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Forging a More Equitable Path for Honors Education: Advancing Racial, Ethnic, and Socioeconomic Diversity

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Abstract: Despite a long tradition of social science research on educational access and barriers to inclusion for underrepresented minorities and the poor, until recently such issues have gotten relatively little attention in quantitative investigations of honors education. Public interest in educational access has grown in recent years, however, energizing discussions about the need to confront the exclusionary features of honors. The authors use data from the 2018 Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Survey to examine the degree and variability of underrepresentation in honors at a sample of major universities in the United States. They then identify a set of relatively diverse honors programs for a case study exploring the features and strategies employed among such programs. The authors find that honors programs vary widely in the degree of diverse representation and that more diverse programs engage in robust efforts both to recruit and to retain underrepresented minorities.

Keywords: race and ethnicity; diversity in education; educational achievement; attainment gap; stratification

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BACKGROUND

Diversity in honors has been a topic of discussion in honors education for decades, but interest in the subject has grown recently. The 2017 conference of the National Collegiate Honors Council implored attendees to explore "Just Honors" and the topic of racial and social justice. That same week the NCHC Board of Directors added a priority of "diversity and inclusion" to its strategic plan, and in 2019 the Board of Directors published a statement on "Diversity and Inclusion," including language about the promotion of "inclusive excellence" and "educational equity." In many ways, these statements represent a forceful answer to Norm Weiner's question in 2009 in the pages of this journal: "Honors is Elitist, and What's Wrong with That?" (Weiner, 2009). In other ways, though, the idea of selectivity, elitism, and exclusivity raised by Weiner continues to exist in an unresolved tension with recent calls for inclusivity.

Honors education, of course, is but one corner in the larger area of tertiary education in modern societies, and a long tradition in the social sciences has explored whether educational institutions, higher education in particular, reduce or reinforce social class and racial inequality (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977; MacLeod, 1987; Lareau, 2003; Hout, 2009; Khan, 2011; Torche, 2011; Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013; von Hippel, Workman, and Downey 2018). Arguably, the question of class and equality is one of the most centrally important theoretical questions in the sociological study of education. Research has addressed the extent to which formal schooling functions as a "great equalizer" to reduce social inequalities by creating opportunities for children of lower and working-class families, immigrants, and racial or ethnic minorities to escape the conditions of their birth and achieve upward intergenerational mobility. Conversely, research has focused on the extent to which cultural or structural forces in and around schooling encourage the perpetuation of social inequality from generation to generation as well as the net effect of these countervailing forces. While many scholars point to college education as an equalizing force in society, creating opportunities for people of all walks of life to sink or swim on the strength of their own merits, many others argue that education functions as a gatekeeper and plays an important role in sustaining socioeconomic, racial, and similar inequalities across generations (for discussions, see Hout, 2009; Torche, 2011; Krauze and Slomczynski, 1985).

The chief way to reconcile this seeming contradiction has to do with access. While attainment of a college degree, for instance, does in the main

help to propel people from lower-status backgrounds into better jobs and higher economic and social standing than those in which they grew up, getting into and paying for college, as one of the primary pathways to middle-class status, can be a more difficult proposition, and those from more precarious backgrounds who are able to make it into college often face other challenges that make the attainment of a college degree less likely. At each stage, the primary barriers to educational attainment are mechanisms of exclusion.

While the focus of much of this research is the differential access to college and differential attainment of educational degrees, similar theoretical questions exist for other points of educational access, such as what kinds of colleges one has access to—for example, community college vs. traditional four-year degree institutions; public vs. private; open access vs. elite—as well as what kinds of academic programs are accessible. While the question of diversity and inclusion is one that pervades all of U.S. higher education, access to collegiate honors programming is implicated in this larger set of questions about access versus exclusion. These questions are especially pertinent to collegiate honors education because it has so often and for so long been associated with selectivity and the status conferred by providing access to some students while excluding most others from what is known in the social sciences as a "positional good": a desirable marketplace good that has value precisely because others cannot have it, cannot have as much of it, or cannot have what are regarded as the better forms of it (Veblen, 1899; Hirsch, 1976; Bills, 2016; Di Stasio, Bol, & Van de Werfhorst, 2016). Hence, as is often the case with honors education, what we learn from experiments and strategies that honors educators employ can be applied at a larger scale to higher education in general.

ADDRESSING DIVERSITY IN HONORS EDUCATION: A REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

Scholarship since at least the mid-1990s has shown the positive impact of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity on higher education and learning (e.g., Bowen and Bok, 2019; Maruyama et al., 2000). In other words, an initiative that originally was meant to benefit students of color by providing equal access to education was also found to produce a racial and ethnic diversity on campus that had educational benefits for all students, minority and white alike (Maruyama et al., 2000; Ashton, 2009; Ticknor et al., 2020). As a result, colleges and universities today have an additional incentive to increase access

and expand diversity by recruiting underrepresented students through programs that reach into high schools and community colleges and by providing need-based financial aid awards and more inclusive admissions policies.

Honors programs and colleges have been even more challenged in creating a diverse and inclusive climate since they generally have adopted selective admission and retention practices. As noted by a National Collegiate Honors Council Task Force's recently published position paper:

> Approaches to honors recruiting and admission have historically been relatively narrow and restrictive: focused on GPA and test scores, language around superiority, and emphasis on benefits or perks. Such approaches have privileged a very limited portion of a university's potential student body. (National Collegiate Honors Council, 2020, p. 4)

Despite this inherent challenge facing honors educators, the lack of research and scholarship on diversity in honors education was recognized only in the late 1990s. One of the first articles that acknowledged this need was by Donna Y. Ford, Tarek C. Grantham, and J. John Harris, III (1996) in the related field of gifted education. The authors state that although "much has been written about the importance of multicultural education to the psychological, affective, and educational well-being of racially and culturally diverse students, a review of the literature . . . indicates that the need for multicultural education has received little attention in gifted education" (p. 72). Although gifted education focuses on kindergarten through secondary school, that population has similarities to post-secondary honors students, more than a few of whom are what have been termed "gifted students" until they reach college or the university. Scholars in the field of honors education soon acknowledged the same lack of research (e.g., Pittman, 2004).

Existing studies on diversity have largely focused on single programs or colleges or on specific ethnic and racial groups, and typically sample sizes have been small (see Cognard-Black and Spisak, 2019, for an exception). Two National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) monographs address diversity in honors education from philosophical and political perspectives (Coleman and Kotinek, 2010; Coleman, Kotinek, and Oda, 2017). The earlier monograph used an approach that was conceptual rather than quantitative, providing models for supportive and enriching educational environments. The second continued with a theoretical and political approach to creating diverse and enriching models for honors educators. Another more recent collection of essays on diversity, edited by Graeme Harper (2019), takes a

more grounded approach, with institution-specific examples for addressing the lack of diversity in honors.

One early study that does extend its reach beyond a single institution is by Reenea Rosheene Harrison-Cook (1999), who conducted a quantitative study of 256 African American students attending five NCHC-member predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Her goal was discovering why most of these 256 students chose not to participate in honors education at their institutions. Also, she included in her study ideas on how to increase African American participation. Harrison-Cook's study includes data collected from a preliminary survey of fifteen colleges and universities with honors programs (two of which were part of her study). She concluded from her survey that honors programs are failing to attract a substantial number of African American students. She found that a large majority of the non-honors respondents believed that they were at risk because they might lose their financial aid due to low grades. Participants indicated that they needed financial incentives to participate in honors education. She also found that non-honors respondents believed that honors appealed mostly to white students.

Several other studies have focused on the African American population in honors programs or colleges, but none using a quantitative approach. Fred A. Bonner's 2010 book on academically gifted African American male college students, which is largely based on two case studies he did in 2001 (Bonner, 2001), addresses the question of what factors influence the success of academically gifted African American college students. He presents case studies of two African American students, one attending a historically black institution and the other attending a predominantly white institution. Factors he deems most important are relationships with faculty, peer relationships, family influence and support, factors influencing college selection, self-perception, and institutional environment. We note in passing an article by Donna Y. Ford and Michelle Trotman Scott (2010), which, although it does not focus directly on honors education, surveys theories that explain why African Americans are underrepresented in gifted education. The authors present nine theories or frameworks, as they term them, as well as a listing of authors who have written on these theories. The authors believe that the Deficit Thinking theory is at the heart of underrepresentation of African Americans in gifted education. Deficit thinking in education, as they define it, is the view that the "alleged deficiencies of poor and minority group students and their families . . . [are] predominantly responsible for these students' school problems and academic failure, while frequently holding structural inequality blameless" (p. 2).

Additional studies, although they do not include specific data on participation of African Americans in honors programs, address the possible causes for that underrepresentation. Lulrick Balzora (2015) in an unpublished dissertation examines African American male awareness of and application to honors programs at two selected state colleges in the southeastern region of the United States. He investigates which recruitment methods are most effective in serving the needs of this population of students. His findings indicate that African American male participants valued the atmosphere and reputation of an honors program more than its facilities, personal influences, and incentives. Another study that focused on African Americans, by Bridal Pearson and Deborah Kohl (2010), gives a more informative perspective on why African American males are underrepresented in high-achievement academic settings. They frame their approach in the context of the socio-psychological experiences of these students as they make their way through the education pipeline:

> Historical, situational, and developmental cues often communicate to these students that they are not equipped to engage in higher-order intellectual activities. A long history of these negative educational and social experiences results in low self-efficacy and destroys motivation towards honors-level participation in college. (p. 31)

This perception is similar to the theory of deficit thinking posited by Ford and Scott (2010) as the main cause of underrepresentation of African Americans in gifted education. Pearson and Kohl also suggest specific and useful strategies to welcome African American male students into honors programs.

One final example is a study in 2001 by Anthony Pittman, who investigates why students of color at the University of Connecticut may be reluctant to be part of the university's honors program. The sample size was small: 6 out of a population of 831 students. Pittman collected interview data and found that nonwhite and white participants had distinctly different views on the barriers the program presented to persons of color. White participants thought the barriers for nonwhites were poor performance on standardized tests and the honors program's lackluster recruiting efforts. Conversely, nonwhite participants thought the barriers for students of color were "lack of diversity, misperceptions of honors as an elitist organization, and misperceptions of honors as an unnecessary addition to their course loads" (p. 136). Subsequent research also shows these same three factors, in some variation, as major barriers to diversity for honors programs. In our discussion section, we look more closely at strategies for improving diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in honors programs and summarize results.

Three more studies prove valuable in addressing diversity. First is the detailed account Patricia J. Smith and John T. V. Zagurski (2013) give of their data-driven strategy to increase retention and diversity at the Schedler Honors College at the University of Central Arkansas. They moved from a selection process based on standardized testing (SAT and ACT), which have been shown to contain class and race biases while not accurately predicting retention, to a holistic, multi-criterion selection process that deemphasizes standardized tests. They analyzed the outcomes to test whether variables in the admissions model predicted retention and then made changes in the weighting of variables for a revised rubric, which they used thereafter for their admissions process. In addition to improving retention, their goal was to improve racial and ethnic diversity in their student population. In the first year they implemented their holistic admissions process, the freshman non-white student population increased from a prior average of 12.3 percent to 16 percent. In a subsequent conversation with one of the authors (Smith, 2018), we learned that since the implementation of their holistic admissions process and for their last three entering cohorts, 22 percent of their students were minority students. We also learned that they used targeted recruitment, in which they made sure minority students were pictured in their recruiting materials and online; made sure their ambassadors were representative of their student body; and, in order to get the notice of minority students, started the practice of reaching out to any student who had applied to the university who met their minimum requirements. In their outreach they simply informed students about the program and invited them to learn more instead of touting the status of the program and the accomplishments of its students. The Schedler Honors College's more inclusive admission policy and recruiting practices increased retention markedly by about 15 percent, and their minority representation in the college in the last several years is up to 25 percent.

Another study of note that details successful recruitment practices for diversifying an honors student population is Simon Stacey and Jodi Kelber-Kaye's (2018) account of the process they used at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) Honors College. In two ways their practices were similar to what Smith and Zagurski (2013) described for the Schedler Honors College. They revised their admissions process so that it was "more holistic, flexible and sensitive to the many forms that academic promise can assume" (6). They also intensified their recruiting and outreach to applicants and potential applicants to their college, particularly focusing on

underrepresented minorities. As did Schedler Honors College, they sought to help potential applicants understand what the honors college was and how it could benefit them instead of touting the accomplishments of their students. For this effort they had current honors college students handwrite notes or creative messages to potential students. Third, unique to their situation, they instituted a mentoring partnership with an anchor high school in Baltimore City, a large urban center near their university. The Baltimore City Schools have an unusually large underrepresented-minority (URM) population, around 90 percent, and much of the population is of relatively low socioeconomic status: 64.7 percent of the Baltimore City School students are classified as low income. The UMBC Honors College saw recruiting from this population as a way to increase racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity. They were able to form a mentorship program with the STEM magnet high school that paired AP Capstone students with University of Maryland Baltimore County faculty, who helped supervise their projects. Meetings with faculty brought the high school students onto campus, which in turn made them more aware of the academic facilities, including the UMBC Honors College. Because the college took advantage of circumstances and opportunity, it managed to create a pipeline that has potential despite being slow to develop.

Finally, a recent study in *JNCHC* by Cindy S. Ticknor, Andrea Dawn Frazier, Johniqua Williams, and Maryah Thompson (2020) focuses on the recruiting practices at the Columbus State University Honors College. To more effectively recruit students of color, they conducted focus groups with high-achieving students of color who were not part of their honors college to determine whether their recruiting efforts were reaching those students. They also examined whether there was a disconnect between what they promoted as benefits of participating in honors and what the students themselves valued. Columbus State University (CSU) itself has a relatively large percentage of URM students: nearly half its student population is non-white, and 38 percent identify as black or African American. The CSU Honors College's demographic, in contrast, was 76 percent white, with 14 percent black. Its Hispanic population was 5 percent as compared to CSU's 6 percent. Understanding the disparity in the black student population compared to CSU's was the main focus for their study. One of the predominant themes was a perceived mismatch between the perception that focus group participants had of themselves as students and scholars and the perception they had of students in the honors college. Specifically, when asked to describe an honors student at the university, participants responded that honors students were highly

intelligent but socially disconnected (i.e., had little or no social life), and in general they said that lifestyle did not appeal to them. Instead, they hoped for a balanced lifestyle that allowed them to have time for relaxation and recreation instead of only studying all the time. Participants, all of whom said they valued diversity, also assumed that the honors college was not intellectually or racially diverse. Participants' experiences with K–12 gifted programs and AP classes contributed to all these perceptions. Finally, participants did not see as valuable the benefits that the honors college offered, such as challenging classes, leadership development, and small classes. They thought that either these benefits were available to all students or that they were not of direct value for their particular career goals.

Competing values that favor recreation and social life over a bookish lifestyle are common among minority and majority students alike, however. Ticknor et al. acknowledge this possibility in their discussion but are unable to address it because of the way their analytic sample was constructed. Because Ticknor et al. interviewed only honors-eligible black, multiracial, and Hispanic students, they had no basis for comparison with white majority or Asian American students who similarly were eligible for honors yet chose not to apply. Thus, we cannot say from their study whether the values expressed for a "balanced" lifestyle would uniquely explain racial disparities in pursuit of honors education.

While the "possible selves" theory (Markus and Nurius, 1986) that Ticknor et al. use as a lens for interpreting their qualitative data enjoys significant support within psychology, as an explanation of racial disparities the framework shares theoretical similarities with anthropologist John U. Ogbu's (Ogbu, 1978; Fordham and Ogbu, 1986) disputed theory of "oppositional culture" by attempting to show how some minority groups contribute to their own disadvantage. In brief, this family of theories explains racial disparities in educational attainment by linking them back to limited opportunities that are internalized and affect minority students' self-concept, values, and motivation. These differences in values and motivation in turn lead to various kinds of resistance to formal schooling that manifest in "self-regulatory," self-defeating attitudes and behaviors: "Development can be seen as a process of acquiring and then achieving or resisting certain possible selves. Through the selection and construction of possible selves individuals can be viewed as active producers of their own development" (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 955). In the subsequent section, Markus and Nurius elaborate: "In this way, self-concept becomes a significant regulator of the individual's behavior" (p. 955). Ogbu's

explanation focuses more on the development of an "oppositional culture" among "involuntary minority" groups, but values and motivations remain a central theoretical linkage between perceived opportunities and educational outcomes. His theory became a popular explanation in the 1980s and 1990s, but empirical scrutiny of the explanation has raised serious doubts about its ability to describe differential educational outcomes of underrepresented minorities, especially once differences in socioeconomic status are accounted for (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Downey & Ainsworth-Darnell, 2002; Downey, 2008a; Downey, 2008b; Downey, Ainsworth, & Qian, 2009; Diamond and Huguley, 2014). As Downey (2008b) says, the "data did not cooperate" with Ogbu's predictions: "Rather, we found that blacks expressed greater optimism about their future, viewed education as more important, and exhibited more proschool attitudes than whites—all patterns contradicting the [oppositional culture] theory" (p. 108). Comparable analyses have not yet taken place specifically within honors, so it is difficult to say whether Ticknor et al.'s findings are generalizable and defensible in the presence of representative data and rigorous hypothesis testing, but the weight of the evidence against explanations in this theoretical tradition suggests that caution is warranted. One finding their study does reveal quite clearly, however, is that minority students value more diversity than many honors programs may have to offer, thus raising the possibility that honors education is perceived among minority applicants as a place of social isolation—one in which they may feel outnumbered, out of place, and unwelcome.

As a review of the related literature indicates, the challenge of inclusivity for honors educators has generated numerous strategies for achieving greater diversity. The most recent and comprehensive listing of such strategies was compiled by a task force of the National Collegiate Honors Council and published in a white paper (National Collegiate Honors Council Board of Directors Task Force, 2020, p. 3). As the authors of that white paper state, their approaches are intended for a broad audience of higher education administrators. Not all of the strategies in this list will fit all institutions:

- Frame Honors in Inclusive Ways So That All Students Can See Themselves in the Program's Language
- Market and Advertise Honors to All Potential Students Rather Than a Select Few
- Reimagine "Invitation Only" Pathways into Honors to Include an Open Application Process

- Develop Holistic Honors Admission Practices That Include Test Optional, Test Flexible, or Test Blind Approaches
- Develop Transfer-In Options That Provide Seamless Transition from One Program to Another
- Foster Relationships with Community and Campus Partners (Latinos in Action, AVID, McNair, Clemente, etc.)
- Eliminate Barriers to Entrance in Honors Programs and Colleges (Application Fees, Enrollment Fees, Minimum Entrance Requirements)
- Eliminate Barriers to Continued Participation in Honors Programs and Colleges

The white paper provides extended descriptions for each strategy as well as examples for most.

METHODS, ANALYTIC APPROACH, AND DATA

Our previous research has shown compelling evidence that traditionally underrepresented minorities and low-income students are, on average, even more underrepresented in honors than they are in the general undergraduate student body at major universities in the United States (Cognard-Black and Spisak, 2019). Focusing, however, only on averages, as useful an exercise as that can be, leads us to overlook what can often be important differences among honors programs. In this study, we expand on our previous research in which we used data from the 2018 Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Survey to explore demographic factors associated with honors student status and experiential factors associated with the honors student experience in college.

In our previous study, we noted that black and Hispanic students, in particular, were dramatically underrepresented in honors programs compared to their numbers in the larger university student bodies from which they were drawn. On average, black students were only about half as likely to be found in a university honors program as they were to be found on a college campus. Hispanic students were slightly better represented but were still 42 percent less likely to be in honors than they were to be on campus. In other words, at the typical university in the SERU sample, black and Hispanic students were substantially underrepresented within a context where black and Hispanic students were already underrepresented compared to the larger population of black and Hispanic people in the United States (see the endnote for a further

explanation of sampling procedures in that study). On many college campuses, then, honors students tend to be disproportionately white and Asian, as the SERU data demonstrate.

Similarly, low-income students, as indicated by the receipt of a Federal Pell grant at some point in college, were also significantly and substantially underrepresented among honors students compared to the larger student bodies at SERU schools. Indeed, only 27.5 percent of honors students self-identifying in the SERU sample reported having ever received a Pell grant compared to 40.5 percent of non-honors students, indicating that Pell grant recipients were 32 percent less likely to be in honors.

Whereas these data from our previous study show that black, Hispanic, and low-income students are dramatically underrepresented across the universities participating in the survey, one might expect that some honors programs would be better than others at maintaining a diverse honors student body and approaching race-ethnic and socioeconomic compositions that better match the universities, locales, and states in which they are situated.

To explore this supposition, our analytic approach was to borrow a model used by the *Chronicle of Higher Education (CHE)* in its 2019 article "How Well Do Freshmen at Flagships Reflect the Share of Underrepresented Minorities in Their States?" (*CHE*, 2019). The *CHE* approach was to calculate for flagship universities the percentage of students in the first-year class who were underrepresented minorities—defined as Native American, black, or Hispanic—and by way of comparison to calculate a difference score between that percentage and the known percentage of college-age underrepresented minorities in the state (defined as between 17 and 21 years of age). The 50 flagship universities were then ranked from high to low based on those difference scores. Only 5 out of the 50 leading public universities in the analysis had underrepresented minority percentages within 3 percentage points of the state percentage, and only 2 (both in states with unusually small minority populations) had underrepresented minorities in numbers greater than what would be expected under a condition of proportional representation. The other 48 universities all had negative difference scores, indicating underrepresentation compared to the state population, and in most cases the differences were quite large: one-fourth (13 out of 50) had negative difference scores in excess of 20 percentage points.

We borrowed the basic approach of the *Chronicle* model to compare representation of black, Hispanic, and Pell-eligible students in honors education, but we have adapted it in several respects. First, since we are primarily interested in honors programs (this terminology throughout includes honors colleges as

well) within universities, we make our primary focus a comparison between the percentage of a given group within honors and the percentage of that group within the larger university where an honors program is housed. Second, since simple difference scores—one percentage minus another—can exaggerate differences for schools and states with larger minority populations, compared to smaller ones, we use a ratio of honors to university percentage for a given group in order to rank schools. Third, while we rank schools by these ratios to capture the variation in the extent to which honors underrepresents minority and low-income students, we use arbitrary numeric school identification codes to distinguish schools in tabular presentations to preserve the anonymity of schools in the SERU sample. We preserve anonymity because ranking schools on any metric for the purposes of identifying which is better and which is worse is problematic in that the ranking can make what are often small differences in the underlying metric seem more important than they really are.

Part of our goal in this phase of our research is to identify schools that appear to be doing better in terms of proportional representation for the purposes of a case study of exemplary honors programs that we pursue in a second phase of this project discussed later. We do not, however, wish to name, call out, and publicize individual schools for doing better or worse. Our purpose is to explore variation and then make some attempt at theorizing about that variation, not publicly to shame or reward specific schools.

The case study methodology employed in the second phase of our project is a qualitative approach that involves focus on a single or small number of specific cases for in-depth examination as illustrative examples of a larger phenomenon. The case study is an approach commonly used in organizational and other social science research (see, for example, Kanter's *Men and Women of the Corporation*, 1977a). In the case study analysis, we continue to use the convention of omitting specific school names to preserve the confidentiality of the schools and personnel involved.

Data

Our primary source of data in this investigation is the 2018 Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Survey, an annual survey of the undergraduate experience at research universities in the United States (Center for Studies in Higher Education, 2018). The SERU survey data include a variety of measures of student demographic characteristics, such as race and ethnicity, and the survey also includes data for a question about having ever received a Federal Pell grant as well as an indicator of honors program

participation. In our previous research, we have described the SERU Survey and discussed its unique strengths and weaknesses for research exploring the honors student experience as well as the characteristics of honors students themselves (Cognard-Black and Spisak, 2019).

The SERU project uses an online census methodology to survey undergraduate students at research intensive universities and gather student-level data. In 2018, 19 consortium universities took part in the survey: the nine campuses of the University of California system and ten large public universities, all with the R1 Carnegie classification. While these schools were not randomly selected, they nevertheless represent an important segment of U.S. colleges and universities. Research 1 universities are only 3 percent of all the institutions of higher education in the United States, but those 131 schools have a large footprint in American education. Together, R1 universities enroll almost one-third (31.5%) of the students at traditional four-year degree schools in recent years (Center for Postsecondary Research, 2018), and the 19 schools participating in SERU in 2018 enroll about one-sixth (17.6%) of all those R1 university students.

The total SERU sample size was 118,852 undergraduate students, with 15,280 students reporting current participation in or completion of an honors program. Those interested in the details regarding sample sizes, distribution of respondents across participating schools, and response rates will find them in our previously published work (see Cognard-Black and Spisak, 2019, Appendix). While response rates vary considerably from school to school, and response is generally higher at University of California campuses, the overall 2018 SERU response rate was 24.8 percent. This rate of response is reasonably good for online surveys, and it is also consistent with rates reported for similar surveys such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (Center for Postsecondary Research, 2016).

For the purposes of validity checks and basic points of comparison, we supplement SERU data with estimates of university and state percentages derived, respectively, from actual student-level data reported by universities to the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and from the *Chronicle* report discussed earlier (*CHE*, 2019).

We omitted two SERU schools from our analysis because we determined from searches of university websites that, while they may have some presence of what is often referred to as departmental honors or honors in the major, those schools do not have a broader honors program or college at either the university level or within a college of liberal arts and sciences, where such programs are often housed.

Measures

Honors Student Status

Our measure of honors student status is derived from a single question asked of students as part of a set of possible undergraduate experiences. The common question stem for the set reads, "Have you completed or are you now participating in the following activities at [University Name]?" with response options allowing for "No" or "Yes, doing now or have done." Our measure of honors participation is based on the response for "honors program" within that question set. The question wording does not allow us to distinguish between those who currently are in an honors program and those who may have started in honors but subsequently left due to attrition or dismissal. This likely introduces some unknowable degree of error that we discussed in our previous published work (Cognard-Black and Spisak, 2019, p. 134), but SERU remains one of the best sources of data with national reach to be able to make comparisons of honors and non-honors students.

Race-Ethnicity and Pell-Eligibility

Our measures of black and Hispanic identity were derived from a set of Yes/No measures asking respondents to indicate whether they identified as one or more of a set of racial and ethnic categories: "International Students," "Hispanic or Latino," "American Indian or Alaskan Native," "Asian," "Black or African American," "Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander," "White," or "Race/Ethnicity Unknown." Multiple responses were allowed. We used responses to these discrete questions in constructing a measure of race-ethnicity consistent with those used widely throughout higher education. The result is an operationalization of race and ethnicity that, for instance, distinguishes those with Hispanic background from others in conventional racial categories (e.g., non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, etc.). The complete distribution has been presented and discussed in greater detail previously (Cognard-Black and Spisak, 2019).

Our measure of Pell eligibility was derived from a Yes/No question asking, "Have you ever received a Pell grant?" This question will result in higher estimates of Pell participation than those typically included in official reports that are based on data from a given academic year, but this discrepancy is of no particular concern, for reasons that we discuss in the presentation of results.

RESULTS

Tables 1–3 present, respectively, the variation in representation of black, Hispanic, and Pell-eligible students in honors. The second and third columns in the body of the tables present the percentage for a given group—e.g., black, Hispanic—in the school's honors program and the percentage for that group for the entire university, both estimated from the SERU data. The differences between these two columns are the primary focus of our analysis.

Since these estimates are based on survey responses for which there would likely be some unknown degree of non-response bias, we also present a column for the fall 2017 official university percentage that was reported to the U.S. Department of Education (IPEDS). While it is the third column that is labeled "University," the IPEDS column presents university numbers, too, and to the extent that the SERU estimates fairly reflect the true underlying student population, the numbers in the third and fourth columns should be identical. Since there is usually some non-response bias in survey estimates, however, these numbers are not identical, but we note that they are usually very close, a fact that would seem to indicate that the SERU data are very close to the true undergraduate population in terms of race and ethnicity.

The principal exception to the otherwise close correspondence between SERU and IPEDS is in Table 3, where the percentages in the "University" and "IPEDS" columns can differ by quite a bit. In one case those numbers differ by as much as nearly 17 percentage points, and all these differences are such that the University percentage is larger than the IPEDS percentage. While this might seem to make the SERU data problematic for the Pell analysis, we argue that it is not. These differences exist because the IPEDS percentage reflects only those students who were eligible for a Pell grant in the 2017–2018 academic year whereas the SERU survey question asked students whether they had ever received a Pell grant at any time during college, which for more senior students will have been a significantly longer period. Since our purpose is to compare the "Honors" and "University" percentages, which both derive from the same survey question, and since our purpose is to make comparisons among schools all using the same survey methodology, these discrepancies are of no particular concern.

To attempt to settle any doubts, we calculated Pearson's correlation coefficients for the University and IPEDS columns in each table to assess how closely the SERU data correspond with the official IPEDS data. The correlations for Tables 1 and 2 were both what is usually regarded as very high (r = .86 for the percent black in Table 1; r = .996 for the percent Hispanic in Table

2)—which is not surprising in light of how visibly close the percentages are in those columns. In the case of Table 3 for the analysis of Pell eligibility, the correlation was also exceptionally high (r = .985). These strong associations should give even the most cautious readers confidence that the SERU numbers are an adequate reflection of the underlying student body despite the 24.8 percent response rate and despite the possibility of some non-response bias. The marginally lower correlation for the data in Table 1 suggests that non-response bias may be more of a problem for the analysis of black student representation, but the correlation there is still so high that it should ease most concerns.

Finally, we have included a column (column 1) indicating whether a school was a member of the National Collegiate Honors Council. We have collected and presented this information because we were interested in finding out whether affiliation with NCHC might have some association with greater URM representation. We do not have a strong theoretical basis for an expectation that NCHC member institutions have better URM representation within honors, especially since our survey data preceded the recent prioritization of diversity in the NCHC strategic plan, but given this recent interest and strategic priority, we wanted to explore the question.

Schools in the tables are sorted from high to low by the column presenting ratios of honors to university percent black, percent Hispanic, and percent Pell-eligible, respectively. These ratios were derived by dividing the percentage in the "Honors" column by the percentage in the "University" column, and they provide an intuitive measure of the degree to which honors approximates (or not) proportional representation of the group in focus for a given table. For instance, ratios below 1.0 in Table 1 indicate that black students are underrepresented in honors relative to their numbers in the overall student body as well as just how underrepresented they are. Scores near 0.5 in Table 1 indicate a situation where the percentage of honors students who are black is half (a proportion of .5, or 50%) the percentage of the general student body who are black, as in the case of school #1, where the percentage for honors is 2.4, just a little more than half the 4.5 percent black for the overall student body.

For Tables 1 and 2, we also present the ratio of honors percentage to the state population percentage in the far-right column for comparison. These ratios are derived from percentages (not presented in tables) for a given group in the larger college-age population in the state (17–21 years old). These data were calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau in collaboration with the National Center for Education Statistics and were provided to the authors by *CHE* analyst Ruth Hammond. These are the very same state-level

data for underrepresented minorities used in the *Chronicle* article discussed above. No such estimates were provided for Pell-eligible students, so Table 3 does not present comparable honors to state ratios. We note that, as we point out in our previous research (Cognard-Black and Spisak, 2019), percentages of black students in the student body themselves do not at all well represent the overall population in the state. Thus, the honors to state ratios are, with one unusual exception (discussed below), always much smaller than the honors to university ratios, a fact consistent with the larger problem of

Table 1. Percent Black in Honors vis-à-vis the University and State Populations

School ID	NCHC Member	Honors (%)	University (%)	IPEDS (%)	Honors vs. University ↓[a]	Honors vs. State
School #6	No	3.6	3.5	4.2	1.02	.54
School #2	Yes	3.0	3.1	3.8	.98	.26
School #7	Yes	3.9	4.0	3.9	.97	.59
School #17	No	5.6	5.9	7.7	.96	.25
School #4	Yes	2.0	2.2	2.9	.93	.31
School #10	No	1.6	1.9	2.3	.83	.24
School #16	No	3.6	4.5	4.5	.80	.27
School #5	Yes	1.7	2.4	2.7	.72	.26
School #15	Yes	3.2	4.8	5.6	.67	.23
School #3	Yes	5.1	8.5	8.4	.60	.33
School #1	No	2.4	4.5	8.6	.53	.14
School #8	No	0.9	1.8	3.2	.49	.13
School #13	No	1.9	3.9	5.3	.48	.21
School #9	No	1.3	2.8	3.0	.46	.20
School #11	Yes	1.2	2.7	3.8	.45	.20
School #12	No	1.9	4.5	5.0	.41	.11
School #14	Yes	0.0	1.7	2.8	.00	.00
Average		2.5	3.7	4.6	.67	.25

Note: IPEDS data are from fall 2017, the same academic year as the SERU survey. Data for percent black in the state used to determine Honors vs. State ratios are for 17 to 21 year olds and come from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2019). Those percentages were derived from estimates prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau for July 1, 2017. *Chronicle* data were provided courtesy of Ruth Hammond at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, taken from the CDC-INFO interface at <https://wonder.cdc.gov/Bridged-Race-v2018.HTML>.

[a] Schools in the table are sorted by the ratio of honors to university percent black.

underrepresentation found in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* analysis discussed earlier (*CHE*, 2019).

The average ratio of honors to university representation for all three tables indicates that, for the typical school in the SERU sample, limited income and URM students are underrepresented in honors by about 30 percent (average H/U ratios of .67, .73, and .73 for Tables 1, 2, and 3), but examination of the tables reveals considerable variation across honors programs in diversity and in the degree of proportional representation relative to the university

Table 2. Percent Hispanic in Honors vis-à-vis the University and State Populations

School ID	NCHC Member	Honors (%)	University (%)	IPEDS (%)	Honors vs. University ↓[a]	Honors vs. State
School #17	No	7.7	7.6	7.7	1.01	.68
School #4	Yes	24.9	27.9	29.4	.89	.50
School #15	Yes	3.2	3.7	4.1	.88	.32
School #13	No	4.1	4.8	4.7	.84	.53
School #6	No	23.1	27.6	27.5	.84	.47
School #10	No	28.7	34.6	33.7	.83	.58
School #7	Yes	37.1	45.1	45.7	.82	.75
School #11	Yes	7.0	8.6	8.7	.82	.87
School #2	Yes	4.7	6.4	6.3	.74	.53
School #5	Yes	23.1	32.5	32.0	.71	.46
School #12	No	5.0	7.1	6.8	.71	.70
School #8	No	17.4	26.3	23.0	.66	.35
School #1	No	2.8	4.4	5.2	.64	.39
School #9	No	18.6	33.9	32.2	.55	.38
School #16	No	13.6	25.6	25.5	.53	.29
School #14	Yes	6.9	13.7	15.2	.50	.35
School #3	Yes	7.9	15.8	15.3	.50	.33
Average		13.9	19.1	19.0	.73	.50

Note: IPEDS data are from fall 2017, the same academic year as the SERU survey. Data for percent Hispanic in the state used to determine Honors vs. State ratios are for 17 to 21 year olds and come from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2019). Those percentages were derived from estimates prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau for July 1, 2017. *Chronicle* data were provided courtesy of Ruth Hammond at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, taken from the CDC-INFO interface at <https://wonder.cdc.gov/Bridged-Race-v2018.HTML>.

[a] Schools in the table are sorted by the ratio of honors to university percent Hispanic.

environment in which they find themselves. While black and Hispanic students are quite underrepresented in honors at some schools—with about one-fourth to one-third having half as many URM students in honors as in the overall student body—representation is much better at other schools and approaches parity in about one-third of cases (schools with, say, ratios of around 0.85 or higher, indicating a 15% or smaller gap to proportional representation).

While traditionally underrepresented minorities are fairly well represented in honors at some schools relative to their numbers in the university, they remain far underrepresented in almost all of these honors programs relative to their numbers in the states where they are located. In large part, this underrepresentation is a function of being underrepresented at the university

TABLE 3. PERCENT PELL-ELIGIBLE IN HONORS VIS-À-VIS THE UNIVERSITY POPULATION

School ID	NCHC Member	Honors (%)	University (%)	IPEDS (%)	Honors vs. University ↓[a]
School #4	Yes	43.5	48.1	39.0	.91
School #6	No	34.5	40.8	34.0	.85
School #8	No	38.4	45.6	34.0	.84
School #10	No	38.9	46.4	39.0	.84
School #5	Yes	39.8	50.6	42.0	.79
School #7	Yes	47.3	61.6	56.0	.77
School #17	No	14.3	19.1	12.0	.75
School #11	Yes	19.7	26.8	19.0	.74
School #12	No	18.8	26.0	15.0	.72
School #15	Yes	15.8	22.3	16.0	.71
School #1	No	17.3	24.7	22.0	.70
School #9	No	31.2	44.5	36.0	.70
School #2	Yes	15.8	24.2	17.0	.65
School #16	No	18.6	29.0	24.0	.64
School #13	No	15.3	25.6	19.0	.60
School #14	Yes	19.2	32.8	25.0	.59
School #3	Yes	21.2	38.0	29.0	.56
Average		26.5	35.6	28.1	.73

Note: IPEDS data are from fall 2017, the same academic year as the SERU survey.

[a] Schools in the table are sorted by the ratio of honors to university percent Pell-eligible.

to begin with, and this is particularly true for black students; the typical university has, on average, only 25 percent (see Honors to State ratio of 0.25 in Table 1) as many black students in honors as in the college-age black population in the corresponding state where the university is located. We discussed this issue in some greater detail in our previous report: "Research 1 universities do not, in general, have enrollments that are especially representative of ethnic and racial minorities. This problem goes beyond honors, affecting the larger institutional environments in which honors programs and colleges are located, and it is a problem of which we should be aware" (Cognard-Black and Spisak, 2019, p. 140).

As with race and ethnic diversity, there is also considerable variation across honors programs in socioeconomic diversity, as measured by Federal Pell grant eligibility. While Pell-eligible students are far underrepresented in honors at some schools, representation is much better at other schools, with the ratios of honors to university representation ranging from 0.56 up to a relatively impressive 0.91.

As readers will readily see, NCHC members are scattered from top to bottom on all three lists, so there seems to be no relationship between NCHC membership and representation of URM students. Since the National Collegiate Honors Council Board of Directors has in the last several years begun to emphasize these issues in a new and more vigorous way, these efforts may not yet be reflected in the 2018 administration of the SERU Survey.

The bottom line is that at every university in this sample very few African American students are in honors, either in absolute or in relative terms. Half of the schools have honors programs with a 2.0 or lower percentage of black students, and one of these schools had so few black honors students that none showed up in the SERU sample (School #14). The situation is only slightly better for Hispanic students in honors, where half of schools have an honors percentage lower than 8 percent.

Case Study Results

To better understand some of the possible factors that contribute to better representation of traditionally underrepresented minorities and low-income students, we undertook a case study as a complement to our quantitative findings. Using the results from the research presented above, we identified a small sample of schools that appeared to do especially well in terms of high Honors-to-University ratios presented in Tables 1–3. To do so, we first created a composite measure of each school's relative placement across

all three measures by calculating the mean rank for each university across all three tables. The correlations among the three different rankings presented in Tables 1–3 are moderately strong ($r \approx .5$), and there appears to be some tendency for schools that appear low on one ranking to appear low on other rankings. School 14, for instance, appears at or near the bottom of all three tables, and another four schools appear in the bottom half of all three rankings. On the other end of the distributions, five schools appear in the top half of all three rankings (4, 6, 7, 10, and 17), and the remaining seven schools either tend toward the middle of all three distributions or have a more erratic pattern of rankings resulting in averages that placed them toward the middle.

Based on this analysis, in summer 2020 we contacted honors directors or other high-ranking honors administrators at four schools appearing in the top half of the distribution. We presented these individuals with the data discussed in the tables above, informed them that their honors program appeared to be well-positioned at the top of one or more of these rankings, and asked if they would be willing to reflect on possible reasons for the strong placement.

In June 2020, we received a detailed email from one of the case study university contacts discussing a variety of programs and other features of honors that bear on DEI, and in July we conducted a one-hour informational interview, via the Zoom online video conferencing application, with the honors director and an associate director at a second university about their approach to diversity and inclusion in honors. The two other schools responded briefly by email but indicated that more information would be needed; those exchanges resulted in dead ends to communication. It should be noted that these requests were made in the summer after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the midst of widespread Black Lives Matter protests following the killing by police of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in May 2020. Many contemporary readers will readily recall the challenges these issues created on campuses and in society at large in the months leading up to the fall 2020 semester, possibly resulting in less responsiveness than we might have received at another time.

Despite these challenges, the qualitative data resulting from the email and interview exchanges we did have point to important approaches within honors that may be associated with relatively high URM and Pell-eligible student representation in honors, maximizing the chances that programs approximate the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity on campus. As a check on the validity of our results, we asked our respondents to review an earlier draft of this paper and correct any factual mistakes or errors of interpretation. The

interview subjects all responded and made only two small factual corrections, both of which are reflected in the final version presented here.

Table 4 summarizes key revelations across both schools featured in our case study, organized by what will probably be a familiar tripartite taxonomy including admission, recruitment, and persistence. These approaches point

Table 4. Highlighted Honors Program Features among Schools Ranking Highly on DEI Representation

Admissions
• Using holistic admissions criteria that, in particular, de-emphasize use of standardized test scores and give greater weight to contributions to community and other forms of commitment
Recruitment
• Making direct phone calls to encourage and welcome first-generation, limited-income, and underrepresented minority students about a month before the SIR [Statement of Intent to Register] deadline
• Hosting a special "preview day" to "showcase diversity" to prospective students in the spring about two months before the SIR deadline
Persistence
• Providing peer mentoring that specifically matches new and 3rd- or 4th-year minority, limited income, and first-generation honors students
• Hiring specific staff in honors that are dedicated entirely or in large part to diversity, equity, and inclusion
• Articulating a stated goal in the program's strategic plan to increase diversity among honors faculty
• Articulating a stated goal in the program's strategic plan to recruit an honors cohort that "reflects the diversity of the institution"
• Nurturing of a culture within honors that values diversity and promotes equity and inclusion
• Explicitly and visibly promoting "inclusive excellence" on the program's front-facing honors website
• Budgeting funds each year earmarked specifically to pay for diversity, equity, and inclusion speakers and performances
• Hosting a visiting scholar program that brings diverse speakers to campus
• Promoting a culture where honors faculty center issues of diversity in their courses—"Often in the titles . . . but always in the content"
• Including demographic breakdowns of race/ethnicity and first-generation status as a regular part of an honors "data forum" held each semester

to the obvious importance that student recruitment and admissions policies play in bringing underrepresented minority and limited-income students to honors, but the weight of the approaches also highlights the importance of strategies that go beyond the point of entry into honors. In particular, these strategies include promoting a culture of inclusiveness designed to make underrepresented students feel welcome and valued, thus potentially improving retention, persistence, and completion among those students who are admitted. These efforts are important in their recognition that the composition of the honors student body is a function not only of the gatekeeping criteria used to admit students into honors but also of the choices that students make about whether they might apply to honors in the first place (at schools where application is involved); whether they will accept offers of admission from honors programs; whether they will have the support necessary for them to be successful; and whether they will continually make decisions to stay in honors after they begin and thus persist all the way to program completion.

While holistic admissions policies that relied less heavily on standardized testing were emphasized as key during the interview we conducted, and while the associate director indicated that they have fostered a strong connection with the office of undergraduate admissions, attention to admissions turned out to be a point of departure for a much longer conversation about features designed to make underrepresented minorities and limited-income students feel they belonged in honors and could find a community in the program. Both in that interview and in the email exchange with the other responding school, many of the specific details offered in reply to our questions fit better into the categories of recruitment and persistence.

The one school that did particularly well in Pell-eligible and Hispanic student representation indicated that, about two months before the student aid commitment deadline, they held a "preview day" for admitted students that was designed to "showcase diversity" to prospective students. About one month before their SIR deadline (Statement of Intent to Register), the associate director, who was from an underrepresented minority group and grew up with limited income, made direct calls to students from URM and limited-income backgrounds with the specific goals of encouraging them, making them feel valued and welcome, and connecting with them as a person of similar experience who has been successful academically:

> We are very intentional in making sure that we develop a list of individuals who have a single, double, or triple variable—who may be

> first-gen., limited income, or URM—and we call them, we make outreach to them, talk to them about the program, demystify some of the myths that they have about honors—that it's AP, that it's IB. No. It's not like that. It's a small, close-knit community . . . and we're very intentional about that. (Associate Director, taken from interview transcription of audio recording)

The director of honors during that same interview made it a point to say that, in agreeing to serve as director, it was an important goal to hire an associate director who could make those kinds of connections with diverse students; they wanted someone who had excellent administrative skills and whose "background and interest were absolutely consistent with the diversity, equity, and inclusion goals of the program . . ." (quotation taken from interview transcription).

Having specific honors professionals charged with diversity and inclusivity was important in the case of the second school, too. The email exchange with the representative from that school revealed that they not only had an honors faculty member with a 25 percent (full-time equivalent, FTE) assignment as the director of diversity and inclusion initiatives within the honors college, but they also had a student life professional in the honors program with an assignment devoted 25 percent FTE to work specifically with that director.

For those honors programs that may not have the resources or cannot for other reasons have honors professionals with job descriptions dedicating them to diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, this second university points to a constellation of other activities and programs that, while the representative did not use these terms, promote a culture that values diversity and equity and thus might serve meaningfully to accomplish inclusivity. Both in the exchange with that school and in the interview with the other, part of the success of the schools appeared to derive from the fact that they offer robust programming that makes clear to underrepresented students that their experience and presence in honors matter. Both programs included clear, front-facing articulations about the value of diversity on the program websites and, in the case of one university, also included not just occasional events about diversity but regular and sustained event programming and annual budget allocations for such programs.

As an important part of this culture of inclusivity, both honors programs had taken affirmative steps to make sure that the people helping to run the program and teach its courses reflected the diversity that they hoped to

witness among the students. One of the two schools in the case study did particularly well in representation of black students in honors, and as the representative from that university mentioned in our email exchange, "we have the most ethnically/racially diverse faculty on campus. We are small but mighty in this area" (quotation taken from email exchange). While faculty diversity may not be practical on every campus, it seems to be critically important, in solving the DEI puzzle, to make sure that role models among honors professional staff and faculty include those who look similar and have similar experiences to prospective and current minority students. Given the small number of non-white honors directors among NCHC member institutions, increasing diversity among honors professionals would also distinguish those honors programs that accomplish it. According to the "NCHC 2016 Census of U.S. Honors Programs and Colleges," only 3.8 percent of responding honors directors/deans in 2016 were black, and only 2.5 percent reported Hispanic identity (omitting historically black colleges and universities from the analysis, the number for black directors/deans actually shrinks to about 1%; NCHC, n.d.). The racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity of honors professional staff and faculty is beyond the scope of this paper, but faculty diversity is clearly crucial to creating a culture of inclusion in education. Future research is needed to better understand the full extent and causes of racial and ethnic homogeneity among honors professionals.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We have attempted to provide an empirical sketch of the variability among honors programs in the representation of key underrepresented minority groups as well as to identify programmatic features of honors programs that appear to be doing especially well in that representation.

Perhaps most important among our findings is that many of the honors programs in this sample appear to be failing at even proportional representation of key underrepresented minority groups on their campuses. This underrepresentation in honors programs compounds the significant underrepresentation on many college campuses to begin with, perhaps especially at the major research universities in the SERU sample (Cognard-Black and Spisak, 2019).

Moreover, even at those SERU schools where black and Hispanic students show up in honors in roughly proportional numbers compared to their presence on campus, the incontrovertible fact is that only small numbers of Hispanic and, especially, black students find themselves in honors programs. This reality means that black and Hispanic students often find themselves in

numbers far, far below the 15 percent threshold that Kanter (1977a, 1977b) posited as the line of demarcation for token status. Sociologists since Georg Simmel (1950) in the nineteenth century have described how group size affects social interaction. In her landmark study *Men and Women of the Corporation*, Kanter (1977a) describes the negative consequences for token status in highly skewed work groups, including heightened visibility of tokens that leads to performance pressures and "role entrapment" in which preexisting generalizations and stereotypes "tend to force them into playing limited and caricatured roles" (Kanter, 1977b, p. 980). The heightened visibility and role entrapment can lead to significant consequences such as social isolation, stress, and self-distortion that increase the likelihood of departure and attrition, and this in turn may undermine any ongoing attempts at minority student recruitment. As Kanter (1977b) puts it in the closing lines of her companion article appearing in the *American Journal of Sociology*, "The dynamics of tokenism also operate in such a way as to perpetuate the system that keeps members of the token's category in short supply; the presence of a few tokens does not necessarily pave the way for others—in many cases, it has the opposite effect" (p. 988). To the extent that these predictions apply to minority students on college campuses and in honors programs, merely achieving proportional representation on campus may not be enough; perhaps we should instead be thinking in terms of significant, meaningful representation where minority students will find enough others with shared identity and lived experience to mitigate the most pernicious effects of extreme token status. The results from research by Ticknor et al. (2020) highlight how important thinking about such meaningful representation is for minority students who choose not to apply to their honors program: "Overall, our students valued diversity and assumed that the honors college was not intellectually or racially diverse" (p. 80).

We believe that our results provide compelling quantitative and qualitative evidence of how far honors education in the United States needs to go just to approach proportional representation for historically underrepresented minorities, and we have described the effectiveness of certain strategies that may be deployed to accomplish such representation, but readers should keep in mind several limitations while evaluating these findings and conclusions for themselves.

First, the SERU survey item that identifies students as "honors" may present some challenges in terms of validity. The survey item asks students to self-identify as honors students. In addition to some issues with wording raised in the discussion of honors measurement above, some students may be confused by such a question for a variety of reasons. Perhaps they were

admitted to an honor society. Perhaps they have participated in departmental honors but not in their campus-wide honors program. While students in the honors program or honors college are likely good about self-identifying as honors students, some unknown number of others may report that they are honors students when they have never been in the university honors program.

Second, small non-response biases in SERU across race and ethnic groups at different schools could potentially have sizeable influence on how representative an individual honors program looks. Our estimates for group percentages from SERU correspond closely with IPEDS percentages, and in the case of black and Hispanic percentages these estimates are also quite close. That finding is a good indication that such a limitation surrounding non-response bias is only a small one, but we do not have good race and ethnicity composition data for honors programs nationally that we can use to corroborate these data, so it is hard to assess the impact of any potential non-response bias that would affect race and ethnicity estimates, especially for honors programs relative to larger university populations.

Third, the case study approach offers an idiographic approach to understanding specific individual cases. While we have tried to strategically select individual honors programs that did especially well in terms of proportional representation of traditionally underrepresented minority groups, we should, as ever, remain cautious about drawing firm conclusions based on small numbers of cases alone. Ideally, future research in this area will collect more detailed data for larger samples of honors programs, looking at the kinds of program features identified here and rigorously testing hypotheses about the unique effects of those features on minority student representation in honors.

We do not believe, however, that any of these limitations would significantly change the central findings of this study or the conclusions that flow from them. While many who work in honors may be aware of the lack of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity in their programs, the results presented here provide a clearer glimpse at the extent of the problem and help to illuminate an issue of growing importance in the community of honors educators. While some of the barriers to opportunity within society are beyond the control of those on any one college campus or within any one office or division of the campus community, we as honors educators can make our campuses more welcoming places for underrepresented groups. As leaders in institutions that are centrally important in helping to determine the careers and class trajectories of citizens, we have an especially important role in this regard. Working toward a more diverse and inclusive campus is about fairness and making opportunities available to those who are willing

and able to take advantage of them, not just those fortunate enough to inherit material and social advantages by chance of birth. Moreover, diversity and inclusion are also about the importance of creating environments open to the voices of divergent experiences on which critical inquiry depends. The greater the diversity of opinions, the stronger the foundation for arriving at a more complete understanding and avoiding the groupthink that homogeneity encourages. To the extent that we are able to move beyond exclusion, beyond mere tolerance of difference, and toward an inclusive appreciation for the full range of human experience and perspectives, we can all see further and with greater clarity; thus, we all benefit. Too often, we talk about and settle for tolerance of difference—but learning to appreciate difference is the key to a more civil, just, and humane society.

NOTE

We excluded the nine California schools from the sample for our analyses of racial composition in our earlier work because one of our interests in that project was estimating racial and ethnic composition within honors nationally. Both the state of California itself and the major universities in the California sample are different from the rest of the nation because of their relatively large Asian American and Hispanic populations. What is more, as a University of California project, SERU includes all nine of its liberal arts and sciences universities, giving them an inordinate influence on the overall sample estimates for race and ethnic composition if they had not been excluded.

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