Valdes's critiques of anti-racist and LGBTQ+ activism to *Tongues Untied* to map how Riggs poignantly illustrates the necessity of intersectional and multidimensional approaches to activism.

C. Riley Snorton's "glass closet" allows seeing and mapping queerness in primary sources even when they might remain hidden from a heteronormative lens. He introduced this concept in *Nobody is Supposed to Know* (2014), where he addressed Black sexual representation in popular cultural production, with the central analysis addressing the "down low" figure, a term that "typically refers to black men who have sex with men and women and who do not identify as gay, bisexual, or queer" (6). While this term was "concretized" in the early 2000s, years after *Tongues Untied* and decades after "Smoke, Lilies and Jade," Snorton's innovative frames and his broader analysis of the representation of Black sexuality are critical tools for analyzing these earlier texts. Working with the idea of the "glass closet," which Snorton defines as a space "marked by hypervisibility and confinement, spectacle and speculation" (4), I consider how the issue of the hypervisibility of Black sexuality was challenged, used strategically, and/or illustrated differently by the "New Negro" movement, the artists of *Fire!!*, and Marlon Riggs.

Because *Fire!!*, due to its short run, is sometimes seen as a failure, I also engage theory of "failure" and "low theory" to expose yet another layer of queerness within these texts. Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011)

engages “low theory”—“the theorization of alternatives within an undisciplined zone of knowledge production” (18)—to consider the “rewards” that may be gained from failure. Although the archive to which Halberstam applies low theory consists mainly of animated films, the concept of “productive failure” is a critical lens through which I examine *Fire!!*, a magazine that “failed” after its first issue due to financial complications. Engaging Halberstam’s recognition of “failure as a way of refusing to acquiesce to dominant logics of power and discipline” (88), I consider how the artists of *Fire!!*, including Nugent, held values different from more mainstream Black publications at the time and ask whether, if viewed apart from dominant conceptions of success, the achievements of the magazine were valuable or significant. I incorporate an analysis of Langston Hughes’s “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (1926), published in *The Nation*, to supplement this discussion of *Fire!!* because this article functioned as Hughes’s manifesto, declaring the purpose of the magazine and the ambitions of its young artists.

Finally, I attempt to map the complex relationship between the work of Richard Bruce Nugent and Marlon Riggs. Although Riggs is identified as part of the “legacy” of the queer Harlem Renaissance, I draw from Jagose’s “Feminism’s Queer Theory” (2009) and Geller’s “Is Film Theory Queer Theory?” (2013) to complicate this urge to rely on “linear historical time with its implicit prioritization of the present and its reliance on heteronormative tropes of lineage, succession, and generation” (Jagose 160). Jagose examines the relationship between feminist theory and queer theory, mapping the succession narrative that casts feminism as “past” and queer as “now.” Geller identifies Eve Sedgwick as the “mother of queer studies” and Robin Wood as the “father of gay film studies,” and she then proceeds to trouble those very designations as heteronormative “in the[ir] evocation of foremothers and forefathers” (160). In order “to outline an altogether different image of the present” and trace a future path (Geller 160), Geller and Jagose strive to balance reflections on the past with a rejection of reproductive futurity. I attempt to emulate this balance as I consider the connections between Nugent and Riggs while avoiding a simple trope of lineage.

DISRUPTING SILENCES AND REFUSING ERASURE

The period known as the “Harlem Renaissance” witnessed an explosion of cultural production from Black artists and writers. The return of Black soldiers to the U.S. after the first World War is heralded as the start of the Harlem Renaissance, which continued until the mid-1930s and the Great

Depression (Carbado et al. 2). As a literary and artistic movement, the Harlem Renaissance is but one chapter in a much longer history of the Black struggle for self-representation and self-definition in America. The struggle represents a long-held belief that the negative and racist portrayals of Black people that have dominated American popular culture can be refuted with positive counter-representation. If the “novels, essays, and visual images” that portrayed Black people as inferior and subhuman could be used to “justify or even encourage racism and violence,” as well as slavery, then perhaps alternative representations of Black Americans “might have an ameliorating effect on racism and its manifestations” (Carroll 5–7). These hopes were illustrated in various “New Negro” texts published at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as *A New Negro for a New Century* and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’s (NAACP) *The Crisis*. These texts aimed to present Black Americans in a favorable light that would significantly aid the struggle for racial equality. These texts would also be challenged by the work of Nugent and his contemporaries.

Lifting as We Climb: Art as Racial Uplift Propaganda²

Prominent Black leaders and publications in the early decades of the twentieth century were committed to racial uplift and to representations and narratives of Black progress and development. Booker T. Washington et al.’s (1900) *A New Negro for a New Century* presented “an accurate and up-to-date record of the upward struggles of the Negro Race” designed to showcase the social and intellectual advancement achieved by Black people in the thirty years since Emancipation. Fannie Barrier Williams’s discussion of the work of Black women’s clubs, which she posited as evidence of racial progress, emphasized the value that Black elites placed on race respectability and narratives of progress; she lauded the efforts of Black women who worked to achieve the “domestic virtues, moral impulses and standards of family and social life that are the badges of race respectability” (379). Williams also noted the belief that positive and respectable presentation of the race was an important strategy for the eradication of racism: “There is certainly more power to demand respect and righteous treatment since it has become possible to organize the best forces of all the race for such demands” (405). W. E. B. DuBois’s approach to racial issues, articulated in his 1903 essay “The Talented Tenth,”

²“Lifting as We Climb” was the motto of the National Association of Colored Women, founded in 1986.

was similarly focused on the “best forces of the race.” DuBois claimed that “the Negro Race, like all races, [was] going to be saved by exceptional men” (33). He argued, therefore, that it was imperative that educational efforts be focused first on the best and brightest Black youth, citing the progress already achieved by the advancements made with the education of Black people in the U.S. (45). DuBois’s insistence on centering the “best” that Black communities had to offer illustrates the elitist dimensions of racial uplift strategies. The elitist and respectable values that dominated the New Negro movement had implications for Black artists and writers at the time: if a credible appeal for racial equity and justice was to be predicated on showcasing the most progressive and respectable face of the Black community, then positive representation in Black cultural production—art and literature—was essential.

In addition to volumes like *A New Negro for a New Century*, many Black newspapers were also invested in racial uplift and respectable, progressive representations of the Black community. The NAACP’s *Crisis* devoted space in each issue to “The Horizon,” a column that announced Black advancements and accomplishments in music and art, education, industry, politics, and social progress. Additionally, the “Men of the Month” column in each issue of *Crisis* showcased successful Black men (and occasionally Black women), once again emphasizing the progress and respectability achieved by Black people in the U.S.

Art and literature also played a role in racial uplift propaganda. The Urban League’s *Opportunity* and the NAACP’s *Crisis* often published the works of Black artists and writers “as part of a strategy to advance the cause of social and political equality by trying to gain the attention and respect of the white elite and the empathy of white readers” (Wirth 2). DuBois “had made the case for ‘conscious, normative, intelligent action’ as an antidote to the violence of racism” (Hannah 165). Black cultural production was a component of this anti-racist antidote. Indeed, DuBois made his stance on art and racial uplift clear in his “Criteria of Negro Art” in volume 32 of *The Crisis*:

Thus all art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists. I stand in utter shamelessness and say that whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy. I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda. But I do care when propaganda is confined to one side while the other is stripped and silent. (Oct. 1926)

The strong beliefs among New Negro intellectuals regarding “appropriate” goals and accomplishments for Black artists and writers led to censorship of more radical and transgressive art (Wirth 13-14).

The belief in the transformative potential of Black art has deep roots.³ Henry Louis Gates addresses the “direct relationship between the race’s creation of ‘art’ and its realization of its political desires” as central to Black intellectual history (Gates, “Trope” 133). Addressing white Americans, DuBois claimed “[y]ou misjudge us because you do not know us” (“The Talented Tenth” 34). For DuBois, the racism and violence experienced by Black people in America resulted from the false and racist negative portrayals of Black people in art and cultural production; therefore, manipulating the representations of Black people in U.S. cultural materials would change the material experiences of Black people in U.S. society. The persistence of racism past the Harlem Renaissance, however, indicates that these strategies were ineffective at erasing racism and its various manifestations, evidence of the empathic fallacy described by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (34). Volumes such as *A New Negro for a New Century* exemplify the hope that illustrating “the progressive life of the Afro-American people” would prove that the Black community had a credible claim to its political and social rights (Washington 3). The strong connection between art and political and social movements seemed rational at the time, and therefore Black art was expected to fit a particular agenda and support certain norms, values, and ideas. As a result, the category of “acceptable” racial art was narrow.

While the older generation of Black elites and intellectuals sought to use “literature as a source of liberation [by] employing ennobled representations” of Black people, a small group of younger Black artists, led by Wallace Thurman, rejected these strategies of racial uplift. In 1926, this group, which included Richard Bruce Nugent, published the first issue of *Fire!!*, a magazine that Thurman intended “to be a repudiation of . . . the stodgy political sociology of the Negro press,” particularly *Crisis* and *Opportunity* (Hannah 164). *Fire!!* was an independent, avant-garde magazine “Devoted to Younger Negro Artists” and was a space in which the contributors could create expansive artwork that represented the great diversity of Black identities and lives, regardless of whether these representations were deemed respectable, progressive, or normative. The diverse and radical work included in *Fire!!* redefined Black art outside of the racial uplift politics that confined Blackness to a narrow ideal.

The artists of *Fire!!* refused to be beholden to a political agenda that limited the subject matter with which they were permitted to engage. The

³Phillis Wheatley’s (1773) *Poems on Various Subjects* and Frederick Douglass’s (1845) *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* are examples of this broader legacy.

contents of the magazine critiqued dominant “ideas about African American identity” and sought to distance these young artists from the Black “intelligentsia” whom they considered “too insistent on the idea of using art as a political and social tool, and too obsessed with the idea of race” (Carroll 190). The contributors to *Fire!!* were able to explore and address controversial topics and include transgressive work because of the magazine’s status “as an independent publication, free from the controlling interests of an organization like the NAACP or the NUL” (Carroll 191). Such freedom allowed the young artists to create authentic and expressive “representations of life as it really [was], regardless of the ‘moral’ considerations of uplift ideology” (Hannah 166). Langston Hughes, another artist of *Fire!!*, boldly articulated the intentions of the magazine and its contributors in his “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain”:

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn’t matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. . . . If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn’t matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves. (76)

The magazine included an array of shocking and bold works, such as Wallace Thurman’s “Cordelia the Crude,” a story about sex work; Gwendolyn Bennett’s depiction of an interracial relationship in “Wedding Day”; and Zora Neale Hurston’s “Sweat,” which was about an abusive relationship. But the most transgressive inclusion in *Fire!!* was Richard Bruce Nugent’s “Smoke, Lilies and Jade.”

On *Fire!!*

Richard Bruce Nugent was born in Washington, D.C., on July 2, 1902, to Richard Henry Nugent, Jr., and Pauline Minerva Bruce Nugent. Nugent described his parents as bohemian, and they exposed him to art at a young age, often taking him and his younger brother to the theater (Smith 209). Books were also a significant part of Nugent’s early life, including Richard von Kraft-Ebing’s work on sexology, which left Nugent with “no doubt as to the nature of his own budding sexuality” (Wirth 8). Nugent recalled that his parents were considered “pillars of society” due to their middle-class status, fair complexions, and what Nugent described as “all the other bullsh*t” (Smith

210). Because of their social standing, “Nugent’s mother was concerned that his homosexuality might bring disgrace to the family name,” leading Nugent to use the pseudonym “Richard Bruce” for his artwork (Smith 210). Following his father’s death, the family moved to New York City, but Nugent’s mother “sent [him] back to Washington” in 1924 “to punish [him] because [he] wouldn’t get a job” (Smith 211). The conflict between Nugent and his mother would later be reflected in the tension between mother and son in “Smoke, Lilies and Jade.”

Nugent’s time in Washington, D.C., would eventually bring him back to New York City and the Harlem Renaissance. He became acquainted with the young poet Langston Hughes at a social gathering hosted by Georgia Douglass Johnson, whose “home was *the* place to meet . . . fascinating people” (Smith 211). Nugent’s first published work was the short story “Sahdji,” which was included in Alain Locke’s *The New Negro*, but Thomas Wirth identifies “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” as Nugent’s most important work (75). In addition to being “the most openly homosexual of the Harlem Renaissance writers,” Nugent was also the first Black writer to work from a “self-described homosexual perspective,” exploring the connections between sexuality and race (Gates, Foreword xii). The story’s exploration of sexual desire through an interracial relationship between two men “was a direct affront to the conservative notions of propriety that governed ideas about socially and culturally responsible portrayals of African Americans” (Carroll 208). “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” aligned with the larger goals of *Fire!!*, depicting multiple aspects of identity, creating art for its own sake rather than for racial uplift propaganda, and resisting and challenging normative ideas of respectability espoused by the more conservative, older generation of Black writers.

Nugent’s “Smoke, Lilies and Jade,” regarded as the first piece of explicitly homoerotic literature from a Black male writer, celebrated queer Black love and broke the silence around nonnormative sexuality. The story follows Alex, the protagonist, as he meets and falls in love with a man named Adrian. Alex subsequently grapples with his sexuality and his simultaneous love for Adrian and a woman named Melva. With a stream-of-consciousness narrative characterized by the use of ellipses throughout, Alex moves between dreaming and waking, between internal dialogue and external experiences. Nugent’s exploration of themes of shame, identity, and nonnormative sexuality remain relevant to Black queer communities today, and similar celebrations of queer Black love would be taken up by artists in subsequent decades.

Through Alex’s rejection of shame, Nugent challenges normative ideologies that equate an individual’s value with productivity in the workforce

and that privilege respectability and politeness. Although Alex's mother is a peripheral character in the story, Nugent uses fragments of Alex's memories and thoughts about his mother to demonstrate their conflicting ideologies and her attempts to shame Alex into a more conservative and normative lifestyle, resembling Nugent's conflicts with his own mother. While lounging about and smoking a cigarette, Alex "wondered why he couldn't find a job," thinking that "he should be ashamed that he didn't work . . . he should be . . . his mother and all his relatives said so . . ." (Nugent 77). Alex is so aware of his mother's negative attitude toward his lifestyle that he intentionally avoids her: "if he went to see mother she would ask . . . how do you feel Alex with nothing in your pockets . . . I don't see how you can be satisfied . . ." (77). Alex instead finds himself content to fill his time with other activities, pursuing alternative forms of satisfaction and fulfillment. In fact, rather than internalize and agree with his mother's negative feelings, "he vaguely pit[ied] her instead of being ashamed . . ." (77). Alex's rejection of shame is emblematic of Nugent's approach to disapproval throughout his life: "If you can't take me the way I am, it's your problem. It's certainly not mine" (qtd. in Smith 209). Alex follows his passion to be an artist rather than to pursue traditional work as his mother would deem more appropriate; thus, Nugent challenges New Negro racial uplift propaganda, using art to depict real life rather than a display of propriety and respectability. Alex's desire to create art also mirrors *Fire!!*'s emphasis on creating art for its own sake while simultaneously it is constitutive of that same value.

Nugent's establishment of Alex as an artist connects to the exploration of identity in "Smoke, Lilies and Jade." In keeping with *Fire!!*'s commitment to illustrating the multiplicity of Black identities and experiences, Nugent focuses on elements of identity other than race. Beyond the exploration of queer sexuality that is a central aspect of the story on its own, Nugent also takes care to specify other elements of Alex's identity, including his age and ideology. Alex's community of friends is closely connected to his self-identity as an artist, indicating the bidirectional relationship between identity and community and the vital role played by the latter to help sustain the former: "but was he an artist . . . was one an artist until one became known . . . of course he was an artist . . . and strangely enough so were all his friends" (77). Alex's identity as a nineteen-year-old artist imitates *Fire!!*'s devotion to "Younger Negro Artists." Nugent pays homage to his fellow *Fire!!* contributors, whose names appear in Alex's thoughts: "he liked many people . . . Wallie . . . Zora . . . Clement . . . Gloria . . . Langston . . . John . . . Gwenny . . ." (82). "Smoke,

Lilies and Jade” is also aligned with the other artwork in *Fire!!* because of its ambiguity about racial identity. Although all the contributors to *Fire!!* were Black, “their racial identity is only sometimes reflected in the content of their work or in the characters they portray” (Carroll 217). Nugent “was relatively vague about the racial identity of his characters [and] . . . never identified Alex as black or white” (Carroll 217), but the autobiographical elements of the story suggest that Alex, like Nugent, is Black.

Alex’s appreciation and enthusiasm for beautiful things—which, over the course of the story, morphs into a celebration of the beauty of queer Black love—is established early in the story. Alex wonders why people “never cried for beautiful sunsets . . . or music” (Nugent 75) and feels sad that the woman he passes on the street “did not weep that she would never be beautiful” (78). Nugent portrays Alex and Adrian’s first meeting with artistic metaphors and intimate language, emphasizing Alex’s appreciation of that which is beautiful: describing Adrian’s face as “a perfect complement to his voice . . . Alex knew that he had never seen a more perfect being . . . his body was all symmetry and music . . . and Alex called him Beauty” (80–81). Alex’s established identity as an artist lends itself to a deep adoration of Adrian even before he recognizes the sexual component of his desire for Adrian. The nickname “Beauty,” along with Nugent’s physical descriptions of Adrian, demonstrate the contemporaneous transgressive nature of “Smoke, Lilies and Jade.” As Devon W. Carbado points out, “merely calling another man ‘beautiful,’ as Nugent had done . . . was a bold act” (11), positioning “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” as a challenge to heteronormative notions of propriety and respectability. Nugent’s expressions of homoeroticism through his intentional use of beautiful and artistic language make “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” not merely an acknowledgment of homosexuality but a celebration of queer Black love.

Initially, Alex conflates his desire for Adrian with his more general appreciation of beauty, and the eventual decoupling of these two feelings enables Alex to claim his love for Adrian authentically. Alex wonders if he likes Adrian so much “because he was so susceptible to beauty,” and he works through this queer confusion by examining his feelings for Adrian within a framework that is already familiar: his love for Melva.

he knew other people who were beautiful . . . but he was never confused before them . . . while Beauty . . . Beauty could make him believe in Buddha . . . or imps . . . and no one else could do that . . . that is no one but Melva . . . but then he was in love with Melva . . . and that explained that . . . he would like Beauty to know Melva . . . they were

both so perfect . . . such compliments . . . yes he would like Beauty to know Melva because he loved them both . . . there . . . he had thought it . . . actually dared to think it. . . (82)

The realization and acknowledgement of love and desire quickly gives way to a new internal conflict, Alex's simultaneous desires for Adrian and Melva: "Alex couldn't understand . . . and it pained him . . . almost physically . . . and tired his mind . . ." (82). Ultimately, Nugent's resolution of this conflict affirms and celebrates Alex's queer identity.

Shortly after his realization, Alex experiences a dream that illustrates his bisexual conflict as well as the depth of his feelings for both Melva and Adrian. Alex wades through a field of red calla lilies and black poppies. Pushing aside flowers, he discovers Adrian and Melva, in turn, before waking up increasingly confused and torn between these two warring desires. In the dream, Adrian and Melva are both described intimately. Alex notes Adrian's "dancer's legs," "lithe narrow waist," and "Grecian nose," as well as Melva's "graceful slender throat," "slightly parting lips," and "black eyes with lights in them" (82–83). The careful and sensual portrayals of Adrian and Melva in Alex's dream convey the beauty and depth of the love he feels for each of them. At the end of the story, Alex comes to terms with his desires, rejoicing in the realization that "one *can* love two at the same time . . . one *can* . . . one *can* . . . one *can* love" (87). Rather than concede to a heteronormative society that would deny the validity and expression of his identity, Alex imagines a different path, affirming his own desires by boldly claiming his simultaneous loves for a man and a woman.

Although crucial to providing the contributors with the artistic freedom they sought, *Fire!!*'s independent status proved to be a significant disadvantage. The lack of financial assistance from a sponsoring organization caused problems almost immediately, and the reception of the first issue of *Fire!!* ensured its failure. Some critics praised the artistic individuality and originality of the magazine, but these positive reviews were far outnumbered by negative ones, "which were much more damning than the positive ones were laudatory" (Carroll 194–95). David Levering Lewis noted that "senior Afro-American notables and their allies found the quarterly distinctly not to their liking" (197), and many of the negative reviews took issue with the sexual content in *Fire!!* Benjamin Brawley of the *Southern Workman* "found *Fire!!* offensive because of . . . its vulgarity" while the headline of another Black weekly newspaper branded the quarterly as "Effeminate Tommyrot" (qtd. in Carroll 195). Alain Locke, a prominent New Negro intellectual known for

the value he placed on “authenticity of expression,” also disapproved of *Fire!!* (Wirth 48). Locke took issue with the “strong sex radicalism of many of the contributions [which would] shock many well-wishers and elate some of our adversaries” (qtd. in Wirth 48). The negative reviews of *Fire!!* emphasize that the younger artists had transgressed conventions of propriety, artistic style, and heteronormativity.

The worst fate was not the negative reviews, but rather *Fire!!*'s fading into obscurity. As Nugent recalled in a 1980s interview with Charles Michael Smith, “Wally [Thurman] and I thought that the magazine would get bigger sales if it was banned in Boston. So we flipped a coin. . . . The only two things we could think of that was bannable were a story about prostitution or about homosexuality” (qtd. in Smith 214). Nugent’s “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” and Thurman’s “Cordelia the Crude” were the result of this plan, but these stories were not enough for the magazine to be banned in Boston, nor were they able to rescue the magazine from financial failure. However, the intentional discussion of sexual themes in *Fire!!* stood in stark contrast to the content permitted in the more prominent Black publications.

The different attitudes toward the topic of Black sexuality indicate the different goals and strategies of the dominant Black publications in contrast to the aspirations of the artists of *Fire!!* Each publication had to navigate the hypervisibility and spectacle that C. Riley Snorton contends is linked to representations of Black sexuality (4) in accordance with these different goals. The organizations—and their affiliated magazines—that promoted racial uplift through Black art and literature avoided sexual topics altogether; such topics were at odds with the notions of propriety and respectability that were intertwined with racial uplift. “Issues of sexuality appear nowhere in *The Crisis* [or] *Opportunity* . . . and homosexuality is unmentioned” (Carroll 205) as these publications navigated the hypervisibility linked to Black sexuality with their drive toward invisibility. On the other hand, the artists of *Fire!!* rejected respectability politics, racial uplift, and progressive art, expressing what Locke described as “sex radicalism” in the contents of the magazine. The contributors of *Fire!!* strategically harnessed the hypervisibility of Black sexual representation to increase the visibility of their magazine.

Fire!!'s failure after its first issue illustrated the difficulty of forming and sustaining a space in which artists could create work independent from racial uplift politics and essentialist notions of Black identity. But as Jack Halberstam argues in *The Queer Art of Failure*, unique and significant rewards can result from failure. According to Halberstam, “failure allows us to escape the

punishing norms that discipline behavior” (3), which, in the case of *Fire!*, were the restrictions and censoring of art that depicted Black life, identity, and experience in ways that were not respectable, proper, or normative. Indeed, Hughes’s essay in *The Nation* articulated the desire of younger artists to create outside of those “norms that discipline behavior” as “an artist must be free to choose what he does” (76). *Fire!!* may have been smothered by the external forces of economic hardship and public disapproval, but the magazine gestured toward alternative expressions in which the complex multiplicity of Black lives and identities could be fully acknowledged and represented. Lewis claimed that “to succeed, [*Fire!!*] would have had to . . . gain loyal readers among curious whites . . . and attract a critical mass from the ‘Talented Tenth’” (197), choices that would have compromised the mission of *Fire!!*’s artists. The younger artists’ rebellion against dominant racial uplift ideology allowed for “a more complicated definition of African American identity than was offered elsewhere” (Carroll 221), including the first homoerotic literary work from a Black writer. *Fire!!*’s failure ignited a spark that would be taken up by later queer Black artists responding to the Black community and expressing their own sociopolitical realities and the struggle for freedom.

Your Silence Will Not Protect You: Raising Queer Black Voices⁴

Decades after *Fire!!*’s failure and the end of the Harlem Renaissance, Nugent became an important source of knowledge about twentieth-century Black and queer histories. As serious academic study of the Harlem Renaissance began in the 1970s, followed by “a wave of post-Stonewall interest in gay history” in the 1980s, Nugent—one of the last surviving figures of the Harlem Renaissance—was an invaluable resource (Wirth 39). He was interviewed for many biographies and historical studies of the era and appeared in anthologies such as Joseph Beam’s (1986) *In the Life: A Black Gay Anthology* as well as Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg’s (1984) documentary *Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community*. Despite his slender corpus of published work, Nugent’s art and life were crucial to bridging the gap between the queer Harlem Renaissance and the Black gay movement of the eighties. In 1982, Thomas Wirth and Richard Bruce Nugent published a “facsimile edition” of *Fire!!*, giving the magazine “a renaissance of its own” (Wirth 40). As “the first writer who directly raised the issue of what being black and being gay might have to do with each other” (Gates, Foreword

⁴After Audre Lorde’s “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action” (1977).

xii), Nugent opened the door for later Black queer cultural production. The “renaissance” of *Fire!!* and “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” in the early 1980s generated expansive discourse about queer Black history, and Marlon Riggs’s *Tongues Untied* was a critical part of that discourse and queer legacy.

Born in 1957 and raised in the South, Marlon Riggs was one of the most significant Black queer artists of the 1980s, and the power and love that resonated through his work made him the “most well-known independent filmmaker” in the San Francisco Bay Area (Moon 287).⁵ Riggs studied history at Harvard University, and after deciding that filmmaking would be the best way to communicate his ideas about race and identity to the world, he attended the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley. As a journalist, Riggs was trained to convey the stories of others objectively. Riggs, however, “felt that this objectivity and its lack of passion prevented journalists from using their subjective passion to better tell their stories” (Moon 288). This subjective and passionate approach to filmmaking became Riggs’s *modus operandi* for the rest of his career.

Though Riggs won over “two dozen awards and commendations for his art and humanity,” including an Emmy Award for his second film, *Ethnic Notions*, it was with his 1989 *Tongues Untied* that he achieved national attention (Moon 292). The film, “a video-poem about the African American gay experience” (Moon 288), had been partially funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, prompting outcry from political conservatives for its “inappropriate” content. Riggs claimed that he had not intended to shock audiences with “obscene” images in *Tongues Untied* but rather aimed to affirm the identities of gay Black men in the U.S. and to give voice to their experiences (Moon 289). Using a combination of spoken poetry, interpretive dance, and personal testimonies, Riggs explored themes of silence, violence, homophobia, racism, and the revolutionary potential of Black men’s love through a subjective documentary film.

Silence runs as a common thread through Riggs’s efforts to address the HIV/AIDS crisis, homophobic and racist violence, and the destruction of queer Black bodies. From the first scenes of the film, a connection between silence and death—physical, social, and emotional—is clearly established. An

⁵Some critics, such as Spencer Moon, claim that Riggs’s status as a well-known artist of his time was mainly a result of the controversial nature of his work. While the controversy generated by *Tongues Untied* did increase the national attention directed at Riggs, he was not the only artist creating controversial work during the 1980s and 1990s. Thus, I hold that it was the creative power of his work, grounded in love for his community, that caused so many to embrace and celebrate his work.

interpretive dance shows a Black man moving to the rhythm of a beating drum as a disembodied voice speaks: “Silence is my shield / it crushes. / Silence is my cloak / it smothers. / Silence is my sword / it cuts both ways” (*Tongues Untied* 2:24–3:13). In addition to introducing a metaphor that the film will return to repeatedly, the scene draws attention to the ways men are socialized not to speak up about their trauma, pain, and emotions, as inappropriate topics for men to engage. The repression of such feelings has a particularly toxic effect on gay Black men, who experience specific violence and oppression within an anti-Black and heteronormative society. Throughout the film, Riggs showed that while silence may be a weapon and a tool for survival, it results in emotional and physical death. Both Riggs and Nugent broke the silence surrounding Black queer identities with their work, but the sociopolitical specificities that Riggs experienced lent a particular urgency to his efforts to break this silence.

Riggs’s art was influenced by the sociopolitical climate in which he worked as well as by his own experiences as an activist. The calls to “break the silence” throughout the film reference the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP), the AIDS activist group whose slogan, SILENCE = DEATH, emphasized that the silence and deliberate ignorance around HIV/AIDS killed thousands of LGBTQ+ people. The topic of the AIDS crisis is particularly salient in a film directed by a gay Black man as HIV/AIDS has disproportionately impacted Black communities.⁶ Riggs exemplified the courageous breaking of silence that the film encourages, as he described the discovery of “a time bomb ticking in [his] blood” (48:51–48:54). In an interview with *The Creative Mind*, Riggs expressed that “he felt it was important to affirm that he was a Black gay man with HIV” (Moon 289). In addition to calling for increased dialogue in the future, the film depicts the profound loss that had already been experienced in the queer community at this stage of the epidemic. Moments after Riggs reveals his own diagnosis, the screen flashes obituaries of Black men who have already been killed by AIDS. Accompanied by the sound of a beating heart, the obituaries and pictures flash by at an increasing pace, building a sense of grief, loss, and desperation. Silence was killing gay Black men.

Not only was silence physically killing Black gay men in the form of the AIDS crisis, its perpetuation of homophobia and racism in Black and gay spaces contributed to the social death of Black queers who were exiled from their communities. During a scene that cuts back and forth between a raging

⁶According to the Population Reference Bureau, “40 percent of Americans who have been diagnosed with HIV since 1981 have been African American” (Andriote).

Black preacher and a Black activist, the film depicts a version of anti-racism that “is constructed around a heteronormative vision of justice” (Hutchinson 5–6). The preacher roars that queer sexual practices are “abominations” and that there is no place “in God’s church for perversion” (23:15–23:29; 23:47), powerfully portraying how queer Black people are excluded from spaces that are central cultural components of the Black community. The tirade of the activist, on the other hand, exemplifies how “anti-oppression . . . activists . . . replicate social hierarchy in their . . . activism because they render invisible and subordinate already marginalized individuals” (Hutchinson 3). Ignoring the “relationship between racial oppression and . . . heterosexism” (Hutchinson 4), the activist is invested in the notion that various elements of an individual’s identity are discrete and separable from each other. Referring to the argument that all Black people, including those who are gay, “should be brothers” because of their political common ground, he asks, “before I accept his kinship, political or otherwise, this is what I want to know: Where does his loyalty lie? Priorities? . . . Come the final throwdown, what is he first? Black or gay?” (23:29–23:39; 23:50–23:55).

The disembodied voice that reacts to the activist’s homophobia articulates the need to center intersectionality within activist work and discourse. Speaking over the sound of a heartbeat, the voice eloquently connects Black homophobia and silence:

You know the answer. The absurdity of that question. How can you sit in silence? How do you choose one eye over the other, this half of the brain or that, or in words this brother might understand: Which does he value most, his left nut or his right? . . . *Silence is my shield / It crushes.* (23:57–24:21)

By invoking the metaphor of silence as a shield, the film captures the dual nature of silence as protection and destruction. While silence may protect a gay man from homophobic backlash in the moment, the inability to respond to the diatribe of the activist, a fellow Black man, results in an emotional and social death. To repeatedly hear that gay Black men must choose one element of identity over the other erodes one’s dignity and sense of self, denying the experiences of violence and oppression that stem from intersections of racism and homophobia.

Just as Riggs addresses homophobia in the Black community, he critiques the racism present in mainstream gay spaces, focusing specifically on the Castro, which he describes as a “great, gay Mecca” (18:39). In doing so, Riggs critically investigates “the ways in which white and straight supremacy

interlock” and interrogates “the racialized . . . dynamics of sexual orientation identities and issues” (Valdes 1296–97). Drawing from personal experiences, Riggs describes the “lack of Black images in this gay life, in bookstores, poster shops, film festivals, even my own fantasies” (17:34–17:48). His disembodied voice is accompanied by examples of the representations of Black men that are available in this gay culture: derogatory and pornographic images that play into offensive and harmful histories and stereotypes, such as a “slaves for sale” advertisement and drawings of hypersexualized Black men with enormous penises. As Riggs reflects on being rendered “an invisible man . . . an alien, unseen and seen, unwanted” (18:39–18:55), he makes visible the white supremacy within LGBT spaces and discourse.⁷

Riggs employs the power of personal testimony, telling stories from both childhood and adulthood about his experiences of racism and homophobia, which are often invoked concurrently to emphasize the intersectional nature of his experiences. Assaultive speech, particularly racist and homophobic slurs, feature prominently in many of these stories, mirroring Matsuda et al.’s work with assaultive speech in *Words That Wound*, which they wrote “is influenced by the use of narrative and the authority of personal experience” (9). Matsuda argues that a victim’s response to assaultive speech can be to “reject one’s identity as a victim-group member” and that “the price of disassociating from one’s own race is often sanity itself” (25). *Tongues Untied* effectively illustrates Matsuda’s point through a scene that weaves together various experiences from his childhood and adolescence. As Riggs describes how he realized his queer sexuality “by age six” and “practiced kissing” with a friend at age eleven, the viewer is bombarded by close-up shots of various mouths hurling slurs: “punk,” “homo,” “f*ggot,” “freak,” “Uncle Tom,” “motherf*cking coon,” “n*gger” (11:29–13:36). This chorus of verbal abuse demonstrates how assaultive speech and labels are used to police identities and behaviors. Riggs articulates how this homophobia and racism made him feel “cornered by identities that [he] never wanted to claim,” driving him to run “deep inside [him]self, where it was still, silent, safe. Deception” (13:36–14:00). The closing of this scene yet again invokes the dangers of silence as a protection against violence.

Riggs uses writer Joseph Beam’s proclamation that “Black Men Loving Black Men is a Revolutionary Act” to express and affirm the identities and experiences of gay Black men and to call for revolutionary change. Such a

⁷Decades later, Francisco Valdes would be among the generation of scholars who would bring a structural critique to the narrative introduced by Riggs, mapping issues of white supremacy and racial oppression onto critical queer theory and legal studies.

claim about love between Black men is made more powerful because it is a conclusion that the film reaches only after Riggs shares his experiences with white men and in white gay spaces. After explaining how racism and homophobia drove him into a silence that denied his identities, the screen displays a picture of a young white man. Riggs continues his story, in which “a white boy came to my rescue . . . seduced me out of my adolescent silence” (15:14–15:37). Riggs describes this “immaculate seduction” as a blessing and a joy but identifies as a “curse” the fact “that it should come from a white boy with gray-green eyes” (15:51–16:08). The consequences of this “curse” were Riggs’s experiences in the white gay spaces of the Castro.

Internalized racism and a rejection from the Black community caused Riggs to search for validation, acceptance, and approval from white gay men. When Riggs moved to the Castro, he described his sexual explorations as being “immersed in vanilla” (17:24) as he deliberately avoided relations with other Black men. As noted above in the discussion of racism in the white gay spaces of the Castro, Black men were largely absent from this community. Instead, Riggs searched for love, affirmation, and a reflection of himself “in eyes of blue gray green” (18:18–18:24). The sense of invisibility and exclusion from the gay “Mecca” brought Riggs closer to his recognition of the beauty and revolutionary potential of Black queer love. Upon realizing and acknowledging that he was viewed as inferior in these spaces, Riggs left the Castro in search of a community.

Riggs seemed to find this community among other gay Black men. The first appearance of the proclamation “Black Men Loving Black Men is a Revolutionary Act” is in footage of the organization Gay Men of African Descent (GMAD) at a gay pride parade (40:24). The affirmatory stance of the proclamation is paired with the celebratory and positive energy of the parade as men chant “we’re Black . . . gay . . . and we don’t have no other way!” and “homophobia has got to go!” (43:12–43:27). The chants and the assertion of Black men’s revolutionary love combine to powerfully affirm and celebrate queer Black identities and experiences. As Essex Hemphill describes in an earlier scene, it is difficult and daunting for Black men “to take on the threatening universe of whiteness by admitting that we are worth wanting each other” (27:47–27:55). To face that threat is an act of revolution: for Black men to see their reflections in each other’s eyes and intentionally love each other is to defy a homophobic and anti-Black society that constructs queer Black bodies as disposable. By calling for Black men to love each other, Riggs encourages radical self-love as well. The film ends with a final call for revolutionary love, solidarity, action, and responsibility: “Black men loving Black men. A call to

action. A call to action. An acknowledgement of responsibility. We take care of our own kind when the nights grow cold and silent. These days, the nights are cold blooded, and the silence echoes with complicity” (53:55–54:12). The calls to action and for solidarity in the face of state inaction, neglect, and violence ring as urgent in the twenty-first century as they did in 1989.

At the beginning of the film, Riggs draws an explicit connection between silence, history, and future, connecting *Tongues United* to larger histories of Black resistance and making clear the need to create more livable futures for queer Black people and communities. After the introduction of the metaphor that constructs silence as a shield that crushes, a cloak that smothers, and a sword that “cuts both ways,” the disembodied voice continues: “Silence is the deadliest weapon. What legacy is to be found in silence? How many lives lost? What future lies in our silence? How much history lost? . . . Let’s end the silence, baby. Together. Now” (3:17–3:38). Considering the destruction wrought on queer and Black bodies by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the question of how many lives have been lost to silence has a clear and literal meaning. As Riggs digs deeper into the equation of silence and death, the film conveys the urgent need to end the silence to save present and future queer Black lives.

Storytelling and Legacies of Resistance

The question of “how much history lost?” takes on a deeper meaning when considered in terms of Black stories that have been lost, erased, and suppressed throughout U.S. history. In the wake of revealing his HIV-positive status, Riggs looks to the remaining legacies of Black ancestors for strength: “I watch, I wait . . . I listen for my own quiet implosion. But while I wait, older, stronger rhythms resonate within me, sustaining my spirit” (49:04–49:54). The screen displays photos of historic symbols of Black resistance: Harriet Tubman, Bayard Rustin, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Sojourner Truth. Footage from the 1965 Selma to Montgomery march is interspersed with clips of GMAD marching with a “Black Men Loving Black Men is a Revolutionary Act” banner. The appearance in this scene of Bayard Rustin, a lesser-known Civil Rights activist who was boldly Black and queer, complicates the connection between ancestry and modern activism, indicating that queer liberation and Black liberation have always been intricately connected. The film establishes a long history of resistance in the Black community and gives hope for the kind of futures that can be created when silence is broken.

The power of storytelling has long been employed to influence how Americans see race. In publications such as the New Negro texts from the

beginning of the twentieth century, stories functioned to bridge the gaps between the Black community and the dominant white world. Because the dominant racial group in the U.S. cannot easily understand what it is like to be a person of color, “the hope is that well-told stories describing the reality of black and brown lives can help bridge the gap between their world and others” (Delgado and Stefancic 46). Early twentieth-century Black elites and intellectuals attempted to bridge that gap with the most “favorable” portrayals of Black experiences and accomplishments, directing these stories at the dominant group and precluding certain “unfavorable” representations of Black lives and identities.

Storytelling also serves a powerful function for those within marginalized communities, as seen in *Tongues Untied* as well as in “Smoke, Lilies and Jade.” Critical race scholars have argued that storytelling allows discrimination to be named, combated, and deconstructed, thus giving minoritized communities “a voice” (Delgado and Stefancic 51). In addition to the constructive function of bridging the knowledge and experiential gaps between communities, counterstorytelling also has a “valid destructive function” (Delgado and Stefancic 49). Riggs’s *Tongues Untied* focuses on the functions of storytelling that serve marginalized communities, as indicated in the subtitle of the film: “Giving a Voice to Black Gay Men.” Riggs did not think that the film “contained shocking images” because “his original audience, Black gay men, would not be shocked by his images or ideas” (Moon 289). Riggs sought to express, name, and represent the experiences of gay Black men *for* gay Black men. This emphasis on affirmation of Black queer identity can be contrasted with Nugent’s “Smoke, Lilies and Jade,” which, while also affirming and celebratory, intentionally aimed to shock mainstream audiences.

Riggs used *Tongues Untied* to challenge the homophobic ideologies that exist in the Black community, displaying the destructive function of marginalized storytelling. Although the film received no attention from popular Black magazines, articles from *Ebony* magazine substantiate Riggs’s charges of homophobia within the Black community. For example, June Dobbs Butts’s article “Is Homosexuality a Threat to the Black Family?” from the April 1981 issue of *Ebony* addresses the “concern” and “great controversy” of “homosexuality . . . and its impact on the future of the Black family” (138). While Butts argues that homosexuality is not a threat to the future of the Black family, she concedes that “there are many sincere Black people who will . . . profoundly disagree . . . with this conclusion,” noting the “organized groups, including religious groups, that are condemnatory of homosexuality” (144). Riggs

speaks back to these attitudes, showing the emotional damage wrought upon gay Black men:

I am angry because of the treatment I am afforded as a Black man. That fiery anger is stoked additionally with the fuse of contempt and despidal shown me by my community because I am gay. I cannot go home as who I am. When I speak of home, I mean not only the familial constellation from which I grew, but the entire Black community. The Black press, the Black church, Black academicians, the Black literati, and the Black left. Where is my reflection? I am most often rendered invisible, perceived as a threat to the family, or I am tolerated if I am silent and inconspicuous. I cannot go home as who I am and that hurts me deeply. (28:18–28:59)

The film captures the pain and anger that homophobia and exclusion from the Black community produce, aiming to break the silence and shed the shroud of invisibility. Riggs does not ask for sympathy but rather attacks the preconceptions that “conceal the humanity” of gay Black men.

Because of its depictions of queer Black sexuality, *Tongues Untied* received the most national attention and generated the most controversy of all the films Riggs created during his short career. While mainstream magazines—such as the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Washington Post*—gave the film positive reviews, around “a third of the biggest public stations” around the country refused to air the program due to its “offensive” content (Goodman). The strong reactions to depictions of sex scenes between Black men illustrates the hypervisibility and spectacle that mark Black sexual representations (Snorton). The film was also the target of backlash from political conservatives because it had been partially funded by the federal government: “the political right wing cited the film as an example of the need to censor, control, and monitor the funding of art that related to unpopular ideas” (Moon 288). Particularly outspoken in denouncing the film was Rev. Donald Wildmon of the American Family Association, who expressed having “a problem with the government promoting homosexuality” (Mills). Although Riggs did not believe that *Tongues Untied* contained obscene content, he “*did* see as obscene the exploitation, degradation, deliberate distortion and falsification of people’s humanity” (Moon 289).

Space, Time, and Generativity: Queer(ing) Genealogy

Riggs and Nugent both disrupted silence with their work, yet they emerged from very different spaces. A queer Harlem was available to Nugent in the 1920s, but no such sanctuary was available to artists like Riggs in the 1980s. The “great, gay Mecca” of the Castro seemed to offer the possibility of a queer center, but the racism that rendered Riggs an invisible man pushed him to search for other queer spaces. A brief scene in *Tongues Untied* explores the Black and queer subculture of voguing, ballrooms and “houses” that function as the chosen families of queer Black youth. The film maps the existence and diversity of these communities as “each state, each gay community does different things” (33:48–34:32). The men interviewed in this scene explain how queer youth identify themselves with their houses through dress and performance, reflecting the bidirectional relationship between community and identity that Nugent addressed with the character of Alex. The exploration of Black ballroom house culture, which began in New York City in the 1960s, evokes a spatial connection that specifically ties Riggs’s search for a Black queer space to the legacy of queer Harlem, where Nugent and *Fire!!* lit a spark from which a queer Black legacy could emerge.

The path from Nugent’s “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” to Riggs’s *Tongues Untied* is not one of linear and straightforward genealogy. The spark that Nugent lit positioned him as the author most “closely associated with the queer spirit of the Harlem Renaissance” (Carbado 11) and would become generative of later Black queer cultural production. Arguing that “black gay print culture [is] indispensable to black gay film,” Shawn Anthony Christian positions “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” as relevant and necessary for the creation of contemporary Black films such as Issac Julien’s 1989 *Looking for Langston* and Rodney Evan’s 2004 *Brother to Brother* (21). Both films draw explicitly from the queer Harlem Renaissance, *Fire!!*, “Smoke, Lilies and Jade,” and Nugent’s life. While Nugent and “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” are identified as “a point of origin in black, queer, literary history” (22), Riggs and *Tongues Untied* are also vital components of the emergence of Black gay films. Christian posits that “both films [*Looking for Langston* and *Brother to Brother*] are indebted” to *Tongues Untied* and Riggs’s work with queer Black subjectivity (28). The path from “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” to contemporary Black gay film illustrates not only the generative capacity of Nugent’s work but also the integral role that Riggs played in making possible contemporary Black queer cultural production.

Despite producing their groundbreaking works nearly six decades apart, the temporal and artistic connections between the two artists are close, once again disrupting a neat and heteronormative narrative of genealogy. Before Nugent's passing in 1987, two years before Riggs would release *Tongues Untied*, he was interviewed by Charles Michael Smith for the 1986 anthology *In the Life*. The anthology was edited by Joseph Beam, the writer who coined "Black Men Loving Black Men is a Revolutionary Act" and whose obituary appears in *Tongues Untied*. Riggs also expressed the significance of the past on his work as an artist, speaking in an interview with *The Creative Mind* about "connecting with the past and history of other life-affirming artists such as Langston Hughes" (Moon 289), the poet who sparked Nugent's arrival in Harlem. The few degrees of separation between Nugent and Riggs serve as a reminder that the past is never very distant and encourage us to ask how the work of queer Black ancestors can guide us in the creation of the liberatory future that we need.

TAKING UP THE TORCH: IMAGINING QUEER BLACK FUTURES

Richard Bruce Nugent and Marlon Riggs created art that subverted oppressive ideologies within both dominant society and the Black community. Their work transgressed conventional boundaries of propriety, respectability, and heteronormativity, shocking mainstream audiences and receiving harsh criticism. Their artistic engagements with queer Black sexuality drew a great deal of public attention, demonstrating the power of radical and transgressive art to break silences and spark conversations. As queer Black men working in an anti-Black and homophobic society that often renders queer Black communities and struggles invisible, the ability of their works to generate attention remains a vital component of the power of both "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" and *Tongues Untied*. The work produced by Nugent and Riggs constituted queer interventions in conversations and movements that excluded queer Black voices; by shocking wide audiences, these artists made it difficult for queer Black identities and experiences to be ignored.

Riggs and Nugent did not, however, shock their *intended* audiences: fellow Black queers whose identities and experiences were affirmed and celebrated by "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" and *Tongues Untied*. These transgressive queer interventions should be read as expressions of the artists' love for their communities. Guided by love for queer Black people like themselves, these artists engaged in critique of the larger Black and gay communities from which they

had been excluded. Nugent's "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" rejected racial uplift politics that excluded representations of queer identity from Black cultural production. The first Black writer to produce an explicitly homoerotic piece of literature, Nugent carved out a creative space to rejoice in the beauty of queer Black identity and experience. The deeply moving and beautifully crafted depictions of Alex and Adrian's relationship attest to Nugent's love for his community and his refusal to concede to heteronormative expectations. Created decades later in a different artistic medium, *Tongues Untied* depicts Riggs's journey to achieve a love for himself and a love for his community, shedding light on Black gay men's experiences with racism and homophobia, breaking the silence and giving his community voice. Echoing Nugent's celebration of Black queer identities, Riggs disrupted the dominant discourses that invalidate, erase, and kill queer Black communities.

Defying normative conventions of expression and representation, Nugent and Riggs both offer strategies for survival in and resistance against an anti-Black and heteronormative society. Darius Bost suggests that "black gay cultural production offers a way of asserting black gay personhood amid" the "forces of antiblackness and antiqueerness [that] doubly mark the black gay body for social and corporeal death" (3). "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" and *Tongues Untied* resist these forces, demanding an end to the silence that kills Black queers. Riggs's declaration of Black men's love as revolutionary suggests the need for a revolution. *Tongues Untied's* invocation of the history of Black resistance demands that we move beyond survival and toward resistance to fight for livable, liberatory futures for queer Black communities.

With their transgressive and celebratory representations of queer Blackness, Nugent and Riggs rejected the dominant ideologies that constricted Black cultural production and dared to imagine and create alternative forms of expression that affirmed queer Black identities. In doing so, Nugent and Riggs, as well as the later discourses and art that their work spawned, encourage us to imagine and create alternative, liberated futures in which queer Black communities can thrive. The complex thematic, spatial, and temporal connections between "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" and *Tongues Untied* gesture toward the immense generative potential of radical Black queer cultural production and issue a challenge to present and future generations. Guided by an awareness of the past, how will the queer Black artists and activists of the present and future honor these legacies? How will we complicate them and build upon them? How will we draw on these traditions of revolutionary love, affirmation, and joy to imagine the future that we need, and then fight to create it?

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RESEARCH ESSAYS

“Best of Both Worlds”: Alumni Perspectives on Honors and the Liberal Arts

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Abstract: This study explores the extent to which skills acquired through liberal arts curricula facilitate immediate post-graduate employment of honors college alumni. Using qualitative methods and semi-structured interviews ($n = 16$), authors examine the honors college experience and the attainment of skills through the lens of graduates (2017–2020) at a large research institution. Results indicate that while honors alumni identify certain skills that helped them realize initial employment, they were often unable to translate and apply these skills in professional workplaces, particularly nonacademic ones. Data further suggest that liberal arts skills (communication, research competence, critical reasoning, intercultural competence, interdisciplinary inquiry, disciplinary methods, and intellectual engagement) can be cultivated within honors colleges at large universities and are not particular to traditional liberal arts colleges. By focusing on earliest career experience rather than cumulative, this study is an essential contribution to outcomes-related discourse in the field of honors education.

Keywords: employment and education; college honors courses; value of liberal arts; career preparation; post-graduation outcomes

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INTRODUCTION

Honors colleges often tout being the “best of both worlds,” balancing the benefits of a large research university and a small liberal arts college (Breneman, 2010; Scott & Smith, 2016; Sederberg, 2008). This rhetoric is commonly used to recruit top students by offering them many of the same experiences at (heavily-subsidized) state institutions that they could otherwise find only at private liberal arts colleges (Kimball, 2014; Savage, 2019; Sederberg, 2008). That is, a selling point for honors education is that it provides students with a less expensive means to maintain access to an elite education (Kimball, 2014; Scott & Smith, 2016).

Regardless of whether a liberal arts education takes place within the honors college of a large research university or within a small liberal arts college, it can provide students with a multitude of benefits from building a deep love of learning to cultivating a sense of purpose (Roche, 2010; Stross, 2017; Zakaria, 2015). Students can also build skills during their liberal arts education that employers find valuable, such as communication skills, problem-solving skills, and working as part of a team (NACE, 2019; Pasquerella, 2019; Roche, 2010). Liberal arts advocates argue that the wide range of skills that students build will help them succeed in a range of first destinations while also giving them the toolkit to be successful long-term in an ever-changing job market (Gobble, 2019; Osgood, 2017; Stross, 2017; Zakaria, 2015).

Despite the benefits, students, parents, and politicians today are increasingly questioning the value of a liberal arts education (Pasquerella, 2019). Colleges have seen this skepticism displayed in funding declines (Pasquerella, 2019) and in student major selection (Brint, 2011; Flaherty, 2017; Weise et al., 2018). Given the current context, we have engaged in this project to unpack alumni perceptions of their experiences attending an honors college at a large public institution that emphasizes a liberal arts ethos. We build upon previous work focused on the values of higher education broadly and the connections between a liberal arts education and post-graduate outcomes.

This study aims to build a deeper understanding of the extent to which skills acquired through the liberal arts curriculum of an honors college help alumni reach their first destination post-graduation. To this end, we worked with The Honors College (THC) at an anonymous research university (ARU) to explore how former students benefited professionally from their liberal arts skills. (The university preferred to remain anonymous.)

THC is one of the ARU's nine colleges and is designed to be like a small liberal arts college within a large, public, flagship university. As described on their website, THC provides students with skills in problem solving, communication, and critical thinking that will help them become life-long learners and versatile members of society (*Why THC?*, n.d.). The faculty and administrators within THC largely approach teaching and learning with a liberal arts philosophy (former dean, personal communication, June 25, 2020).

While THC's strategy relies on the assumption that liberal arts skills have a positive influence on students' first destinations (i.e., their initial professional outcomes after graduation, such as first jobs, graduate schools, or volunteer positions), THC has little institutional data to support this claim. Thus, this study asks: In what ways are THC alumni using liberal arts skills to reach their first destinations?

LITERATURE REVIEW

We focus on the following seven sensitizing concepts—which align with the seven key learning objectives of THC (see Appendix)—in our conceptual framework: intellectual engagement, critical reasoning, disciplinary methods, communication skills, intercultural competence, interdisciplinary inquiry, and research competence. These seven skills also align broadly with other literature about the expected outcomes of a liberal arts education (cf. Haberberger, 2018; Seifert et al., 2008).

Intellectual Engagement

Intellectual engagement is essential to student development and student learning. Students who participated in diverse coursework show increases in cognitive development and writing skills (Mayhew et al., 2016). Evidence has also shown that honors college students are experiencing higher levels of key experiences that result in increased intellectual engagement. Seifert et al. (2007, p. 69) report that honors students experience “relatively higher levels of course-related interaction with peers, academic effort and involvement, instructor use of higher-order questioning techniques, instructor feedback to students, and instructional skill and clarity than their non-honors peers.” While researchers have highlighted that this type of academic and intellectual engagement is important for high-quality student learning, more qualitative and quantitative research is needed related to student outcomes and student engagement (Savage, 2019).

Critical Reasoning

Critical reasoning has been repeatedly identified as essential for college graduates by students, recent graduates, and employers (Hart Research Associates, 2015; Kotschevar et al., 2018; Wells et al., 2017). This concept is now emphasized throughout honors college curricula (Savage, 2019). Early work by Astin (1993) found that in a study of 25,000 students across 217 colleges, honors college participation did have a small, positive influence on analytical and problem-solving skills (as cited in Seifert et al., 2007). Seifert et al. (2007) also found that honors college students scored higher than their non-honors peers on combined measures of cognitive development and critical thinking. Employers also articulate a need for employees with critical reasoning skills, including a particular focus on “critical thinking, complex problem solving, communication, and applying knowledge to real-world settings” (Wells et al., 2017, p. 168). While over 80% of employers think it is very important for recent college graduates to have critical and analytical thinking skills, less than 30% of them report that recent graduates are prepared to utilize these skills upon entering the workforce (Hart Research Associates, 2015).

Disciplinary Methods

Disciplinary methods—whether in the humanities, social sciences, or natural sciences—are often developed and refined by carrying out academic research (cf. Lopatto, 2010). While these skills are often honed via scholarly research, they are not only useful within academic research careers but also beyond them. That is, practical experience with the scientific method and with developing field-specific research questions and evidence-based analysis has been seen as beneficial in preparing students for the workplace (Wells et al., 2017, p. 169). Specifically, 68% of employers surveyed think that locating, organizing, and evaluating information—a disciplinary method common in the humanities—is very important for recent college graduates (Hart Research Associates, 2015). Additionally, 56% of the same employers think that working with numbers/statistics—a disciplinary method common in the social and natural sciences—is very important for recent college graduates (Hart Research Associates, 2015). Despite their importance, less than 30% of those employers believe that recent college graduates are prepared to undertake these tasks in the workplace (Hart Research Associates, 2015).

Communication Skills

Communication is one of the most sought-after skills in the labor market (Weise et al., 2018). In a survey of honors college graduates from South Dakota State University, alumni shared the most valuable personal and professional skills they gained while in the honors college. They relayed that the ability to communicate their ideas and beliefs with clarity, civility, and respect was among the top skills that they had acquired (Kotschevar et al., 2018, p. 143). They also noted that their ability to produce effective written communication had an important impact on their professional endeavors.

Research indicates that liberal arts skills such as communication skills are also valuable to employers (NACE, 2019; Pasquerella, 2019; Roche, 2010). According to Hart Research Associates (2015), more than 80% of employers believe that it is important for recent college graduates to have oral and written communication skills; however, less than 30% of employers think that recent college graduates are prepared in this area. Further research indicates that hiring managers and executives also listed oral communication as one of the top skills desired when seeking candidates (Hart Research Associates, 2018).

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence is generally understood as the enhancement and appreciation of differences among cultures. More specifically, five measures of students' global and intercultural competencies include the following: applying disciplinary knowledge globally, understanding the complex nature of global issues, having linguistic and cultural competency in a language other than their own, and the ability not only to work with people from other cultures but to do so comfortably (Stebleton et al., 2013, p. 6). The literature indicates that diverse interactions promote other skill sets that include academic ability, leadership, civic attitudes and behaviors, and positive diversity attitudes (Mayhew et al., 2016, pp. 550, 553).

Study abroad programs also contribute to intercultural competence. In one study, participants reported that studying abroad increased self-confidence, expanded understanding of intercultural perspectives and issues, and contributed to academic development (Dwyer & Peters, 2004). Stebleton et al. (2013) stated that formal study abroad programs sponsored by a college or university contribute to students' intercultural and global competencies in

a way that generally meets or exceeds the outcomes of other types of international travel. Additionally, 66% of employers indicated that they are more likely to consider hiring a recent college graduate who participated in a field project with people from different backgrounds/cultures, and 51% are more likely to hire a recent college graduate who finished a study abroad (Hart Research Associates, 2015).

Interdisciplinary Inquiry

Alumni perspectives on the usefulness of interdisciplinary inquiry in the workplace are mixed. On the one hand, alumni from the more than 600 institutions within the Council of Independent Colleges were asked to share their perspectives, and many noted how they had been exposed to different ways of thinking that prepared them “to adapt to a rapidly changing world and career” (Nugent, 2015, pp. 28–29). On the other hand, the survey of South Dakota State University alumni, which asked them to rank the most valuable personal and professional skills gained while in the honors college, found that “analyz[ing] and integrat[ing] multiple sources of information” were among the least selected skills (Kotschevar et al., 2018).

Employers recognize the value of interdisciplinary inquiry, however. As previously noted, 68% of employers surveyed reported that it was very important for recent college graduates to be able to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources (Hart Research Associates, 2015). However, only 29% of the same employers thought recent college graduates were prepared to utilize this skill in the workplace (Hart Research Associates, 2015).

Research Competence

Most of the studies about the impacts of research experiences are STEM-focused or discipline-specific (Craney et al., 2011; Dowd et al., 2018; Seymour et al., 2004). Lopatto (2010) noted that some of the benefits gleaned from summer research experiences (SREs) in STEM disciplines could be applied to other contexts. His work on SREs highlights potential learning outcomes in the areas of enhanced disciplinary skills, research literacy, communication skills, professional development, and personal gains derived from engagement in a research community. Still, there has been minimal investigation of senior capstone or thesis projects. In Padgett & Kilgo’s (2012) national study, they determined that these culminating experiences lead to increased student performance on learning objectives. Additionally, the culminating

experiences have the potential to positively impact employment opportunities for graduates. A research study indicated that 87% of employers are more likely to consider hiring a recent college graduate who has completed a senior thesis/project demonstrating knowledge, research, problem-solving abilities, and communication skills, and 80% are more likely to consider hiring a recent college graduate who has done a research project collaboratively with peers (Hart Research Associates, 2015).

DATA & METHODS

Data

To better understand how liberal arts skills help THC graduates reach their first destinations, we adopted a qualitative research approach. We chose this method because, as Patton (2001, p. 21) describes, “the open-ended responses permit one to understand the world as seen by the respondents . . . to understand and capture the points of view of other people without pre-determining those points of view.” As a result, we conducted semi-structured interviews with THC alumni.

Sample

THC alumni from the classes of 2020, 2019, 2018, and 2017 were interviewed for this study. We invited 476 THC alumni to participate, and 16 volunteered to be interviewed. Initially, we sought to conduct the qualitative study using a maximum variant sample. The goal of this strategy was to sample for maximum heterogeneity, thus increasing respondent diversity relevant to our research questions. After obtaining initial responses from alumni interested in being interviewed, we worked with THC to target diverse perspectives. However, THC indicated that they did not have data regarding alumni’s racial identities; therefore, we could not target individuals from these backgrounds. Instead, we sent an additional email to all alumni indicating that we were seeking participants from specific racial identities, but this yielded no additional participants. Thus, we were left with a convenience sample of THC alumni who had self-selected to be part of our study.

We collected information about each interviewee’s graduation year, college/school, major, and first destination. According to THC’s Strategic Plan, the vast majority of THC students have majors in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). Most of our interviewees graduated from the CAS and were

thus reflective of THC's population. Additionally, THC reports that 46% of its graduates go to graduate school, 41% obtain employment, 12% participate in service activity, and 9% travel (*Life After THC*, n.d.). Our interviewees were somewhat reflective of the THC target population in this regard, but their pathways to their first destinations were more nuanced. For example, 14 of the 16 interviewees obtained some level of employment directly after graduation. Of the 16 interviewees, only 2 went directly to graduate school. However, at the time of the interviews, 8 of the 16 participants were in the process of applying to graduate school or were in graduate school following their initial employment opportunity. We did not collect demographic information about the interviewees' gender or race/ethnicity, so we cannot compare our sample to the target population using these criteria.

Table 1 presents a breakdown of the graduation year, college/school, and first destination of interviewees.

Methods

To collect our qualitative data, a THC staff member emailed THC alumni from the classes of 2020, 2019, 2018, and 2017 inviting them to participate in the study. Potential participants were instructed to email the researchers if interested. After emailing, participants were sent the date and time for the interview as well as a Zoom link. Interviewees had the opportunity to participate by phone or Zoom because in-person interviews were not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each researcher conducted 5–6 individual interviews with alumni. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Quotations used in this report were also edited for readability by removing fillers such as “like,” “um,” and “you know.”

The interview protocol was organized to probe the professional experiences of alumni their first year after graduating from the ARU. We used Arum and Roksa's (2014) “Employment and Graduate School” portion of their interview protocol as an early foundation for developing our questions about the ways liberal arts skills helped THC alumni reach their first destinations. We focused specifically on how alumni identified, applied for, interviewed for, and selected their first destinations after graduation. These questions helped to determine what liberal arts skills alumni used that they had obtained in their THC experience. Additionally, the protocol sought to highlight potential gaps in resources from THC and/or ARU.

TABLE 1. INTERVIEWEE CHARACTERISTICS

Pseudonym	Graduation Year	ARU College/School	First Destination
Taylor Moore	2018	College of Business/ College of Arts and Sciences	Research employment → Graduate school ¹
Joe Deming	2018	College of Arts and Sciences (STEM)	Employment → Graduate school ¹
Erica Johnson	2018	College of Arts and Sciences	Employment
Carla Smith	2018	College of Arts and Sciences (STEM)	Gap year/employment → Graduate school ^{4,1}
Jacob Spiller	2018	College of Arts and Sciences (STEM)	Employment → Graduate school anticipated ²
Noah Parker	2018	College of Arts and Sciences	Graduate school
Howard Jacobs	2019	College of Arts and Sciences (STEM)	Research employment → Graduate school ¹
Candace Jones	2019	College of Arts and Sciences	Employment → Graduate school ¹
Tim Hill	2019	College of Arts and Sciences	Employment
Kelly Day	2019	College of Arts and Sciences (STEM)	Research employment → Graduate school anticipated ²
Jade Allen	2020	College of Arts and Sciences (STEM)	Graduate school
Ruby Solomon	2020	College of Arts and Sciences (STEM)	Volunteer/Employment → Graduate school ^{3,1}
Samantha Brown	2019	College of Arts and Sciences/School of Journalism and Communications	Fellowship/Employment
Ellie Smith	2017	School of Journalism and Communications	Gap year/Employment ⁴
Veronica Turner	2017	School of Journalism and Communications	Gap year/Employment ⁴
Whitney Malone	2019	School of Music and Dance	Gap year/Employment → Volunteer/Employment ^{4,3}

Notes: ¹First destination was employment but continued to graduate school within two years or less; ²Applied to graduate school in 2020 and awaiting outcome; ³Joined service organization; ⁴Traveled or taught English abroad.

Data Analysis

After conducting interviews, we developed a data analysis plan to identify themes that aligned with our research question. Our analysis included the following phases: listening tours, analytic memos, and developing and implementing a coding scheme. These phases allowed for a comprehensive review and analysis of the qualitative data.

LISTENING TOURS

Each interview was recorded and transcribed via Zoom and Otter.ai. Each team member listened to the interviews they conducted to ensure accuracy of the transcripts and to become refamiliarized with the content in preparation for creating analytic memos and developing a coding scheme.

ANALYTIC MEMOS

Each team member crafted an analytic memo that summarized key themes from the interviews they conducted. The memos provided an opportunity to articulate descriptive information about the interviewees, to identify overarching themes amongst the interviews, and to identify lingering questions. This process helped to elucidate themes and create a foundation for comparison across interviews.

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A CODING SCHEME

We used a deductive approach for our qualitative study using THC's learning objectives to frame our coding. We then applied a multipronged approach to coding the data. According to Thomas (2006), this approach allows researchers to "use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data" and allows the theory to emerge without the constraints of preconstructed methodologies. The team identified general themes throughout the interviews. Each team member used these themes to complete the first round of coding for the five to six interviews they had individually conducted. A joint coding scheme for the entire data set was then developed based on this initial round of coding. Subsequently, every interview was recoded three additional times using this data coding scheme. Team member one was responsible for identifying and confirming general themes in the entire data set. Once that was complete, a second team member coded the interviews to fine-tune themes where necessary. The third team member completed the final round of coding

to confirm themes and resolve any discrepancies among coders. This process of triangulation among coders reduced bias in our findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are derived from the analysis of our 16 alumni interviews. During our interviews, we focused on whether liberal arts skills helped alumni reach their first destinations. We focused on themes in alignment with the seven THC learning outcomes (see Appendix). These learning objectives arose throughout our interviews; however, they were not all mentioned equally by interviewees. Table 2 outlines the frequency with which each learning objective was coded in our analysis.

Communication skills were mentioned most often during the interviews, nearly three times more than research competence, while disciplinary methods and intellectual engagement were coded the least number of times. Below, we discuss the themes that emerged via our interviews and how they align with THC's liberal arts learning outcomes and related literature.

Communication Skills

Participants magnified three focal points in the area of communication skills. Those foci included oral communication skills, written communication skills, and increased proficiency in scientific writing.

Communication skills were a consistent and significant topic for all participants, who were extremely aware of how their communication skills helped them reach their first destinations. These skills were particularly helpful in building confidence and helping students prepare for graduate programs. Alumni spoke about both oral and written communication skills.

TABLE 2. LEARNING OBJECTIVES CODING PREVALENCE

Learning Objective	Number of Excerpts with This Code
Communication skills	149
Research competence	54
Critical reasoning	33
Intercultural competence	27
Interdisciplinary inquiry	18
Disciplinary methods	13
Intellectual engagement	12

Experiences such as public speaking, debate, and practicing for presentations helped them to garner and hone their oral communication skills. Veronica commented:

You have to do public speaking; you have to do your research. And I think that whole experience helps you become a better public speaker. And in this role that I was interviewing for, part of it was attending these public speaking events through this grant. And so that [skill] was something that I relied on.

In addition to the oral communication skills, they talked about how THC experiences transformed their writing skills, which were useful in preparing graduate school applications. Candace said:

I mean, I think it goes without saying, like the writing skills that I got from the Honors College were absolutely necessary for writing my personal statement.

Science majors spoke specifically about how their acquired communication skills helped to refine their scientific writing skills, as Howard expressed:

And I think ultimately I could develop my scientific communication skills. It was basically . . . a little bit more readable, like for a general audience. I think it really honed my scientific writing skills and my ability to do research—learning new laboratory methods and kind of learning how to ask those questions and how to answer them. So those are definitely the skills that I'm taking away and still trying to develop.

Overall, participants consistently talked about the importance of communication skills and how THC helped them to improve, which in turn helped them to reach their first destinations.

Participants articulated that communication skills were helpful during their academic career, when choosing a first destination, and in first jobs or graduate school. THC expects that its students will be able to “practice active participation and oral communication of ideas in a group setting” as well as “recognize and employ the conventions of academic writing, presentation, and discussion” (see Appendix). Alumni responses clearly indicate that this skill helped them to reach their first destinations and remained useful in their careers, studies, and daily lives. These conclusions are supported by research that indicates the value of liberal arts skills, such as communication skills, to employers (NACE, 2019; Pasquerella, 2019; Roche, 2010). In fact, these skills are noted as some of the most desired in the labor market (Weise et al., 2018).

Research Competence

Alumni focused on three aspects in the area of research competence: the thesis project, creating new knowledge, and research skills. Participants talked often about the research skills that they had acquired during their time at THC. It was one of the few competencies that most of them named explicitly. Not only were they aware that THC had provided them with this skill, but they could articulate its value in interview settings, on applications, and in other processes associated with reaching their first destinations. They noted that the skill was a necessity in their graduate school applications and that they had clearly demonstrated its application through their thesis project. In reference to her personal statement for graduate school, Jade stated:

And then I spent quite a bit of time talking about what I've done since being in [the] lab. So the story arc of my research of starting in the lab: I had that kind of mini project, how that led me to the thesis, and how the thesis has now led me to other projects and other collaborations. . . .

Participants talked about their research competence in two distinct ways. Some talked about research in terms of a scholar who creates new knowledge while others talked about researching to find and/or prepare for first destinations. Those who expounded on their research competence for the purpose of reaching their first destination used spreadsheets and systematic thinking to choose their first destinations. Ruby expressed:

Oh okay, yeah, picking which med schools: that was a lot more of me honing into scientists' spreadsheet version of me. You know, in that case I talked more with some of my research mentors in the lab—I worked in a biology lab—so coming up with like an unbiased way to try to find which schools to apply to, and then I talked to my pre-med advisor . . . and I created this huge spreadsheet that had the school and all of these attributes about it, like its cost, its location, MCAT, GPA, key things about it. And I just go school-by-school through this one registry of schools.

Some noted that the thesis and these research skills mattered when they were attempting to get a job. Kelly provided context for how her thesis helped her in her interview when she relayed the following:

Yeah, I mean, the general gist of the best way to interview for a lab is to read some of their work and be able to talk about specifics of their

research, so that you sound knowledgeable, and then also to be able to talk about what you've done. So I know from one of the interviews in particular that I did, they asked me to put together a presentation on my own research. And I was like, "Well, my thesis is coming up. That's really good practice, that's fine." But things like that. You need to be able to talk knowledgeably about your own experiences and then be able to make connections to their work and what you're interested in about their work.

The continued use of research competence depended upon alumni's first destinations. For those opting for graduate school, the research skill was useful long-term, but it was less notable for those who talked about other employment.

Alumni consistently spoke positively about the research competence skill and how it impacted them. THC's learning outcomes state that their students will be able to "develop research competence through inquiry, project-based and active learning, based on students' own questions" (see Appendix). THC is intentional about offering an in-depth research experience to students through the senior thesis, which the literature explains is critical and necessary to build liberal arts skills (Padgett & Kilgo, 2012; Pascarella et al., 2005; Seifert et al., 2008). Alumni described how they used research competence as a tool to reach their first destinations and how their ability to conduct research via the thesis process was essential to their success.

Critical Reasoning

Interviewees highlighted two subject areas in the area of critical reasoning: unintentional preparation and analytical development. Participants were aware of their critical reasoning skills and made direct links between this skill and how it helped them to reach their first destinations; however, they did not all attribute these skills directly to their THC experience, as Ruby demonstrated when she said she believed THC had "unintentionally" prepared her for her first destination:

it's great that I could think about Plato, but how is that going to translate into having a corporate boss? So, I think it's more unintentional that [THC] taught me how to think and be critical. And I'm able to translate that [into my career field] even if that wasn't like [THC's] obvious goal. . . .

Similarly, when Jacob was asked about how THC helped prepare him for his position, he was quick to mention that THC did not help with the "content

and specifics” but that it might have helped with “how my mind thinks and being analytical and processing and multitasking.” While he went on to pinpoint communication and writing skills specifically, he acknowledged that some skills, like how his mind thinks, are more nebulous, and “there’s no way to really, I don’t know, describe those and describe how I learned them and picked up the skills in college.”

Alumni could clearly articulate how the application of critical reasoning assisted them in reaching their first destinations. They said that their analytical development helped them think critically about their coursework and post-graduation plans, as Ruby indicated:

It became helpful for me just getting in the habit of producing large quantities of written words, and also being analytical about it too and really reflecting on my experiences. So much of what I learned in the Honors College is to be able to reflect and look back, so that was extremely valuable.

Additionally, some participants indicated that they used their critical reasoning skills to articulate the relevance of their experiences in job interviews. For example, Whitney talked about preparing for interviews:

I had a couple topics that I thought I would like to highlight, and so I tried to work my answers to fit whatever question they were asking, like obviously, as applicable. And then I also thought about, like, if I were the person hiring, what would I be looking for in a candidate, what would I expect to hear?

Whitney also described how critical reasoning helped her in her teaching job abroad. She described learning to “give constructive criticism in real time” and that she “found that useful when evaluating student presentations [abroad].” Tim, on the other hand, was reluctant to connect his THC experiences to the development of his critical reasoning skills. He attributed these skills to his summer work experiences; however, when asked if his thesis came up in the interviews, he said “Yeah, yeah. Talked about that a fair amount.” Tim did not appear to believe that his thesis helped him develop critical reasoning skills. Ultimately, alumni were able to identify critical reasoning as a skill they obtained from their college experience, and while some attributed this directly to THC, others did not.

Participants could clearly identify and articulate critical reasoning as a THC learning outcome. THC expects its students to “apply and demonstrate critical reasoning through the use of appropriate evidence and methods” (see

Appendix). Not only were alumni aware that they obtained critical reasoning as a skill, but also they could articulate how they applied it as students and how it played a role in helping them reach their first destinations. This awareness is consistent with previous findings in which honors college alumni identified critical thinking as one of the most valuable skills they gained from their honors college experience (Kotschevar et al., 2018). THC alumni articulated that critical reasoning was particularly helpful in the analysis of their coursework and post-graduation plans. In contrast to some alumni's perceptions that they had not acquired their critical thinking skills from THC, Astin (1999) argues that liberal arts experiences, like those cultivated by THC, contribute to positive outcomes in students' critical thinking.

Intercultural Competence

Three themes surfaced in participant interviews in the areas of intercultural competence: experiences abroad, employment, and use of a second language. Alumni were aware of how intercultural competence helped them reach their first destinations. Their understanding of intercultural competence was mostly related to acquiring proficiency in a second language by being in another country and/or experiencing another culture, however. Carla said, "the French position was frankly something I applied for as, like, a backup . . . but, I think, I had studied abroad in France, and I wanted to keep using my language skills, so that motivated that decision [to teach English in France after graduating]."

Alumni's intercultural competence was useful professionally in many ways that included pursuing employment as a nanny or a journalist, teaching English abroad, and working in foreign affairs. Erica illustrated her use of intercultural competence to reach her first destination in international congressional relations:

So a lot of those resume skills I highlighted . . . show that I knew about government—how government works—and also have an Arabic skill and studied the Middle East. So those were some of the components I used.

Ellie reiterated how intercultural competence gained by experiences abroad impacted the interview process when she was seeking employment opportunities. Additionally, her experience highlights how THC participants gained intercultural competence outside of their honors college experience:

Like I was able to do some international journalism with, through the journalism school. We traveled to Sri Lanka and to Morocco on

various trips to do just some immersive on the ground journalism working groups in communities there. And so those were experiences that I often brought up as well.

The ability to speak a second language boosted their confidence and served as a talking point in their personal statements, as Candace indicated:

I wrote my personal statement broadly on the experience of, like, learning a second language—that language specifically being Spanish—about teaching English speakers, and then my thesis was [on a related topic]. A lot of my statement was about . . . some things that I had learned from my professor . . . the one who is, like, quadrilingual.

While THC lists intercultural competence as one of its primary student outcomes, alumni cited their major coursework and their study abroad experiences as the primary sources of this skill.

Acquiring proficiency in a second language was paramount in obtaining intercultural competence for many participants, which is in line with THC's learning objective that students will “demonstrate intercultural competence through linguistic diversity and awareness of and appreciation for diverse cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives” (see Appendix).

While students were explicit about their linguistic diversity, they did not speak overtly about their appreciation and awareness of other cultures outside of their experiences abroad. Nevertheless, the literature indicates that diverse interactions promote other skill sets that include academic ability, leadership, civic attitudes and behaviors, and positive diversity attitudes (Mayhew et al., 2016, pp. 550, 553). Students who are consistently engaged in diverse collegiate experiences have increased critical thinking skills (Pascarella et al., 2014).

Interdisciplinary Inquiry

In relation to interdisciplinary inquiry, participants highlighted three themes: their living environment, coursework, and fields of interest. Alumni recognized that interdisciplinary inquiry provided them with the skill of a different way of thinking, but they could not describe how it helped them reach their first destinations.

Participants cited their housing assignments and coursework as the root of their interdisciplinary inquiry. Jade described how housing impacted her interdisciplinary exposure:

So they have the [Honors] Scholars Hall, which is the freshman dormitory that they guarantee housing for all the first year students in the Honors College. You don't have to choose to live there, but if you want to, they reserve a spot for you. And so what it allowed me to do is basically make a bunch of friends who were also in the Honors College, but it spans multiple disciplines. And so now, who I consider to be my three best friends and I, all met in that dorm hall, and one of them was an econ major, one of them was in cinema studies, and then one of them was international studies . . . so we were all in completely different parts of the university and wouldn't have met otherwise if we weren't all living together.

Noting that interdisciplinary courses helped him find the field of interest he wanted to pursue, Howard stated:

And I think, in general, all the sorts of different subjects that I had to study for all sorts of different professors and classes I guess I wouldn't have otherwise. I think it did end up making me more well-rounded and more, just like, interested more generally, in different sorts of academia and like, gave me . . . a broader appreciation of things beyond just my tiny little field that I'm in right now.

Likewise, when asked what skills had helped him identify the graduate schools he would like to attend, Noah said:

I think what was key in helping me identify those options was the breadth of the things I learned at [the institution]. I think that really made me interested in both getting more education and learning—learning more about how to impact public policy.

Overall, alumni said that the new way of thinking expanded their minds and provided them with a more well-rounded thought process even though they were unable to draw connections to reaching their first destinations outside academia.

The fact that students can acquire an appreciation for interdisciplinary inquiry from not only the classroom but also their living environment is consonant with the literature. “[T]he liberal arts college experience is not limited to the curriculum alone. The residential community itself, as well as the many avenues for engagement, from athletics to governance to special interest clubs and community service, present the student with yet another array of diverse experiences and practices” (Nugent, 2015, p. 29). Although interdisciplinary

inquiry is highlighted as a common skill acquired from a liberal arts education (Astin, 1999; Seifert et al., 2008), participants in our study struggled to translate its value to first destinations beyond academia. This finding aligns with that of Kotschevar (2018), who reported that honors alumni rarely identified interdisciplinary inquiry as one of their most valuable professional skills.

Disciplinary Methods

THC's disciplinary methods learning outcome refers to the ability to "identify and appropriately apply disciplinary methods in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences" (see Appendix). Our interviews with alumni revealed, however, that many were under the impression that teaching disciplinary methods was not the purpose of THC. They attributed the acquisition of these skills instead to their major coursework or to their hands-on experience. Jade, for instance, felt that THC faculty actually communicated this idea to students:

The perception of many of the core [THC] faculty . . . seems to be . . . that the science students come to the Honors College to learn liberal arts skills, and then you learn your science skills somewhere else. You go to your major for that. That's not what we do.

However, Jade also mentioned one THC course taught by a science faculty member that truly contributed to significant learning gains in her understanding of different disciplinary methods:

I think I learned those liberal arts skills in—in the courses that were taught by scientists that were not taught by the humanities professors [in THC], like that Biology of Politics course that I took. I feel like that's really when I learned what philosophical thinking is . . . where I learned those kinds of skills that I would associate with liberal arts. And that was taught by a scientist. And it was partly so successful because he understood the knowledge base we were coming from and knew how to incorporate our misconceptions in a way that helped us learn . . . he understood as a scientist. He went through that transition of having to abandon this rhetoric that we spit out [about] what the scientific method is, who a scientist is, what the process of science is, and [that] it's this objective perfect system. We spit out that rhetoric even though we know it's not true, and so how do we establish a new rhetoric? It's actually a lot of what we do. That doesn't devalue what science is; it actually puts science in a level field

of knowledge with other knowledge bases, including social sciences and humanities because they're all valid ways of collecting information about what's going on.

While Jade was the only interviewee to be able to point to specific THC coursework that contributed to her knowledge of disciplinary methods, several alumni did mention that discipline-specific skills were commonly asked about or necessary in interviews and applications. Samantha said that her thesis in the field of international journalism helped demonstrate her knowledge of discipline-specific methods in job interviews:

[My thesis] showed that I could interview people. It showed that I could execute a project that's a long-term project, plan steps, and do it in advance . . . it showed that I could plan in advance, I could write . . . I can do research. I can find sources using initiative. You know, like, I was in a foreign country, but I was still able to find 25 people to talk to me about a pretty sensitive topic . . . using Twitter and connections and other things.

Others, like Joe, lacked the ability to transfer their discipline-specific skills to other domains. When asked what he wished he had had more training in during his time at THC, he said:

More training on, like, how do you write professionally? And how do you write specifically for the purpose of getting admitted to a graduate institution of study? What is it that people are looking for? What is it that you should emphasize? And how do you write what is an awkward letter? . . . Because I think within the Honors College and within college in general you write a lot of research focused papers, or you, in the case of my friends who were in the journalism school or in the business school, you write a lot of technical reports, articles, things that you would be expected to put together in a portfolio for your later applications, but within the field of graduate school, I think there's a gap there of, like, what does this application process look like?

Beyond Jade and Samantha, other participants were less familiar with how the disciplinary methods learning outcome was connected to THC's liberal arts curriculum, and interviews like Joe's demonstrated what the literature has shown: that there are gaps in liberal arts students' ability to apply different disciplinary methodologies across varying contexts (Anders, 2017; Hart Research Associates, 2018; Hutton, 2006; Roche, 2010; Weise et al.,

2018; Wells et al., 2017). These findings also corroborate the more than 70% of employers who did not feel students were prepared to use disciplinary skills in the workplace (Hart Research Associates, 2015).

Intellectual Engagement

Three overarching themes emerged from participants' comments about intellectual engagement: exceptionally intelligent students, challenging courses, and an implicit love of learning. Participants spoke positively about the level of intellectual engagement they experienced within THC. Specifically, students indicated that they were surrounded by peers within THC who were exceptionally intelligent. As a result, they indicated that they learned more, thus enhancing their THC experience. Erica stated:

I learned so much also from my fellow students. Just getting to know people in the smaller class sizes, I think, was extremely helpful to get to know maybe their background. A lot of them were from [this state]. That was kind of fun to see, and also they're just brilliant people. They're brilliant students who have done so much and continually were driven to do so much throughout our time at [ARU]...

Participants saw intellectual engagement as a benefit of THC and a clear characteristic of THC's students. Howard explained, "and so I think there's a lot of benefit of that. I think I was able to have, like, a lot more discussions with people who were clearly, like, engaged with the material. Otherwise, they really wouldn't be in the Honors College."

In addition to being surrounded by students who challenged them intellectually, participants indicated that the course content was more challenging. As a result, students expressed that they worked harder to meet the elevated THC academic expectations. Taylor explained:

So I think that it challenged me like a lot more than my business classes did, so I felt like I was actually pushing myself. It definitely made me a better writer, which was good. . . . I got to take psychology classes, and I took a class on genetics, and I would have never had that opportunity . . . if I was just in the business track. . . .

Finally, participants said that students enjoy and find THC experiences useful because they have an implicit love of learning. They also indicated that if they did not have this orientation toward learning, THC experiences would not be helpful in reaching their first destinations. Veronica expressed:

My favorite classes of all of college were my first ever class and my last ever class and both of them were honors college classes. There was wisdom literature and there was an ethics class. And these were classes that, I mean, I guess if you look at my resume [they] wouldn't matter to my resume, but they mattered a ton in the way that I think and the way that I continue to think . . . outside of yourself and . . . about the world in a different way. That sounds really cheesy, but I think that that partnered with my very tangible and hard skills within journalism was very refreshing. . . .

While some of the participants were aware of the usefulness of the intellectual engagement offered by THC experience, some indicated that its usefulness was contingent on one's career path. Taylor said:

My best friends also did it [participated in THC], and like they're also all, I mean, mostly all going into academia. So I think that that's what a key thing is: that's what it prepares you for and sets you up [for], and I didn't even realize that it was basically like four years of grad school training, but that's what it is. If you don't go into grad school, I'm not really sure what it does for you, other than like, you know, I mean the 'learning is good' kind of thing. I don't know if it really sets you apart or if it gives you really any fundamental skills, other than grad school prep.

Overall, students spoke positively about the intellectual engagement they experienced because of their participation in THC. However, many were not explicitly aware of how this skill helped them to reach their first destinations.

THC expects that students will "show initiative, independence, and intellectual engagement in the classroom and in assessments" (see Appendix). Students talked about the intensity of their writing requirements and how their classroom experiences deeply influenced their level of intellectual engagement. Participants indicated that being surrounded by exceptionally intelligent peers, engaging in challenging courses, and possessing an explicit love of learning contributed to their ability to cultivate intellectual engagement through THC. As Roche (2010, p. 10) has indicated, "learning for its sake" is requisite for success beyond the college years and can be cultivated through a liberal arts experience.

As suggested by Seifert et al. (2008), liberal arts experiences like THC's positively impact liberal arts outcomes such as lifelong learning. Alumni consistently discussed the many ways that they experienced intellectual

engagement during their time at THC; however, they could not articulate how it helped them reach their first destinations. Overall, participants were not aware of the value or usefulness of the skill outside of academia.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided an important addition to the literature as it explores the role of liberal arts skills in students' first post-graduation outcomes. Advocates of liberal arts education claim that it develops broadly applicable skills that are advantageous to students many years beyond college graduation (Roche, 2010; Stross, 2017; Zakaria, 2015). However, the literature does not present an in-depth review of how students are using liberal arts skills to reach their first destinations post-graduation.

This study provides context for how liberal arts skills help students to reach their first destinations, such as employment, prestigious fellowships, and graduate programs. Moreover, it confirms that liberal arts skills can be cultivated outside of the traditional liberal arts college environment and instead in an honors college at a research institution (Kimball, 2014; Roche, 2010). Honors colleges provide access to those who might not otherwise be able to afford an elite liberal arts college. This study also provides additional breadth to the literature indicating that thesis and research experiences contribute to students' personal and professional development. In the literature, most of the studies about the impacts of research experiences are STEM-focused or discipline-specific (Craney et al., 2011; Dowd et al., 2018; Seymour et al., 2004); however, our findings indicate that research competence, such as writing a thesis, also helps students reach their first destinations.

While THC students obtain liberal arts skills that help them reach their first destinations, they are often unable to articulate, recognize, translate, and apply the liberal arts skills they have acquired to their career settings—especially non-academic ones (cf. Anders, 2017; Hart Research Associates, 2018; Hutton, 2006; Roche, 2010; Weise et al., 2018; Wells et al., 2017). Since employers find liberal arts skills valuable—in some instances, more valuable than the academic major—honors colleges need to ensure that students can not only identify the liberal arts skills that they have cultivated but also have an explicit understanding of how such skills can and should be used to reach their first destinations.

The findings and recommendations of our study provide insights and opportunities for further research dedicated to the outcomes of honors graduates. We recommend future studies that explore whether there is an economic

return on a liberal arts education from an honors college once graduates reach their first destinations or whether they must wait several years to feel the impact of the economic benefits. We also recommend additional research on whether students' sense of belonging within an honors college affects their development of liberal arts skills while in college and their application of liberal arts skills after college. Both are particularly important as honors colleges explore ways to attract diverse populations and as students continue to weigh the costs and benefits of a liberal arts education.

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APPENDIX

THC Learning Objectives

Evaluation Criteria	100 Level	200 Level	300 Level	400 Level
1. Critical Reasoning Apply and demonstrate critical reasoning through the use of appropriate evidence and methods.	Develop ability to read and question critically; think logically, and reason effectively. Identify the major assertions and assumptions of an academic argument and evaluate its supporting evidence.	Develop and articulate well-reasoned arguments supported with appropriate evidence. Integrate material from multiple sources in support of a single argument.	Develop innovative research questions and determine the evidence needed to support an argument.	Integrate complex and diverse bodies of evidence in support of sophisticated and original arguments.
2. Communication Skills Use effective communication skills, both written and oral, by constructing coherent, logical, and persuasive arguments.	Practice active participation and oral communication of ideas in a group setting. Recognize and employ the conventions of academic writing, presentation, and discussion.	Productively engage in academic dialogue and debate. Express complex ideas clearly in writing and demonstrate strong command of structure, syntax, and mechanics.	Articulate the purpose, methodology, and results of independent research integrating material from multiple sources.	Demonstrate the ability to communicate complex and difficult concepts orally and in writing to both specialists and a broad audience.
3. Research Competence Develop research competence through inquiry, project-based and active learning, based on students' own questions.	Use appropriate methods for identifying and accessing relevant and reliable sources.	Evaluate the use of diverse research methods for the production of knowledge.	Define and refine research questions, and synthesize, integrate, and evaluate relevant and reliable sources of evidence.	Adapt appropriate research skills to a thorough and effective investigation of a research topic or problem.

<p>4. Intellectual Engagement Show initiative, independence, and intellectual engagement in the classroom and in assessments.</p>	<p>Collaboratively and independently explore and evaluate issues, ideas, data, and/or sources.</p>	<p>Develop and articulate reasoned responses to issues, ideas, data, and/or sources.</p>	<p>Identify and engage with individual interests within a broader research area.</p>	<p>Demonstrate independence, initiative, and self-direction in well-conceived individual research papers and projects and in group projects.</p>
<p>5. Disciplinary Methods Identify and appropriately apply disciplinary methods in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.</p>	<p>Identify a range of disciplinary approaches and characterize the diverse perspectives they offer.</p>	<p>Assess and evaluate the use of disciplinary methods.</p>	<p>Employ approaches, methods, and writing style appropriate to the discipline(s) and audience.</p>	<p>Critically reflect on methods within the course discipline(s).</p>
<p>6. Interdisciplinary Inquiry Engage in interdisciplinary inquiry by integrating insights from more than one research approach and by synthesizing diverse perspectives and modes of thinking.</p>	<p>Describe the value of a liberal arts perspective across fields of inquiry.</p>	<p>Explore the contributions of different disciplinary perspectives within a field of inquiry.</p>	<p>Synthesize ideas and information from relevant disciplines in support of arguments.</p>	<p>Adapt, analyze, integrate, and critically reflect on methods within relevant disciplines.</p>
<p>7. Intercultural Competence Demonstrate intercultural competence through linguistic diversity and awareness of and appreciation for diverse cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.</p>	<p>Describe the underlying premises in their own and others' arguments or perspectives.</p>	<p>Engage with and reflect on examples of diverse human identities, experiences, and thought.</p>	<p>Appreciate the role of diverse perspectives in shaping complex arguments. Characterize the importance of research ethics and describe best practices.</p>	<p>Demonstrate an ability to empathically consider and present issues from multiple nuanced perspectives.</p>

Dutch Honors Alumni Looking Back on the Impact of Honors on their Personal and Professional Development

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Abstract: This study considers the value of honors programs by investigating alumni perspectives of learning goals relative to personal and professional development. Using a longitudinal cross-sectional survey instrument, authors track participants ($n = 79$) for four consecutive years (2017–2021). Qualitative measures indicate the importance of freedom to develop within the curricula, stimulus to experiment and shape one's own path, and insights and inspirations resultant of rigorous study. Respondents identify certain learning goals (i.e., ability to look beyond boundaries and show initiative and guts) to be critical in their personal and professional development but question the role of the honors certificate in job applications. While data indicate post-graduate employment (<18 months) for the majority (62%) of alumni, nearly 23% in post-graduate study (a high percentage in Dutch universities of applied sciences), and 5% in trainee programs or apprenticeships, authors do not know to what extent employers use the honors certificate as a criterion for recruiting a candidate. Further investigation into the role and status of the honors certificate during job application is needed, including the viewpoint of employers.

Keywords: higher education; Netherlands; curriculum evaluation; occupational training; Hanze University of Applied Science (Groningen, Netherlands)

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INTRODUCTION

Although honors education seems to thrive (Allen et al. 6), justifying its importance to officials is still necessary (Rook 69). Savage states that

“honors programs and honors colleges face increasingly greater pressure to justify their existence,” and “the pressure is on and growing when it comes to defining, disseminating, and defending the value of higher education generally and the reasons for funding it” (13). Especially, from the point of view of policymakers, the necessity to invest in honors education is still open for discussion not only in the U.S. but also in the Netherlands.

In the Netherlands, honors education is rather new. The first Dutch honors programs were established no earlier than 1993, and in 2003 only ten different universities offered 25 programs. A grant program from the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the so-called Sirius Program, was launched in 2008 and gave support to the implementation of honors education at almost all institutions of higher education (Huijts and Kolster 2). In 2020, 13 of 14 Dutch research universities (Statista) and 26 of the 36 universities of applied science (UAS) had developed honors education in some form, such as honors colleges, honors courses, or excellence programs (*Honoursnetwerk; Instellingen met honoursonderwijs*).

Despite these achievements, people still raise questions about investing in students who are already doing well. The Dutch honors network for the Universities of Applied Science (UAS) recently wrote a note, on behalf of the board of the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, publishing their own, internal, view on the future of honors in the Netherlands. In the note, the authors stated that although honors education had gained a fixed place in the catalogs of UAS, they pointed out that it is still not commonplace at all universities to facilitate students who want to and can do more. The financing of honors programs tends to be a major issue in many universities.

Within our university, the Hanze University of Applied Science, we felt that we needed to demonstrate the value of honors education. Answering the “value question” of honors education can be done by assessing the value students experience while at college and also by determining the value alumni experience in life after college in its the impact on their personal or professional development and careers. In the current study, we take the latter approach and investigate the perceived effects of honors education on both personal and professional development from the point of view of honors graduates.

Assessing the Value of Honors Education during One's Education

Investigations of the impact of honors education on students while they are at college use different outcome measures. Quite often these measures are variables that can be measured within the educational system, such as grades and credits. In 2019, Cognard-Black et al. published an NCHC monograph titled *The Demonstrable Value of Honors Education: New Research Evidence* devoted to the subject of the value of honors programs. This monograph showed several examples of the “internal” approach to studying academic success. For example, Diaz et al. (59–91) reported significant benefits of participating in university honors by looking at first-term GPA, first-year credits earned, second-year retention, and graduation rate. Additionally, Patton et al. (93–114) found that honors students had higher retention and graduation rates than comparable non-honors students.

Glastra and van Middelkoop (37–40) show that the value of education can be measured by looking at external goals. External goals can be personal development, the development of citizenship, or one's economic potential in the labor market. Hammond, McBee, and Hebert (203), for example, showed that honors education contributes to independence from family, fitting into a social network, the desire to overcome life's challenges, and the strengthening of one's internal will. In the Netherlands, Kool et al. (123) found a modest increase in intellectual curiosity among honors students whereas non-honors students showed a decrease. The findings of Jacobs et al. (15) suggest that students in the Netherlands who participated in honors programs developed their cognitive and non-cognitive skills.

The examples we have discussed so far demonstrate different ways to look at the value of honors education during college, distinguishing between an internal and external view on the contribution of honors education to academic success. Yet one can also look at the impact and added value of honors *after graduation*.

Assessing the Value of Honors Education after Graduation

Students do not fully experience the outcomes of education until after their graduation when valuable skills need to be applied in practice. Therefore “assessing alumni's perceptions of a program's impacts after graduation is imperative” (Kotschevar et al. 141). In the Netherlands, Wolfensberger et al. (200) were among the first researchers to look at honors education from the

graduates' point of view. They asked how honors alumni, in retrospect, valued their honors program in relation to their present situation. The responding alumni reported that the honors education they received supported their personal development and helped them to attain skills and knowledge that were not part of the regular academic program. Alumni also reported having landed a good job and a satisfactory income (Wolfensberger et al. 211). Allen et al. (115) found that, in comparison to regular alumni, honors alumni are more likely to find a job matching the level of their degree. They also showed that honors alumni were able to expand their network through the honors program and to connect to their professional or scientific practice.

Investigating the effects on skills and labor-market experiences is at least an indirect indication of educational value. Another approach is to explore the extent to which the learning goals of honors programs turn out to be valuable to one's professional career (Kotschevar et al. 141). In their study, Kotschevar et al. showed that an overwhelming majority of alumni expressed the belief that their honors experience added value to their personal and professional contexts. Skills that most honors students particularly valued from their education were communication skills, professionalism, and critical thinking.

Given our interest in learning about arguments to support honors education, we have investigated how honors alumni of a specific Dutch college, in this case the Hanze UAS in Groningen, perceive the added value of the learning goals of their honors program to their personal and professional development. Although this information is valuable for our own institution, this type of research is also currently lacking in Europe, as far as we know. For instance, the research of Wolfensberger et al. did not explicitly look at the learning goals of honors programs, nor did it explore the added value of these goals to the alumni's professional careers. Our research question is thus: "How does an honors program, and its learning goals, contribute to personal and professional development according to honors alumni?"

The Current Study and Its Context

Hanze UAS got its current name when two local institutes for professional education merged in 1986, but its history dates back to 1798. In that year was founded the Academy for Arts, Architecture, and Navigation, which was the first in a long list of institutes for higher education that would eventually form today's Hanze UAS. In 2022, Hanze UAS was tutoring 28,432 students in 18 different schools offering 54 bachelor's programmes (15 English or German-taught), 19 master's programmes (12 English-taught), and 8 associate degrees

(Hanze Hogeschool, *Facts & Figures*). Around 2009, Hanze UAS embraced its first honors program. Hanze UAS now has a system of decentralized intra- and extracurricular honors programs. Each faculty or school can develop its own honors programs within a general framework that is monitored by the overarching body of the Hanze Honors College. Today, the 18 schools host 50 honors programs (Hanze Hogeschool, *Hanze Honors College*).

The current study explores the value of honors education within the context of the extracurricular honors programs, the so-called Honors Talent Programs. These programs consist of a study load of 30 extra European Credit Transfers (ECTs); 1 ECT equals 28 hours/week. The extracurricular Honors Talent Programs start in the second year of the bachelor program and last for three years. According to Hanze UAS's original vision statement on honors education,

the honors student is an ambitious and extremely talented student, a critical, inquiring thinker that can handle complex issues, looks beyond the boundaries of his or her discipline, pays attention to ethical dilemmas, strives for added value to the society, reflects critically, creates his or her own vision, realizes useful, sustainable, working and innovative solutions, shows initiative and guts and gets the best out of his or herself. (Tiesenga 5)

This vision statement is the foundation of the learning goals we let honors alumni reflect on in the questionnaire (see Table 2).

METHOD

Participants

This study comprises a longitudinal cross-sectional survey. As the honors programs we examine are extracurricular, there is no control group of non-honors graduates. We approached alumni during four subsequent years, from January 2017 to January 2020. In 2021, no data were collected due to the Corona pandemic. Each year, a new group of honors alumni of Hanze UAS was approached approximately 18 months after their graduation. The period chosen offers a reasonable chance that their initial career development has taken place. In principle, the research population contains all Honors Talent Program alumni of that specific graduation year. The list of potential respondents is based on the one derived from the administrative system of Hanze UAS. However, since this list depends on students' willingness to share

personal contact information, not all honors alumni are included. All listed alumni (214) were approached via email to participate in an online survey (SurveyMonkey/Analyzer). In total 79 alumni responded. The responses and response rates of the different cohorts are reported in Table 1.

The final sample contains a broad representation of the different programs within the Hanze UAS. The average age of respondents was 26.26 years, $SD = 2.95$. The gender question was answered by 76 people (21 male, 55 female, which is in line with the total population within the Honors Talent Programs of Hanze UAS). Most graduates (62%) found a job 18 months after graduation, almost 23% followed a master's study, and 5% mentioned their participation in a traineeship.

Measures

We used different types of questions to explore how participation in an honors program contributed to the students' personal and professional development before and after graduation. First, we asked students to retrospectively rate the added value of their honors program during their time of study on a scale from 1–10 (in the Dutch rating system, 10 is the highest and 1 the lowest grade you can get or give) as well as to explain their rating.

Next, we asked them to describe their current position and whether they had mentioned their honors program on their CV (yes or no) and to what extent they believe this affected the employer's decision to hire them (1 = absolutely not, 5 = very strong). Respondents were also invited to elaborate on the answer to this last question. Next, we asked alumni to indicate how they valued what they learned in their honors program, looking back from the time of graduation until the time of the survey (1.5 years later), and to rate this on a scale from 1–10 (1 = lowest, 10 = highest). Also, we asked alumni to what extent they reached the learning goals of the Honors Talent Program during the honors program (see Table 2; 1 = absolutely not, 5 = very strong). Finally, we asked them to indicate which honors learning goals contributed

TABLE 1. SURVEY RESPONSES AND RESPONSE RATES

Graduation Year	Data Collection	Response	Response Rate
July 2015	January 2017	22	37%
July 2016	January 2018	18	64%
July 2017	January 2019	24	35%
July 2018	January 2020	15	22%
Total		79	37%

significantly to their development/career as well as to explain how they came to this conclusion.

As indicated in the introduction, the honors learning goals are derived from Hanze UAS's vision statement on honors education. Table 2 shows the list of learning goals that are used in the study (Tiesenga 5).

Analytic Strategy

For our descriptive analysis, we combined data from four different cohorts into one data set. To analyze the answers to the open questions, we used a manual inductive coding strategy. We categorized the content of the open answers in order to look for themes, using two independent coders. For the findings to be of use, the coders first discussed the themes and subsequently decided together on their importance (Thomas 240).

RESULTS

Appreciation during College

The appreciation of honors education during college can be considered high ($M = 8.15$; $SD = 1.87$ on a scale from 1 to 10). The reasons respondents gave for this appreciation can be divided into several themes: room to develop oneself, being stimulated to experiment, following one's own path, experiencing inspiration and new insights, getting in touch with the work field, interdisciplinary work, building networks, developing entrepreneurship, creating new visions, creativity, and doing something good for society. Many entries reflect an appreciation of the room to develop oneself by giving examples such as: "I

TABLE 2. HONORS LEARNING GOALS AT HANZE UAS

Learning Goals
1. Ability to handle complex issues
2. Ability to look beyond the boundaries of your discipline
3. Ability to pay attention to ethical dilemmas
4. Ability to strive for added value to society
5. Ability to reflect critically
6. Ability to create your own vision
7. Ability to realize useful, sustainable, working, and innovative solutions
8. Ability to show initiative and guts
9. Ability to get the best out of yourself

experienced more room to develop faster and better on multiple aspects than my regular program offered me” or “I learned to take initiative and developed courage and self-confidence.” One respondent remarked: “To devote a lot of time to development is the norm within honors.”

Being stimulated to experiment and to follow your own path is also highly ranked. As one respondent noted,

It is very difficult to express the overall added value within a few sentences. It was the first time during my studies I was not forced to follow specific courses, I could choose this all by myself, and it was mostly not business-related, which was a great chance to widen the horizon besides following business courses. Also, most members of the honors community were truly inspiring ambitious people with a likewise mindset.

The program is also appreciated for providing inspiration and new insights. One alumnus comments: “So much motivation, ambition, creativity. My studies wouldn’t have been the same without the honors program!” This inspiration is found in the boost of knowledge that the honors program offers “a great chance to widen the horizon besides following business courses” and “[e]xploration in subjects that I found interesting besides my regular study.”

Alumni also mention their appreciation of the support they receive: “The teaching is a lot more fun, more mature and modern.” However, some alumni offered criticism about support: “It was hard to get started and finding out what to do, a bit more support there would have been nice.” Despite the apparent freedom, other alumni experienced too much bureaucracy: “Still, I think there is some room for improvement with the organization (e.g., decrease the bureaucracy experienced with the project proposals).”

Other important themes regarding appreciation are the possibilities of getting in touch with the work field, interdisciplinary work, building networks and developing entrepreneurship, creating new visions, creativity, and doing something good for society.

Current Position and Influence during Application

All students said that they list the honors program on their CV. The answers to the question “to what extent has the honors program affected the decision of your current employer to hire you for the job” varied from 19.30 % “absolutely not” to 20.05 % “strong” or “very strong.” The possibility to answer “does not apply/I don’t know” was chosen by 21.05% of the

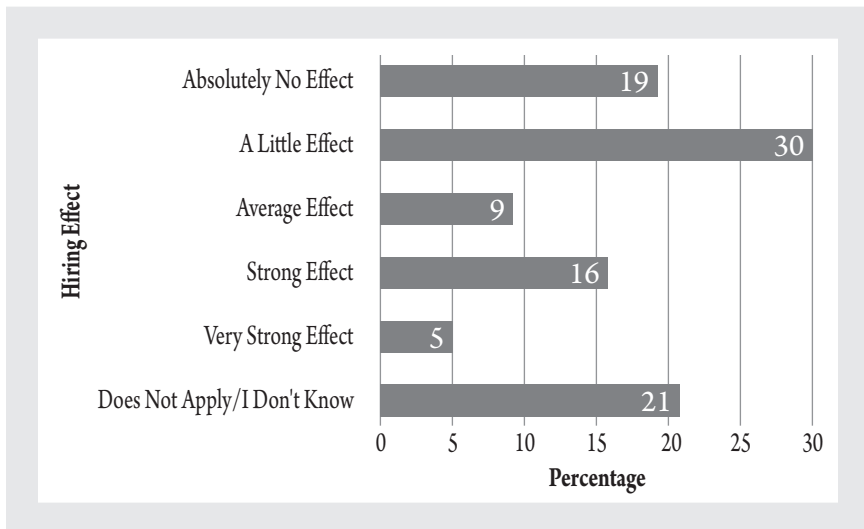
respondents. Figure 1 provides the full range of answer options and their accompanying percentages.

Respondents were invited to reflect on this question. Several of them mention unfamiliarity with honors as the reason that honors didn't play an apparent part during application: "The honors program did not come up during my job interview. I believe that many countries, where honors degrees are not known, do not consider it an added value to a candidate," and "I learned a lot from the honors program, and in terms of self-development it really helped me. However, the 'added value' towards employers is low. Usually, I must explain what it was about and what I did." On the other hand, another alumnus remarks: "People always ask me about it and they are impressed!"

Appreciation after Graduation and Contribution of the Honors Program toward Learning Goals

The appreciation after graduation was scored on a 10-point scale. Here, the mean was 7.36 ($SD = 1.64$). Alumni were then asked to score the contribution of honors programs toward learning goals in relation to the development of competencies in practice (example: to what extent did you develop the ability to reflect critically?). This response was rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much). The mean scores and the SD s are presented in

FIGURE 1. EFFECT OF THE HONORS PROGRAM ON THE DECISION TO HIRE A CANDIDATE FOR THE JOB



Note: Percentages have been rounded.

Table 3, which shows that all learning goals were rated on or above the mid-point of the scale. The ability to look beyond boundaries and the ability to show initiative as well as courage were clearly important contributors to one’s personal and career development.

Alumni were subsequently asked to indicate which of these learning goals contributed significantly to their development/career. Results are presented in Table 4, which shows the number of times each learning goal is mentioned as being significant.

Finally, the alumni were invited in to explain in an open-answer statement how they concluded that the learning goals contributed significantly to their development/career. The themes we found in our analysis involve personal development: “I am not ok with being average. I set my own goals and

TABLE 3. AVERAGE CONTRIBUTION OF HONORS TOWARD LEARNING GOALS IN DEVELOPMENT/CAREER

Learning Goal	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Look beyond the boundaries of your discipline	4.23	0.23
2. Show initiative and guts	4.18	0.23
3. Reflect critically	4.08	0.22
4. Create your own vision	3.83	0.21
5. Strive for added value to the society	3.70	0.21
6. Handle complex issues	3.45	0.38
7. Pay attention to ethical dilemmas	3.22	0.20
8. Realize useful, sustainable, working, and innovative solutions	3.13	0.20

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO INDICATE WHETHER A LEARNING GOAL CONTRIBUTES SIGNIFICANTLY TO THEIR DEVELOPMENT/CAREER

Learning Goal	Times Mentioned
1. Look beyond the boundaries of your discipline	37
2. Show initiative and guts	36
3. Reflect critically	23
4. Create your own vision	22
5. Strive for added value to the society	17
6. Handle complex issues	15
7. Pay attention to ethical dilemmas	11
8. Realize useful, sustainable, working, and innovative solutions	9

I am open to new opportunities, something even better than what I planned.” At the same time, the benefit for professional development is also mentioned more often: “I realize that in the working field I only could have gotten there through honors.” Although not ranked very high in Table 4, a large number of respondents mention the effect honors has had on the development of ethical/social awareness in their open answers: “I’ve learned to take social cause into consideration, but also simple things, such as employee well-being, or finding synergy effects that positively affect all stakeholders.”

Finally, two specific comments are worth mentioning as they seem to illustrate the value of that particular honors period for the students. One alumnus says:

During honors, I got the best out of myself. Now I try to get that feeling again because 1.5 years later it is hard, I lack creativity, so I would like to suggest that the honors program provide a guide “for the rest of your life,” with techniques and tips to use in practice. I would love to have an honors session to regain that feeling, once a week.

Another student offers some inspiring advice: “My advice is not to take the easy road. The easy road is already followed too often and does not often lead to innovation or prizes. Honors was beautiful because of the challenges it posed and let nobody take that away from you.”

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this study, we looked at the value of honors education from the point of view of honors alumni. We did so by focusing on the question “how does an honors program, and its learning goals, contribute to personal and professional development according to honors alumni?” Alumni in our study appreciate the honors program they had followed. The overall appreciation during college was rather high and still quite positive after graduation as well, albeit slightly lower. Honors alumni report that the honors program they had followed had strengthened their personal development. More specifically, they report having gained a broader perspective and developed more self-esteem through the honors program. As for professional development, the possibility to get in touch with the work field, build networks, and develop entrepreneurship are mentioned as the most important gains of the honors program. The honors alumni furthermore indicate that four honors learning goals are particularly important in relation to their current situation: look beyond the boundaries of your discipline; show initiative and guts; reflect critically; and create your

own vision. Two learning goals score relatively low regarding the appreciation of the honors program: realizing useful, sustainable, working, and innovative solutions; and paying attention to ethical dilemmas.

Honors alumni also report that they appreciated honors education because of the high degree of freedom and autonomy the program provided. Themes such as “room to develop oneself,” “being stimulated to experiment and to follow your own path,” and “providing inspiration and new insights” are often mentioned. Furthermore, the honors program is seen as a bridge between the university and the working field. Alumni appreciated that the honors program brought them in touch with the work field, offering them the opportunity to build networks and develop entrepreneurship. They also appreciated experience with interdisciplinary work and doing something good for society.

In the Netherlands, the labor market position of graduates in higher education is monitored by the Dutch Higher Education Monitor. Comparing our data to that of the monitor (HBO-Monitor 2020) shows that the percentage of alumni that found a job 18 months after graduation is in line with the percentage of general students finding a job. However, the percentage of honors alumni following a master’s program is rather high compared to the percentage of regular students; this is especially remarkable given the fact that it is not easy to start a master’s after graduation from a UAS university in the Netherlands (Onderwijsinspectie.nl). It could be that honors education has opened new opportunities for these students. Overall, positive social and economic effects of honors programs are probable, but further research to determine the precise effects is required.

All alumni reported that they mention the honors program on their CV, but the extent to which the honors program affected the decision of their employer to hire them for a job varies from having little to no effect to high effect. The open answers suggest that employers are not familiar with the existence of honors education, which is still a fledgling undertaking in Europe. When employers were familiar with honors, it came up during the job interview as being somewhat important. Our findings are in line with the findings of Allen et al. (76–80) who in 2015 performed a vignette study showing a relative unfamiliarity with honors that differs between fields of education. Therefore, further investigation into the role and the status of the honors certificate in job applications from the employers’ point of view is needed.

Limitations and Further Research

A response rate of 37% could be considered sufficient given that the data were collected 18 months after the respondents’ graduation. During the four

years that the survey was used, it became clear that careful administration of alumni contact details is an issue of concern. Due to the decentralized system of organizing honors programs, several alumni were likely missing in the central administration.

Although response rates could be considered sufficient, it could also be that the more enthusiastic or more successful students were more prone to participate in the study, somewhat inflating our findings. Within our data, we had no way of testing for this other than comparing our data with data on the general graduates. As indicated before, honors alumni were not more likely to have a job but were more likely to participate in a master's program.

The current study does not use a control group, which some might consider a limitation. Here the difference between the U.S. and Dutch honors situations must be considered. Honors students in the current study are following honors courses that are on top of the regular courses, and therefore no comparable control group is available. Also, the fact that we asked alumni to reflect upon learning goals of honors makes it not possible to compare their answers with those of regular students.

The survey itself has some limitations. The outcomes of this study are based on the viewpoint and memories of alumni 18 months after graduation, which may have led to bias in the perception of the respondents. We found some differences between their appreciation before and after graduation, but we cannot explain this difference. A point of inquiry for future research would be to look at the expectations of the benefits of their honors program in finding a job and to what extent the various aspects of the honors experience are reflected in their current working situation.

Implications for the Practice

In this article, we looked at the appreciation of honors education from the point of view of honors alumni, using specific learning goals as a point of reference. This approach has provided useful information about the value of the honors programs. For example, the somewhat lower appreciation, or relevance, of the goals "realize useful, sustainable, working and innovative solutions and pay attention to ethical dilemmas" suggests the need to adapt the honors programs of the Hanze UAS.

Alumni are uncertain about the role of their honors certificate during a job application, and we do not know to what extent employers use honors as an argument to recruit a candidate. More communication about the value of honors in the work environment is needed and can perhaps be accomplished

by sharing honors students' testimonials, asking honors alumni to become honors ambassadors, or designing transdisciplinary projects including honors.

Finally, a useful addition to the honors programs would be to provide some training in the way alumni can use honors during an application. Alumni do mention the positive effect of honors on networking and projects in the work field, but it is not evident that they learn to present themselves favorably during applications.

This study looked at the value of education from the point of view of its beneficiaries, the graduates. The honors alumni we have studied seem to advocate the value of honors. Clearly stated learning goals help honors alumni to self-reflect. Honors alumni also pinpoint the need to invest in honors education. Their appreciation of the honors program and its contribution to their personal and professional lives indicates that personal and professional as well as academic success signifies the value of educational programs.

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Perfectionism and Honors Students: Cautious Good News

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Abstract: Psychoeducational research differentiates adaptive and maladaptive forms of perfectionism. This study considers personal-strivings and evaluative-concerns perfectionism in relation to procrastination, stress, anxiety, well-being, and academic achievement among students ($n = 147$) of all undergraduate levels and across disciplines, with honors representing a little over a quarter. While results show evaluative-concerns perfectionism to positively correlate to stress and anxiety and negatively correlate with well-being, no correlation is found relative to procrastination and GPA. Conversely, personal-strivings perfectionism negatively correlates with procrastination and stress and positively with well-being and GPA. Honors students show a higher degree of the more adaptive personal-strivings perfectionism than their undergraduate counterparts but do not differ in the maladaptive form. Data suggest that this is good news for honors students: they have more adaptive perfectionism and are in no more danger from its maladaptive type than other students.

Keywords: psychology of college students; adaptability; well-being; Frost Multi-dimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS); Northwestern College (IA)—Honors Program

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Perfection is a lofty goal that can motivate hard work and perseverance. Attempting to achieve such a lofty goal, however, may come at the expense of a person's well-being (Rice et al., 2003). As high-achieving students throughout their academic careers, college honors students might be expected to show more perfectionism (Mendaglio, 2007) and potentially pay the price for it. The purpose of this research was to explore perfectionism in

honors students, along with a comparison group of non-honors students, and assess positive and negative outcomes of perfectionism.

Early work on the concept of perfectionism focused on the negative impact perfectionism could have on individuals (Blatt, 1995; Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Pacht, 1984), but even then, some researchers suggested perfectionism could have adaptive qualities (Frost et al., 1993; Hamachek, 1978). Perfectionism is best understood as a multidimensional construct with different aspects associated with different outcomes (Blankstein & Dunkley, 2002). Although the number of dimensions can vary depending on the theorist (e.g., Hewitt & Flett's 1991 theory has three dimensions), a division into adaptive and maladaptive components fits well with most models (Bieling et al., 2004; Frost et al., 1993).

The more adaptive form of perfectionism is personal-strivings perfectionism (Bieling et al., 2004; Blankstein et al., 2008), which involves setting high standards for oneself and being strongly motivated to reach those standards (Drizinsky et al., 2016; Madigan, 2019). The more maladaptive form of perfectionism is evaluative-concerns perfectionism. Individuals high in evaluative-concerns perfectionism believe others have imposed high standards on them and are concerned that others will evaluate them based on those high standards. They may feel they lack the motivation or ability to achieve those standards and anticipate failure (Blankstein et al., 2008).

As can be logically concluded from the description of evaluative-concerns perfectionism, it is related to a number of negative outcomes whereas positive-strivings perfectionism tends to relate to more positive outcomes. Procrastination, when a person deliberately puts off tasks that need to be done (Steel, 2010), may occur when a perfectionist cannot complete a task for fear it will not be perfect. Evaluative-concerns perfectionism and procrastination have been correlated in past research (Rice et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2017). Personal-strivings perfectionism is associated with less procrastination (Xie et al., 2018). Stress, the feeling that one is unable to meet the demands of life, is correlated with evaluative-concerns perfectionism (Chang, 2006; Rice et al., 2006), but maladaptive perfectionists often have more chronic stress (Richardson et al., 2014). Students with more positive-strivings perfectionism tend to use more adaptive coping strategies in response to stress (Mofield et al., 2016) and may thus report it less often. Anxiety, involving feelings of tension or worry, has also been associated with perfectionism generally. When people believe that others expect perfection from them and are aware they cannot reach that level, they are likely to feel anxiety. This apprehension about the expectations of others is the hallmark of evaluative-concerns

perfectionism and has been associated with anxiety in previous research (Flett et al., 1994; Wimberley & Stasio, 2013). Maladaptive perfectionism can even lead to feelings of hopelessness as one's best efforts are never seen as good enough (Rice et al., 2003). Personal-strivings perfectionism, on the other hand, is negatively correlated with anxiety (Flett et al., 1994; Wimberley & Stasio, 2013).

Overall well-being, including positive mental health and life satisfaction, has been correlated with personal-strivings perfectionism (Molnar et al., 2020; Suh et al., 2017). In a study of university students, Stoeber and Corr (2016) found that socially prescribed perfectionism (similar to evaluative-concerns perfectionism) had a negative association with flourishing while a more self-oriented perfectionism (on par with personal-strivings perfectionism) was positively associated with flourishing.

Perfectionism may be associated with academic achievement for students (Stoeber, 2012). Evaluative-concerns perfectionism often shows no correlation with academic achievement, but personal-strivings perfectionism is positively correlated with achievement (Madigan, 2019; Osenk et al., 2020; Rice et al., 2016; Stoeber, 2012). Park et al. (2020) found that perfectionistic concerns about being evaluated by others can lead to inaccurate self-assessment while personal-strivings perfectionism allows people to accurately assess their own abilities, providing better prediction of academic achievement.

Although there has long been concern about the maladaptive nature of perfectionism among gifted and talented children and college honors students, maladaptive perfectionism is only occasionally found to be higher in those populations (Neumeister, 2007). Most researchers find no greater evaluative-concerns perfectionism in gifted adolescents or honors students than in non-honors students (Parker, 2000; Parker et al., 2001). The more adaptive form of perfectionism is more often found among gifted and talented adolescents and college honors students. These groups tend to exhibit more personal-strivings perfectionism than comparable students (Closson & Boutilier, 2017; Mofield & Parker Peters, 2015; Wimberley & Stasio, 2013).

Previous research on perfectionism led to four hypotheses. First, the more evaluative-concerns perfectionism students report, the more procrastination, stress, and anxiety they report and the lower their sense of well-being. Second, the more personal-strivings perfectionism students report, the less procrastination, stress, and anxiety they report and the higher their sense of well-being. Third, personal-strivings perfectionism, but not evaluative-concerns perfectionism, is related to more positive academic achievement. The

final hypothesis is that honors students show a similar degree of evaluative-concerns perfectionism as non-honors students but more personal-strivings perfectionism than non-honors students.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 147 college students at a small midwestern college in the U.S. participated in the study, with 31% identifying as male, 69% as female, and 0% as non-binary or other. Just under half (48%) were first-year students, 29% second-year, 18% third-year, and 4% fourth- or fifth-year students. Honors students made up roughly 27% of the sample, with the remaining (73%) being non-honors students.

Procedure

Before data were collected Institutional Review Board approval was obtained. All participants provided informed consent and were offered a debriefing at the end of their participation. Participants were recruited through an email to honors students and students in psychology classes as well as announcements in psychology classes. A link to a Qualtrics survey was provided if the student expressed an interest in participating. All participants received a candy bar in appreciation for their participation. Some psychology students also received extra credit in their courses. Because the recruitment focused heavily on psychology courses and a reward was offered, the sample is not random and may be more heavily weighted to students who like to be helpful or are strongly motivated by chocolate.

After providing informed consent and basic demographic information, surveys of perfectionism, procrastination, stress, anxiety, and well-being were administered. To assess academic achievement, students were asked to provide their cumulative GPA. To assess perfectionism, the brief version of the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scales was used (Burgess et al., 2016). The 8-item scale provides scores for evaluative-concerns perfectionism and personal-strivings perfectionism. Cronbach's alpha for evaluative-concerns perfectionism was .83 and for personal-strivings .84, showing that both had acceptable internal reliability. Procrastination was measured with the 12-item Pure Procrastination scale (Steel, 2010). Students responded with items such as "I generally delay before starting on work I have to do." Cronbach's alpha for the procrastination scale was .92.

The perceived stress scale (Cohen et al., 1983) was used to assess stress. Participants answered questions such as “[over the last month] how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?” The Cronbach’s alpha for the 10-item perceived stress scale used in this study was .87. A 20-item scale was used to measure anxiety (Zung, 1971). The scale showed acceptable internal reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha of .81. Diener et al.’s (1985) subjective well-being scale was used to assess well-being. The Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .84.

RESULTS

Bivariate correlations were performed to evaluate the correlation of evaluative-concerns perfectionism and personal-strivings perfectionism with procrastination, stress, anxiety, well-being, and GPA. Procrastination was not significantly correlated with evaluative-concerns perfectionism, $r(144) = .13$, $p = .12$ but was negatively correlated with personal-strivings perfectionism, $r(144) = -.37$, $p < .001$. Stress was positively correlated with evaluative-concerns perfectionism, $r(147) = .47$, $p < .001$ and negatively correlated with personal-strivings perfectionism, $r(147) = -.18$, $p = .026$. Anxiety was positively correlated with evaluative-concerns perfectionism, $r(141) = .42$, $p < .001$ but not significantly correlated with personal-strivings perfectionism, $r(141) = -.06$, $p = .49$. Well-being was negatively correlated with evaluative-concerns perfectionism, $r(146) = -.24$, $p = .004$ but positively correlated with personal-strivings perfectionism, $r(146) = .24$, $p = .003$. GPA had no significant correlation with evaluative-concerns perfectionism, $r(146) = .002$, $p = .98$ but a positive correlation with personal-strivings perfectionism, $r(146) = .43$, $p < .001$.

Independent samples t-tests were performed to determine if honors students showed more evaluative-concerns or personal-strivings perfectionism. Honors students ($M = 11.0$, $SD = 4.38$) were no different from non-honors students ($M = 11.6$, $SD = 4.08$) in their evaluative-concerns perfectionism, $t(145) = -0.71$, $p > .05$. However, honors students showed more personal-strivings perfectionism ($M = 17.3$, $SD = 2.63$) than non-honors students ($M = 15.5$, $SD = 3.04$), $t(145) = 3.22$, $p < .01$.

DISCUSSION

Evaluative-concerns perfectionism was associated with negative outcomes, including greater stress, more anxiety, and lower well-being, an expected

response given previous work showing it as a maladaptive type of perfectionism (Chang, 2006; Richardson et al., 2014; Wimberley & Stasio, 2013). The good news for honors students from this study is that they are no more likely to be high in evaluative-concerns perfectionism than non-honors students. However, honors students did show more personal-strivings perfectionism, as anticipated from previous research (Closson & Boutilier, 2017; Mofield & Parker Peters, 2015; Wimberley & Stasio, 2013); this is good news as personal-strivings perfectionism was associated with less procrastination, less stress, higher well-being, and higher GPA.

While the maladaptive form of perfectionism is no higher in honors students than in non-honors students, it is not entirely absent and should cause concern because of the danger it poses for anxiety, stress, and well-being. Evaluative-concerns perfectionism tends to be stable over time (Rice et al., 2006; Wimberly & Stasio, 2012), akin to a personality trait. Without intervention, therefore, this type of perfectionism is unlikely to change. Along with the anxiety, stress, and lower well-being found in the present study, previous research has found connections between evaluative-concerns perfectionism and depression and suicide (de Jonge-Heesen et al., 2021; Hewitt et al., 2006; Kawamura et al., 2001; Smith et al., 2018).

Although personal-strivings perfectionism has been labeled an adaptive form of perfectionism, some have questioned that label. If the goals being pursued are overly idealistic, this type of perfectionism could be associated with negative outcomes (Shafran et al., 2002). Greenspon (2000) argues that even labeling personal-strivings perfectionism as perfectionism demonstrates a misunderstanding of the concept. Striving for excellence in one's work is not, in and of itself, perfectionism but may be better described as conscientiousness (Flett & Hewitt, 2006). Personal-strivings perfectionism has been associated with suicidal ideation, especially in the presence of other stressors, although there is some question of whether this association results from high evaluative-concerns perfectionism overlapping with personal-strivings perfectionism (Smith et al., 2018).

Honors students and those who work with them can make changes that will help honors students reap the benefits of and avoid the costs of perfectionism. For students high in evaluative-concerns perfectionism, use of maladaptive coping strategies such as rumination and catastrophizing results in greater distress, depression, and suicidality (de Jonge-Heesen et al., 2021; Park et al., 2010). Learning and applying more adaptive coping strategies, such as planning and putting things into perspective, can be helpful. Turning to others in times of stress can also be helpful. However, evaluative-concerns

perfectionism, along with feelings of inferiority and inadequacy that can come with it, may lead to less well-developed social networks (Rice et al., 2006). Providing opportunities for social connection to honors students can help lessen perfectionism's impact.

Self-compassion, mindfulness, and cognitive-behavioral therapy interventions can also be helpful for dealing with perfectionism. Self-compassion involves focusing one's kindness and care on oneself. Neff (2009) includes three pieces in her definition of self-compassion: being kind to oneself, rather than judging oneself; recognizing that human beings make mistakes and fail as part of our common human condition; and having mindful awareness of the present moment. The practice of self-compassion can reduce the relation between maladaptive perfectionism and depression (Ferrari et al., 2018). Mindfulness itself has also been shown to reduce stress, negative feelings, and maladaptive perfectionism (Wimberley et al., 2016). In looking at interventions for perfectionism, cognitive-behavioral therapeutic strategies have been shown to be effective (Arana et al., 2017; Grieve et al., 2022). In a meta-analysis of studies of interventions, Lloyd et al. (2015) found that they reduced maladaptive perfectionism as well as symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Honors professionals should be aware of the origin of maladaptive perfectionism. Evaluative-concerns perfectionism is influenced in adolescence by parental expectations (Damian et al., 2013). Damian et al. speculated that adolescents may also believe that others besides their parents have expectations of them, increasing their evaluative-concerns perfectionism. Given these findings, the expectations of honors instructors and directors may increase maladaptive perfectionism. Communication that supports students' own goals and personal-strivings perfectionism may be helpful to students rather than communication that expresses high expectations and thus increases evaluative-concerns perfectionism.

Overall, what this study and previous research on perfectionism and honors students shows is that perfectionism does relate to negative outcomes in one of its forms: evaluative-concerns perfectionism. As a maladaptive form of perfectionism, evaluative-concerns perfectionism is associated with negative outcomes and should be of concern to honors students and those working with them. However, because honors students are at no greater risk for evaluative-concerns perfectionism than non-honors students, we can temper our concerns with hope. Honors students are not of special concern when it comes to maladaptive perfectionism. Instead, honors students are higher in another type of perfectionism: personal-strivings perfectionism. Fortunately, personal-strivings perfectionism is mostly associated with adaptive outcomes

such as high well-being and lower stress. While this type of perfectionism can, in some circumstances, still be problematic, for the most part the news about perfectionism and honors students is positive.

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ABOUT THE NCHC MONOGRAPH SERIES

The Publications Board of the National Collegiate Honors Council typically publishes two to three monographs a year. The subject matter and style range widely: from handbooks on nuts-and-bolts practices and discussions of honors pedagogy to anthologies on diverse topics addressing honors education and issues relevant to higher education.

The Publications Board encourages people with expertise interested in writing such a monograph to submit a prospectus. Prospective authors or editors of an anthology should submit a proposal discussing the purpose or scope of the manuscript; a prospectus that includes a chapter by chapter summary; a brief writing sample, preferably a draft of the introduction or an early chapter; and a *curriculum vitae*. All monograph proposals will be reviewed by the NCHC Publications Board.

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Assessing and Evaluating Honors Programs and Honors Colleges: A Practical Handbook by Rosalie Otero and Robert Spurrier (2005, 98pp). 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.”

Beginning in Honors: A Handbook by Samuel Schuman (Fourth Edition, 2006, 80pp). Advice on starting a new honors program. Covers budgets, recruiting students and faculty, physical plant, administrative concerns, curriculum design, and descriptions of some model programs.

Breaking Barriers in Teaching and Learning edited by James Ford and John Zubizarreta (2018, 252pp). This volume—with wider application beyond honors classrooms and programs—offers various ideas, practical approaches, experiences, and adaptable models for breaking traditional barriers in teaching and learning. The contributions inspire us to retool the ways in which we teach and create curriculum and to rethink our assumptions about learning. Honors education centers on the power of excellence in teaching and learning. Breaking free of barriers allows us to use new skills, adjusted ways of thinking, and new freedoms to innovate as starting points for enhancing the learning of all students.

Building Honors Contracts: Insights and Oversights edited by Kristine A. Miller (2020, 320pp). Exploring the history, pedagogy, and administrative structures of mentored student learning, this collection of essays lays a foundation for creative curricular design and for honors contracts being collaborative partnerships involving experiential learning. This book offers a blueprint for building honors contracts that transcend the transactional.

The Demonstrable Value of Honors Education: New Research Evidence edited by Andrew J. Cognard-Black, Jerry Herron, and Patricia J. Smith (2019, 292pp). Using a variety of different methods and exploring a variety of different outcomes across a diversity of institutions and institution types, the contributors to this volume offer research that substantiates in measurable ways the claims by honors educators of value added for honors programming.

Fundraising for Honor\$: A Handbook by Larry R. Andrews (2009, 160pp). Offers information and advice on raising money for honors, beginning with easy first steps and progressing to more sophisticated and ambitious fundraising activities.

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.

A Handbook for Honors Programs at Two-Year Colleges by Theresa A. James (2006, 136pp). A useful handbook for two-year schools contemplating beginning or redesigning their honors program and for four-year schools doing likewise or wanting to increase awareness about two-year programs and articulation agreements. Contains extensive appendices about honors contracts and a comprehensive bibliography on honors education.

The Honors College Phenomenon edited by Peter C. Sederberg (2008, 172pp). This monograph examines the growth of honors colleges since 1990: historical and descriptive characterizations of the trend, alternative models that include determining whether becoming a college is appropriate, and stories of creation and recreation. Leaders whose institutions are contemplating or taking this step as well as those directing established colleges should find these essays valuable.

Honors Composition: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Practices by Annmarie Guzy (2003, 182pp). 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.

Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges by Samuel Schuman (Third Edition, 2011, 80pp). Practical and comprehensive advice on creating and managing honors programs with particular emphasis on colleges with fewer than 4,000 students.

The Honors Thesis: A Handbook for Honors Directors, Deans, and Faculty Advisors by Mark Anderson, Karen Lyons, and Norman Weiner (2014, 176pp). To all those who design, administer, and implement an honors thesis program, this handbook offers a range of options, models, best practices, and philosophies that illustrate how to evaluate an honors thesis program, solve pressing problems, select effective requirements and procedures, or introduce a new honors thesis program.

Housing Honors edited by Linda Frost, Lisa W. Kay, and Rachael Poe (2015, 352pp). This collection of essays addresses the issues of where honors lives and how honors space influences educators and students. This volume includes the results of a survey of over 400 institutions; essays on the acquisition, construction, renovation, development, and even the loss of honors space; a forum offering a range of perspectives on residential space for honors students; and a section featuring student perspectives.

If Honors Students Were People: Holistic Honors Education by Samuel Schuman (2013, 256pp). What if honors students were people? What if they were not disembodied intellects but whole persons with physical bodies and questing spirits? Of course . . . they are. This monograph examines the spiritual yearnings of college students and the relationship between exercise and learning.

Inspiring Exemplary Teaching and Learning: Perspectives on Teaching Academically Talented College Students edited by Larry Clark and John Zubizarreta (2008, 216pp). This rich collection of essays offers valuable insights into innovative teaching and significant learning in the context of academically challenging classrooms and programs. The volume provides theoretical, descriptive, and practical resources, including models of effective instructional practices, examples of successful courses designed for enhanced learning, and a list of online links to teaching and learning centers and educational databases worldwide.

Internationalizing Honors edited by Kim Klein and Mary Kay Mulvaney (2020, 468pp.). This monograph takes a holistic approach to internationalization, highlighting how honors has gone beyond providing short-term international experiences for students and made global issues and experiences central features of curricular and co-curricular programming. The chapters present case studies that serve as models for honors programs and colleges seeking to initiate and further their internationalization efforts.

Occupy Honors Education edited by Lisa L. Coleman, Jonathan D. Kotinek, and Alan Y. Oda (2017, 394pp). This collection of essays issues a call to honors to make diversity, equity, and inclusive excellence its central mission and ongoing state of mind. Echoing the AAC&U declaration “without inclusion there is no true excellence,” the authors discuss transformational diversity, why it is essential, and how to achieve it.

NCHC MONOGRAPHS & JOURNALS

The Other Culture: Science and Mathematics Education in Honors edited by Ellen B. Buckner and Keith Garbutt (2012, 296pp). A collection of essays about teaching science and math in an honors context: topics include science in society, strategies for science and non-science majors, the threat of pseudoscience, chemistry, interdisciplinary science, scientific literacy, philosophy of science, thesis development, calculus, and statistics.

Partners in the Parks: Field Guide to an Experiential Program in the National Parks by Joan Digby with reflective essays on theory and practice by student and faculty participants and National Park Service personnel (First Edition, 2010, 272pp). This monograph explores an experiential learning program that fosters immersion in and stewardship of the national parks. The topics include program designs, group dynamics, philosophical and political issues, photography, wilderness exploration, and assessment.

Partners in the Parks: Field Guide to an Experiential Program in the National Parks edited by Heather Thiessen-Reily and Joan Digby (Second Edition, 2016, 268pp). This collection of recent photographs and essays by students, faculty, and National Park Service rangers reflects upon PITP experiential learning projects in new NPS locations, offers significant refinements in programming and curriculum for revisited projects, and provides strategies and tools for assessing PITP adventures.

Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning edited by Bernice Braid and Ada Long (Second Edition, 2010, 128pp). Updated theory, information, and advice on experiential pedagogies developed within NCHC during the past 35 years, including Honors Semesters and City as Text™, along with suggested adaptations to multiple educational contexts.

Place, Self, Community: City as Text™ in the Twenty-First Century edited by Bernice Braid and Sara E. Quay (2021, 228pp). This monograph focuses on the power of structured explorations and forms of immersion in place. It explores the inherent integrative learning capacity to generate a sense of interconnectedness, the ways that this pedagogical strategy affects professors as well as students, and instances of experiential learning outcomes that illustrate the power of integrative learning to produce social sensitivity and engagement.

Preparing Tomorrow's Global Leaders: Honors International Education edited by Mary Kay Mulvaney and Kim Klein (2013, 400pp). A valuable resource for initiating or expanding honors study abroad programs, these essays examine theoretical issues, curricular and faculty development, assessment, funding, and security. The monograph also provides models of successful programs that incorporate high-impact educational practices, including City as Text™ pedagogy, service learning, and undergraduate research.

Setting the Table for Diversity edited by Lisa L. Coleman and Jonathan D. Kotinek (2010, 288pp). This collection of essays provides definitions of diversity in honors, explores the challenges and opportunities diversity brings to honors education, and depicts the transformative nature of diversity when coupled with equity and inclusion. These essays discuss African American, Latinx, international, and first-generation students as well as students with disabilities. Other issues include experiential and service learning, the politics of diversity, and the psychological resistance to it. Appendices relating to NCHC member institutions contain diversity statements and a structural diversity survey.

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Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education edited by Peter A. Machonis (2008, 160pp). A companion piece to *Place as Text*, focusing on recent, innovative applications of City as Text™ teaching strategies. Chapters on campus as text, local neighborhoods, study abroad, science courses, writing exercises, and philosophical considerations, with practical materials for instituting this pedagogy.

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

Writing on Your Feet: Reflective Practices in City as Text™ edited by Ada Long (2014, 160pp). A sequel to the NCHC monographs *Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning* and *Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education*, this volume explores the role of reflective writing in the process of active learning while also paying homage to the City as Text™ approach to experiential education that has been pioneered by Bernice Braid and sponsored by NCHC during the past four decades.

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC) is a semi-annual periodical featuring scholarly articles on honors education. 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.

Honors in Practice (HIP) is an annual journal of applied research publishing articles about innovative honors practices and integrative, interdisciplinary, and pedagogical issues of interest to honors educators.

UReCA: The NCHC Journal of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity is a web-based, peer-reviewed journal edited by honors students that fosters the exchange of intellectual and creative work among undergraduates, providing a platform where all students can engage with and contribute to the advancement of their individual fields. To learn more, visit <http://www.nchc-ureca.com>.

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