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Forum on Risk-Taking in Honors

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Journal

OF THE National Collegiate Honors Council

RISK-TAKING IN HONORS

JOURNAL EDITOR
Ada Long
University of Alabama at Birmingham

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CALL FOR PAPERS

The next issue of *JNCHC* (**deadline: March 1, 2020**) invites research essays on any topic of interest to the honors community.

The issue will also include a Forum focused on the theme "The Professionalization of Honors." 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 by Patricia J. Smith is posted on the NCHC website: <https://www.nchchonors.org/uploaded/NCHC_FILES/Pubs/The_Professionalization_of_Honors_Education.pdf?1569449769769>. In Smith's essay, "The Professionalization of Honors Education," she cites the theory of how an occupation becomes a profession advanced by sociologist Theodore Caplow in 1954: "Caplow identifies four stages whereby a developing profession transitions to a professional association: organizing membership, changing the name of occupation from its previous status, developing a code of ethics, and after a period of political agitation, beginning a process by which to enforce occupational barriers." Synchronizing the evolution of the NCHC with the Caplow's stages of professionalization, Smith argues that the issue of certification, which has been controversial and disruptive in NCHC's past, is likely to arise again as a matter for serious attention.

Questions for Forum contributors to consider might include the following:

- Is certification—the establishment and enforcement of "occupational barriers" (Caplow) or the use of "a nationally accepted instrument to be used in a process of certifying honors colleges" (Smith)—a necessary next step in the professionalization of honors?
- Is the professionalization of honors inevitable? Is it necessary? Is it desirable?
- Is standardization a necessary consequence of professionalization?
- What values does certification add to or subtract from honors education?
- If the NCHC were to "establish and sustain its jurisdictional authority" over honors education, what might be the responses of various interest groups such as two-year colleges and research universities? Would they accept this authority or withdraw from it? What would be the effect on the internationalization of honors, given the different structures and values of honors education in other countries?
- What characteristics of honors education might (or might not) distinguish the NCHC from the kind of professional organizations that Caplow describes?
- If honors develops as a discipline rather than a profession, is Caplow's argument for the inevitability of "occupational barriers" or certification irrelevant to honors?

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.

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.

Submissions and inquiries should be directed to: Ada Long at adalong@uab.edu.

DEADLINES

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

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We accept material by e-mail attachment in Word (not pdf). We do not accept material by fax or hard copy.

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

All submissions to the journals must include an abstract of no more than 250 words and a list of no more than five keywords.

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

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.

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

DEDICATION

Art L. Spisak

Civility, intelligence, efficiency, kindness, wisdom, experience, and willingness to listen are virtues that have been notably absent in national leadership of late but that the NCHC has had the great fortune to find exemplified in Art Spisak in all of his leadership roles within the organization. Another quality of great leadership is self-knowledge, which allows empathy for others, so it is fitting that when Art ran the 2016 NCHC conference in Seattle, the theme was "Know Thyself." Lest Art is sounding like a goody two-shoes, though, he's always up for a good laugh and a fine wine.

Art's academic background is in the classics and includes his book *Martial: A Social Guide*, published in 2007 by Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd., as well as numerous articles and presentations. From 1996 to 2011, he was a professor of Modern and Classical Languages at Missouri State University, where he also became Director of the Honors College and Associate Provost for Faculty and Student Academic Affairs. In 2011, he was hired as, and has remained, Professor of Classics and Director of the University of Iowa Honors Program.

In the NCHC, Art has held a variety of leadership roles, serving on the International Education Committee, the Assessment and Evaluation

Committee (as co-chair), and then as a member of the Board of Directors. He held the sequence of offices that includes the presidency of NCHC from 2015 through 2018, and subsequently has served on the Outreach and Development Committee, the Large Research University Committee, and (as co-chair) the Advocacy Committee. He has also published four articles in NCHC publications and conducted twelve program reviews and consultancies.

Art has given thirty-four presentations on honors topics, mostly at NCHC conferences but also at, for instance, the Honors Education at Research Universities conference and the International Honors Conference in the Netherlands. A significant part of his agenda, not just as president but in in his other NCHC roles, has been to create partnerships and cooperative projects with other professional groups, such as the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), broadening the interests and influence of the NCHC and its membership. He has been a significant diplomat for the organization as well as leader.

Members of the Board of Directors have illustrated Art's leadership skills in describing how he runs a meeting: he arrives with a specific proposal, stays on topic, keeps the discussion moving toward resolution, listens carefully, and is willing to abandon his own proposal based on what he hears. These skills propelled the NCHC in new and productive directions that continue to benefit not just the organization but honors education, and so we are especially pleased to dedicate this issue of *JNCHC* to Art L. Spisak.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Ada Long

University of Alabama at Birmingham

The last issue of *JNCHC* (spring/summer 2019) included a Forum on "Current Challenges to Honors Education." The essays focused on challenges to honors while this issue's Forum addresses challenges within honors, especially the challenges we present to our students in courses that are designed to complicate, interrogate, and often defy accepted practices and beliefs. The introduction of risk-taking takes this topic beyond the unthreatening and inviting terrain of challenge into a different territory. Virtually all honors programs and colleges advertise themselves as presenting challenges to their students, but few if any boast that they are risky. Jumping hurdles is a challenge: jumping when you don't know what is on the other side is risky. Risk involves some possibility of danger, and to varying degrees the essays in this issue's Forum address not just the challenge but the risk for students, educators, and programs in honors.

The following Call for Papers was distributed in the NCHC newsletter, on the honors listserv, and in the previous issue of *JNCHC*:

> The next issue of *JNCHC* (**deadline: September 1, 2019**) invites research essays on any topic of interest to the honors community.
>
> The issue will also include a Forum focused on the theme "Risk-Taking in Honors." 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, which is posted on the NCHC website <https://www.nchchonors.org/uploaded/NCHC_FILES/Pubs/Risky_Honors.pdf?1552674194168>, is by Andrew Cognard-Black. In his essay, "Risky Honors," he surmises that honors educators almost all encourage their students to take risks. Starting with Joseph Cohen in 1966, a recurrent honors mantra has been that honors students "want to be 'threatened,' i.e., compelled to question and to reexamine"; they need and want to question their values and the values of their community. This mandate is now subsumed in the "critical thinking" movement. Cognard-Black challenges us to formulate strategies for implementing this mandate when we know that students have to weigh it against the importance of grades: "higher

> education is clearly a high-stakes enterprise, and grades are the most visible currency in that enterprise." The motivation for students to play it safe is real and compelling, so honors educators need to come up with strategies to encourage their students to take risks while at the same time acknowledging the forces that discourage them from doing so. Cognard-Black suggests one method [an "automatic A" grading policy] for resolving this tension and dares honors educators to come up with others.
>
> In addition to meeting Cognard-Black's challenge, Forum contributors might consider other questions such as the following:
>
> - What might be the benefits and liabilities of the "automatic A" policy that Cognard-Black describes, and how could it be modified?
> - If teachers reward students for risky behavior, is it really risky?
> - Do teachers model risk aversion when they adopt grading or assessment policies that are required by their institution but that they find counter to their values?
> - Tenure, promotion, and salary raises are the currency of academic employment in a way similar to the status of grades for students; are faculty members hypocritical when they preach risk-taking to students but play it safe in placing their personal advancement above, say, long-term research projects or commitments to teaching that do not yield such rewards?
> - Is critical thinking so fully the lingua franca of the academic world now that it is the safe route for students rather than the risky path of stubbornly holding onto their cultural, intellectual, religious, or political beliefs?

Seven responses to this Call for Forum essays were accepted for publication.

In his lead essay, Andrew J. Cognard-Black weighs the importance of intellectual risk-taking in an honors education against the incentive to play it safe that is built into the institutional reward system, especially through the grading system. While inviting all readers to address this dilemma that honors students face through their college years, he offers one suggestion for risk management devised by a colleague at St. Mary's College of Maryland: all students enter the class with an automatic A and maintain that grade as

long as they meet the class requirements, which are fairly rigorous. If they fail to meet the basic requirements, then they lose the "automatic A" and revert to the regular grading system. This strategy does not eliminate risk but does reduce or at least disguise it; the policy implies that intellectual risk need not be accompanied by academic risk or that, at least, the risk to a student's academic success can and should be reduced.

Brian Davenport of Eastern Washington University addresses another kind of risk that goes beyond the intellectual or academic risk addressed by Cognard-Black. In "An Honors Student Walks into a Classroom: Inviting the Whole Student into our Classes," Davenport advocates the risk that faculty members take when they interrogate and threaten their students' deeply held beliefs, their "whole person." He suggests not just critical thinking but critical reflection as a mode of transformative teaching and learning. He argues that, in a way that runs counter to traditional pedagogies, "we have an obligation to interact with [the] whole person, not simply the intellectual person" so that students can leave the honors classroom having accomplished "the truly difficult task of self-knowledge."

Eric Lee Welch of the University of Kentucky offers a perspective similar to Davenport's in "Risk that Lasts: Prioritizing Propositional Risk in Honors Education." Welch contrasts "strategic risk," which he sees as standard in the honors classroom, with deeper and more lasting "propositional risk." He associates strategic risk with "intellectual jousting around the seminar table" whereas, in taking propositional risks, students "are willing to interrogate deeply held beliefs and to immerse themselves in the full complexity of attendant issues in order to refine or substantially alter their views." Welch offers specific suggestions for implementing propositional risk in the classroom as well as the example of his study abroad class in Israel as an illustration of long-lasting and risky honors education.

In the current climate of higher education, the advocacy of risk by Cognard-Black and especially by Davenport and Welch confronts a new problem. In "Risky Triggers," Larry R. Andrews of Kent State University essentially agrees with all three of these authors, but he introduces serious questions about addressing the "whole person" or encouraging "propositional risk" given the new sensitivity to traumas and discomforts that at least some honors students are likely to have experienced in their past. In the era of "trigger warnings," addressing standard academic materials is risky enough, much less threatening students' basic beliefs. Andrews believes, though, that if we create in our classrooms "a free, open, and nurturing learning environment, a space

safe enough for them to take on emotional as well as intellectual risks," then students can better deal with their demons and can flourish both in the classroom and in their lives beyond college.

With previous essays having considered intellectual, personal, ideological, and emotional risk-taking, the next essay adds consideration of the body. In "Embodied Risk-Taking: Embracing Discomfort through Image Theatre," Leah White describes the competency development model at Minnesota State University, Mankato, which "depends heavily on self-awareness gained through reflection" and that must be risky for students in order to be meaningful. White's strategy for achieving this goal is "to get them out of their heads by using their bodies in a series of theatre exercises." Adapting Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, the course centers on collaborative student creation of a performance that addresses social justice issues in their community. As a means of overcoming the discomfort and self-consciousness that honors students often feel about their bodies as well as about issues of social oppression, "theatre becomes a common language through which students can begin taking risks with new concepts and ideas" and gives them "space to be physically present in their learning, not just intellectually engaged."

Another strategy for encouraging risk-taking through introduction to new ideas and unfamiliar experiences is study abroad. Many study abroad programs promise risk-free adventure, assuring students and parents that safety is a primary factor in the proposed experience. In "Academic Risk and Intellectual Adventure: Evidence from U.S. Honors Students at the University of Oxford," Elizabeth Baigent of the University of Oxford describes a program that promises risk rather than safety. Wycliffe Hall's Scholars' Semester in Oxford (SSO) for Registered Visiting Students at the University of Oxford, Baigent writes, is a seriously risky intellectual adventure based on rigorous academic study. Experiencing temporal as well as geographical dislocation, given the ancient traditions of Oxford University, students learn to deconstruct common misunderstandings of both British and American history while undertaking an ambitious academic project within the unfamiliar traditions of an Oxford education.

Intellectual and cultural risk-taking is also the subject of "Disorienting Experiences: Guiding Faculty and Students Toward Cultural Responsiveness" by Rebekah Dement and Angela Salas of Indiana University Southeast (IUS). The context of this risk-taking is contrary to that of the Oxford program, however, since the IUS is a rural and predominantly white institution where "challenging deeply ingrained mindsets, particularly those pertaining

to issues of class and race, becomes a risk-taking endeavor for instructor and student alike." The essay focuses primarily on the risk that teachers take in assigning subject matter that proves unexpectedly risky to their students. Dement describes the discomfort and antagonism she encountered in assigning Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* and the impatience of her students in reading Rick Bragg's *All Over But the Shoutin'*," when one student commented "There's only so much empathy we can have." However, with the guidance of her mentor, Angela Salas, teaching culturally challenging texts started leading to significant cultural responsiveness in Dement's students as she modeled "the vulnerability and openness to growth necessary for such experiences to change us."

Like Dement and Salas, Alicia Cunningham-Bryant focuses primarily on the risks taken by faculty in "Practicing What We Preach: Risk-Taking and Failure as a Joint Endeavor." She also answers Cognard-Black's challenge to come up with strategies that make honors seem less daunting; while Cognard-Black suggested an "automatic A" policy, Cunningham-Bryant describes an experiment that is riskier for the teacher: having honors students grade themselves at Westminster College. She describes how the pilot project worked in multiple team-taught sections of the first-year, second-semester honors seminar. Overall, the project was, in a word, a failure. "While self-grading was originally intended to provide increased freedom for risk-taking, in truth it led to increased anxiety in students and high levels of frustration for faculty." The project did, however, raise a number of interesting questions about risk-taking among both students and faculty and about the cultural mores that work against the success of taking significant risks in academia. Cunningham-Bryant thus provides a provocative conclusion to this Forum on "Risk-Taking in Honors."

Many of the Forum essays focused on the personal development of honors students through risk-taking. The first research essay in this issue of *JNCHC* continues this focus in describing "organizational activity games" at Siberian Federal University (SibFU) in Krasnoyarsk, Russia In "The Game as an Instrument of Honors Students' Personal Development in the SibFU Honors College," Maria V. Tarasova makes the point that "The organizers of honors programs always take risks when they opt for innovative approaches in teaching and learning, but the risks are justified when the innovative pedagogy leads honors education toward achieving its goals." She describes the history, theory, practice, and goals of games in the SibFU Honors College, showing how games relate to the principles of honors education.

Organizational activity games (OAG) served as the structural design of this pioneering honors program in Russia, creating "the honors college as a novel and different learning environment" and enabling students to act as "leaders of their education and creators of their unique learning trajectories." Any of the the nine types of games developed by Georgii Petrovich Shchedrovitskii "can be performed with students, faculty, or staff members as players," and the rules "allow students to take roles of professionals, scientists, or managers of education, for instance." In her detailed account of how the games have been adopted at the SibFU Honors College, Tarasova provides a model that could be adopted at any university.

Honors programs and colleges in the U.S. and elsewhere struggle continuously to find the best admissions criteria and to measure the effectiveness of the different options in best serving their programs, institutions, and students. An original approach to this topic is the subject of "Selection Criteria for the Honors Program in Azerbaijan" by Azar Abizada of ADA University and Fizza Mirzaliyeva of the Institute of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The authors describe the three criteria used in their program, all of which are generally effective predictors of student success: "(i) student performance in the centralized university admission test; (ii) student performance in the first year of studies; and (iii) student performance in the honors program selection test." What distinguishes their research from other studies of admissions criteria, however, is that Abizada and Mirzaliyeva then measure the effectiveness of different ones of these criteria in predicting student success in different disciplines: Business and Economics; Engineering; Education; Arts; and International Relations and Law. They determine, for instance, that "in Business and Economics, Engineering, and Arts, all three variables are significant at some level whereas in Education the state admission test score is not significant, and in International Relations and Law none of the variables are significant predictors." This methodology could have a significant impact on honors programs that adopted this form of correlation between disciplinary success and admissions criteria, perhaps discovering that, like the honors program in Azerbaijan, we might find a better method for admissions than applying the same criteria to all disciplines.

The final essay in this issue of JNCHC is a collaboration between six authors from different schools but with a single thesis. The title is "Purpose, Meaning, and Exploring Vocation in Honors Education," and the authors are Erin VanLaningham of Loras College; Robert J. Pampel of Saint Louis University; Jonathon Kotinek and Dustin J. Kemp of Texas A&M University;

Aron Reppmann of Trinity Christian College; and Anna Stewart of Valparaiso University. The authors write, "The term 'vocation' in higher education refers to a discernment process focused on deep understanding of an individual's purpose in the world." Given the definition and context of "vocation" in this sense of the word, the essay echoes many of the perspectives voiced in the Forum on Risk-Taking. The authors set out to examine "the sorts of curricular and advising steps we should make to dissolve the boundary between personal and professional goals, the heart's desire and the mind's abilities." After reviewing the substantial scholarship on the "discourse on vocational discernment," the authors suggest ways to integrate vocation in all stages of an honors education. The broad outline of the phases they suggest for this integration, each amplified in considerable detail with examples from their various institutions, is: cultivating individual reflection and community in the First Year; adopting e-portfolios as a regular component of honors courses; and exploring vocation in a personal and communal as well as practical context as part of advising and senior experiences. The authors conclude that the concept of vocational discernment—as manifested, for instance, in Ignatian pedagogy—is already compatible with honors education and that the overlap between the two fields reinforces the goal of encouraging "personal fulfillment as well as intellectual talent, largely by integrating a focus on a meaningful and purposeful life."

Journal

OF THE National Collegiate Honors Council

RISK-TAKING IN HONORS

Risky Honors

Andrew J. Cognard-Black
St. Mary's College of Maryland

Abstract: Most educators today are likely to proclaim a commitment to teaching critical thinking. Willingness to take intellectual risks such as questioning orthodox teachings or proposing unconventional solutions is an important component of critical thinking and the larger project of liberal education, yet the reward structures of educational institutions may actually function to discourage such risk-taking. In light of the extra importance placed on grades and high-stakes entrance exams in an increasingly competitive educational marketplace, this problem might presumably be magnified among honors students. This essay concludes by calling on honors educators and other interested parties to contribute their voices, their questions, and their proposed solutions to a new *JNCHC* Forum focusing on the tension among talented students between taking intellectual risks and a desire to avoid the personal struggle and possible failure that sometimes come from taking such risks.

Keywords: collegiate honors, intellectual risk-taking, failure, courage, critical thinking

Students, especially the bright and sensitive ones, need to go through a necessarily painful period of self-analysing, of reexamining values, of questioning the safe and easy. . . . Not all students in the honors program achieved this awakening. Sadly, there were two whose autobiographies revealed they had chosen to stay wrapped snugly in a cocoon of acceptable grades. With little insight, courage, or self-confidence, they chose to make their college experience scarcely more than a superficial encounter with courses and examinations dutifully and successfully passed.

—James H. Robertson, "The Superior Student: Characteristics, Aspirations, and Needs"

But it does move.

—Galileo

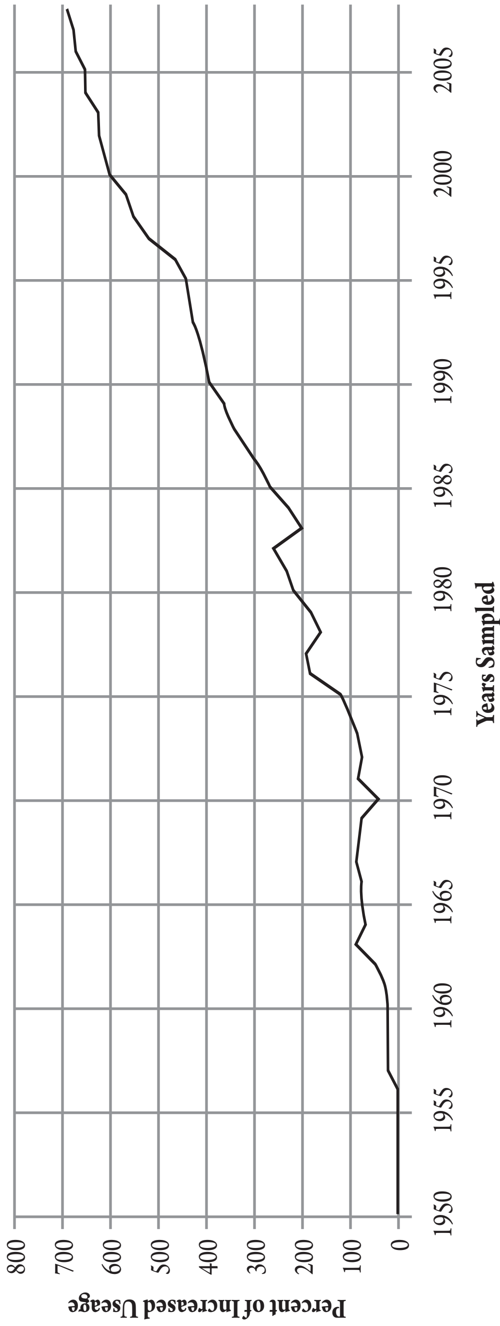
I'm going to go out on a limb: I don't think that we in the honors community do a very good job of managing risk. Risk management has become a bit de rigueur in recent decades. Figure 1 presents a Google Ngram tracking published occurrences of the phrase "risk management" over time. Use of the phrase popped onto the scene sometime in the middle of the last century, started to gain traction in the 1960s, and increased dramatically after that. By 2005, occurrences of the phrase were about fifteen times what they were around 1970.

Most of the time, talk of risk management concerns the risk of financial or other material loss. The *Oxford English Dictionary* entry for "risk management" links the first usage to a 1948 publication in the *Journal of Marketing*. The risk I'm talking about, however, has more to do with concern about the loss of status, which many people might care about even more than financial wealth. Conversations about risk can easily overlook status since it does not occupy space in the same way that corporate assets or navy fleets do, even though many status markers can and do occupy space. Status generally exists in social space, and so it is harder to pin down. We all have some kind of status within social space, but generally what we want is the high kind; as elusive as the criteria for reputable status may be, most of us know that we want the high and not the low kind. Attainment of high status usually requires considerable time and effort while losing status can happen overnight. One bad grade, one crazy idea or interpretation, one misstep can easily shatter the image that we have deliberately tried to construct of ourselves as responsible, smart, cool, successful, or whatever trait is the basis for status in a given setting.

