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Social Integration and High Achieving Columbus City Students: A Comprehensive Analysis

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Abstract:

Denison Columbus Alliance scholars are a group of high achieving urban students who not only face informational gaps regarding different aspects of university life, but also class and race-based obstacles when trying to integrate into Denison University. Once scholars arrive at Denison, they perceive a major disconnect with the white and upper middle-class majority on campus due to their predominantly middle and lower-middle class upbringing as well as their experience as either people of color or their immersion in culturally diverse settings. Along with these perceptions, students face structurally created race and class-based barriers when exploring the social environment of the university. These barriers in turn effect scholar's overall social and educational experience on campus and lead to feelings of alienation and discomfort. To overcome these obstacles, scholars develop meaningful formal and informal relationships with mentors as well engage in social coping mechanisms such as codeswitching and protective segregation within organizations that reflect their unique social locations. In order to improve their integration process (and by extension their overall experience on campus), the scholarship program should work to strengthen the social network created amongst DCA scholars as well as provide informational services that teach students how to navigate different aspects of university life. By implementing educational programs that are specifically targeted towards the informational gap these students are facing as well as working towards greater group cohesion, the integration process of DCA scholars will be greatly improved and the university's investment in these students will be protected.

Introduction:

It is an undeniable fact that the affordability of top tier colleges in the United States has decreased significantly over the past 60 years. While in the 1960's tuition at a private liberal arts school in the middle of Ohio cost around \$500 a semester (Denison University, 1960) it now costs approximately \$73,000 a year to attend that same school when you include room and board (Denison Financial Aid, 2021). Even when taking into account inflation and financial aid, the cost of receiving a quality liberal arts education has increased significantly over the years. Because of this, many schools have worked to create scholarship programs to better help serve those who have the intellect and skill necessary to receive such a rigorous education but have historically been unable to due to financial barriers.

The above-mentioned school, Denison University, has historically been partnered with the Posse Foundation, a third-party non-profit that works to provide scholarships to students from the Boston and Chicago area. For eighteen years, Denison brought Posse students onto campus with the hopes of providing them with a what the school would describe as a "world class education" (Cosdon, 2021). However, these students were not from the surrounding area, and with an urban center 40 minutes away and an almost non-existent Columbus City student population on campus, the University set out to try and bring students from Columbus City schools to campus. In order to engage in this work, the university created the Denison Columbus Alliance Scholarship program and modeled it off of the successful Posse Program. While there can be arguments made about the overall effectiveness of the program when compared to Posse, it is impossible to deny the underlying parallels between the two programs.

The number of students being brought to campus, the overall mission and the inherent design of the programs mirror each other.

The creation of the Denison Columbus Alliance scholarship in 2016 put in motion a series of events that will undoubtedly shape the Denison University social landscape for years to come. While in years prior, the admittance of Columbus City students to Denison was extremely low (in large part due to the cost of Denison and its lack of a presence within CCS programming), this scholarship program was created with the ambitious goal of bringing up to twenty CCS students a year to Denison.

The Denison Columbus Alliance (DCA) scholarship program is best described a collaborative scholarship program administered by Denison University, the nonprofit I Know I Can and the Shackleford foundation that aims to provide twenty full tuition scholarships to graduating Columbus City students each year. The students are chosen based on academic achievement, leadership qualities, extracurricular activities and recommendations from the community. According to the former program director Dr. Sokolik, "Our goals are quite straightforward: provide full tuition grants to Columbus City School graduates so that Denison University is an affordable college opportunity (Sokolik, 2018)".

Since its inaugural class in the fall of 2017, the program has brought approximately 70 students to campus and pledged over seventeen million dollars in financial aid. The generosity of Denison University and the Shackleford foundation has allowed many CCS students to get a college education at a price much more affordable than any other college in the area. However, due to the social structure of the institution itself, as well as the primarily urban experience

students had in Columbus City schools, many students report difficulties integrating into the university early on.

These initial experiences inadvertently shape DCA students' careers moving forward and if we are to set these students up for success and ensure that the program continues, we must understand what barriers these students are facing when coming to college and why. Only through this understanding can we begin to generate comprehensive and culturally competent intervention programming designed to assist urban students at predominantly white and affluent educational institutions like Denison University.

Purpose:

The purpose of this project is to explore the experiences of these students in their new environment and utilize their personal perspectives of Denison and the university's social structure to create structural recommendations that can be used by administrators to improve student integration across future cohorts. While these are high performing and motivated students, it is important to understand they come from a drastically different socioeconomic and cultural environment than the average Denison student (Denison Factbook, 2017). Therefore, the literature suggests there will be differences in the way they operate within Denison's complex social ecosystem (Drotos 2014).

To put these differences in perspective, according to the 2017 Denison Fact Book approximately 63% of students on campus reported being white and on average Denison students paid approximately \$21,122 in tuition and fees a year. In contrast, the demographics of the recipients of the DCA scholarship are approximately 70% students of color and

approximately 56% describe themselves as lower – lower middle class (Columbus City Schools 2018/figure 6). This indicates that on average Denison students are of a higher socioeconomic status and have a drastically different racial and ethnic profile than the majority of DCA students. This difference in experiential background as well as class and racial standings contextualizes the social environment these students are operating within and orients us in our attempt to understand and assist them moving forward.

By working to improve the integration of these students we are also working towards helping them perform at their optimal level within a university that does not reflect their unique cultural and experiential background. While it is important to note that Columbus is an extremely diverse city with students from many different racial, economic and cultural backgrounds, the common experience of attending Columbus City schools creates a common ground for us to work on.

The project itself will explore the intricate and subtle ways students navigate the social landscape of Denison by generating three distinct yet interconnected systems of knowledge. First, the project will utilize data collected through interviews and surveys to generate a grounded understanding of Denison's complex social ecosystem from the perspective of DCA scholars. This data will allow us to understand how students view the university itself through a systemic and hierarchical lens. Second, the project will outline the major barriers to integration students face throughout their time on campus. By analyzing the DCA scholar's understanding of Denison's complex ecosystem we can pull out trends and shared experiences with regards to barriers to integration. By understanding these social barriers, we can work to generate the third and final aspect of the project, structural recommendations. Structural recommendations

will be based on student experiences and will reflect the complex and shifting needs to DCA scholars across their time on campus. While we cannot ensure that all needs will be met, there is a great need for structural recognition and change in the way DCA scholars are handled on Denison Universities' campus.

Theoretical Framework:

Based on the review of literature conducted before engaging with this research, the most applicable theories to build this study on are Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) and Tinto's Student Integration Model (1975). Bandura's theory argues that individuals learn social norms through the people around them as well as the environments that they grow up in. When applying this theoretical framework to the project we can see that because Columbus city students were socialized in an environment that is dissimilar to the majority of Denison students, they may find it initially difficult to understand the new social ecosystem that they find themselves in. Because of this difficulty, it is important to look into how these students interact with Denison's social structure and what obstacles they are facing. Denison University is a predominantly white and affluent educational institution and because of that, we can assess that the majority of students who are coming here are coming from a similar background. DCA scholars on the other hand do not share the experiential background that many other Denison students do, meaning they will likely have different norms and values than their peers.

Tinto's Student Integration Model argues that there is a complex system of factors that affect a student's ability to integrate smoothly into a university social setting. Tinto asserts that a student's family background, individual attributes and pre-college training affects two systems

of commitments: goal commitment and institutional commitment. These systems of commitments in turn affect the academic systems of student's grade performance and intellectual development as well as the social systems of peer-group interactions and faculty interactions. Depending on how students operate within the social and academic systems of a university, social and academic integration is either achieved or not achieved. Tinto then argues if academic and social integration is not achieved a student is more likely to make a "drop out decision" (Tinto, 1975). While this project is primarily concerned with the social integration experiences of DCA scholars, this theoretical outline allows us to engage with the integration process from a top-down perspective. If students are not able to connect with their peers due to family background, pre-college training and individual attributes (that Bandura's Social learning theory would argue is largely shaped by social environment), then it can effectively derail the integration process as a whole.

By utilizing both Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Tinto's Student Integration Model we can generate a foundational understanding of how students integrate that will frame the following research. Bandura's Social Learning Theory allows us to understand why Columbus city students operate differently than their peers on campus while Tinto's Student Integration Model provides a framework for what factors create effective and ineffective methods of integration (specifically those shaped by previous experiences and social environment). Together, we see that social environment and socialization plays a major role in intrapersonal development, which in turn greatly affects the integration experience of students.

While the intersectionality of these theories may be contested due to the framework in which they were constructed (they were written and designed within contexts where white

students were the primary focus), this research will attempt to utilize them in a comprehensive and culturally competent manner in which we recognize that culturally distinct upbringings affect the overall integration process for students differently. This is especially important when considering the fact that this research deals with a predominantly non-white group attempting to integrate into a predominantly white campus. These students come from a wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds and these differences will become apparent when discussing the many social pathways they engage with at Denison.

Literature Review:

Before we can begin to analyze the data collected through this research, we must first explore the existing literature surrounding collegiate integration and urban city students. This will contextualize our findings and provide a framework of understanding that this research will expand upon. While the research surrounding urban city students and their integration experiences at predominantly white educational institutions varies across time and discipline, there is a relatively large collection of articles focusing on three major aspects of the integration experience: integration methodology/framework, predominantly white institutions, and experiences of race on campus. These three theoretical frameworks, while distinct, can be linked in order to help piece together a general understanding of how colleges operate at an institutional and social level. By connecting these themes in a purposeful manner, we can map out the institutional framework that students operate within as well as tailor our focus towards the experiences of predominantly non-white urban students within these systems.

Predominantly White Institutions (PWI)

One of the most defining characteristics of Denison University is that it is categorized as a predominantly white institution due to the racial composition of its student body. The literature suggests that because of this there is a potential for the students of color within the DCA group to feel an extreme disconnect with the campus culture and have difficulty integrating into certain spaces. Due to the predominantly POC population of the Denison Columbus Alliance program, it is important that we understand the experiences of POC students within predominantly white institutions as this understanding will help us better understand the experiences of DCA scholars.

The literature asserts that within predominantly white institutions, POC students face discrimination at a structural and social level. For instance, POC athletes face discrimination by not only the university, but also their peers (Sato 2018). Sato notes that the university sees students of color that are athletes as troubled and describes a “cultural mismatch” between the POC athletes and their mostly white peers. The literature also suggests that because of experiences like these, POC students develop a distrust of their white peers (Ashburn-Nardo 2008) and experience increased levels of stress and dissatisfaction.

If we expand our analysis to encompass a gender-based framework, we see that black women in particular experience high levels of stress and dissatisfaction at predominantly white institutions (Shahid 2017). Shahid asserts that these structurally generated stressors result in lower gpa's and feelings of isolation within a campus' community of black women. These findings are supported by the fact that graduation rates of black students are significantly lower at predominantly white and rural universities (Woldoff 2011). Experiences with a lower population of people of color and feelings of isolation, as well as a disconnect from the urban

center that these students come from creates an environment that is difficult for urban POC students to navigate.

In order to overcome these obstacles, the literature suggests that students develop a unique set of coping mechanisms. One such coping mechanism is the generation and utilization of multicultural organizations. By creating spaces or taking part in preexisting spaces that reflect student's unique social location, POC students are more easily able to engage with the university as a whole. The literature overwhelmingly shows that social integration is extremely important to educational outcomes and in order to attain social integration POC students become involved in multicultural organizations or social networks such as the African American student network (Museus 2008). These organizations work as a primary venue for involvement as well as cultural adjustment and expression of culture. Students involved in these networks show higher rates of retention and graduation (Grier-Reed 2015). Another coping mechanism employed by students is code switching. By "acting white", students benefit from integration into the predominant communities on campus. However, this does have a negative effect within the POC communities as there becomes a disconnect with students who exist outside of those cultural networks (Woldoff 2011).

Race:

Due to the predominantly POC population of the Denison Columbus Alliance scholarship, it is also important to understand how race affects integration into higher educational spaces. The literature suggests that factors around race change the way students interact with both the institution they are in as well as the groups around them. This research

allows us to better understand what students of color within the Columbus alliance are potentially facing upon entering Denison and how they are viewing their own experiences.

Arcidiacono argues that a lack of social integration negates the benefits students of color gain by going to selective universities (Arcidiacono 2013). If students of color within the DCA program are not able to fully integrate it negates the benefits they are gaining by being a part of the Columbus Alliance. The literature suggests that once students of color enter their prospective university, they face a lack of community based support factors that are traditionally utilized to prevent mental health issues such as depression and even suicide (De Luca 2014). The literature also shows that minority students perform better with minority instructors and minority mentors on campus (Fairlie 2014).

Another major factor that impacts social integration into campus communities are student phenotypes. According to Fergus, phenotypes act as a mediating factor for how students interpret both opportunity structures within the university as well as group interaction (Fergus 2016). Students who are white passing have an easier time integrating into communities with predominantly white members and are less likely to believe that race plays a major factor in social integration. Meanwhile, students who are not white passing face more barriers to integration and are more likely to believe that race plays a major factor into integration.

General Integration Methodology/Framework:

Collegiate integration is an extremely complex process that can be affected by a multitude of internal and external variables. Race, class standing, sexual orientation and other individually defining characteristics all play into how students perceive their institution as well

as how they maneuver through its socially constructed landscape. For example, cis-gendered white men are going to interpret and interact with collegiate institutions in a fundamentally different way than students who exist outside of the dominant cultural norms of whiteness or cis-hetero normativity. Due to their position as white cis-gendered men, they are not only perceiving the institution differently, but they are also being supported by the cultural values that underly the construction of the institution itself. These different interpretations and support systems in many ways shape the way students integrate all together. These integration experiences also have a tangible outcome on the lives of students once they leave college. Literature suggests that "social integration is key for the educational performance and persistence of less privileged students" during their time on campus (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013).

However, while these different interpretations and integration methodologies are important (so much so that they are the primary focus of this entire research project), universities in the United States and the systems by which they operate tend to be less different than they appear to be due to their historic association with power structures based in white supremacy and patriarchy. Education as a socio-cultural system in the United States has long benefited white communities, specifically upper-class white men, due to their historic and systemic exclusionary practices. Because of this history, we can draw parallels in the way the colleges operate across institutional typing (private, public, state school, liberal arts, etc). While liberal arts colleges may operate in distinct manners from large research institutions funded by state programing, they have been nurtured and constructed by the same underlying socio-cultural values. It is important to note however that this distinction inherently excludes

HBCUs and other collegiate institutions that were developed in order to combat these racist and classist systems.

Being able to make this distinction is extremely important because the majority of the literature surrounding social integration on college campuses comes out of primarily large state funded research institutions. Knowing this, we can contextualize the literature surrounding social integration while at the same time understanding that we can draw parallels across institution typing. Since this research was conducted at a private liberal arts college instead of a large state school, some findings within the literature may not be applicable to the small intimate setting of Denison University. However, there are similarities that occur across institutional typing that can be used to help us understand just what the integration experience for college is, as well as the potential challenges CCS students may face in their attempts to integrate into a predominantly white and affluent educational institution.

Before attempting to enter college, urban city students are more likely to experience family adversity in the form of divorce and health issues as well as difficult experiences in adolescence such as bullying and institutional violence (Hébert 2017). On top of those issues, the literature suggests that there are three main factors that inhibit urban students from accessing desired colleges, “time, money, and information” (Drotos 2014). On average urban students “work 4.4 hours a week” (Drotos 2014). This work is done after school or on the weekends in order to gain greater financial stability and alleviate the economic burden being faced by their family. According to Drotos, this is significantly higher than non-urban students and causes urban students to have less time for leisure activities such as athletics or clubs that could help them access higher educational institutions. Additionally, they lack the money to access higher

educational institutions as well as the information to properly navigate the potentially confusing world that is college applications and college majors.

Once urban students enter college, they face even more barriers to integration. At an institutional level, certain programs and spaces within universities fail to reflect their unique social locations. For example, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, mathematics) programs have one of the lowest percentages of POC students across institutions. According to the literature, only 7% of students graduating with a stem degree are Latinx and only 4% of engineering majors are African American (Dika 2015). Dika argues that due to lower levels of representation in these spaces, students feel unwelcome and therefore are unable to integrate properly.

In order to combat these obstacles, the literature suggests that positive experiences with people associated with the college enables students to integrate easier (Ocean 2016). One possible method of positive association that the literature shows is through experiences within multicultural organizations. As discussed previously, multicultural organizations operate as safe havens for students of color and allow for cultural expression in predominantly white environments. It is important to note however that outcomes of multicultural engagement are defined by those who operate them, so the benefits found in these organizations are dependent on the institution and its students (Bennett 2016). These findings are similar to the literature surrounding campus community which shows that the campus environment is shaped by institutional policies (Ocean 2016).

Current literature also emphasizes the overrepresentation of upper-class families within collegiate institutions. While upper class families (those making over \$200,000 a year annually) account for approximately .5-1% of the general population of the United States, they account for approximately 19% of the population of students at four-year universities (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013). At Denison University, we see an even greater over representation with approximately a third of students paying close to full tuition (Denison University Factbook, 2017). These parental resources greatly advantage affluent students in a multitude of ways. From having better educational access before college to a greater understanding of how to navigate college due to parental experience, affluent students are set up for success in ways that urban and non-affluent students are not (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013). This distinction is extremely important to outline because urban students have a higher likelihood of not sharing these knowledge systems, making their integration process potentially more difficult. This problem can also be compounded by the fact that they are an extremely small population of urban students on campus, making their struggles unseen at an institutional and communal level.

One of the major ways this greater understanding of college helps affluent students is that it allows students to have a greater understanding of the different social pathways they have access to on campus, as well as which pathway will better serve them with their future endeavors. Literature suggests that there are four major pathways students engage with on college campuses, with three of them being traditional systems of integration and the fourth being an alternative to historically traditional collegiate experiences. These pathways are in large part constructed by race and class standing and are essential in our attempt to understand

why students engage with university social systems in different ways. We will first explore the three major pathways, as they are the foundation for our understanding of collegiate institutions and the primary focus of the literature itself.

The first major pathway students may take part in is what is known as the Party Pathway. The Party Pathway is primarily ascribed to upper-upper middle class white students who are interested primarily in the growth and accumulation of social capital within their new living environment. They have two primary social orientations based on class standing; socialite and wannabe (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013). Socialites are students whose upper-upper middle class experience has oriented them towards engaging with social institutions that are primarily designed around class based segregation. Specifically, these students tend to engage with historically white Greek institutions that are designed around symbols of status and wealth. These socialites typically utilize historically white Greek life organizations to both segregate themselves from poorer students as well as maximize their social capital on campus due to the heavy emphasis placed on Greek organizations by campus culture.

Wannabes on the other hand are typically middle-class students who engage with the Greek system, but do not share the higher class standing that their peers do. Because of this, their engagement with the system places them at a higher risk of downward reproduction with regards to their class trajectory. