# THE HONORS DISTINCTION

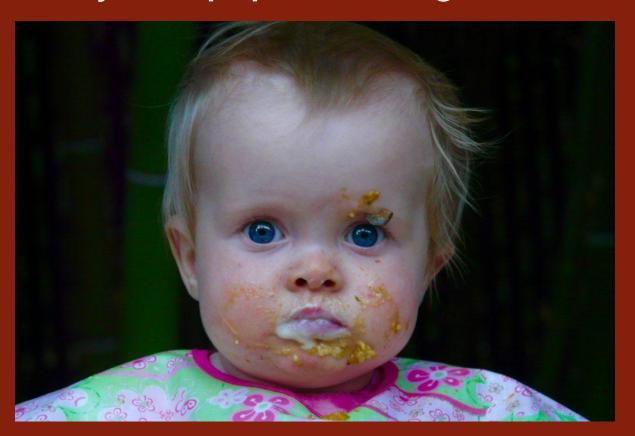


**Jordan Packer** 

#### What's an honors program?

- Educational stratification
- Secondary school tracking comparison
- Track advantages
- Honors programs & tracking

#### "When do you stop spoon feeding? Answer: Today"



#### MY RESEARCH QUESTION

What role does the honors program play in the reproduction of inequality?

#### **METHODOLOGY**

- 3 honors programs in different disciplines
  - o interdisciplinary, social science, humanities
- Observation in the programs (~40 hrs)
- Questionnaires
  - Honors & non-honors students
- 15 in-depth interviews

#### **FINDINGS**

- Capital
- Identity

# **CAPITAL**

#### SOCIAL CAPITAL

Humanities course observation:

In class, as Tevan and Max talk about their research interests, Max offers to give Tevan the contact information of a graduate student in Tevan's field. Tevan excitedly responds, "Wow, we just networked."

#### CULTURAL CAPITAL

Social science course observation:

The librarian presented the research page she created for their course, with links to tests and measures, articles, and other resources. Learning about this resource led to a whole-class sigh and someone uttering, "I wish I'd known about this."

#### THE "EASY A" EFFECT

Prof. Weston (interdisciplinary):

This is a critical year, they are applying for graduate school...

The average for this class is going to be an A-...but realistically, you know, probably goes down at least half a notch for some of the folks, falling down into the C category...

And how do you deal with that in this setting, without being the bad meanie that's ruining their lives?

### **IDENTITY**

## **EFFORT**

"we are all strivers"

"we are hard-working"

"really high-achieving, high-effort students"

#### PERCEPTION OF NON-HONORS

Tevan (humanities):

They're the kind of students who are like 'I got a B on this final, perfect, that's what I wanted.'

# **UPSHOTS**

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- Capital advantages
- Honors students are different from other students
- Self-fulfilling prophecy
- Long-term, lasting inequalities

# REPRODUCTION OF INEQUALITY

Those who consider themselves "high achieving" thrive, while those who do not consider themselves "high achieving" cannot access the same resources.

#### CONCLUSION

What role does the honors program play in the reproduction of inequality?

### **FUTURE RESEARCH**

- More qualitative methodologies
- Other universities and honors structures
- Observation of non-honors

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#### **THANKS!**

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