A casual search online for the word "risk" reveals no shortage of inspirational quotations from a who's who of famous and historical figures from Anaïs Nin to T. S. Eliot to Herodotus to Mark Zuckerberg. Some of these quotations are of dubious origin, but the volume of pithy passages urging us to take risks in order to stretch ourselves, to accomplish "great deeds," or to discover "how far one can go" is striking. The spirit behind these simple messages seems to capture a cultural truism that is, if not universal, nonetheless widely held. Galileo, Gandhi, Parks, Tiananmen Tank Man: we celebrate those who take risks for ideas that matter and in so doing elevate us all.

Taking risks is not for the faint of heart, though, which probably has something to do with all of the quotations urging us to do so. Most of us aren't that jazzed about taking risks. Risks take courage, persistence, and a willingness to lose something of importance: maybe financial standing, maybe reputation, maybe freedom, maybe life itself.

Figure 1. Google Ngram of "Risk Management," 1950–2005



Source: Google Ngram Viewer <http://books.google.com/ngrams>; See Michel et al. (2011).

Most educators today are likely to proclaim a commitment to teaching critical thinking, and doing that right is a risky proposition. Yet willingness to suffer exposure to threatening material or to question orthodox teachings, propose unconventional solutions, or question one's own assumptions are important components of critical thinking and the larger project of liberal education. In his seminal text on honors, Joseph Cohen (1966) aptly captures the importance of threat and risk:

> Specifically, the abler students want to be involved in a meaningful dialogue with their instructor, their peers, and with themselves; they want to be "threatened," i.e., compelled to question and to reexamine. (p. 54)

Quoting from an honors student at the University of North Carolina, Cohen continues:

> [T]he classroom experience must pose a threat. The student must be threatened; he must be driven outside himself; he must be compelled to question himself and his values and the values of those among whom he lives. (p. 54)

Yet the reward structures of formal educational institutions may function to discourage such risk-taking and willingness to endure threat, and so I wonder just how much Cohen's claim describes what honors students today actually want versus some romanticized version of what he and I hope they will want.

Whether we like it or not, and whether our own vision for honors flows from the noble impulse for erudition rather than the mundane impulse for elitism, honors education is implicated in these concerns. The extra importance placed on grades and entrance exams in an increasingly competitive educational marketplace might magnify this problem among honors students. We live in a moment that encourages aspiring middle-class youth to pursue higher and higher levels of education, with a growing interest in the idea of universal post-secondary education. Whether the whispers of "college for all" are mere political lip service, and whether they are realistic or desirable, higher education is clearly a high-stakes enterprise, and grades are the most visible currency in that enterprise. "Is that going to be on the test?" "What is my grade?" "How much is that assignment worth?"—these are questions that many educators will recognize, perhaps especially from honors students.

While it is hard to quantify, some measure of the desire among students—and the parents who advise them from the shadows—to join an honors program is probably the status and distinction that such membership

confers. As educators, many of us will advise students about the importance of taking intellectual risks, asking penetrating questions about theories, and challenging our claims and those of their peers in class, but we should hardly be surprised if students are suspicious of that advice. At the end of the semester, they know that we grade them. That kind of environment does not exactly encourage what we say we value, and so we need to seek strategies that allow us to ameliorate the tension that talented, creative, and conscientious students experience in balancing risk and reputation.

A colleague of mine in the honors college at St. Mary's College has for many years used what she calls an "automatic A" policy in her college writing classes. The policy comes with several fairly rigid parameters, so it is not the easy-A situation it sounds like on its face. For example, students must have near-perfect class attendance, and the policy on late submission of papers and other assignments is unforgiving: if students submit their work late or with missing elements, or if they exceed their small allowance of absences, they lose the right to an automatic A. Students can still earn an A under a fallback system of rules that looks more like the one on a standard syllabus, but an A is no longer "automatic." As she explains it, the idea is to set up the classroom with a sense of heightened responsibility: treat the class seriously by meeting or exceeding the basic requirements. Thus, those students who meet and exceed these basic expectations of professionalism enjoy wide latitude to experiment with their writing and can be bold in their expression of ideas.

I, too, have experimented with my colleague's idea on certain assignments in honors seminars that are writing-intensive. I wonder if the approach works in writing-intensive or similar humanities courses better than in others, but I like the idea of starting a relationship with students based on the assumption that they will succeed, as opposed to setting up the classroom with an expectation that students must prove that they're not failures. The strategy may be somewhat of a rhetorical ploy, such as articulating an "academic fraud" policy instead as an "academic honesty" policy, but I believe that words matter, so I am delighted with the simple beauty of turning the grade distribution on its head right before students' eyes and highlighting the A rather than the threat of F. To solve big problems, we sometimes need to think outside of the proverbial box, turn the box upside down, or maybe even break it down and see what else we can make.

I started this essay by climbing out onto a limb, but in doing so I was playing on a false sense of risk. In truth, it was not risky because I know that honors administrators have the same concerns I do. We all worry about the extent to

which fear of failure constrains our students from thinking creatively, making inductive leaps, or expressing ideas that they consider too unorthodox, too revolutionary, or too doubtful of professorial authority. We all struggle with how to inspire courage and creativity and curiosity, especially when many students will enter a workforce that demands obedience and conformity and routine. We all look for and try out strategies to free our students to take intellectual risks—and to become independent, critical thinkers who might one day be celebrated for solving the problems that today seem unsolvable.

But we don't have to worry, struggle, and experiment in isolation, and so for this *JNCHC* Forum on "Risk-Taking in Honors," I call on you now to respond with your own concerns and solutions for dealing with intellectual risk-taking in the honors environment. Go on, I dare you.

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An Honors Student Walks into a Classroom: Inviting the Whole Student into our Classes

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Abstract: This paper explores the risky proposition of encouraging students to question deeply held values and beliefs. After connecting honors pedagogy with transformative learning theory, the author encourages faculty who are willing to take this risk to consider involving the whole student and not simply their cognitive aspects. The author then explores whole student pedagogy and transformative learning, positing how these can be present in the honors classroom. Finally, the use of critical reflection as a tool that facilitates interaction with the whole student is discussed, with suggestions as to how it might most effectively be incorporated into the honors classroom.

Keywords: whole student pedagogy; transformative learning, critical reflection; theory of self-knowledge; effective teaching

In his lead essay to this forum, Cognard-Black explores what he calls the "romanticized version" of honors. Asking us to create a learning environment that challenges students at a deeper level, Cognard-Black quotes Cohen (1966):

> the classroom experience must pose a threat. The student must be threatened; he must be driven outside himself; he must be compelled to question himself and his values and the values of those among whom he lives.

Cohen's proposal is indeed a risky proposition and one to which honors faculty should aspire. However, this risk also fills me with fear, though not the fear that one might think. While I applaud the desire to create a learning environment that causes the honors student to deeply question and explore the values that she or he holds, my fear is that without a willingness to go on the

journey with the honors students, honors faculty are creating an environment that may very well inhibit both deep questioning and value exploration. As a result, I encourage honors educators to take a risk beyond Cognard-Black's learning environment that asks students to "suffer exposure to threatening material or to question orthodox teachings, propose unconventional solutions, or question one's own assumptions." I encourage those who create this environment to risk exploring, with students, the impact of these risks to an individual that go beyond simple learning and critical thinking and instead reach the whole honors student.

TRANSFORMATIVE HONORS

Honors pedagogy challenges students to examine their values and to step outside of themselves in this exploration. According to Taylor (2011), this self-evaluation is a hallmark of transformative learning, which

> involves the most significant learning in adulthood, that of communicative learning, which entails the identification of problematic ideas, beliefs, values, and feelings; critically assessing their underlying assumptions; testing their justification through rational discourse; and striving for decisions through consensus building. (p. 3)

The idea of transformative learning is in line with honors pedagogy. Knapp, Camarena, and Moore (2017) explained that "when intentionally directed, honors education promotes the full transformation of the student" (p. 121). However, some aspects of transformative learning, such as the emotional (Dirkx, 2006) or spiritual (Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006), may not be in the comfort zone of honors educators. Nevertheless, as Tisdell and Tolliver (2011) explained, "for learning to be truly transformative, it must engage one's whole being. . . . It has to get into our hearts, souls, and bodies and into our interactions with others in the world" (p. 93). If honors educators are going to risk guiding the honors student in questioning deeply held values and ideas, then they are also, willingly or not, going to engage aspects of the student beyond the cognitive, including the emotional and spiritual. Yet, even though transformative education is transformative precisely because it connects to the whole person, how often do we, as honors educators, truly invite the whole student to join us in the classroom? We may tacitly acknowledge that the students we teach are more than simple cognitive beings, but we often do not truly engage in the practice of providing space for the whole student to explore what is happening in the honors classroom. As the faculty who

encourage students to challenge their deeply held beliefs, we need to be also willing to risk bringing our whole selves on this journey with our students.

THE WHOLE STUDENT WALKS INTO A ROOM

Transformative learning involves the whole student, but to invite the whole of a student into a classroom is to take a risk for which we might not be prepared. The problem, though, is that whether we invite them or not, the whole student is already in our classrooms. As Schoem explained, students "bring into the classroom their hearts and spirits just as they bring their minds and intellectual capacities. . . . Students bring to the classroom their life experiences; their social and personal identities; and life's deeper meaning, purpose, and emotions" (p. 2). Because learning really is more than an analyze-think-change process and instead is closer to see-feel-change (Brown, 2006), honors faculty need to engage the whole student in the honors classroom even though it can be a risky proposition for both educator and student. It is risky for students because we are asking them to engage in an unfamiliar way. The risk for honors educators is twofold: first, they will be introducing new ways of engaging course content; second, and likely riskier, they will have to bring their own whole person into the classroom. As Crews (2011) asked, "is it not essential for faculty members to become whole persons in order for them to be able to educate their students to become whole persons?" (p. 334). The second risk for faculty is one that each must consider and explore in an individual and unique way, but the first risk—bringing in new ways of engaging material to allow for deep questioning and exploration—is more readily accessible; it is still risky only because it is unfamiliar to the teacher, but it creates an environment that alleviates some of the risk to the honors students.

I would like to suggest one tool as a starting point for engaging the whole honors student: critical reflection. Critical reflection allows the whole student to process and explore what is taking place both in the classroom and internally. Merging critical inquiry and self-reflection, critical reflection "involves the examination of personal and professional belief systems, as well as the deliberate consideration of the ethical implications and impact of practices" (Brown, 2006, p. 720). This tool allows students to explore how what is being learned and experienced is affecting them, a process that does not come naturally or innately but must be taught (Smith, 2011). This process requires that honors faculty add the development of critical reflection skills to the content and focus of the course; as Ash and Clayton (2009) explained, "critical reflection . . . does not occur automatically—rather, it must be carefully

and intentionally designed" (p. 28). The design can take many forms (Smith, 2011), but the form it takes must be thoughtfully and intentionally integrated into the course. This kind of integration takes time, but "teaching students to think reflectively on and in their learning and experiences creates individuals who are capable of critical reflection on their environments, and new information they may receive, and their own day-to-day practices and beliefs" (Kline, St. John, & Connors, 2017, p. 232). In short, teaching critical reflection in the classroom gives students the skills to continue integrating new knowledge and experiences into who they are after they leave the classroom precisely because it allows faculty to engage the whole student, including the cognitive, emotional, and spiritual (Galura, 2017). Numerous resources explore the how of critical reflection in depth (e.g., Smith, 2011; Watson & Kenny, 2014), and honors faculty can explore these and other resources before embarking on the risky but transformative journey of engaging the whole student in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

Transformative pedagogy is risky; it is difficult, it takes work, and, most importantly, it requires courage (Taylor, 2006). Since the whole student walks into our honors classroom, though, we have an obligation to interact with this whole person, not simply the intellectual person. While this approach to teaching runs counter to the traditional ivory-tower concept of higher education, it allows our students to leave our classrooms prepared to fully engage the world they encounter, including the truly difficult task of self-knowledge.

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Risk that Lasts: Prioritizing Propositional Risk in Honors Education

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Abstract: The fear of missing the mark often shapes how honors students approach risk in the classroom and, consequently, how instructors build risk-taking exercises into their curriculums. This paper explores the concept of propositional risk in the context of honors pedagogy, wherein students are challenged to interrogate deeply held beliefs and tasked with exercises designed to call forth the full complexity of attendant issues surrounding any individual viewpoint. As distinct from strategic risk, which can be characterized as performative and externally motivated, propositional risk requires students to critically evaluate a spectrum of thought, value, and ideology in the context of singular, independent vantages. The author uses examples from a study abroad program and provides tips for fostering propositional tension in the classroom; suggesting that this type of risk, latent with the potential for change, is of greater benefit to the student long-term.

Keywords: risk-taking; propositional tension; dialogic teaching; self-reflection; study abroad

INTRODUCTION

In considering the types of risks students take, Cognard-Black identifies the tension among talented students between taking risks and trying to avoid the consequences of failure, whether personal tension or more measurable consequences such grades. This second type of tension—between the risk of an action and its potential result—is characteristic of what is called strategic risk. While encouraging students to engage in strategic risk can be desirable

in honors pedagogy, the performative nature of this risk often yields temporary results rather than lasting changes in the student's thought and action. Instead, honors educators should create an environment that fosters propositional risk, a more meaningful and lasting type of intellectual risk-taking behavior.

STRATEGIC RISK IN HONORS

The type of risk typically associated with honors students is often characterized as daring, almost rebellious in nature. This type of risk is largely bound to the classroom and particularly challenges traditional or orthodox ways of learning. For example, a student may opt to create a performance or mixed media project instead of an essay or perhaps will adopt a surprising confrontational stance on an issue debated in class. Many high-achieving students have been conditioned to deliver their work in original ways, so by the time they reach college they are fully trained in a performative game of cat and mouse that is daring but at the same time expected by their peers and instructors.

In many cases, educators encourage these behaviors because we want our students to embrace creativity. We want them to think deeply and broadly about the problems that face our society and to be creative in the ways they apply their training to generating solutions. We hope that their willingness to confront the norms of higher education will later translate into a willingness to confront the systems and structures that impede the advancement of society. However, when our student learning outcomes for a course begin to steer our students toward this type of performative strategic risk, we may do a disservice by overlooking a more foundational type of risk, the risk of personal struggle.

A CRITIQUE OF PERFORMATIVE STRATEGIC RISK

What I have called performative strategic risk is, at its roots, situational or contextual; it often takes place when students feel it is appropriate to engage in risk-taking behaviors. This feeling may be based on the course, the curriculum, the way grades are managed, and the students' standing within the course in relation to the instructor and their peers. In other words, before engaging in risk-taking behaviors in the classroom, a student conducts an internal risk-reward analysis to determine the suitability of risk. This type of risk is entirely strategic in that the determining factor is whether the potential for reward outweighs the potential negative consequences of the action.

The honors demographic of high-achieving students has been conditioned to seek the highest grade possible and typically deems anything short of a top mark as a failure. The fear of missing the mark shapes how honors students approach risk in the classroom. As educators, we should be suspicious of construing this type of risk-taking as desirable. After all, our goal is not that our students take on risk only when the probability of reward is in their favor. While a keenly developed sense of this type of risk-reward approach may carry over into certain career fields, this type of behavior does not create conditions for improving how students engage in authentic intellectual risk beyond the walls of the classroom.

Typically, the situational nature and external motivation of strategic risk yield a temporary result. No lasting effects of this risk beyond the assignment created and the grade recorded may exist. As far as the individual goes, very little change that takes place internally may occur. We are not making our students better people when we encourage this risk. We are conditioning students to become people who make sound bets. Instead, our classrooms should be an environment where students are asked to engage in a conversation with themselves and come to decisions through personal struggle.

PROPOSITIONAL RISK

I propose that the more valuable type of risk in honors education is what I call "propositional risk." Students exercise propositional risk when they are willing to interrogate deeply held beliefs and to immerse themselves in the full complexity of attendant issues in order to refine or substantially alter their views. In this type of risk, students must examine a fact, a statement, or worldview and personally evaluate its validity in the context of their own worldviews. Propositional risk does not merely require that a student take a controversial view of a topic; rather, it occurs when a student is able to consider that viewpoint openly and critically, with a willingness to acknowledge that it could be as viable as their own. This kind of risk brings about change in a student's worldview.

The challenge of propositional risk is that it is internally motivated: there is no performance to give and no reward to be received. The process of changing or nuancing a viewpoint rarely provides a visible signal for the world. Despite the lack of quantifiable output for the purposes of a grade, a student's willingness to engage in propositional risk may be one of the greatest factors affecting his or her potential intellectual development.

PROPOSITIONAL RISK IN CONTEXT: STUDY ABROAD

As a study abroad educator, I have made propositional risk an important part of the student learning outcomes related to cultural engagement. Every summer I take a team of undergraduate researchers to Israel to participate in an archaeological excavation. Over the course of their trip, the students spend three weeks working and living with students from around the world, including Israeli undergraduates, most of whom have completed their mandatory military service in the Israel Defense Forces. On the weekends, the same study abroad participants stay in the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City. This context is an ideal training ground for students to encounter propositional risk organically.

The majority of my students who study in Israel are from midwestern or southern states. Typically, they are familiar with what they perceive to be Christianity, which may be described more accurately as Western Evangelical Christianity. Their time in Jerusalem exposes them to Orthodox traditions with extravagant churches, icons, and fully developed liturgies. For a number of students, this trip will mark their first visit to a Catholic church. Often, this exposure to new and wildly different implementations of Christianity—not to mention the Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem themselves—comes as a shock to students. Every year the students meet Zak, a Palestinian Christian who owns a shop in the Old City. Many students find it hard to conceptualize that an Arab man is Christian and not Muslim. They are even more puzzled to hear from Zak about the hardships that Christians endure in the West Bank and the ways the Church must function given these challenges. Suddenly, their tidy version of Christianity looks very different, and their uneasy encounter with a worldview that most resembles their own faith happens as they also confront two other major religions for the first time.

Unfortunately, many students today relate to Islam through the narratives of Islamic extremism that have dominated national conversation since their birth. At the same time, few of our southern and midwestern students have actually known someone who is Jewish. In the span of three weeks, living, eating, sleeping, working, and playing with these new Israeli friends—while on the weekends sitting in the shops of Palestinian Muslims who are also new friends—presents a tension between two new realities that confront students with propositional risk. They are challenged to resolve the tension between their own experiences with these people and the many competing narratives they have received up to this point in their lives. Under most circumstances,

their decisions may never be presented to a group, discussed in class, or defended in a written response. They have little external motivation in the form of a grade to force them to declare a stance. Instructors and peers will never gasp at their bravery. Only in the dichotomy of multiple real and valid positions do the students sense an urgency to resolve the tension. Despite the unseen nature of this personal struggle, these contemplations have the potential to change the student in meaningful and lasting ways if they are willing to do the work of confronting the tension.

FOSTERING PROPOSITIONAL RISK

To foster this type of values-based intellectual risk in the honors classroom, I offer the following suggestions, drawing from my example of study abroad.

Students Must Know Their Own Position

Many of our students have never been required to take a stand on the types of issues we encounter in the seminar room. They frequently understand the facets of a debate, but a significant portion have lived with the privilege of never needing to confront and act on the data in a conclusive manner. In their minds, they are observers or neutral parties, not participants in the debate under study. For these students, new facts become part of a larger data set rather than registering as incongruous with a personal conviction. Without incongruity, there can be no tension and consequently little impetus for urgency on the part of the student.

Knowledge of facts is not enough if a student is to enter a position of propositional risk. Students need to be able to articulate the facts that they know and make a declaration of their position in the discussion. When students say they do not know or cannot come to a conclusion, they must be able to articulate why they do not know. For students to encounter a new proposition that poses a risk to their own view, they must first take a personal inventory to be certain of their own position.

Students Must Encounter the Proposition in a Real and Meaningful Way

Study abroad offers an immersive experience in which students are removed from their own contexts and placed into situations entirely different. They are thrown into the deep end of cultural engagement, and suddenly

every experience—from doing laundry to using public transportation—takes place in a matrix comparing the new experience with what is known. While washing laundry seems insignificant, a student can hardly make an informed assessment without experiencing other methods of doing laundry. The immersive experiences of overseas programs force a student to come to terms with new alternative viewpoints as real and viable options.

Encountering propositional tension in such a way encourages urgent resolution in a manner that makes new experiences appear as conceivable and valid as a student's previously held assumptions. In my study abroad course, the experience of engaging with Israelis and Palestinians in such a short time span creates an urgency on the part of the student. In the example of doing laundry, students have no option but to wash their clothes using the new local methods.

To recreate this kind of propositional tension in the honors classroom, the instructor must immerse students in the issues. While articles and lectures can move a student toward understanding an issue in an academic sense, we owe it to our students to bring them as close to the issues as possible. In my courses, I have achieved this goal through visits to contested monuments, in-class Skype interviews with people from around the world, and the use of the extensive oral history archives at the University of Kentucky. More than ever before, our unprecedented access to technology and the widespread support for experiential learning on our campuses is making it possible to present ideas and issues to our students in ways that move them from the abstract to concrete.

Students Must Be Encouraged to Engage in Propositional Risk

A guiding narrative about the intended outcomes of a single activity or entire course can have profound effects on the final results. For example, when I teach my course on the history of Jerusalem, I make it clear from the first day of class that I expect students to confront their own views of the history and politics of Jerusalem. The course begins with a short reflection exercise so the students can articulate what they know about Jerusalem and its politics and where these views come from. At the end of the semester they receive a very similar prompt to see how their thinking has changed. Throughout the semester, I reinforce the intended outcome of the class that students will evaluate their own positions and those presented in class, then drawing conclusions in these areas.

CONCLUSION

I conclude with the words of Joseph Cohen (1966) invoked in the essay convening this forum:

> Specifically, the abler students want to be involved in a meaningful dialogue with their instructor, their peers, and with themselves; they want to be "threatened," i.e., compelled to question and to reexamine. (p. 54)

Cohen rightly suggests that meaningful dialogue in the honors classroom requires not only a conversation between peers and instructors but a conversation with one's self. His call to question and reexamine is not for the sake of intellectual jousting around the seminar table but for creating a context in which threats to one's views and values provide true and meaningful learning. As honors educators, our mission is not to encourage performative strategic risk in some sort of academic casino game but to compel our students to do the difficult work that comes with confronting new and challenging viewpoints.

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Risky Triggers

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Abstract: Risk-taking in honors education entails not only anxiety about grades and intellectually disturbing ideas but also painful emotional responses to course materials. Rather than censoring such "dangerous" materials, faculty should compassionately encourage vulnerable students to acknowledge their pain safely in an open and accepting classroom atmosphere.

Keywords: honors education; teaching methods; academic freedom; trauma; compassion

Andrew Cognard-Black is spot-on when he defends the liberal idea of intellectual risk-taking and searches for ways to help honors students feel "safe" both from grade stress and from philosophical "threats" to their beliefs. He aptly cites Joseph Cohen's assertion that the "classroom experience must pose a threat" and that honors students want "to question and to reexamine."

In my college days, I was struck by a classmate's need to obtain special dispensation from his priest in order to take our French class because it included Voltaire's *Candide*. Was this novel so dangerous to Catholics—with all of Voltaire, it was then on the Index of forbidden books—because it included fornicating priests and corrupt Jesuits? Or because of its satiric portrayal of the Inquisition? Or because it questioned whether everything was ordained by God for the good? Here was an example of intellectual threat, and I, as a student eager for such threat, was unsympathetic.

Currently, however, other threats besides loss of status or intellectual discomfort have come to the attention of educators, especially in the humanities and social sciences. What if a student who has experienced sexual assault comes across a rape scene in a novel and feels a revivified sense of trauma? What if a case study in a sociology class triggers painful childhood memories of a sibling's death from a random gunshot? What if a political science discussion of

tribalism opens up an excruciating, emotionally devastating wound in a Rwandan refugee? What if an African American student encounters the n-word in a class text that is so offensive that s/he withdraws from the class?

As teachers we seldom know the extent of any such traumatic experience in our students' past. We may well include emotional "triggers" in our class materials and presentations that evoke painful reverberations in individual students. What are we to do? Obviously we cannot actively ferret out such hidden sensitivities. Do we act as if they do not exist? Do we continue the tradition of remaining willfully ignorant of them but respond sympathetically if a student reveals a hidden trauma in a paper or journal or even in class? Should we refer such a student to psychological services? Do we self-censor and exclude materials that might be disturbing? Do we take into account the possible existence of trauma, search our course materials for any "triggers," and, with well-intentioned compassion, warn students in advance with a sort of disclaimer? On a line in a syllabus below the listing for Toni Morrison's *Beloved* shall we warn students that this work "contains scenes of infanticide and extreme violence"? Certainly some administrators are beginning to ask for such advance warnings. But how can we cover all the bases, all the possibilities of offense or reawakened trauma?

Or do we have faith in our students' strength of mind? Do we create a classroom atmosphere in which a degree of intellectual distance or dispassion allows students to confront extremely painful material? Do we encourage students to be open even to hurt in order to grow larger, more expansive inside? Can we create a tone of safety for this freedom to explore, no matter where it takes us? Shall we openly discuss the issue of triggers at the outset of a course and during it as needed?

Cognard-Black again strikes a chord when he urges us to enter a course with the assumption that students can and will succeed rather than that they "must prove that they're not failures." In other words, we should create a climate of hope and nurture rather than fear. The result? Safety. Not only intellectual but also emotional safety. In such a safe environment, students can be free to read anything, hear anything, and voice anything. Let us bring explicitly into classroom discussion the challenge of potentially painful course materials.

Student blossoming in safe conditions became clear to me early in my teaching career when, in my freshman honors colloquium, I always required a creative project to be presented at the end of the year. Students enjoyed wide latitude in designing it but had to have a proposal approved in advance.

Because the students in the class had been together for the entire year, they had developed a degree of comfort and collaboration, the latter including producing a booklet of their best writing that also included some fun at my expense. Intensive reading, personal as well as analytical essay topics, and freewheeling class discussion—all in an atmosphere of acceptance and mutual encouragement—enabled some striking results in the creative projects.

One year a budding folksinger used the occasion to write a song and perform it with guitar for the class. It soon became dramatically apparent that she was using the song to come out of the closet as a lesbian, certainly a courageous act in the 1970s. Another year, two Korean American young pre-med students, who had always felt a bit different from the rest of the class because they were in an accelerated six-year BS/MD program and because they were culturally "other," collaborated and performed a traditional Korean dance with costumes and music.

The triggers that some students may encounter in a class they will also encounter in life outside the class, usually without advance warning. I prefer to trust their intelligence in dealing with their demons in a free, open, and nurturing learning environment, a space safe enough for them to take on emotional as well as intellectual risks.

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Embodied Risk-Taking: Embracing Discomfort through Image Theatre

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Abstract: Taking risks does not come easily to many honors students. Often their success is based on carefully following directions and working hard to meet established expectations. Although the Minnesota State University, Mankato Honors Program's competency-based model encourages students to focus on personal growth rather than course completion, our students still struggle with the open-ended nature of reflection-based learning. This essay explains how incorporating Augusto Boal's Image Theatre techniques in an honors seminar, Performance for Social Change, helped encourage students to become more comfortable with taking academic and ideological risks. Boal's methods depend heavily on embodied experience as a companion to reflection. Incorporating the body into the learning process requires students to relinquish some control and open themselves to taking chances.

Keywords: reflection, embodied experience, risk-taking, Boal, image theatre

Many honors students, as Wintrol and Jerinic (2013) affirm, are obsessively organized, conscientious rule-followers who have thrived in the United States educational context. With high control comes an aversion to risk-taking, which works out well in a system based on following directions and meeting clearly defined standards but presents obstacles in a learning environment that requires trial and error. My students are good at doing school but not always comfortable with learning. In the lead essay for this forum, Cognard-Black discusses risk-taking as the act of allowing for the potential loss of status within a social space. The social space for honors students is one in which they hold high status, and many fear losing that status. Cognard-Black challenges honors educators to "seek strategies that allow us to ameliorate the tension that talented, creative, and conscientious students experience in balancing risk and reputation." We need to help our students learn, not just achieve.

One way we try to address this tension in the Minnesota State University, Mankato Honors Program is focusing the curriculum on personal growth through competency development rather than successful completion of courses. Our competency development model depends heavily on self-awareness gained through reflection, yet our students struggle to understand how mindful reflection differs from the formulaic critical thinking patterns they have been taught to value. Good honors students know they must embrace critical thinking to grow, but too often they go into the process of reflection believing they are expected to discover the right answer rather than their own answer. As Cunningham (2009) reminds us, "Reflection is not just a skill; it's a disposition that develops over time and through experience" (p. 122). Therefore, we continue developing strategies to support our students as they become more comfortable with the process of reflection.

One of the ways I encourage my students to engage in meaningful risky reflection is to get them out of their heads by using their bodies in a series of theatre exercises. I incorporate Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) methods into many of my courses and especially in my upper-level honors seminar, Performance of Social Change. The goal of this seminar is to help students identify instances of injustice and promote social change through theoretical analysis and performance techniques. Students discuss theories of oppression, power, and privilege, specifically as they appear in the social categories of race, class, and gender.

Throughout the course, students engage in multiple TO methods as they work together to construct a performance that confronts a social injustice they have identified in our local community. They then present the performance in a community, rather than only campus, venue where we are more likely to interact with community members. For example, one semester students chose to address the problem of bullying and we performed for seventh- and eighth-grade assemblies at a local middle school. For many students, this course is their first opportunity to openly discuss oppression and privilege, and almost none of them have any performance background. The class does not just push students out of their comfort zones, it shoves them. Boal's methods, however, are designed to build a cooperative and supportive community among practitioners where all share the risks of the process. The result is often students "thinking creatively, making inductive links, or expressing ideas that they consider too unorthodox, too revolutionary, or too doubtful of professorial authority" (Cognard-Black).

Boal's methods depend heavily on an embodied experience as a companion to reflection. He writes, "In our culture we are used to expressing everything

through words, leaving the enormous expressive capabilities of the body in an underdeveloped state" (p. 130). His method of image theatre requires participants to use their bodies, alone or in combination, to construct frozen images that represent emotions and experiences. For example, when I first begin to introduce Boal's methods in my classes, I might ask students to show me, using their bodies, how they feel about the start of a new semester. One student might create an image using wide open arms and a broad smile illustrating excitement. Another may sit hunched on the floor, knees pulled to chest, curled into a ball of apprehension and stress. I usually have students face away from each other the first time they form an image. We then turn back toward each other and form the image again so that we see what others have done.

Although my students could have discussed their feelings about the new semester in small groups, asking them to use their bodies to show their feelings introduces a new level of nuance. As the semester progresses, we begin to build images exploring more difficult ideas such as how power, oppression, and privilege influence their lives and the lives of others. Students learn from each other by first observing each other's images and then sharing what they see in those images and how the images make them feel. For example, when asked to show what it feels like to be powerless, some students created images of having their bodies constrained in some way whereas others constructed images where they were unable to speak. Discussing how these images differ allowed students to understand how silencing renders one powerless in ways as harmful as being physically constrained. Howard (2004) explains that this "coauthorship leads to discovery" because through using Boal's methods, "people in communities can work together in a synergistic way to solve problems, share joys, learn about themselves, and take charge" (p. 221). Theatre becomes a common language through which students can begin taking risks with new concepts and ideas.

Boal explains that image theater has "an extraordinary capacity for making thought *visible*" (p. 137). His methods are concerned with the ways we can use our bodies to heighten our understanding of abstract concepts and emotions. As Auslander (1994) explains, "Augusto Boal's theatre is intensely physical in nature: everything begins with the image, and the image is made up of human bodies. . . . The body also becomes the primary locus of the ideological inscriptions and oppressions Boal wishes to address through theatre" (p. 124). By embodying their ideas in an image, students need not worry whether they are wording an answer correctly; they can simply express their thought or feeling from an immediate impulse. Students eventually learn that there is no one correct way to create an image. There is no rubric they can follow to

get the image right. The image is theirs alone. Once they have had a chance to experience what an image feels like on their body, they can begin to reflect on the experience and shift to processing the exercise through language. Describing the value of using TO methods to experiment with transformative learning practices in the classroom, Bhukhanwala, Dean, and Troyer (2017) state that "Embodied reflections through theater activities enable us to integrate the experiments and then act on this new learning" (p. 615). Although some students may initially feel self-conscious using these methods, those who take the risk and fully embrace the experience are often the ones who demonstrate the greatest depth in their understanding of the topics.

Students experience initial self-consciousness because incorporating Image Theater into a classroom acknowledges the presence of bodies in an academic context, which is typically discouraged. hooks (1994) explains that we come into classroom settings "determined to erase the body and give ourselves over more fully to the mind" (p. 192). Honors students are especially vulnerable to this impulse, often ignoring the needs of the body (i.e., sleep) for fear of failing to achieve goals. Giesler's (2017) work using TO methods with social work students confirms that creating an academic space where students can be aware of their bodies as companions to, rather than distractions from, their academic development can be liberating. Perry (2012) supports the growth potential provided through image theatre, arguing that it "may provide a way of creating an aesthetic space where dialogue and self-actualisation are affected through the body" (p. 111). Providing students space to be physically present in their learning, not just intellectually engaged, can welcome risk-taking into our classrooms.

Although my experience in creating spaces for actualization is grounded in a knowledge of how to use TO methods, there are numerous ways to adjust and adapt teaching methods and administrative practices to encourage embodied risk-taking. Wintrol and Jerinic (2013) challenged honors educators to be willing to take risks in our own approaches to teaching if we wish to model such behavior for our students. Ozment (2018) argues that "there are no truly safe spaces in or outside of the classroom, nor ought that be the ultimate goal" (p. 138). Therefore, we must prepare our students to be comfortable with the inevitable risks that will be required of them in the future, and Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed methods are one effective way to accomplish that goal.

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Academic Risk and Intellectual Adventure: Evidence from U.S. Honors Students at the University of Oxford

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Abstract: Many study abroad programs promise students self-knowledge through adventure. Those that involve intense study seem at first sight not to offer adventure nor to entail risky dislocation nor to offer new insights into self. However, evidence from study abroad students at the University of Oxford reveals that they describe intellectual endeavor as adventure, finding that their academic experiences pose risks, demand courage, and are the means through which they and their new surroundings accommodate one another. Oxford faculty encourage academic risk-taking by posing hard intellectual challenges, helping students find their own voice rather than summarizing the views of others and having a grading system that emboldens students and rewards those who learn through their mistakes. Oxford faculty encourage students to take risks in their writing and dare to apply to good graduate schools but help them to submit carefully prepared applications to avoid unnecessary hazards. Home campus advisers can help honors students by recognizing those for whom study is adventure and by encouraging them to risk a rigorous intellectual study abroad program.

Keywords: foreign study; theory of self-knowledge; cross-cultural engagement, undergraduates; academic writing

In *Conversations with James Joyce*, the novelist remarks, "in my opinion the modern writer must be an adventurer above all, willing to take every risk, and be prepared to founder in his effort if need be. In other words, we must write dangerously" (Joyce and Power 95). Academic honors students in Oxford follow Joyce by framing their writing and their study in general as adventure, not as a means of playing it safe. Their tutors abroad and advisers

at home can foster in them desirable academic risk-taking while helping them avoid undesirable hazards.

ADVENTURE AND STUDY ABROAD

Risk and adventure are prominent themes in study abroad programs. Program weblinks emphasize "adventure" whether that's what they offer or not (e.g., weblinks for International Partners for Study Abroad; IES Abroad; GoAbroad.com.; and Brilliant Abroad). Study-abroad-as-adventure narratives are premised on the trope of the bold adventurer risking contact with the exoticized Other and, through authentic experience, winning the prizes of self-discovery, global competence, and personal resilience. Such narratives are ethically dubious in some respects (Doerr; Cavanaugh et al.; Lewin; Woolf) and internally contradictory in others (Pettersen and Rye), including in their presentation of risk. For instance, students are offered risk while their parents are offered safety, and students are promised life-changing experiences if they dare to take the risk while programs are ever shorter so that students need not risk jeopardizing their normal schedules (Jander; Thatcher). Adventure narratives also seem ill-suited for the rigorous academic study abroad programs that the most intellectually ambitious honors students have traditionally considered (Bodfish); reserved for those whose grades show they have favoured the library or laboratory over more daring pursuits, they have extensive study requirements that limit the time for venturesome activities abroad.

Research with honors students in one highly rigorous study abroad program, Wycliffe Hall's Scholars' Semester in Oxford (SSO) for Registered Visiting Students at the University of Oxford, however, revealed that in their blogs some of them couch their Oxford experience in the language of adventure and risk: "I'm ready for this adventure" ("Courtney Abroad"); "Now, to the next adventure" ("Widening Circles"); "My Oxford adventure" ("Binding Scattered Leaves"); "Adventures in Oxford"; and "My Awfully Big Adventure." "Risk" and "adventure" also regularly appear in survey responses from SSO students from 2011 through 2019, from which all quotations are taken unless separately referenced. "Adventure" is sometimes used ironically—"my awfully big adventure," for example, plays on British tropes of irony and understatement—but there is a prevailing sense that, for these honors students, study abroad is an intellectual adventure and entails beneficial risk.

TEMPORAL DISLOCATION

"The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there," wrote L.P. Hartley in *The Go-Between* (9). Oxford's ancientness attracts study abroad students, but their awe of the past poses risks. Following Walter Benjamin's description of the "aura" of art whose social exclusiveness is its purpose, Lewis warns against the "aestheticisation of academics" in some study abroad programs (Lewis xvi). The aim of some "cultural immersion" programs in historic European cities, he suggests, "is less to develop students as critics and more to enable them to move seamlessly between North American and European bourgeois culture" (xvi). However, being in ancient cultures also presents learning opportunities. The spatial dislocation that study abroad entails can foster the personal development of students abroad through "constructive disequilibrium," Che, Spearman, and Manizade suggest following Vygotsky's and Piaget's theories of learning and development. Students indeed find that Oxford's temporal foreignness can have a dislocating effect. For example, one student used the language of adventure to describe how a familiar experience became Other because of a building's ancient beauty: "I ventured into the most beautiful library in all of existence" ("My Oxford Adventure"). Another found ancientness unexpectedly disconcerting rather than comfortably quaint. "Experiencing old buildings was enriching in a way I didn't expect . . . the sense of history reminds you how small you are, that you are in place where so many have gone before. This was not something I even knew was on the agenda."

Students' temporal dislocation thus presents risks and opportunities to Oxford study abroad faculty as they guide their students. To address the risks of aestheticizing academics, SSO faculty oblige their students to take a critical view of Britain, including its fantasy pasts and the uses made of them. SSO students face questions such as "What do war memorials encourage Britons to forget?" "Why are there so many statues of slavery abolitionists in Britain, but only one museum of slavery?" "What is the point of the (British) Commonwealth?" To seize the opportunity of temporal dislocation, the syllabus makes students confront presentism—the interpretation (and often criticism) of the past using the standards of today—and other types of essentialism. SSO students must interrogate historic objects or events according to contemporary, not modern, standards ("Why are the contents of the Magna Carta so very different from what most people expect?" "Why did many Britons support their 'American brethren' in the War of Independence?") and

confront the historical meanings of words and concepts whose current usage is different ("What did Locke's contemporaries understand by "liberty" and "property"?" "What was Celtic Christianity and what is it now?")

RISK, COURAGE, FEAR, AND THE ACADEMIC PROJECT

A classic trope of adventure stories is the risk-laden quest, and Oxford study abroad is often couched in the language of a quest for learning: "I love . . . reading about your adventure in searching for knowledge!" commented a relative on an Oxford study abroad student's blog whose title spoke of "adventure" ("Cold Coffee Cup"). Another classic trope is finding that the quest leads, actually or metaphorically, home. Honors students in Oxford regularly speak of such a homecoming—sometimes just because of unavoidable familiarity, sometimes by way of self-congratulation (Doerr), but sometimes sensitively and complexly. "I was not so much an outsider as I was a new insider," wrote one SSO student in "AfterOxfordThoughts" as she explored how she and Oxford had changed to accommodate each other. Others link feeling at home to the academic project, specifically to the act of writing: "To call Oxford 'home,' I have to be a part of Oxford. . . . I am writing myself a role in the story of this new world with all the people I meet, the places I go, and all the beautiful things I see. . . . When I write home, I am writing myself 'into home'" ("My Awfully Big Adventure"). The writing is part of Oxford, part of making home, and part of the adventure of the blog title. Moreover, some SSO students link the courage needed for risky study abroad with the courage needed for the academic project: "And wow, will Oxford help you see just how big your life can be. Living with courage is . . . like writing—you just do the next thing" ("Widening Circles").

SSO students thus link courage, adventure, home, and writing in the context of the Oxford undergraduate writing process into which they have plunged. In the conversation cited above, Joyce says, "The important thing is not what we write, but how we write. . . . A book, in my opinion, should not be planned out beforehand, but as one writes it will form itself . . . [what] we want to avoid is the classical, with its rigid structure" (95). Though Oxford tutors are probably relieved not routinely to receive student essays that resemble *Ulysses*, Joyce's strictures epitomize something of the Oxford writing system at its best. That system is summarized below, with comments from SSO students following.

1. The Oxford tutor sets the question for each week's essay, using the question to push the student down unexpected paths. For example: "Why has globalization been accompanied by a rise in the number of small states?" "Should we try to have whatever beliefs will best promote the general happiness?" "Is literary narrative where theory takes place?" "Is all art social?" "Is it possible to achieve the main aims of a legal system without a legal system?" "Why has anarchism as an intellectual and cultural trend been forgotten in the historiography of modern Japan?"

    > The questions are very thought out and very difficult to answer and involve a lot of thinking.

    > I liked the questions. . . . I could write on things I'd never thought about before.

    > Those questions! I realised I'd spent the rest of my life pitching myself soft balls.

2. The timeframe for answering the question is short—at most a week—forcing students to interrogate ideas and form an argument ready for the week's tutorial during which the essay and the week's reading for it will be discussed.

    > You need a teacher who asks awkward questions, to be directed to evidence which poses awkward questions, and a tight deadline to answer the awkward questions in.

3. The essay question and subsequent tutorial discussion require that the writer come to a view, not just summarize those of others.

    > I liked the questions that needed an answer that had to come from me, not just the books.

4. Simplistic answers do not survive the scrutiny of the tutorial.

    > I always used to write nice tidy answers, with all my points all neat and tidy: at Oxford I learned to enjoy the messiness and complexity.

    > History here seems complex and nuanced, not the like the black and white picture [I produced] back home.

5. Answers are always provisional, since they are a weekly statement of interim views, not the final word on the matter.

> In the US you're told to start your paper with a thesis statement so you know your answer before you start writing. Here you start with a question, which forces you to open up and accommodate surprising findings.

6. Essays are not individually graded; instead students get one overall grade at the end of term. This means they can risk trying a new approach or daring argument, and if thereby they discover for themselves why certain arguments, techniques, or strategies do not work, they are likely to achieve higher final grades than their peers who have sat neatly on fences all term.

> I want the freedom to be bold in my thought and analysis, even if often wrong.
>
> I liked the fact that you could take risks [because of the grading system].
>
> I learnt how to be wrong well.

Students describe the system as initially "daunting" or "terrifying" and talk of the courage needed to "push through stress" and keep up with the "daunting pace," but they recognise that it is "scary but rewarding," "challenging but beneficial." This is the language of risk and of an adventure that proves its worth (Palfreyman).

RISK, THE OXFORD TUTOR, AND THE ACADEMIC HONORS STUDENT ABROAD

A study abroad program for studious venturers should oblige them to risk the new, local style of learning but simultaneously equip them for graduate study in which the already familiar U.S. model sets the pace internationally. For this reason, alongside the tutorial essays described above, SSO students produce a longer undergraduate research essay, planned with an adviser but written wholly independently. Advice and mentoring sessions about graduate school encourage students, emboldened by having flourished at Oxford, to apply to first-rank schools. In such applications, good preparation to minimize risk is wholly beneficial and reminds us that esteeming risk and adventure is an Anglo-Saxon idiosyncrasy. Baffled by the tendency for British polar expeditions to rely on heroic, skin-of-the-teeth adventuring, Icelander Vilhjálmur Stefánsson remarked, "Having an adventure is a sign that something

unexpected, something unprovided against has happened; it shows that some one is incompetent, that something has gone wrong. For that reason we pride ourselves on the fewness of our adventures" (164–65). Tutors need to judge when risk brings benefits and when not, and graduate school application is the time for meticulous planning, not risky spontaneity.

RISK, ADVENTURE, THE HONORS ADVISER, AND THE ACADEMIC HONORS STUDENT ABROAD

Honors advisers at home can be reassured that steering intellectually focused students toward academic programs rather than more obviously adventurous ones is not playing safe: such programs are equally, if differently, adventurous. Advisers can also be assured that their recommendations need not apologize for intellectual students who are not obviously venturesome. The SSO program has fruitfully accepted students with recommendations that included the comments "not a leader on campus," "has shown no leadership qualities to date," "quiet," "reserved in class," or, possibly my favorite, "always wears a tie." Regardless of their prominence in extracurricular activities, volubility in class, or mode of dress, intellectual risk-takers will enjoy the adventure and reap the rewards of highly academic study abroad programs.

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Disorienting Experiences: Guiding Faculty and Students Toward Cultural Responsiveness

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Abstract: This essay examines the challenges of integrating culturally responsive teaching into an honors curriculum at a predominantly white institution. Through self-reflection resulting from three specific incidents, one author examines the trajectory of risk-taking as it pertains to assigning difficult or challenging texts. The second author provides a vital complement to self-reflection: the mentorship of a senior colleague.

Keywords: culturally responsive pedagogy; Predominantly White Institution (PWI); self-reflection; diversity

Asking students to become more culturally responsive hardly seems like a risk-taking exercise as few students (or faculty, for that matter) are likely to object to learning about other cultures and viewpoints. For a small honors program serving a predominantly white institution (PWI) in a relatively rural area, however, challenging deeply ingrained mindsets, particularly those pertaining to issues of class and race, becomes a risk-taking endeavor for instructor and student alike. The riskiness of such an exercise is exacerbated by the likely lack of diversity within the program itself: just as persons of color are underrepresented in many K–12 gifted and talented programs, so too may persons of color be underrepresented in honors education. As identified by Anthony Pittman in 2001, perceived barriers to entry into honors education vary greatly according to race, with students of color citing lack of diversity within honors as a primary barrier. Pittman studied an honors program with an 18.5% minority population—a relatively small population for

a large university, but quite a large population for some predominantly white institutions. For such programs where recruiting and retaining minority students already proves challenging, such perceptions may further perpetuate a lack of diversity within honors education. Consequently, the "risk" of emphasizing cultural responsiveness within honors education becomes a veritable necessity for both minority students and their peers.

The challenge for honors educators—those at PWIs in particular—is to design an effective approach to such a risk-taking endeavor. The risk often begins with a "disorienting learning and teaching encounter," a phenomenon described by China Jenkins in a 2016 qualitative study of white educators at PWIs. Jenkins limited her study to established scholars in the field of education, with a primary purpose "to examine the motivation to become culturally inclusive and the transformational experiences that created this motivation and shaped their development" (151). Though neither Jenkins nor those she interviewed reference honors education specifically, the emphasis on continual self-reflection aligns closely with the behaviors that we as honors educators seek to model for and develop in our students. If, like those in Jenkins's study, we are willing to examine our own motivations for pushing boundaries and expanding cultural responsiveness in our classrooms, we can better encourage our students to follow suit. Examining our motivation seems a straightforward task, but we must be willing to examine a series of events rather than search for a single moment of epiphany; Jenkins suggests these "disorienting incidents occur periodically over time, so that one is always in a state of transformation" (152). To remain in a constant state of transformation is a risk-taking endeavor in itself as it requires vulnerability, a quality that many might consider risky in the increasingly competitive world of higher education.

Rebekah

I have experienced three such incidents in my teaching career to date, the first of which I managed through the guidance of a faculty mentor. Without this personal journey, I would have remained woefully underprepared to encourage my students to grapple with the complex process of identifying their own biases and privileges

The first incident occurred in my second semester of teaching, when I naively assigned Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* in a lower-level literature survey course. I found the book personally moving but didn't fully anticipate how its difficult subject matter (including issues of domestic violence, sexual assault, alcoholism, and poverty) would be received by my

students. Some suggested we shouldn't read about "those kinds of people," and I found my African American students were particularly dismissive of the plight of poor whites. Puzzled by the backlash, I sought the advice of Angela Salas, who suggested I consider the longstanding, economically constructed sense that poor whites and African Americans were vying for finite resources, thus leading to mutual mistrust and antagonism. Despite having minored in history as an undergraduate, I had failed to consider this vital bit of context and was thus unprepared to lead my students through the difficult emotions and responses arising during class discussion. Consequently, I earned my first negative teaching evaluation: a student noted the readings were "weird and offensive." While I never want to shy away from assigning difficult texts, I wish I could have guided my students through the disorienting experience of challenging notions of class and race rather than leaving them to flounder largely without my direction.

Angela

A senior faculty member working with a sincerely earnest and engaged junior colleague is sometimes in a similar position to a faculty member working with a student. One must encourage an open-hearted and open-minded spirit, as well as a willingness to take pedagogical and personal risks, while also holding firm to the notion that experiments must be undertaken seriously and that the outcomes we hope for our students are sacrosanct.

When my wonderful colleague came to me, unnerved and feeling guilty for not anticipating resistance to course readings, particularly in the contexts of her previous successes, we had a conversation about her desired educational and personal outcomes for the students. We spoke as well about the ways people need to posit themselves as in control of their own narratives. It is possible, I suggested, that the very features that made the authors of these narratives authentic to working-class students might also make them unnerving. The seemingly endless litany of obstacles that can unmoor a person from the path toward a secure economic future could well leave a young student facing similar odds with a choice between realizing the long odds against success or dismissing others who struggle as having less grit, less resilience, and less of the right stuff. "This can't happen to me," they might assure themselves, "because I'm frugal/celibate/employed/fit. I will prevail."

We spoke a bit about the grief students might feel at learning that people they might have judged before were actually just like them and about the intellectual and emotional pulling away that grief engenders. To an extent, I think, my colleague needed to work through her own grief at having her

gifts to their education rejected with pat phrases like "compassion fatigue", but she soon did, remaining engaged and refusing to mischaracterize her students' expressed reservations or detachment as being indicative of some lack in these students' ability to empathize.

Rebekah

Buoyed by this and similar conversations, I forged ahead until a few years later, when I found myself with another distinctive, disorienting experience: our campus had assigned the controversial *Hillbilly Elegy* as the Common Experience text for the year, and the students in the first half of my Honors Introductory Seminar Sequence did a commendable job leading a campus-wide discussion of the text. Hoping to build on this success, I assigned Rick Bragg's *All Over But the Shoutin'* to the same cohort of students the following semester. Instead of expanding our discussion of choices, poverty, and related social issues, students expressed frustration about the overlap between the texts, with one noting, "There's only so much empathy we can have." I found this reaction baffling as so many of the issues were relevant to our region. In this disorienting experience, I learned firsthand what Angela Salas had observed in our previous conversations: asking students to critically evaluate a culture close to them may be more complicated than evaluating cultures and viewpoints they haven't personally experienced. When I assigned *Outcasts United* the previous year, for instance, I received no such pushback despite its depiction of similarities in refugee experiences. My students seemed more willing to examine subtle differences in cultural experiences and values when those experiences were vastly different from their own, leading me to wonder about the relationship between empathy and proximity. I would have the opportunity to explore these questions in more detail the following year when our campus adopted Kelsey Timmerman's *Where Am I Wearing* for the campus Common Experience text. Students read this book, which included the experience of an immigrant from Honduras entering the United States illegally, during the peak of national dialogue on the migrant "caravan" allegedly threatening the border. My experience with previous difficult texts better prepared me to anticipate student responses, and I was able to guide class discussions away from assumptions about illegal immigrants being "irresponsible" by leaving family at home and instead refocus our attention on a more empathetic dialogue. Notably, a student remarked, "I was a real knucklehead at the start of this semester and thought nobody should come here illegally. Now I watch the news a little differently."

Rebekah and Angela

As is often the case with teaching, we are continually reflecting on our experiences. Through subsequent conversations, we have formulated a few underlying thoughts about your experience that may be of use to others in similar situations. Few of us in higher education, whether as faculty or as students, would challenge the efficacy of empathy or cultural responsiveness as desirable values within honors education. However, the implementation of these values often requires risk-taking on the part of faculty, whether through assigning difficult texts or encouraging open discussion of difficult issues. Such endeavors present unique challenges when undertaken at PWIs, especially when risk-taking ideas and actions challenge deeply ingrained notions of class and race. With proper guidance, though, we can encourage self-reflection as a result of those disorienting experiences, and we can model the vulnerability and openness to growth necessary for such experiences to change us.

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Practicing What We Preach: Risk-Taking and Failure as a Joint Endeavor

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Abstract: Faculty and administrators often present risk-taking as something honors students must do, but rarely do they take risks themselves. In an ideal situation, communal risk-taking would subvert institutional power dynamics, free students from grade-associated anxiety, and enable them to build dynamic partnerships with faculty. This paper discusses how one honors college piloted self-grading in the second semester of its first-year seminar as a mechanism of liberatory learning for both faculty and students. While self-grading was originally intended to provide increased freedom for risk-taking, in truth it led to increased anxiety in students and high levels of frustration for faculty. This pilot program demonstrated the underlying flaws in the concept of risk-taking and ultimately failed. Although faculty may have good intentions, simply removing grades does not remove internalized, perceived judgment. Real risk-taking requires all parties to participate with enthusiasm and to adapt when necessary in order to be successful. While self-grading did not accomplish its original aims, the process demonstrated previously underappreciated underlying cultural tensions that fundamentally affect student and faculty freedom and risk-taking, displaying how deeply entrenched the social mores are for honors faculty and students, as well as how much work is left to encourage risk-taking by both groups.

Keywords: honors education; self-grading; liberatory learning; anxiety; Westminster College (Salt Lake City, UT)

When academics engage in conversations about risk, we tend exclusively to enjoin our students to leap into the unknown. We decry the system that makes them risk-averse, that leaves them status-conscious and grade-driven, and we make judgments about the necessity of risk-taking and the need for students to accept the process as we define it. This one-sided

risk-taking perpetuates preexisting norms of top-down pedagogy by portraying the faculty member as driver and the students as hard-working passengers who, through commitment to reaching goals we have set, will be transformed. While Cognard-Black mentions the honors course wherein everyone begins with an A and can maintain it through rigorous attention to structures, this arrangement still puts the onus of risk-taking solely on the student. The faculty risk nothing simply by reframing their grading as a maintenance strategy rather than an earning framework. The issue, then, is to devise a means whereby we alter the student-teacher relationship in the honors classroom so that both parties have a shared role in the risk-taking enterprise. Only then will the honors classroom be a truly shared learning environment.

bell hooks's discussion of the need for liberatory learning and Adrienne Rich's discussion of claiming your own education exhort students to be bigger than status, to move beyond the confines of our constructed systems and to build worlds that are bolder and fully their own. Impeding that project, though, is the reality that our students are socially constructed beings for whom metrics are previously inscribed and for whom risk-taking is culturally bound. The same holds true for honors faculty and administrators. As Vicki Reitenauer notes, faculty wield institutional power via grading and thus can subconsciously maintain the status quo (61). This power differential led to Reitenauer's move to self-grading as a mechanism that "requires each of us individually to assume a different set of responsibilities and a set of strategies for becoming accountable to ourselves and each other" (61). Within this framework, faculty and students are risk-takers together, attempting to deconstruct the external power structures and join in bold collaborative ways to move out of our individual snug cocoons.

THE SELF-GRADING PILOT

In order to engage in the risk-taking advocated by hooks, Rich, and Reitenauer, Westminster's Honors College piloted a self-grading scheme in the spring 2018 first-year seminar, in which all sections were team-taught. The pilot was designed not only to help honors students achieve greater self-awareness regarding the quality of their work and to improve their assessment skills but also to reduce anxiety around grades by subverting traditional faculty and student roles, disrupting the institutional power differential. We hoped that by providing an environment in which students were arbiters of their own success rather than dependent on outside evaluation, they would feel freer to take risks in their writing, in the classroom, and even as

members of the broader Westminster community. Likewise, we believed that by removing the punitive aspect of grades from the faculty-student relationship, stronger bonds would be forged between first-year students and faculty potentially leading to future advising and mentorship opportunities. As a team, we hoped that taking risks in these ways would produce myriad other benefits inside and outside the classroom for all parties involved.

Demonstrating of the level of collaborative risk-taking necessary, all faculty pairs for the course agreed to participate and set the parameters for the pilot as a collective. The structure of the course and its assignments would not change; students would still write eight short and two long essays (also known as Short Form and Long Form Prompts), participate in a comprehensive conversation (the final face-to-face assessment exercise), and receive a participation grade. They would also still submit a midterm short form prompt portfolio and a participation self-assessment that would produce non-binding grades that later would be replaced by the end-of-semester final portfolio and final participation assessment. The faculty then proceeded to develop a list of shared agreements that would serve as the methodology for self-grading.

The faculty teams agreed to the following terms at the outset:

1. Faculty would have shared rubrics for all assignments.
2. Students would be the lone arbiters of their grades; faculty would not change any grades.
3. Students would submit their self-grades with their work.
4. Faculty pairs would meet to give “shadow” grades to students on assignments. Halfway through the semester faculty pairs would meet with each student to talk through each “shadow” grade and how they aligned or did not align with the student’s self-assessment.
5. Faculty would keep track of both student-assigned and faculty-assigned grades.

However, the actual practice of self-grading varied quite a bit across sections as faculty pairs altered the proposed structure to fit their own teaching preferences, so the practical methodology shifted substantially from the original agreements. For example, when students turned in their first long essay, they also submitted their self-evaluation/grade. However, faculty noticed hurried self-grading in the classroom right before submission, thereby undermining the goal of self-assessment as self-reflection. Students also voiced concern

that the way they felt about their writing at submission was not an accurate reflection of their actual product but rather a reflection of their feelings about their process. In other words, immediately upon completion it was difficult to move some students off the position that hard work should be rewarded with an A no matter the quality of the final product. However, upon rereading their prompt the following week, students were able to more objectively evaluate their work as an independent product and expressed the desire to change their self-assigned grades. Therefore, having observed this issue with the first Long Form Prompt, one faculty pair shifted self-assessment submission to one week after the second long essay submission, with daily reminders to students not to complete the self-assessment until the night before the week was up. The goal was to help students take the time to gain emotional distance, reread their work, and acquire a more objective view of their final product. Another faculty pair went even further in changing the agreed-upon methodology. Based on studies showing that lower achieving students over-estimate their skill and thus may grade themselves more generously while higher-achieving students underestimate their skill and may grade themselves more harshly (Boud and Falchikov 541), the instructors decided that they would maintain the model of student self-assessment and faculty "shadow" grades; but to offset students' tendency to underestimate their own work, these faculty reserved the right to assign their own higher grades in lieu of lower grades assigned by the students. They did not lower any student's grade, but they also did not track "shadow grades" and so the "shadow grades" could not be used for quantitative comparison.

PRELIMINARY PILOT RESULTS

Three sets of data were evaluated at the end of the semester (student self-assessed grades, "shadow" grades, and a qualitative survey). The first indicated relative consistency across sections within each gender group's self-grading. The thirteen male-identifying students viewed themselves and their work as sitting somewhere in the B to B+ range while the thirty-two female-identifying students saw their work uniformly at an A- level. However, when the student-assigned grades and faculty "shadow" grades were compared for the second metric, the sections saw significantly more variability. On average across sections, male-identifying students graded themselves higher than faculty by 5.9% while female-identifying students graded themselves above faculty by 6.3%. The data would appear to contradict findings about female and male self-valuation (see Haynes and Heilman 956–69). However, within

the data set the difference between faculty and self-grading among male-identifying students per section sits between 5.2 and 6.3% while there is substantively more variability among the female-identifying students, ranging from 1.7% to 11.4%. This difference may indicate that other factors were at work in the sections that influenced the female students' self-assessment. In addition, one faculty pair—in the section that moved self-assessment to a week after Long Form Prompt submission—noted that after frank midterm conversations with students, in keeping with the original project's methodology, both male- and female-identifying students' self-assessed grades shifted and came more in line with faculty grades. This shift was particularly evident for female-identifying students, whose self-grades and faculty grades were only 1.7% apart.

For the third factor evaluated, in addition to tracking grades faculty pairs were asked to provide students with the usual forms for qualitative feedback on the entire course with an added question specifically devoted to self-grading. Unlike the quantitative data, the feedback forms were anonymous, so differentiation by stated gender was not feasible. However, like the quantitative data, this data set was also not complete. Two sections did not keep these forms, so their responses could not be evaluated; nonetheless, those sections which did retain them demonstrated some consistent themes. First, the responses were bimodal in nature: students responded that they loved or hated the exercise with roughly equal numbers on each side. Second, the students who enjoyed the project stated routinely that they felt it removed the pressure associated with grades, in keeping with Reitenauer's claims (61), and forced them to take greater ownership of their work product. Those who disliked the experiment stated overwhelmingly that it increased their focus on their grades and raised their anxiety about grading as they felt they "had to hit a magic number" that the professors had in mind. In addition, numerous students expressed feelings of guilt and anxiety that they would be viewed negatively by faculty if they did not give themselves the faculty's chosen grade, and in two sections faculty reported negative associations with students they felt had "over-graded" themselves, one going so far as no longer desiring to write letters of reference for certain students who had not lived up to the imagined responsibilities of the experiment.

CONCLUSIONS

Genuine risk-taking at its heart poses the possibility of failure, and in this case the risks taken by students and faculty with self-grading led to a failed

endeavor. While the intent of self-grading was to liberate students from a focus on grades as an arbiter of worth and to encourage risk-taking and owning their work product, the results were mixed. Many students remained overly concerned with their grades and still saw faculty as the ultimate arbiter of their work's value, demonstrating that the self-grading pilot ultimately failed to achieve the desired goals. The perceptual differences between students and faculty led to two issues raised by both groups. First, both felt that second-semester first-year students are incapable of accurately assessing their work product—even when using a detailed and prescriptive rubric—due to their limited experience and ability in writing at a level expected of college/university students. Second, students and faculty recognized that significant differences between student self-assessed grades and faculty-given grades caused interpersonal conflict. Because in all but one section the faculty stuck to the decision not to alter student grades, both students and faculty were frustrated as there was no way to balance the scales. Students wound up essentially penalized for under-grading and rewarded for over-grading themselves on their transcripts, which led to tension between faculty and certain students or, in one case, a faculty pair and an entire class.

Finally, there seemed to be a direct correlation between the initial enthusiasm of the faculty pair for the project and reported student satisfaction at the end of the pilot. In the section that had the highest faculty enthusiasm, though the least reported data, faculty and students anecdotally remained extremely positive toward self-grading at its conclusion although this section also chose to raise the grades of students as faculty thought necessary and did not track student and faculty scoring. In this section, students and faculty may have appreciated the appearance of taking risks but without risking much, if anything. The two sections in which at least one faculty member was extremely ambivalent about the project had the highest difference between student self-grades and faculty-given grades as well as the strongest sentiment against the experiment in qualitative responses. The section in which faculty were relatively neutral to the project at the outset and willing to make minor adjustments at midterm, had the highest student-stated satisfaction and the narrowest difference between faculty and student grades even though faculty remained neutral at the end; this pair wanted to make structural changes should they agree to undertake self-grading again, perhaps reiterating the desire to take small, incremental risks rather than make bold sweeping changes. These differences across sections seem to indicate that faculty perception of the self-grading pilot may have influenced messaging in the

classroom, discussion in student meetings, and willingness to adapt, thereby influencing the results.

The failure of the honors college's self-grading pilot project demonstrates that risk-taking is a multi-party process that is deeply connected to the psychology and socialization of both students and faculty. Whether through ambivalence/antipathy by individual faculty towards loss of control or fear of a poor grade from students planning on medical school, risk-taking demands that we all leap into the unknown together with a willingness to adapt. The sections that saw relative success with self-grading were those that embraced the process as a joint endeavor where risk-taking and world-building exist in a collaborative space where all parties "go through a necessarily painful period of self-analyzing, of reexamining values, of questioning the safe and easy" (Robertson 64), where the onus is not solely on students but where failure is a potential outcome for both faculty and students. Risk exists when we as educators see our best-laid plans explode and/or blossom, when our students take ownership of their education, or not, and when we all accept the consequences of our actions, even if that means a collective sigh of frustration,

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RESEARCH ESSAYS

The Game as an Instrument of Honors Students' Personal Development in the SibFU Honors College

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Abstract: Honors colleges often serve as laboratories for pedagogical innovation, where new learning strategies and technologies are created both in the sphere of honors education and in the broader context of universities. This study describes a method of "organizational activity games" (OAG) introduced in the honors college of Siberian Federal University (SibFU) in Russia. The author explores the advantages of the game method for reaching the goal of honors students' personal development. The theory and history of the game, invented in the Russian school of methodology by G. P. Shchedrovitskii, is explored in its relation to the theoretical principles of honors education. This research shows that the philosophy of games designed to create an intellectual elite of independently thinking citizens can be effectively employed in honors education. The study reveals how the objectives of the game—to develop and study new methods of teaching and learning in universities—contribute to the inventive pedagogies of honors colleges. The author provides insight into the various stages of the inaugural organizational activity game conducted at the SibFU Honors College. Results prove that the game may be regarded as a new method of honors teaching and learning applicable to honors programs in institutions worldwide.

Keywords: higher education—Krasnoyarsk (Russia); educational games; learning strategies; student development; Shchedrovitskii, Georgy Petrovich, 1929–1994

The goal of honors education is to benefit the gifted and talented students who are willing and able to do more than a regular program can offer, certainly in terms of academic challenge but often in their broader personal development as well (Brock, 2008; Hébert & McBee, 2007). Honors

students are identified not only by their high academic achievements but also by their creative thinking and inclination to have deeper, more meaningful, and transformative learning experiences (Wolfensberger, 2012). The greatest transformation an honors education can offer to a learner is the experience of becoming the active force of learning. This development of students' personal agency is one of the priorities of honors education.

Exceptional students call for exceptional pedagogical methods. The organizers of honors programs always take risks when they opt for innovative approaches in teaching and learning, but the risks are justified when the innovative pedagogy leads honors education toward achieving its goals. When the SibFU Honors College opened its doors to students of Siberian Federal University, its organizers took the risk of relying on the principles of the organizational activity game (OAG) as the methodology of honors education.

Georgii P. Shchedrovitskii, the founder of the OAG methodology, defined the game as a special formula for organizing and developing of active, collective thinking (Shchedrovitskii & Kotelnikov, 1988). In the 1980s, he elaborated a technology of organizing group communication and problem solving. He approached constructive thinking as a process of comparable importance to the evolution of the universe, arguing that the future can be what we make it, first in our thought and then in reality (Bureev & Shchedrovitskii, 2004).

Shchedrovitskii (Shchedrovitskii & Kotelnikov, 1988) described the game as a formula for thinking in which varying content that is "weakly normed, plastic, and unstable" may be embodied and played out. This capacity of the organizational activity game as a universal formula for simulating different types and kinds of collective thinking activity enabled the Russian methodologists to use it for the most varied purposes and functions. Various content can be represented and simulated in the game because of its flexible form. Within the sphere of education, the game can serve as a method of teaching students. Within the sphere of culture, OAG can be used to obtain new examples, models, standards, and norms. Within the organizational and managerial sphere, OAG can be used to create new institutions. Within the sphere of national research institutes, OAG can be used to create new projects and new research programs, to state and solve scientific problems.

In the OAG, professionals from different areas of activity collaborated on solving problems and creating new products, technologies, and institutional forms. They achieved results by engaging in collective thinking that was supra-disciplinary and supra-professional, i.e., methodological. The purpose of the

game was to construct a new activity of collective thinking and to reorganize its individual components on the basis of the interests of the whole.

The history of organizational activity games at Siberian Federal University traces back to the mid-eighties. Although the OAG method was already known and used (though not widespread, especially in higher education), some of the games were conducted as an experiment on whether it could help solve educational problems. The "classic" OAGs were meant to create a collaborative environment that develops solutions to real-world problems in the professional area. In those years, a major discussion had been taking place in both academic and educational communities about new challenges that the transitional economy and industry during Perestroika set for higher education in the USSR. In 1986, a game named "forms and means of professional training for a new type of specialists in a modern university," which was organized at Krasnoyarsk State University (as it was called at that time), was one of the ways to address these issues. Another game of the same year set the educational professionalization of junior faculty as the main topic.

Other games had more field-specific topics. Several OAGs were dedicated to applying the theory of developing education created by Vassilii Davydov and Daniil Elconin to teaching and learning practices. One of major results of these games was the sense that developing school environments required not only specific professional training of teachers but also intensive everyday collaboration between teachers and psychologists. The role of psychology in education became a topic of a series of games in 1985–1988, during which the new Department of Psychology at the university introduced and developed a new project. The game reshaped the structure and learning method at the university in Krasnoyarsk.

Since 1988, the format of OAG has been used on a regular basis in the university, and it has been adapted to meet educational goals. The focus deliberately shifted from real-world industry and production problems to the professional self-determination of students. The large majority of the students were recent high school graduates and had no professional background; therefore, they had no solid ground for professional self-determination. For first-year students, the inaugural game aimed to clarify their educational intentions and to help them set preliminary goals for their education.

In the twenty-first century, the idea of OAG at SibFU developed in the School of Economics, Management and Environmental Studies. The first-year master's students took the course titled "Techniques of Self-Determination and Self-Development Under Conditions of Uncertainty," which

was conducted as a single OAG for master's students with the thematic topic of each game designed to create specified conditions of uncertainty. The objective of the game was to enable students to act effectively in each of these conditions and to overcome the uncertainty.

Since 2017, the concept of OAG has served as an integral part of the newly established SibFU Honors College. The first reason to introduce OAG methodology to the SibFU Honors College practices was to develop the collaborative competence of students. The honors college is a community of gifted and talented individuals who specialize in different areas of science but whose capacities for teamwork and for collaboration in group projects are of utmost value. In a game, honors students encountered assignments and tasks for which the solutions required the participation of a large team that included representatives of different professions, scientific disciplines, and subject areas.

Shchedrovitskii identified nine types of games according to their semantic orientation (Shchedrovitskii & Kotelnikov, 1988):

1. solution of industrial organizational problems;
2. solution of fundamental scientific problems;
3. programming the development of radical innovations;
4. programming comprehensive scientific research;
5. developing new forms of instruction in institutions of higher education;
6. advanced training of personnel;
7. comparative analysis and study of different types of thinking activity;
8. study of structures, processes, and mechanisms of thinking activity;
9. study of the interactions and interrelations of individuals and groups in institutional structures.

In higher education, any of these nine types of games can be performed with students, faculty, or staff members as players. The rules of the game allow students to take roles of professionals, scientists, or managers of education, for instance. When the OAG aims at studying interactions within the institution, faculty may play it together with members of the university administration to work out a new form of organization or to find a solution to a problem. In the game, players shift the social barriers existing between them in reality outside

the game and act empowered by the new rules. The players of OAG always take the roles of creators, critical thinkers, and collaborative team members.

In 2017, when Siberian Federal University launched the honors college, it was one of the pioneers of honors education in Russia. OAG served the purpose of developing a new form of education within the university. In the game, students together with faculty and staff were invited to create the honors college as a novel and different learning environment. Participants defined the rules of organizing the environment, first as players and then as actors. The game was played outside of the university campus on neutral ground. The circumstances provided the freedom to play new roles and contributed to productive thinking by all participants. For instance, students played the parts of provosts, directors, deans, and other managers of higher education. Participants took the OAG endeavor very seriously, and the process was never similar to a theatre performance, so the roles were enacted without any shade of doubt about the right to play them, and the players were simultaneously the playwrights of the acts they played. The scenario of the game was based on the balance between following the script and the improvisation.

The function of the inaugural OAG in the SibFU Honors College was also to program the development of radical innovations in higher education. The game was an instrument of conflict resolution (Khasan, 2018). During the game, students worked in small and large groups on the resolution to a conflict between regular teaching and learning procedures in the university and the different learning format of the honors college. Before the game, the participants knew little or nothing about the tradition of honors education. Their task was to make an honors college as they imagined it according to their learning demands. The conditions of the game fueled students' activity, gave freedom to the stream of their ideas, and contributed to developing their agency as learners. Traditionally in Russian universities, education is teacher-oriented, with students led by instructors according to a predetermined program identical for all students of the same specialization and where students are not given any chance to choose the courses they study. On the contrary, the SibFU Honors College employs a student-oriented approach, with students acting as leaders of their education and creators of their unique learning trajectories. Honors students have the opportunity to choose the set of specifically designed honors courses, and they decide on the number of courses in the set, with four courses as the minimum. The game identified the demand for educational freedom and learning leadership. For students of Siberian Federal University, the most innovative element in the new learning

environment of the honors college was the role of educational enthusiast that each student acquired. In accordance with the theory of OAG, the honors college appeared first as a product of collective thought and then as reality.

Possible solutions and outcomes of the OAG included detailed formulation of complex problems, introducing a system of new structures into different spheres of social practice and developing different systems of thinking activity. Also, the game gave methodologists opportunities to investigate a variety of other outcomes:

- a system of collective-thinking activity;
- the behavior and actions of individuals under different organizational, social, and cultural conditions;
- the processes of self-determination and self-organization of people under conditions that are new for them;
- interrelations and interactions among people in small and large groups (including conflict interactions and struggles);
- processes and methods of problem solving;
- processes of goal definition; and
- situations, processes, and mechanisms of learning and teaching.

These outcomes make the method of OAG invaluable in honors education. Honors students develop the competence not only to study well but also to reflect on how they study and what they study for. The ideal honors learner has the capacity for educational reflection, and OAG serves as the catalyst for improving this capacity.

According to Shchedrovitskii (Shchedrovitskii & Kotelnikov, 1988), the game enabled the participants to define themselves not only in the game but also in society as a whole. The contradictions and conflicts in the game were perceived as manifestations of significant contradictions within a given profession, discipline, or institution. After having been engaged in a thinking activity, the participants in the collective work began to project and program their future thinking activity; they began to change and transform themselves as communicators and practical thinkers. These possible OAG results correlate to the ideals of honors education aimed at the personal development of students who are ready to commit themselves to becoming educated members of a democratic society and to pursuing education for life, citizenship, and career (Sederberg, 2015).

The SibFU Honors College offers its two-year program to second- and third-year undergraduates who excel in their studies at the university. At Siberian Federal University, the honors college was introduced as a way to resolve the conflict between needing a satisfying learning experience for extraordinary students with high educational demands while also providing the ordinary program of the university. The second- and third-year students already had the experience of studying in the regular programs at the university. Although they excelled in these learning programs, the alternative learning experience offered by the SibFU Honors College greatly appealed to them. Admission at later stages of their higher education allowed students to reflect on elements still missing in their learning experience and to take a conscious, intentional step in their personal development. The SibFU Honors College is organized for those students who ask themselves questions like these:

- How can I use the knowledge that I have?
- How can I realize my potential?
- How can I generate ideas and bring them to life?
- How can I inspire others with my ideas?

The honors college promised its prospective students a place to find answers to these and other similar questions. The OAG structured the learning process at the SibFU Honors College and contributed to students' educational reflection in answering these questions.

The goal of the inaugural game was to use the SibFU Honors College as a model for educational relations between honors students, faculty and staff. Participants were also engaged in collective thinking about the ideal scheme for integrating the honors college into the broader university community, on the roles that honors college can play within universities. The objectives of the OAG were to formalize the needs of participants and their expectations for honors education. As players, students and teachers were invited to answer the question "What is my aspiration for becoming a member of the honors community?" In the game, the search for an answer required self-determination and goal setting. In the course of the inaugural game, honors students played the roles of educational architects in charge of constructing their own new learning environment.

The game continued for two days, with seventy honors students taking part in it. Day one began by setting goals for the game, defining general rules, and explaining the reasons that the OAG served as the starting point

for organizing activities in the SibFU Honors College. In the first act of the game, the students engaged in a procedure entitled "Images," which evolved in two stages. In the first stage, the participants were encouraged to imagine individually what they would become when their studies in the honors college were over: "Suppose the honors college would have given me everything I hoped for. What would I be like then? What would I be capable of? What competences would I acquire?" Students presented their answers to these questions in visual forms, and the drawings were put on display so each student could see the works of all the others. By studying the products of visual thinking, the participants were invited to find their alter egos in like-minded people. Students who held similar views on their future selves formed small groups with seven or eight participants in each group.

The second stage of "Images" was collaborative as each group of honors students was given an hour to create a collective image on the same theme. The group images were then all presented to the audience. The students demonstrated and discussed a visual image "Hands," for instance, presented hands reaching for a dream. Another version of the same idea was presented in a drawing "World in my Hands," where the honors college was shown as a silver plate with the globe on it. The authors of the drawing understood the world as full of opportunities with the honors college acting as facilitator for taking them. A visual image "Honors Bridge" represented the human transformation of an ordinary human being into a superman through collaboration with others. An image called "Homo Communicatos" showed the value of effective communication in personal development. Images of "ladders" were popular among the ways students envisioned changes in themselves.

After a break, the students continued working in the same groups. Their thinking activities were devoted to finding collective answers to the question "If we want our image to come true, what element should the honors program never lack?" In their answers the students spoke about the ideal learning process they envisioned in the honors college. The collective discussion proved that students thought there should be no teacher as the indisputable authority in the honors college. According to students' opinions, honors faculty should act as consultants and tutors. Also expressed was the need for feedback, for receiving responses. Students proposed an alternative method of evaluating the learning outcomes: that it should take place through personal individual reflection. Students mutually agreed that honors education should be committed to the accomplishment of innovative activities and devoted to the development of students' initiative and creative thinking. Honors students

welcomed collaborative interdisciplinary projects where they could work with faculty as equal participants.

Day two saw honors students creating collaborative maps of the honors college that correlated to the ideas formulated in the previous stages of the game. Discussion of the honors maps provided detailed perspectives on the students' vision of the progress of their studies, the skills to be developed, and the learning outcomes to be achieved. Teachers and students acted as visionaries who employed their visual thinking to chart maps of the ideal honors college and to outline various learning trajectories on the maps.

The inaugural organization activity game showed the advantages of the method in honors education, where the game may be used to obtain new models of teaching, learning standards, and norms. OAG is an instrument to shape and reshape the various forms of honors colleges in different regional, national, and international contexts. Within the sphere of national research institutes, OAG has proved to be an effective method to solve complex problems, to start new projects and new research programs, and to enhance the personal development of honors students as creative thinkers open to a constructive relationship with the world.

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Selection Criteria for the Honors Program in Azerbaijan

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Abstract: Designing effective selection procedures for honors programs is always a challenging task. In Azerbaijan, selection is based on three main criteria: (i) student performance in the centralized university admission test; (ii) student performance in the first year of studies; and (iii) student performance in the honors program selection test. This research identifies criteria most crucial in predicting student success in honors programs. An analysis was first conducted for all honors students. Results indicate that all three criteria used in the selection process are highly significant predictors of student success in the program. This same analysis was then applied separately for each degree program, demonstrating that not all criteria are significant for some programs. These results suggest that creating differentiated selection procedures for different degree programs might be more efficient.

Keywords: higher education—Azerbaijan; educational program admissions; multiple regression analysis

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the Ministry of Education (MoE) of the Republic of Azerbaijan launched honors programs, called Sabah Groups, in several universities. As this initiative was new, the groups were launched only for specific degree programs in selected state universities. The purpose of the honors programs is to educate high-performing students in each program in a more advanced manner, and so most of the major core courses offered in the honors program

are more challenging than the regular program of study. Therefore, identification and selection of high-performing students for the honors programs is a crucial step.

Before going into the selection process for honors programs, let us give a brief overview of higher education in Azerbaijan. The school pupils who are graduating after an eleven-year program of study take a centralized state admission test to get into the university and degree program of their choice. Once students achieve the minimum eligible score on the test, they submit an ordered list of their university and program preferences (e.g., 1. Baku State University, History; 2. Baku State University, International Relations; 3. Western University, International Relations; and so on.), and are allocated based on their acquired scores, high scorers first.

In Azerbaijan, students are separated into four different groups based on their intended program of the study, and four different types of exams (one for each group) are administered, where each type of exam focuses on the subjects that are essential to the major programs within the group. Those who want to major in engineering and science are in Group I and are mainly tested for math and science subjects; those who want to go into business, economics and international relations are in the Group II and are tested in math and some humanities subjects; those who want to go for law, education, public administration are in Group III and are mainly tested in humanities subjects; and those who want to study medicine are in Group IV and are mainly tested in biology and other science subjects. The maximum attainable score is 700 while the minimum eligibility score for admission is 200.

Initially, the state admission test was conducted once a year, but since 2017, students may take the test twice, once in May and once in June. There are twenty-nine state and nine private universities in Azerbaijan. Admission to both private and state universities is through the centralized state admission test. After getting admitted to a program (whether it was the top choice or not), the students start their freshman year in the same major where they will study until graduation. The major choice is made once and is usually very difficult to change, requiring extensive administrative paperwork.

Since honors programs were a new initiative, they were launched in only eleven universities and only in specific degree programs, so currently there are no honors programs in areas such as medicine and public administration. Selection for an honors program is conducted at the end of the first year of studies, after students have been graded in some introductory major courses. Students can then apply to be part of an honors program unless their first-year

GPA is below certain level. Not all students who satisfy the GPA requirement apply to an honors program; some students may believe that honors will be too challenging for them and prefer to stay in the regular program with the possibility of having a higher GPA. Usually, however, the demand for honors programs exceeds the number of available seats.

Students who apply for an honors program must take the honors admission test, which consists of questions twenty-five questions in English n the English language) and twenty-five questions on logic in Azerbaijani. The English language questions test the student's English grammar skills, comprehension, and vocabulary since all the subjects, except for foreign language, are taught in English. Logic questions test the candidate's analytical thinking. The students have only one chance to take this exam.

Once the honors admission test is conducted, selection are made based on the performance of the students in (i) their first-year GPA; (ii) their performance on the centralized state admission test; (iii) their performance on the honors admission test; and (iv) their performance in face-to-face interviews. The overall score of a student is calculated based on the normalized weighted average of the first three three items with weight of 30% each and of the interview results with weight of 10%. The top-scoring students are selected for the honors programs. Face-to-face interviews are conducted to identify the reasons that candidates are switching to honors, to assess their English-speaking skills, and to learn their future goals. Unfortunately, the data on the results of the face-to-face interviews are not available. Therefore, we will exclude this variable from our analysis.

The predictive success of criteria in the selection process is crucial, and when some of these criteria turn out not to be good predictors, either they should be removed from the list or their importance in overall assessment should be lowered. In this paper, we analyze and identify which of the criteria are good predictors.

The question of how to identify the predictors of success in honors program has been widely studied in the literature, and there are wide range of opinions on this question. Commonly accepted criteria for selection to honors program are standardized test scores and high-school GPAs (Long & Lange, 2002). Some researchers showed that the high school GPA is a good predictor of first-year success in an honors program (Wolfe & Johnson, 1995) while others showed that standardized tests can be also a good predictor of university performance (Anastasi, 1988; Hezlett, et al., 2001). On the other hand, some studies found that standardized tests are not good in predicting

student success in honors programs (Sternberg, 1982; Khe, 2007; Green & Kimbrough, 2008; McKay, 2009), and some of these studies found that high school class ranking is a better predictor of student success (Green & Kimbrough, 2008; McKay, 2009). Moreover, a survey was conducted among graduates and current students to understand their views; the majority of the students thought that high school performance was a more important predictor than standardized tests (Roszkowski & Nigro, 2015).

Although some of the earlier works in the literature suggest that high school ranking is an important predictor of student success, no data are available on school rankings of the students in Azerbaijan. Moreover, the level of students in one school might be higher than others, invalidating a comparison of school rankings. Therefore, despite its importance, we cannot take high school ranking as a criterion in selection for honors program.

For our analysis, we consider all graduates (so far there are two years of graduates from our honors program) and use the secondary data provided by MoE. For each graduate we have collected (i) their first-year GPA, (ii) their state admission exam score, (iii) their honors admission test score, (iv) their university GPA. Note that first three variables are used in the selection for the honors program, but we take the fourth variable, namely, graduation GPA, as the key indicator of success in the honors program. We agree that there are more variables that can be taken as indicators of success. A more in-depth study could add variables like future employment (position, salary, etc.) and/or admission to graduate programs (location, GPA in graduate school, etc.) as other indicators of success in the honors program (Mould & DeLoach, 2017). Due to the small number of graduating classes in the honors program so far and the unavailability of post-graduation information for these graduates, we leave this analysis for future studies, when we will have started recording the future progress of honors graduates. On the other hand, some may argue that graduation itself can be indicator of success, but given the low rate of failure in the honors program (only 7 out of 823), we could not analyze the reasons these students failed. Once again, we leave this variable for future studies when we may have more student failures.

In our analysis, we first identify which of the above-mentioned three variables are crucial in predicting the success of students in the honors program. Next, we know that different majors require different sets of skills in order to succeed, so we conduct our analysis of each program of study separately. We separate the students into five groups based on their degree programs (Business and Economics, Engineering, Education, Arts, and International

Relations and Law) and identify the variables that are crucial in predicting the success of the students in each group. Note that this group division is unrelated to the group division made during the state admission test, but we picked them because they cover most of the major degree programs that have honors programs.

METHODOLOGY

For our analysis, we use secondary data provided by MoE. For each graduate we have collected (i) their first year GPA; (ii) their state admission test score; (iii) their honors admission test score; and (iv) their graduation GPA. The data on interview results are not available and are thus not a factor in our analysis. The data we require is available for only one year of graduates, and the data we collected on them includes slightly more than 800 graduates, those students who graduated. We take the graduation GPA as the key indicator of performance in the honors program. The maximum score on the state admission test is 700 with a minimum of 200. The GPA of students in Azerbaijani universities ranges from 0 to 100, with passing score for each course of 50. The maximum score on the honors admission test is also 100 points.

We ran multiple linear regression analyses where the first-year GPA, state admission test score, and honors admission test score were independent variables and the graduation GPA was the dependent variable. We tried to understand how those three variables perform in predicting the success of the students. Moreover, we considered five major degree programs that have honors program (Business and Economics, Engineering, Education, Arts, and International Relations and Law) and separated students according to these programs. We ran the multiple linear regression analyses within each group. Note that only 735 out of 816 students in our sample fell into these five groups, but since the number of the students in the remaining degree programs was too small for analysis, we did not include those degree programs in this study.

RESULTS

Before describing our regression models, we present simple summary statistics of the collected data for all the students and then separately for the five groups based on the degree of studies in Table 1. Although we presented mean and standard deviation in Table 1, given the different ranges of the test scores and GPAs we additionally presented the coefficients of variation,

which shows the standard deviation as a percentage of the mean (Coefficient of Variation = [Standard Deviation/Mean] x 100%), as our measure of variability. If we analyze the summary statistics for all the students, we see that average first-year GPA was around 80 with a coefficient of variation of almost 12% while the graduation GPA rose to 86 with a slightly smaller coefficient of variation of 10.7%. Also, the state admission test score (SSAT) score has an average of almost 467 with a coefficient of variation of 28.3% while HAT scores have an average of 55 with a coefficient of variation of 26.5%. Note that average scores and GPAs for the different degree programs are very close to the general average of the students except for the test results in the Arts program. The reason is that only small number of talented students apply to Arts programs as there is a second stage of ability test for these programs. Due

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF THE BASIC DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR HONORS GRADUATES

		Graduation GPA (0–100)	First Year GPA (0–100)	State Admission Test Score (0–700)	Honors Admission Test Score (0–100)
All Students (816 students)	Mean	86.07	79.43	466.86	55.05
	Standard Dev	10.27	8.55	132.20	14.58
	Coef of Var	11.9%	10.76%	28.32%	26.48%
Business and Economics (256 students)	Mean	89.00	83.70	518.88	63.34
	Standard Dev	5.57	6.25	82.58	9.17
	Coef of Var	6.26%	7.47%	15.92%	14.48%
Engineering (227 students)	Mean	84.31	76.97	448.46	51.11
	Standard Dev	7.32	8.63	124.62	12.90
	Coef of Var	8.68%	11.21%	27.79%	25.24%
Education (173 students)	Mean	83.00	73.46	447.57	49.94
	Standard Dev	16.82	7.23	114.66	13.22
	Coef of Var	20.26%	9.8%	25.62%	26.47%
Arts (42 students)	Mean	85.42	84.52	230.64	29.05
	Standard Dev	6.16	8.21	117.90	15.25
	Coef of Var	7.21%	9.71%	51.12%	52.5%
International Relations and Law (37 students)	Mean	85.40	78.84	561.14	61.62
	Standard Dev	15.11	9.25	106.31	9.99
	Coef of Var	17.69%	11.73%	18.94%	16.21%

to the low demand for Arts programs, the admission entry scores for these programs is usually very low compared to other programs like Business and Engineering.

The goal of our study was to identify the criteria that are good predictors of student success in honors program. We ran multiple linear regression analyses where student graduation GPA is our dependent variable with first-year GPA, state admission test results, and honors admission test results as our independent variable. We ran the regression for all the students, and the results are in Table 2. As we see from this table, all three variables that are used in the selection procedure are highly significant. Although our regression model is significant, our (adjusted) R^2 is around 0.26, which means that our model only predicts or explains one fourth of the variability in the success rate.

Next, we considered five large groups of students separated based on their degree programs and re-did the analysis we made above for each of the specific groups.

Business and Economics

We first ran the same analysis for Business and Economics students. This group constitutes a large proportion of the students in honors programs (256 out of 816). Our results are summarized in Table 3. Although the first-year GPA and honors admission test score are highly significant predictors of students' success, the state admission test score is not significant. Moreover, our regression model for students in Business and Economics programs is not only significant (even at 1% level of significance) but also has a very high (adjusted) R^2 of approximately 0.63; this means that our model predicts/explains a significantly large proportion of the variability in the success rate of the students in the honors programs.

Table 2. Results of Multiple Linear Regression for All the Students

Variables	Test Statistics (Significance)
First-year GPA	t = 12.35 (0.0000***)
State admission test score	t = 2.686 (0.00737**)
Honors admission test score	t = 3.017 (0.00263***)
Regression	F = 95.6 (0.0000***)
R^2=0.26 and Adjusted R^2=0.25	

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.005$

Engineering

We next ran the analysis for Engineering students. This group constitutes another large proportion of the students in honors programs (227 out of 816). Our results are summarized in Table 4. Unlike for Business and Economics students, for Engineering students the first-year GPA and state admission test score are highly significant predictors of students' success while the honors admission test score, while significant, is less so than the other two variables at only a 5% level of significance. Similar to the models for Business and Economics students, our regression model for Engineering students is not only significant (even at a 1% level of significance) but also has very high (adjusted) R^2 of approximately 58–59%, so our model predicts/explains a significant proportion of the variability in the success rate of the students in the honors program.

Education

Next, we analyzed students in the Education programs, the third largest group in the honors program (173 out of 816). Our results are summarized

Table 3. Results of Multiple Linear Regression for Business and Economics Students

Variables	Test Statistics (Significance)
First-year GPA	t = 19.76 (0.00001***)
State admission test score	t = -1.715 (0.087)
Honors admission test score	t = 2.632 (0.009**)
Regression	F = 147.8 (0.00001***)
R^2=0.64 and Adjusted R^2=0.63	

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.005

Table 4. Results of Multiple Linear Regression for Engineering Students

Variables	Test Statistics (Significance)
First-year GPA	t = 11.43 (0.00001***)
State admission test score	t = 4.365 (0.00001***)
Honors admission test score	t = 2.297 (0.0225*)
Regression	F = 105.9 (0.00001***)
R^2=0.59 and Adjusted R^2=0.58	

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.005

in Table 5. Unlike for Business and Economics and for Engineering students, for Education students the first-year GPA and honors admission test score are slightly significant (only at a 10% level of significance) predictors of students' success while the state admission test score is not significant at all even at 10% level of significance. Moreover, although our regression model for Education students is significant, it has a very low (adjusted) R^2 of approximately 0.06–0.07; this means that our model performs poorly in predicting the variability in the success rate of the education majors in the honors program.

In order to understand how our model would benefit without insignificant variables, we modified our regression model by dropping state admission test scores from the list of independent variables since it was not significant predictor. Our analysis shows that the significance of the model increases while the (adjusted) R^2 remains almost unchanged. Results of the modified regression model without the admission exam scores are summarized in Table 6.

Arts

Next is very special group of Arts programs. Unlike other programs, admission exam scores for these programs is low, and there is an additional

Table 5. Results of Multiple Linear Regression for Education Students

Variables	Test Statistics (Significance)
First year GPA	t = 1.655 (0.0996)
State admission test score	t = 0.336 (0.7368)
Honors admission test score	t = 1.706 (0.0898)
Regression	F=4.66 (0.0037***)
R^2 =0.07 and Adjusted R^2 =0.06	

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.005

Table 6. Results of Multiple Linear Regression for Education Students without Admission Test Scores

Variables	Test Statistics (Significance)
First year GPA	t=2.06 (0.0409*)
Honors admission test score	t=2.01 (0.0458*)
Regression	F=6.97 (0.0012***)
R^2 =0.075 and Adjusted R^2 =0.065	

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.005

and more important stage of ability test. Moreover, the number of honors students in these programs is very small (only 42 out of 814). Our results are summarized in Table 7. Like the Engineering students, the Arts students' first-year GPA is highly significant predictor of success while the honors admission test score is slightly significant (at 5% level of significance). Our regression model for Arts students is not only significant but has very high (adjusted) R^2 of approximately 0.75–0.77; this means that our model predicts/explains a significant proportion of the variability in the success of Art majors in honors program. Moreover, if we drop the honors admission test score from our model, both R^2 and adjusted R^2 decrease, which implies the importance of having this variable in our model.

International Relations and Law

Finally, we analyzed International Relations and Law students, the minority among the students in the honors program (only 37 out of 816). Our results are summarized in Table 8. All of the variables are not significant in the predicting success rate of these students in the honors program, and, in

TABLE 7. RESULTS OF MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION FOR ARTS STUDENTS

Variables	Test Statistics (Significance)
First year GPA	t = 6.768 (0.00001***)
State admission test score	t = 1.834 (0.073)
Honors admission test score	t = 2.029 (0.0494*)
Regression	F = 43.2 (0.00001***)
R^2=0.77 and Adjusted R^2=0.75	

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.005

TABLE 8. RESULTS OF MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND LAW STUDENTS

Variables	Test Statistics (Significance)
First year GPA	t = 0.04 (0.968)
State admission test score	t = 0.526 (0.602)
Honors admission test score	t = 0.685 (0.497)
Regression	F = 0.8465 (0.478)
R^2=0.07 and Adjusted R^2= -0.01	

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.005

fact, our regression model itself fails to be significant as well. Moreover, our R^2 is around 0.07, which is very low, while our adjusted R^2 is even negative, which shows that our explanatory variables are insignificant, and our model performs poorly in predicting student success. The results might be different if the sample size were larger; however, currently we do not have a large enough pool of students to choose from. Additionally, if we drop two highly insignificant variables and leave only honors admission test score results, our adjusted R^2 does not grow beyond 0.03.

LIMITATIONS

To our knowledge, this study is the first that provides insights into the selection procedures for honors programs in Azerbaijan. However, our study is not without limitations. First, our population (set of graduate students) is not large: only two cohorts. Moreover, the data that we need was only available for one graduating cohort. Second, unavailability of the interview results during the selection process was missing information in our analysis. A third limitation of the paper is our inability to compare successfully graduated students with the ones who failed as the latter set is very small right now. Finally, there is a high correlation between first-year GPA and graduation GPA because the former comprises 25% of the latter. Unfortunately, we do not possess data for the GPAs of the students from the second through the fourth year. We suggest future research take these limitations into account while running their analysis.

CONCLUSION

We consider criteria that are used in the selection procedure for honors programs and try to identify which one(s) of these criteria are more crucial in predicting student success in honors. Our first results show that all three criteria used in the selection are highly significant predictors of student success. However, when we consider specific fields, we see that in Business and Economics, Engineering, and Arts, all three variables are significant at some level whereas in Education the state admission test score is not significant, and in International Relations and Law none of the variables are significant predictors. We should therefore be able to exclude certain variables in some fields during selection since they do not help to predict student success. Moreover, for majors like International Relations and Law, we may need to introduce a new set of criteria for selection as none of the variables is a significant

predictor of success. As we see in our results for different degree programs, we should not apply a unified selection process for all the programs.

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Purpose, Meaning, and Exploring Vocation in Honors Education

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Abstract: This paper examines the importance of cultivating a sense of vocation in honors education. Through examples of coursework, program initiatives, and advising strategies, authors from across five institutions align the scholarship of vocation with best practices and principles in contemporary honors discourse, defining vocation in the context of higher education and describing how this concept works within honors curricula to enrich student experience and cultivate individual understandings of purpose. By focusing on critical reflection processes, Ignatian pedagogy, and theories of moral development and reasoning, the authors offer different models to advance the thesis that honors educators can and should address personal fulfillment in addition to intellectual talent, and they posit vocational exploration and discernment as tools for extending and deepening their students' personal sense of meaning in local and global communities.

Keywords: vocational discernment; civic engagement; Ignatian pedagogy; appreciative advising; Association of American Colleges & Universities, value rubrics

Honors students are challenged to think critically and deeply about intellectual questions, contemporary issues, professional goals, and community problems. However, they need also to be encouraged to turn this critical lens inward to discover what they might be called to do and what the world might need them to do, We need to provide the direction and space for honors students to consider their particular gifts, responsibilities, and limitations by examining the sorts of curricular and advising steps we should make to dissolve the boundary between personal and professional goals, the heart's desire and the mind's abilities. This article seeks to address how the scholarship and principles of vocation can inform honors education. In sum, we offer different models and entry points for opening conversations about personal fulfillment as well as intellectual talent, listening to mentors and inner voices, and framing consideration of a purposeful life.

The examples and context we provide draw from scholarship in higher education, psychology and human development, vocation, and honors education. The examples from honors programs come out of the varied frameworks of a small liberal arts college, an honors college, a Jesuit university, and a large public university. Together, we provide ways to consider the sense of vocation that can be cultivated and expanded in honors education as well as the benefits and possibilities it offers for honors student development.

HONORS EDUCATION AND THE DISCOURSE OF VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

The language of vocation has a complex history, related to theological understandings of station or status in society on the one hand and contemporary notions of practical education and employment on the other. Vocation, from the Latin *vocare*, means "to call," which can certainly have religious implications but in recent decades also implies discerning one's purpose and meaning in the world. As David Cunningham suggests, "One's vocation is one's calling in life—not simply what one 'wants' to do or 'is expected' to do, but that toward which one is drawn, and which (it is hoped) will provide one's life with meaning, purpose, and a sense of genuine fulfillment" ("Hearing" 8). In other words, vocation is more than a job or a role but a life of purpose. Cynthia Wells argues that "vocation is not just attentive to what we know but also to who we are and how we act" (63–64); it is about using talents for a common good, responding to communal needs, and balancing one's own fulfillment in relation to global and civic concerns. In what is now an iconic

definition, Frederick Buechner suggests that vocation is "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet" (112). The term "vocation" for our purposes, then, suggests a consideration of individual meaning within a complex framework of family, workplace, and community. Equipping students with practices they can use to reflect on and evaluate their talents and desires is part of the work of teaching vocation in higher education.

The scholarship of vocation has seen a recent resurgence and expansion, notably with three volumes from Oxford University Press: *At This Time and In This Place: Vocation and Higher Education* (2016), followed by *Vocation Across the Academy: A New Vocabulary for Higher Education* (2017), and concluding with *Hearing Vocation Differently: Meaning, Purpose and Identity in the Multi-Faith Academy* (2019). Other significant research about the effects of "purpose-programming" on college campuses includes *The Purposeful Graduate: Why Colleges Must Talk to Students About Vocation* (2015) and a recent Op-Ed article in the *New York Times* (Perrin).

The scholarly conversation about vocation is synergistic with relevant issues in higher education and, indeed, honors education. While current cultural debate centers on the pragmatic purpose of a college degree, vocation scholarship prompts an examination of the broader demands on students during their college years and how to equip them for future fulfillment. Vocation emphasizes considering one's own gifts in relation to academic and professional choices as well as developing ethical decision-making and understanding the needs of a pluralistic, global society. Advising students in this process and encouraging experiences beyond the classroom—especially through the lens of diversity education, civic engagement, and social justice—as well as deep listening to self and others prompts examination of vocational identity.

Margaret Mohrmann couches the consideration of purpose and meaning in terms of responsibility: being responsible to self and others, which includes assessing one's abilities and understanding how to respond. She suggests that the processes students use to consider a major, a career trajectory, and life goals should include reflection on the internal and external fit for the various future roles they might encounter. She claims that "vocation is responsibility to and for the whole of reality" (41), which means a measured, holistic reflection on one's purpose and gifts in the context of what our families, workplaces, and communities ask of us.

Further scholarship suggests that community engagement practices, hallmarks of many honors programs, are also a valuable tool in vocational

discernment. Darby Ray claims that "civic engagement invites self-work, world-work, and their mutually transformative meeting," which allows for a consideration of others' needs, listening to alternative perspectives, and becoming "attuned to the world" (313). Thus, our work in civic engagement and community and service-learning pedagogies can also prompt vocational reflection and evaluation.

Vocational programming on college campuses takes place in many forms and locations—ranging from curricular models of vocational formation (within majors or core curricula), spiritual life and student life offices, internship and study abroad opportunities, and developed mentorship and advising programs (see the 2015 work of Tim Clydesdale in *The Purposeful Graduate: Why Colleges Must Talk to Students about Vocation*). Models like the Collegeville Institute (affiliated with Saint John's University and the College of Saint Benedict) host ongoing research seminars on "Vocation and faith in the professions, "Vocation across the lifespan," and "Interfaith perspectives on vocation." However, the wider conversation about vocation across the academy has not been fully integrated into honors education scholarship even though many honors programs are developing and integrating facets of vocation that could be enriched by more intentional conversation with the scholarship of vocation.

While the term "vocation" has not been widely used in honors education scholarship, honors education has developed and pursued similar aims and values in many ways. For example, honors educators have been regular advocates and leaders in civic engagement pedagogy and practice. Craig Kaplowitz, in "Helping with the 'How': A Role for Honors in Civic Education," says that honors programs and colleges can aid students in connecting the dots between classroom learning and their roles in the world through this emphasis on civic participation. He states, "we need to be intentional about helping students connect the processes they learn for good, sophisticated working in the classroom or lab to the ways they think about and act in civic space" (20). Reflecting on how to think and act in civic spaces using the tools and talents they have honed in the classroom equips students with an important tool for vocational exploration. Kaplowitz continues, "When [honors students] leave us to become leaders and influencers in their fields and communities, they will be more responsible, deliberate, and process-oriented in their political activity" (21). This sort of deep consideration is the goal of vocational education.

Honors scholarship also has recently expanded to consider the ways honors attends to the development of the whole person, specifically through

the language of what it means to thrive and achieve a high level of wellbeing. A recent article suggests that colleges and universities are now measuring students' "thriving," which is "defined as academic, psychological and interpersonal wellbeing and engagement" (Cuevas et al. 79). Thriving suggests a sense of purpose and meaning within a framework that considers not only academic performance and ability but enjoyment of and flourishing in relationships. This definition of thriving obviously echoes the concerns of vocational exploration and discernment and could be brought into more direct conversation. Both vocational discernment and the language of student "thriving" have deep relevance for honors students: "Flourishing people are filled with positive emotions, display resiliency in the face of challenges, develop positive relationships, are engaged as productive citizens, and seek to make a difference in others' lives" (Cuevas et al. 83). The synergy between encouraging a process of student wellbeing and vocational discernment suggests that the two academic voices would have a fruitful dialogue.

Vocation scholarship also resonates with principles of design thinking, which has regularly surfaced in honors courses, advising, and NCHC national conference sessions. While little has been published so far on design thinking in an honors context, course descriptions and syllabi within and beyond honors education reveal that design thinking is a frequently used method for addressing the deeper and broader concerns of vocation that we are discussing here. For example, design thinking encourages thoughtful self-reflection and attentiveness to what animates and enervates us. Bill Burnett and Dave Evans's popular book *Designing Your Life* makes the point early on that design thinking is fundamentally about curiosity and having "a bias to action." People are generally not good at following their passions because they foreclose too quickly on an idea. Operating instead with a "beginner's mind" leads to a greater inclination to try new things and to discover one's true motivations, a process called "building a compass" and, later, "wayfinding" (31, 41). This cultivated attentiveness leads to greater joy and purpose as part of a "well-designed life" (xxx). Such an approach is not far afield from the richness of vocational discernment we offer here, and the exercises that Burnett and Evans encourage complement this discussion as we reframe conversations about facilitating discernment by reclaiming a broad and holistic view of purpose and meaningful reflection.

A rare mention of "vocation" in honors scholarship appears in an article about advising by Jeffrey P. Hause. In "Two Neglected Features of Honors Advising," Hause suggests that discussions of advising honors students have often neglected discerning a vocation as well as modeling a deep attentiveness

and questioning mindset. While we assume that honors students are well prepared for careers and future endeavors, as advisors we still need "continuing questions and scrutiny[;] . . . querying opens the door to a richer advising experience in which students have a better understanding of their career goals and how they fit into the larger scheme of the students' life goals" (Hause 152). Like Mohrmann's idea of internal and external "fit," Hause suggests that advisors should seek accurate narratives of a student's life (156), ranging from family obligations, realistic future goals, and accurate assessment of abilities and talents. Hause uses the word "vocation" to mean creating a "sufficiently complex narrative of their lives" (160). With intentional advising that incorporates questions of vocational reflection, students stand to make better informed decisions not only about classes and careers but about what their future might look like more broadly as they serve the community. In addition, we can bring into the discussion of vocational reflection some of the language of appreciative advising (see the work of Jennifer Bloom and others), which prompts students to identify talents and strengths as part of imagining a future vision for their lives.

While we might see the importance of engaging students in civic participation and holistic advising, honors students can encounter barriers in finding fulfillment and wellbeing as they try to focus on future paths. For example, "The struggle to identify career goals is not only a characteristic of perfectionism but also a psychological challenge for many honors students because of their multipotentiality or the variety of interests in which they have the potential to excel" (Cuevas et al. 82). Honors students may avoid seeking guidance for fear of appearing weak or of underachieving (Badenhausen 28), suggesting the urgent need for vocational discernment strategies, practices, and conversations in honors programs, curricula, experiences, and scholarship.

Honors educators are accustomed to saying that honors learning is not more than but different from non-honors learning. This qualitative difference is frequently described in dimensional terms; for instance, the NCHC's "Definition of Honors Education" states the following:

> Honors education is characterized by in-class and extracurricular activities that are measurably broader, deeper, or more complex than comparable learning experiences typically found at institutions of higher education.

Including vocational reflection in students' educational experiences can also be part of this qualitatively different, dimensionally expansive approach.

Although orienting honors students' educational experiences to vocational reflection may initially feel unfamiliar or even uncomfortable to students, faculty, and administrators, who are accustomed to framing honors learning in other terms such as intellectual intensity or social engagement, the opportunities and challenges represented by vocational reflection are very much at home in the imagery typically associated with what makes honors education distinctive.

Vocational reflection invites consideration of height and breadth. The height-dimension is a recognition that the experience of vocation involves an element of transcendence: in some way being called from outside oneself, beyond one's self-initiated purposes, desires, or plans. While those who acknowledge a specific religious context may most readily testify to an understanding of their vocation coming from "on high," this height-dimension is not exclusive to those who identify with religious faith; explicitly articulated religion does not have a monopoly on the mysterious sense that one's life purpose is initiated, at least in part, by sources or factors beyond oneself. Exploring this experience and figuring out how to respond to it is a rich element of vocational reflection, one that can be particularly helpful in challenging honors students, who have often succeeded because they learned to manage and control their educational experiences. David Cunningham considers this height-dimension in his article "'Who's There?' The Dramatic Role of the 'Caller' in Vocational Discernment," pointing out that to acknowledge this "aura of mystery" does not result in giving up rational responsibility, nor does it require a specifically religious faith (152).

The breadth-dimension names another important challenge for honors students' thinking. Even when our students are impressed by the immensity of the source of their calling, they all too often default to a narrow interpretation of the domain of their calling. They may understandably think primarily of a calling in the culturally conventional sense of a vocation that is identified with career, paid work, and other social-identity markers determined by occupation. Introducing purposeful vocational reflection opens the opportunity to relocate students' sense of vocation from a narrow focus on what they do to a broader, more life-encompassing awareness of and commitment to who they are. Jerome Organ uses this contrast between doing and being in in his article "Of Doing and Being: Broadening Our Understanding of Vocation." He writes, "Broader questions about *being* often get scant attention in the work of vocational reflection and discernment—even though these questions are, in the long run, of greater importance" (226). His account of

vocational understanding as oriented more to being than to doing is defined in the concepts of "integrity, authenticity, and faithfulness" (240).

With its emphasis on human flourishing and responsibility to others, vocation is closely aligned with the mission of many higher education institutions. Honors programs often serve as ideal venues or "laboratories" for student learning and the enactment of a university's mission; the National Collegiate Honors Council, in its "Definition of Honors Education," suggests that honors experiences should be "appropriately tailored to fit the institution's culture and mission," so at institutions that stress holistic development, civic engagement, and lifetime learning, one might expect honors programming and curricula to prominently feature vocation and discernment.

Jesuit higher education is particularly receptive to the vocabulary of vocation and discernment. The Society of Jesus, founded in the sixteenth century by St. Ignatius Loyola, was the first Catholic teaching order. Since its inception, the Society has established a vast network of educational institutions around the world that today includes twenty-seven members of the Association of Jesuit Colleges & Universities (AJCU), with honors education a flourishing component at most of these institutions. A brief examination of Ignatian pedagogy reveals its connection with the vocabulary of vocation. Gallagher and Musso describe the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm as "the art of teaching and learning cut from the fabric of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola" (1). Ignatius created and revised the *Spiritual Exercises* after his initial conversion to the Christian faith, and he used this highly reflective model to guide others toward similar ends. The *Exercises* were a means of communion with God, who would "lead men and women to decisions about how they would live their lives, employ their talents, and direct their resources" (Gray 65). Korth describes Ignatian pedagogy as a process involving five key elements: context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation. She explains the interplay of these five elements, providing a helpful overview of Ignatian pedagogy:

> Through consideration of the factors and context of students' lives, faculty create an environment in which students recollect their past experience and assimilate information from newly provided experiences. Faculty help students learn the skills and techniques of reflection, which shapes their consciousness, and they challenge students to action in service to others. The evaluation process includes academic mastery as well as ongoing assessments of students' well-rounded growth as persons for others. (Korth 281)

As a general approach, Ignatian pedagogy is dynamic, student-centered, and integrated, i.e., the five elements "function not as discrete segments or stages of a linear process, but as interdependent facets of any deep learning experience" (Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning).

The Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities views honors programs at member colleges and universities as "catalysts" for their institutions with respect to pedagogy and extracurricular activities (AJCU Honors Consortium). Jesuit honors programs intentionally promote a spirit of discernment and an attention to students' vocational identity. In many cases, the development of self-image or self-ideal is not simply the result of a learning experience, e.g., a course on ethical behavior or post-graduate fellowship opportunities, but is instead the aim of these courses. For instance, a first-year colloquium might address concepts like joy and mindfulness with an eye toward students' professional development. Using the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm as a guide, the course might encourage students to reflect critically on how they can craft experiences as an undergraduate to achieve post-graduate outcomes that bring satisfaction and joy. At Saint Louis University, for example, several of the honors program's experiential learning credits require intentional self-reflection crafted in this mold, calling for students to "recollect past experiences and assimilate information from newly provided experiences" (Korth 281) so that students learn how to attend to their own interests, intellectual gifts, and callings.

Protestant colleges and universities still tied to their religious traditions can also find support within those traditions for vocational discernment and development. Valparaiso University, for example, demonstrates the Lutheran contribution to this discussion. Martin Luther, as an early reformer, was concerned with developing a sense of divinely ordained earthly callings outside of the priesthood, in opposition to a medieval monastic ideal of spiritual separation from worldly pursuits. Within a church structure sometimes imagined as a universal priesthood, Luther described numerous vocational roles as being directly related to God's special intention and calling for individuals. Because the life of faith and service to neighbors was a universal calling, all manner of earthly endeavors could be pursued as authentic vocations. Valparaiso University, which is as religiously and demographically diverse as other schools in the area, explores vocation in numerous other ways as well; however, the Lutheran tradition presents contributes to our wider conversations, and many Protestant institutions have similar notions about a broader spirituality underpinning the processes of vocational development. Indeed,

one of the most typical descriptions of vocation comes from Presbyterian theologian Frederick Buechner, who defined it as "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet" (112).

Regardless of cultural context or religious tradition, Clydesdale's research reveals compelling student-level data on the effectiveness of vocational exploration experiences. For example, compared to their non-engaged peers, students who participated in some kind of "purpose exploration program" while in college reported higher levels of post-graduate life satisfaction. As Clydesdale says, "Those who had participated in purpose exploration during college . . . expressed broader satisfaction with life after college than those who did not participate" ("Purposeful" 121–22). Clydesdale further observes that these participants weren't just more satisfied with their lives but were "flourishing," which he defines as reporting positive goals for the short and long term and demonstrating independence, responsibility, and active engagement in the community (122).

Addressing longitudinal effects, Clydesdale reported that alumni of exploration programs tended to marry four times as often as non-participants; he says, "exploration participants, having spent time as undergraduates reflecting on the long-term direction of their lives, were ready to make a variety of long-term commitments—including marriage" (125). Clydesdale also says that statistics indicate the effectiveness of purpose exploration programs across racial, gender, and disciplinary lines (127). Vocational reflection during college "holds value over time" (125), strengthening the argument that honors education can benefit from further engagement with the scholarship of vocation and its various principles and methods.

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND CULTIVATING VOCATION

College students typically find themselves at a crossroads. Many of them are young adults experiencing independence for the first time. In honors coursework that inspires students to analyze "weighty human concerns" (Kass 87), they are likely to meet many new friends and classmates who both validate and challenge their worldview. In addition, they are likely to experience an academic culture that challenges them with new ways of reading, writing, and articulating their ideas with evidence. Furthermore, as VanLaningham notes, these students "walk a tightrope between pragmatism and curious learning" as they try to determine how much of their intellectual energies to give to their vocational and avocational goals ("Exploring Vocation"). Amid these challenges, students are charting their course for a future in medicine,

law, business, the academy, or other professional fields. In short, these students are enmeshed in a culture that often sends them mixed signals about what they should do and who they should become in their lives after college.

Over the history of higher education, psychologists and student affairs professionals have developed a compendium of research on the developmental changes experienced by college students. Erik Erikson, for example, posited stages of psychosocial development across a person's lifespan from infancy to adolescence to adulthood. The two stages that correspond to the time students traditionally spend in college and are most relevant to vocational discernment are stages 5 (identity versus identity diffusion) and 6 (intimacy versus isolation). At these stages, Erikson suggested that students begin to solidify their value system and to understand their identities as distinct from parents or other authoritative figures in their lives. As Evans et al. summarize these stages, adolescents "become more independent, begin to deal with the complexities of life, and seek answers to the question, 'Who am I?'" (50). Students also begin to form mature relationships with others, which can affect decisions they make about where to attend graduate school, whether to enter the workforce, and how to allocate their emotional and financial resources after graduation.

Whereas Erikson's model was mostly social in nature, William Perry advanced an intellectual and ethical model that defines a student's progression in college. He argued that students develop intellectually by moving from a dualistic state of mind (in which right and wrong are two ends of a clear dichotomy) to one that is marked more by multiplicity or relativity. He asserted that college students would gradually learn to shed simple right/wrong thinking in favor of a more nuanced understanding of the world, one that increasingly relies on evidence-based conclusions instead of unsupported opinions derived from a parent's or other authoritative figure's point of view. While students navigate the tension from dualism to multiplicity or relativity, they may become more receptive to the idea that they have agency in deciding what they can and will become from a vocational standpoint.

Theories of moral development and reasoning inform important questions about student readiness for vocational exploration. The prefrontal cortex of the human brain controls the values-based decision-making related to seeking vocation (Miller & Cohen; Miller et al.). A growing body of neuroscience research suggests that much of the executive function related to planning, organizing, and moderating social behavior does not fully mature until early adulthood. This understanding should guide how we ask traditional-aged college students to make life-changing decisions, how we know

if a student is ready to undertake this task, and what traits demonstrate readiness to consider and cultivate vocational identities.

Moral reasoning, defined as determining right from wrong using logic, is key to the process of considering vocation since some attractive options will be rejected on the basis of ethics. While moral reasoning is an ability that develops early in life, students come to the task of considering vocation with differing levels of experience, depending on how egocentric their thinking is and how much practice they have had thinking through ethical questions. Traditional-aged students from white, upper-to-middle-class backgrounds (the majority of students in honors programs) are likely to arrive at college during what Lawrence Kohlberg describes as the conventional stage of moral development. At this stage, students have internalized conventional social norms, have typically benefitted from a law-and-order mentality, and have defined the good by social consensus. An important role of the college experience in general and the honors experience in particular should be to complicate these students' perspectives by introducing them to viewpoints of others who come from different backgrounds of wealth, education, and opportunity. Post-conventional moral reasoning, according to Kohlberg, develops through a process of assimilation and accommodation (described by Vygotsky) that occurs as students experience conflicts between their principles and the lived experience of others. Students engaged in vocational reflection and discernment should be encouraged to work toward this post-conventional moral reasoning as part of a process to connect their values to the kind of work they want to do and the impact they want to have.

Myriad student development theories account for specific populations of students as well as factors such as gender, race, and class, attributes that are often confounding variables for vocational exploration and discernment. Caryn Riswold argues that such categories affect individual identity, permeating every aspect of the student experience. Although Riswold is concerned about the dehumanizing hierarchical structures and cultural norms that inhibit students' identity formation among marginalized or underrepresented groups, she is optimistic that "by exploring their various callings and by discerning the ways they might live a more meaningful life," students can recover their humanity and combat these odious influences (74). Although "vocation" represents a "complex narrative of [students'] lives" (Hause 160), attending to these narratives enables faculty and advisors to help students negotiate the dynamic and sometimes tumultuous developmental process of adapting to college.

Fortunately, just as the field of student development theory frames the problem, it provides an optimistic outlook for students' future, particularly beyond their first year of college. Student development theorists suggest that students come to greater self-awareness and moral reasoning during the traditional college-going years as they learn from more seasoned thinkers. Walker described this process as "exposure to higher stage thinking" and characterized the feeling as one of "disequilibrium" (qtd. in Evans et al.102). Professors, upperclassmen, and staff members model for students what nuanced thinking on specific topics looks like, ideally leading to intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual growth.

Just as we must understand students' contextual factors in order to assess readiness, we must also account for institutional context in developing vocational awareness programming. Sociologist Tim Clydesdale underscores this point in his thorough exploration of "purposeful" education on college campuses, *The Purposeful Graduate: Why Colleges Must Talk to Students about Vocation* (2015). Although his work concerns Christian institutions, many of his case studies address institutions that have a pronounced secular culture on campus. His conclusions can be helpful in the discussion of honors-based vocational programming in any context. He concludes that "programs that targeted undergraduates during their sophomore and junior years, when they were less distracted by entering and exiting processes, accomplished disproportionately more of their goals" (82).

The honors commitment to the practice of co-curricular integration at all grade levels is particularly well suited to the challenges of students' developmental readiness for intensive educational experiences. The importance of this integral approach is the subject of research on emerging adulthood. The idea of "emerging adulthood" as a distinct life phase is a recent concept first explicitly proposed by psychologist Jeffrey Jensen Arnett in 2000, and more fully presented in his definitive 2004 monograph, *Emerging Adulthood*. Perhaps the most pervasive theme in the recent scholarship on emerging adulthood is that of transition. One of the profound social changes that have given rise to emerging adulthood as a recognizable life phase is the sharp increase in, access to, and expectations regarding higher education. Tim Clydesdale brings these elements together in a sustained investigation of one increasingly crucial life transition: exploring new life patterns and possibilities immediately after high school. In his 2007 book *The First Year Out*, Clydesdale focuses on the transition from the typically structured and predictable environment of high school to the more personally challenging demands of life after high school graduation.

In his analysis, which draws together both quantitative data based on extensive surveys and intensive qualitative surveys and case studies, Clydesdale highlights two key strategies that he finds culturally mainstream American teenagers rely on for navigating the transition of the first year out. The first strategy is focusing most of their energy and attention on what he calls "daily life management": managing "personal relationships," "personal gratifications," and "economic lives" with a goal of keeping life in balance (2). What is not in focus in this project of "daily life management" is the key to the second strategy, in which critical matters of personal identity—including religious beliefs and political loyalties—are placed in what Clydesdale calls an "identity lockbox," where they are safe from challenge but also largely inaccessible and unattended to (39). Most emerging adults in the first year out are not proactively involved in exploring and evaluating crucial matters of identity because too much else going on to occupy their attention and energy.

For those who enter college during this first year out, the combination of "daily life management" and an "identity lockbox" has a significant effect on how education does and does not influence them. The strategy of daily life management, when applied to their educational demands, says: do your work, meet the requirements that authorities set out for you, and don't question too deeply the potential implications of that work. The result, in Clydesdale's analysis, is that the majority of students at the end of the first year out "have become cognitively sharper and more skilled in adapting to new organizations, but are largely immune to intellectual curiosity and creative engagement." (153). That is to say, the first year of college is effective for these students but not necessarily in terms of the big questions that include vocational reflection.

Honors programs across the country are well positioned to address the gap between students' daily concerns and the ideas that educators want them to encounter; this advantage typically results from a variety of social and cultural engagement outside of class, with a wide variety of rationales offered for such activities.

In the NCHC's "Definition of Honors Education," the opening line offers a parallel pride of place to "in-class" and "extracurricular" activities; the document also emphasizes "a close community of students and faculty." The scholarly research and professional presentations on honors education fostered in NCHC's national conferences and journals are also replete with the dynamics of community life; as one sample, an issue of *Honors in Practice* (volume 5, 2009) included a section on "Programmatic Designs" in which all five

of the articles are framed by the centrality of community in the design of honors programs and colleges. The research on emerging adulthood provides an important reason for extending student engagement with one another, with ideas, and with faculty members outside the boundaries of course requirements. For all its intentional engagement of personal identity, a curricular emphasis on vocational reflection, to the extent that it is merely an academic course requirement, can still be open to the criticism that it is just part of the task of daily life management rather than a more significant element of grappling with personal identity. Co-curricular programming can fill that gap.

Although researchers Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, like Clydesdale, find that emerging adults typically engage only the "instrumental value" of education (54), they also point to the crucial role of significant personal relationships (209), especially with nonparental adults who display genuine interest in them and in deepening their religious and spiritual engagement (285). Shannon Dean explores the significance of this relation to honors education in her article "Understanding the Development of Honors Students' Connections with Faculty." The particular challenges for development of personal identity in college students that is described by the research on emerging adulthood turn out to lead precisely to what honors programs have been doing all along: emphasizing the need for intentional integration of curricular and co-curricular experiences, including the fostering of intergenerational care between faculty and students.

INTEGRATING VOCATION THROUGHOUT THE LIFESPAN OF HONORS

Individual Reflection and Cultivating Community in the First Year

Vocation often manifests as an individualistic pursuit, and we can all lose sight of the fact that we cannot understand who we are without fully acknowledging those around us. Exercises in honors programming that facilitate or require collaborative work can prove especially valuable for spurring reflection on vocation as something that is always communal and mediated; for students who have been conditioned toward individual academic pursuits, this collaboration is critical.

NCHC's "Definition of Honors Education" reflects the tradition of commitment to communal experiences in its description of "learning communities" as a distinctive "mode of honors learning":

> Outcomes include connecting members to one another for the pursuit of common goals through interdependence and mutual obligation.

This orientation to communal learning offers a crucial point of connection between honors education and current work on fostering vocational reflection in higher education. Recent scholarship on vocation has highlighted the dominant tendency within our culture to think of vocation in highly interiorized and privatized ways (Cunningham, "'Who's There?'" 147); this tendency leads to a conception of vocation that is individualistic and fragmented. Cunningham has also pointed out the harmfully limiting effects of a merely individualistic understanding of vocation in "Colleges Have Callings, Too: Vocational Reflections at the Institutional Level"; in this limited conception, community is considered primarily as input to or output for an individual's vocational discernment, "input" being the wider context that feeds into a person's vocation and "output" being the field for living out one's calling.

In contrast to this set of dominant cultural assumptions, leading recent scholars on vocation have taken a decidedly countercultural approach, raising questions of communal personhood: a sense of shared, mutual vocation. Thinking of a community as not only a setting for vocation but a vocation itself, a communal vocation, can reshape the conversation about vocation. In addition to Cunningham's article "Colleges Have Callings, Too," other recent work uses this more expansive, communal understanding of vocation to consider the extension of vocational questions to communities beyond educational ones and across the life spans of those who inhabit and make up such communities. This work includes Kathleen Cahalan's *The Stories We Live: Finding God's Calling All Around Us* and a collection edited by McLemore and Cahalan titled *Calling All Years Good: Christian Vocation Throughout Life's Seasons.* The rich tradition of communally conducted education in honors programs and colleges has much to contribute to this still-developing work on communal conceptions of vocation.

Perhaps the most distinctive community-building activity in Christ College, Valparaiso University's interdisciplinary honors college, takes place every fall when the entire first-year class creates and stages an original theatrical production, typically a musical that draws on the themes of the first-year program's readings and discussions. Every component of the production must come from that cohort so that, for instance, the music composition committee can't score for a saxophone if no one in their cohort plays the instrument. On its face, the endeavor seems far removed from questions of vocation and purpose. Certainly, few students in any given cohort will go into the theatre

professionally, but the collaboration itself—in all its creative, frustrating, and exhilarating manifestations—becomes a critical space for students to discover who they are in relation to a larger community with a shared goal and purpose. The rest of the college—sophomores, juniors, seniors, faculty, and staff, not to mention parents, friends, and more than a few alumni—turns up for the mid-November performances, eager to see what this year's class will pull off. In the week after the production, the honors community convenes again for a "talkback." A faculty member or administrator offers a review, and a panel of first-year students answer questions and make observations about how their cohort approached this daunting assignment and what they learned in the process.

Community building practices foster a sense of vocation that extends beyond the individual's gifts and goals. Students come to understand that communities themselves have purpose and meaning and that exploring vocation within community is vital for individual growth and understanding. So too can a set of well-structured prompts be useful to students who are unfamiliar with the values-discernment and goal-setting process. These prompts should guide students into the metacognitive and integrative work that is needed to ground their decision-making in values that they have intentionally evaluated and adopted. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) VALUE Rubrics for ethical reasoning and integrative learning may be especially useful in crafting prompts since they can help tease out whether students have developed the intellectual tools to address real-world situations.

In the first-year honors living learning program at Texas A&M, students are assigned a series of prompts that iteratively ask students to reflect on their values, think about where these values come from, and then connect these values to future goals. The iterative nature of these assignments gives students the opportunity to revisit, revise, and solidify their understanding of their values as they are related to their goals. The excerpted prompts provided below are adapted from those in the University Honors Program's first-year program at Texas A&M University. The prompts are tailored to our locally adapted rubric on lifelong and integrative learning, which also gives formative feedback to students' annual updates to an ePortfolio constructed around related questions (see next section). (See Appendix A for additional assignments).

1. Who Are You?

   The goal of this assignment is to help us get to know you and to have you start reflecting on your values and how you have developed these.

This exercise is important because it provides you an opportunity to think about your values, interests, and strengths. The ability to articulate these is important when making important life decisions and when prioritizing new opportunities and obligations.

Instructions:

Tell the story of your life, highlighting memories or events that you feel are important to who you are today. To help guide your writing, think about the following questions:

- What is most important in your life? Where do these values come from?
- What do you do? What topics interest you?
- How would you describe yourself as a learner? What is your work ethic like?
- What are your strengths/talents and weaknesses/deficits?

2. Courage & Values

The goal this week is to help you further explore your values in relation to your long-term plans and identify areas for growth to become the person you want to be.

Instructions:

Lee Walker, ‘63, has led an extraordinary life full of adventure and success. He has shared stories of that success, along with the failures that led to that success, with students on the Champe Fitzhugh Honors International Leadership seminar. In distilling the lessons of his life, Mr. Walker identified three important characteristics that led to his success: imagination, courage, and gratitude. We have already asked you to consider how gratitude can help you identify your core values in the “Thank You Letter” assignment. In this assignment, we ask you to consider courage as another way to help you focus on those values most important to you. We will focus on imagination in upcoming assignments like the “Real World Issue” and “Personal Statement.”

Mr. Walker likes to talk about “courage pushups,” or doing small acts of courage each day that build your resolve “muscles” and equip

you to face bigger challenges when they come. With this metaphor in mind, please respond to the following questions:

- Describe a time that you tried something that you weren't sure of the outcome when you started. What did you learn about opening yourself up that way?
- Describe a time that you failed at something. How did you/are you working your way back from that failure? Who or what were/are your resources in that process?
- Thinking about the experiences you've just described: can you identify any common thread between them? Are there particular things that you find yourself willing to be more courageous about? If so, how would you describe that as a personal value?
- How can you/have you adopt/ed the concept of "courage push-ups" in your life?

3. Real-World Issue

   The goal of this assignment is to help you connect your personal interests and values to real-world issues that may impact your career.

   Instructions:

   Review your previous assignments in which you described who you are, what your values are, what your strengths are, and how you hope to grow over the course of your undergraduate career.

   With that understanding of yourself in mind, describe an issue, question, or problem in your intended career field that you are passionate about, want to contribute to answering, or that you find interesting.

   A few notes that may help with common questions or concerns:

   - If you struggle to find a topic, don't panic. You can use the break to talk with someone in your field/industry or read about your intended career field.
   - You may change your topic for the final assignment, if needed.
   - If you cannot find an issue in your intended field that you feel passionate about, is there an issue in another field that you do find interesting?

- Find several news stories that you are interested in. Try to figure out what these stories have in common. While it may not be obvious at first glance, your major/disciplinary interest likely has a way to address this topic. Once you identify your topic, remember that you can always use the expertise of the subject-expert librarians to help you find sources that will let you see how people working in your intended field are approaching the issue.
- You can find a listing of the most pressing world problems from "the effective altruism community" at <https://80000hours.org/articles/cause-selection>.

Integrating Vocation into Honors Courses and ePortfolios

As Clydesdale described in *The Purposeful Graduate*, context matters greatly when designing courses or experiences related to vocation or meaningful work. At some institutions, robust retreat programs serve as the primary vehicle for vocational discernment. At others, vocational programming occurs as a part of the classroom experience.

Vocational reflection is oriented to helping students think about their lives more broadly and in longer time spans of time than is conventional within the limits of a course. Nevertheless, a course can be an important location for making vocational thinking concrete and practical rather than holding it in an idealized, abstract space. In their sophomore year, students in the Trinity Christian College Honors Program normally take a required philosophy course that is different from the philosophy course in the regular curriculum. The course has been an example of innovation in the honors program that the rest of the college followed: the course both in and outside of honors is now more aligned with the college's increasingly articulated concern with students' vocational discernment and formation. The honors philosophy course approaches vocation from four angles: knowing, calling, identity, and commitment. Students first encounter these four angles by confronting four questions: Who am I? (identity); Why am I here? (calling); What kind of life is worth the risk of living it? (commitment); How can I tell whether my answers to any of these questions is reliable? (knowing).

A recursive focal point for these big vocationally oriented questions is a single assignment that students engage at multiple points throughout the course. One way of helping students to broaden their sense of vocation is to direct them to think about their vocation not only as something that will

happen later, for which they are preparing now, but also as something that is going on now; this helps them think about vocation as not only a particular "what" but as the larger "how" of their lives. At three points throughout the course (early, middle, and late), students write and subsequently work back into and extend an essay titled "My vocation in this course." The prompt for the early-stage version of this semester-long reflective writing includes the following questions:

> As you consider the course's focus, objectives, and structure (in light of the syllabus and your experience of our first few class meetings):
>
> - What particular gifts and abilities do you have which will contribute to the flourishing of the whole class? What are some specific ways in which you intend to put these gifts and abilities to work, in and out of class meetings? How do these intentions connect to the stated priorities of the course?
> - What about the course do you expect will be challenging, unfamiliar, or uncomfortable for you? What are some specific ways in which you intend to address such challenge, unfamiliarity, discomfort? How do these intentions connect to the stated priorities of the course?
> - What intentions do you have for this course that, while they may not directly connect to either of the two categories mentioned above, are important to your understanding of your calling, your vocation at this time in your life?
> - How are your observations and intentions related to some elements of what we have been reading and discussing so far? That is, how does your own sense of what you are doing and are called to do in this course relate to (how is it supported by, challenged by, complicated by, etc.) what we have been encountering?
> - How do you know all of the things the other questions here ask you about?

Asking students to consider their meaning and purpose "now" affords them some critical reflection tools to consider questions of vocation throughout their college years. When they transition from college into workplace and community roles, they have already cultivated a sense of vocation.

Vocational discernment can happen at all stages of a college experience from the introduction of reflective prompts and community building experiences to assignments and professional exploration. Saint Louis University

features several opportunities for junior and senior honors students to place their learning in the context of their emerging professional and vocational identity. Students can opt into a one-credit course called "Honors Professional Development and Vocational Discernment," which takes the form of an intentionally sequenced five-part workshop series and in which students think and write extensively about the substance of their academic and personal lives, then reflecting on aspirations for future work and service. The goal is for students to emerge from this course with both concrete professional skills and philosophical insights to aid in a job search or graduate school application.

The course at St. Louis University encourages deep reflection in two ways. First, it requires that all students compose a narrative autobiography in which they consider their values and professional/academic ambitions. When students begin to take stock of their lives and the people, experiences, and ideas that comprise it, they often begin to identify major themes that can inform future action. As they do so, they begin to shape a narrative that gives them more confidence in the decisions they have made and will make in the future. Clydesdale's research on purposeful work initiatives on college campuses supports this view (*Purposeful Graduate*). Based on his review of colleges and universities around the country, students who took part in purposeful education programs "voiced longer-term perspectives and demonstrated persistence in spite of setbacks"; he also noted that "participation in purpose exploration programs . . . generat[ed] broader satisfaction with these graduates' life-at-present" (117). In short, exercises like writing a narrative autobiography can make a difference in graduates' post-college overall happiness by compelling critical self-reflection on choices made, successes and failures, and opportunities gained (and lost) during college.

The second main way that the St. Louis University course fosters reflection on purpose is through a session focused explicitly on an understanding of vocation. Facilitated by a member of SLU's Department of Theological Studies and inspired by readings from Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass's *Leading Lives that Matter*: *What We Should Do and Who We Should Be*, students consider what it means to have a vocation as opposed to, say, a career or a job. If students grant that a vocational identity carries a higher responsibility, they then wrestle with competing definitions from theological, philosophical, and other contemporary sources on the meaning of the term. They consider whether a vocational identity compels them to take on a specific career or instead to have multiple "callings" in life, regardless of their paid occupation.

Ultimately, this session encourages them to be thoughtful about how they define their vocation in both their career and their personal life. Students also consider how their developing sense of vocation fits in the context of prospective careers, graduate schools, competitive scholarships, and fellowship opportunities. Ultimately, the course aims to situate students' professional goals within some greater understanding of who they are, where they have been, where they are going, and what values guide them.

As we ask students to consider their vocational identities, bringing together the many pieces of their honors education—including coursework, internships, service, and co-curricular activities—becomes an important process. The goal is to continue an assessment of their talents, values, and experiences so that they see their lives as purposeful and understand the ways they do and can contribute to the greater good.

The use of ePortfolios is a helpful tool in this reflection of learning and growth, supporting and enhancing student reflection in ways that are not new to honors (Zubizarreta; Corley & Zubizarreta). AAC&U has recently acknowledged the power of this kind of meaning-making activity as the "eleventh high impact practice," joining other pedagogical innovations such as learning communities, undergraduate research, and capstone experiences that also saw their start in an honors context (Watson et al.). In the context of discerning vocation, ePortfolios provide space and structure for students to consider their curricular and co-curricular choices together, connecting them to their values and goals in order to create meaning and evaluate learning.

At Texas A&M, students receive guidance in this reflective process in the form of an evaluation rubric (see <http://tx.ag/ePortfolio>). This rubric, a local adaptation of the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics for lifelong and integrative learning, evaluates students' responses to three basic questions: What have you done ? Why is it important (so what)? How will your experience shape your future plans (now what)? Within each question, the rubric identifies characteristics of lifelong and integrative learning, revealing how these are demonstrated. Students are evaluated at the end of each of their first three years and are expected to show improvement from year to year. The intent of this practice is to help students iteratively refine their own understanding of their values, how these values connect to their goals and guide their decisions, and how they are using their refined understanding to continually improve. The prompts that we give students to guide their responses toward this rubric are adapted below.

What?—Interests, Opportunities, KSA

- What are my interests and what opportunities do I see to pursue those in my undergraduate career?
- What are my long-term plans? How are these connected to my core values?
- What classes, lectures, organizations, communities, events, or experiences such as study abroad, undergraduate research, service, or internships have been meaningful to me? How have these reinforced my goals, refined them, or changed them?
- What knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) have I built to this point in my undergraduate career?

So What?—Reflect on Why these Experiences Matter to You

- What has surprised me in my undergraduate education?
- What has caused me to feel excitement or accomplishment?
- What has caused me to feel concern or disappointment?
- How have I grown in my awareness of issues/questions/or problems in my intended field?

Now What?—Connect Experiences & Interests to Your Plans

- How do I see the various aspects of my education, both in and out of the classroom, coming together to help me achieve my goals?
- What gaps in my knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) do I need to fill?
- How is my capstone project helping (or how will my capstone project help) me build confidence in my knowledge, skills, and abilities as I embark on a career?
- How will I celebrate my successes?
- How will I respond to setbacks and disappointment?
- What are my next steps in pursuing my long-term goals?

Vocational Exploration in Advising and Senior Experiences

When students arrive at the final stage of their honors experience, the occasion invites a serious consideration of the past as they look toward their future vocational identity. They have an opportunity to assess their deepest desires alongside the needs of community, family, and workplace. Signature work, as described by AAC&U, is a culminating experience in which the student selects the topic and form of a project and completes it independently with guidance from an expert mentor (Peden; Smith and Fall). Examples might include a service project, capstone experience, or ePortfolio. No matter the format or focus, a key part of the experience is the student's articulation of how the project draws on their previous learning both in and out of the classroom and how it connects to their future plans. Ideally, students also articulate how their work fits into a larger conversation about real-world questions or issues that are important to them. In cultivating a sense of vocation, students are connecting aspects of their past and present to discern purpose and meaning for their future life trajectories. They are also connecting individual talents and goals to the needs of the world around them.

At Texas A&M, students have a number of different capstone options to fulfill these expectations (see <http://tx.ag/Capstones>). Whether they are pursuing a scholarly thesis, undertaking a service project, teaching a seminar, enhancing a student organization, or reflecting on the impact of the arts in their education, students are building confidence in their learning and demonstrating competence in their knowledge, skills, and abilities for future employers. They are also demonstrating broader reflection on their purpose in their community, family, and workplace.

Texas A&M's honors program is in the process of developing capstone evaluations based on the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) career competencies:

- Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
- Oral/Written Communications
- Teamwork/Collaboration
- Digital Technology
- Leadership
- Professionalism/Work Ethic

- Career Management
- Global/Intercultural Fluency

A deeper dive into these competencies reveals important overlaps with the work of discerning vocation, including reasoning ability, clear articulation of ideas, the ability to work across differences, demonstrated integrity, and the ability to "identify and articulate one's skills, strengths, knowledge, and experiences" (NACE) related to one's chosen career path as well as identify areas for growth and development.

Students need to reflect on their role as change agents, and signature works are their opportunity to leave their mark at Texas A&M. The incentive for students to invest time in effecting change on their campus is the understanding that their personal experiences, their expertise in a field of study, and their comprehension of issues in their community are all unique.

For example, Texas A&M senior biomedical sciences major Rahul Atodaria participated in the Undergraduate Service Scholar Capstone with a project called a "Day of Play." He partnered with a local 24-hour emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence to host a simple, sensitive, and relatable opportunity for children and their parents to enjoy local vendors and interact with community leaders, providing them with a therapeutic outlet in hopes of showing them that their community cares and that there is a brighter future for them.

Here, Rahul is connecting his experience in the course Psychology of Adjustment to address the hopelessness that some individuals feel while living in shelters. His studies of the effectiveness of placebo treatment and of hope as a key component in addressing some health conditions are the foundation of his project. As an aspiring physician, Rahul's project focuses on how events like "Day of Play" address the effects of both indirect and direct forms of domestic violence on children. His hope is that this experience will equip him with the necessary tools to identify the subtleties in his patients' lives that influence their health but may not manifest themselves explicitly.

Projects like Rahul's reveal how one student can leave his mark on his community. Another layer in reflecting on these dynamic projects is the focus on sustainability. Students reflect on ways to inspire others to pick up where they left off when they graduate. Students are encouraged to leave their communities better than they found them and also to encourage other students to carry on the work they began, goals that resonate with Clydesdale's research showing that students who participate in vocation exploration experiences have the tools to find meaning and purpose, along with commitment to

community, after college. Such experiences at the final stages of a student's experience suggest that vocational exploration affords a deeper understanding of the self within a future context of responsibilities. While acting as change agents through the signature projects, students also have space to imagine and reflect on ways their future lives might connect to their inner hopes as well as the hopes of those around them. Students need to be allowed this space to imagine their future selves.

At Christ College (Valparaiso University), all graduating seniors participate in a one-credit colloquium built on questions of vocation and the meaning of their education more broadly. Over the years, the colloquium has taken many forms, but most recently it has been anchored by a "Senior Weekend" experience, just after classes start, when students spend time together as a cohort and can read, reflect, and discuss together questions that often feel increasingly urgent at this juncture in their lives. While some components of the colloquium tend toward the pragmatic, e.g., résumés and personal statements, the chief concern of the colloquium is that students step back a bit from the immediacy of the day-to-day and use shared readings and reflective exercises to meditate deeply on a more capacious sense of "vocation" and what it means to be anchored and enlivened by various commitments and experiences beyond the merely academic or career-oriented. Schwehn and Bass's *Leading Lives That Matter*: *What We Should Do and Who We Should Be* serves as a grounding anthology in this endeavor, with readings grouped according to essential vocabularies, e.g., "authenticity," "vocation," and "virtue," as well as a series of framing questions about identity, work, balance, and purpose.

For the senior colloquium itself, much of the richness of the experience derives from the fact that students participated in an intensive first-year honors program focused on "the good life" and "human flourishing" three years before. The first-year program drew on texts from Western and Eastern traditions, spanning from the ancient to the modern-day. Critically examining such rich texts and questions as newly arrived college students helps set the table for a return in the senior year to reflecting purposefully on "the good life" and one's sense of self, around the table once again with the well-known friends and fellow-travelers of multiple honors seminars. The first-year program and the senior colloquium serve as bookends in the curriculum. They are both undertaken collectively by the entire cohort, a reminder that challenging texts and questions about vocation are part of an ongoing conversation, often best taken up within a generous community.

The Christ College's senior retreat recently began including reflective practices: time when students can walk the prayer labyrinth by the chapel,

find a quiet space, go for a walk, contemplate nature, or compose a short piece of writing as a way to model the kind of quiet we have to make room for in our lives in order to better attend to big and pressing questions.

Encouraging a sense of vocation in honors can extend to students' interactions with an academic advisor. Advisors can and often do occupy an important role in the discernment process as they facilitate students' academic and personal growth: guiding curricular decisions, encouraging research, determining extracurricular interests, and ensuring completion of program requirements. The advising situation in honors differs from a typical prescriptive mode. In many honors advising scenarios, the concern is less about the minutiae of registrar-mandated forms for major changes or minimum enrollment for classes and more about "inquiry into academic opportunity broadly defined" (Huggett 77). Therefore, honors advisors can invite or challenge students to "examine their academic goals, describe their aspirations, reflect on their decisions, or speculate on the possible outcomes of pursuing specific opportunities" (Huggett 85). Some of these discussions can lead to discomfort as students entertain future career or vocational prospects that differ from their intended path. Hause's charge to practice careful, attentive, and charitable listening takes on special importance in this context. Attentive and intentional advising conversations can reveal deeper motivations or apprehensions that accompany vocational decision-making.

At Saint Louis University, an advising strategic plan promotes this kind of intentional listening and aspirational thinking, encouraging growth over a student's lifespan in honors that are oriented towards the program's core values: holistic learning, academic innovation, Ignatian reflection, and global citizenship. Each year of a student's participation in the program calls for a different advising interaction. In years one and two, the advisor encourages students to pursue learning opportunities across various disciplines to aid in the discernment process. By pursuing a holistic education, students may discover new interests or affirm existing interests. Regular conversations along the way help both the advisor and the student determine when fruitful avenues for new inquiry exist or when affirming experiences call for deeper study. As juniors in the program, students are advised to identify internship opportunities, secure research positions, and craft their own original research proposals. As students discover innovative academic projects, they develop confidence in their skills and greater commitment to their chosen vocational paths. During their final year, students continue to pursue research and internship posts, but they also pivot to a posture of reflection in which they tie experiential learning

opportunities to their quest for personal and professional purpose. In addition, they may take a senior seminar course in which they grapple with the complexity of identity in a globalized world.

Throughout a student's undergraduate experience, the advisor serves a developmental role by challenging students to pursue rigorous coursework, formative experiential learning opportunities, and research that enhances their academic field of study. Advising students as they consider and apply for competitive fellowships or graduate school programs can quickly become a rich opportunity not only for intentional listening, but for deeper conversations about vocation. Many honors students find being a student a comfortable space, so applying for further study or a competitive academic award seems an obvious choice. These students also need to slow down, however, and reflect on their evolving sense of self as well as the values and commitments that ground them as they discern their path and next steps. Often this reflection occurs in conversations as well as the inevitable drafting and workshopping of personal essays that accompany any of these applications.

At Christ College (Valparaiso), part of the material used to encourage students to engage in this process of discernment is Mary Catherine Bateson's powerful *Composing a Life*, an excerpt of which appears in Schwehn and Bateson's *Leading Lives that Matter.* Bateson evocatively draws out the nuances of "composing," challenging readers to identify the plotlines they have perhaps internalized and to wrest a sort of creative control over the way they frame the "continuities" and "discontinuities" in the stories of their lives (462–63). Ultimately, the act of deep reflection and story-telling—regardless of the outcome of any particular application or competition—is satisfying and rewarding for honors students. They leave the process with a sense of their "story," but also with a fuller understanding that the narrative is ever-evolving and open to their capacity to reflect, narrate, and integrate different aspects and experiences of their lives.

CONCLUSION

We see the honors experience as a place of formation, reflection, and purpose as students contemplate their vocational identities and their place in the world during their college years and beyond. Cultivating a sense of vocation within honors courses, programs, initiatives, and institutions can help students navigate life challenges, offering a framework with which to better understand their individual purpose within complex cultural and communal landscapes.

The current initiatives within honors education already share many goals and strategies of vocational exploration and therefore can benefit from increased attention to and development of a sense of vocation within programmatic and curricular goals. As Kathryn Kleinhans suggests:

> On the one hand, educators have the responsibility of helping students understand that they have a vocation as students, here and now, not just an awaiting future vocation in an eventual career. On the other hand, we need to recognize that the academic vocation of students does not negate their other callings in domestic, economic and communal life. We need to help them identify and affirm these roles and relationships as legitimate callings and we need to help them learn to think and to act responsibly, as whole persons, within the complex intersections of lived human experience. (102)

Honors education brings a depth and breadth to college experience that affords this kind of examination of individual values and community needs. Thus, we are poised as honors educators to help students in this reflective work, affirming their many gifts as they develop their own gifts, aptitudes, and goals within a vocational identity.

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APPENDIX A

Further First-Year Reflective Prompts

A. Thank You Letter

The goal this week is to help you deepen your understanding of your values and how you came to hold these values.

By writing a letter of gratitude to someone who has inspired you, you will reflect on why that inspiration was important and how you came to value the lesson(s) that you've learned. This exercise will be good practice for your personal statement and provides practice at writing a formal letter (e.g., a thank-you letter after an interview).

Instructions:

Respond to the questions below for three different things that you are grateful for learning. Then, in business letter format, write a thank-you letter to one of the people who taught or guided you through an important lesson. Submit your final, proofread and edited letter. You are also encouraged to send your letter to the person you wrote it to!

Think about what you're most grateful for having learned:

- Who taught it to you?
- What did you learn?
- Why are you grateful for learning this?

You can find guidance on writing a business letter at <http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/Students/Writing-Speaking-Guides/Alphabetical-List-of-Guides/Professional-Writing/Business-Letters>.

B. Ethical Implications

Building and maintaining integrity is an ongoing process. Doing this thought experiment about integrity will help you think through how you would react in a difficult situation so that when you are presented with an ethical dilemma in real life, you'll be better prepared to make a decision that is in line with your values.

> Integrity is telling myself the truth. And honesty is telling the truth to other people.
>
> —Spencer Johnson

> It takes courage to create a meaningful life of integrity. It also requires good company. And practice.
>
> —Shelly Francis

Integrity has also been defined as doing the right thing even when no one is watching by figures such as Oprah Winfrey and C.S. Lewis.

Instructions:

Imagine that you are well-established in your desired career, doing meaningful work that is fulfilling, respected, and well-compensated. Now, imagine that you are presented with an ethical dilemma that makes you uncomfortable to continue with the status quo, but addressing it might cost you the comfort that you now enjoy.

- Write a response to the following questions:
- What is the ethical issue that you imagined?
- How will you react, and why?

C. Summer Plans & Development Gaps

The purpose of this assignment is to encourage you to start (or continue) being intentional in how you are investing your resources of time and energy in making decisions that are aligned with your values and goals.

This assignment asks you to identify a skill you are proficient in as well as one that you hope to develop and at least one way you want to use the summer break to work toward the long-term goal you wrote about in your real-world issue assignment.

Instructions:

Write a reflection that addresses the following questions and upload it here as a .doc or .pdf file:

- What specific knowledge, skills, or abilities related to your long-term goal(s) have you already developed? What do you still need to develop?
- Which of these do you have an opportunity to work on this summer? What kinds of opportunities are available to you?
- Which one of these opportunities is highest priority for you? Why?
- What steps have you already taken to pursue this opportunity, or do you plan to take?

D. Personal Statement

The goal of writing a personal statement seems deceptively simple: You have two pages to articulate a goal and communicate how your personal qualities and experiences have prepared you to meet this goal. Typically, the audience is trying to learn more about you as they prepare to evaluate you for a job, graduate school, or a nationally competitive award. Success in these situations will mean selectively sharing, not only the experiences that best showcase yourself, but also those that connect your values with your audience members.

Depending on the purpose, you might approach writing a personal statement in several different ways. The purpose of this assignment is to have you analyze how your experiences during your first year have reinforced or modified your future direction and values, identify past and planned experiences that demonstrate your values, commitments, and connect your overall college experience thus far to the life that you hope to live.

Instructions:

Respond to the prompts below. In order to focus your writing, we are giving you two prompt questions as well as guiding questions for each.

Your response should be 2 pages and fully respond to the two prompt questions.

1. Reflect on the past year: Have your goal and expectations shifted, narrowed, and/or changed since coming college?
    - What choices did you make that challenged you, required you to grow, or to take a risk?
    - How did your first affect your career plans or goals? What did you learn that will translate to your career?
    - How did your major or coursework affect how you approached your first year? How did what you learned in your first year affect the way you think of your major and future career?
    - How has what you learned in your first year affected the way you think about your major, your courses, or your career goals? About undergraduate research or other projects?
    - What was unexpected or surprised you?

2. What are your plans going forward? With all of the possibilities that exist, how have you used (or will you use) your goals and values to identify opportunities that are a good fit?

    - How you would define "a life well-lived"?
    - How are your personal values and long-term aspirations reflected in your choices of academic discipline, intended career field, and personal aspirations? (think back to your "Who Are You?" and "Summer Plans & Development Gaps" essays)
    - What opportunities and/or challenges exist within these areas that will allow you to make a positive impact to others, while also authentically reflecting your commitment to your own personal values? (think back to your "Real-World Issue Assignment")
    - How will your academic, co-curricular involvement, and your signature work (Capstone) choices help you to prepare for your "life well-lived"? (think back to your "Courage & Values" essay)

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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.

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NCHC Monographs & Journals

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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.

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.

Fundrai$ing for Honor$: 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 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.

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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.

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, Latina/o, 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.

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.

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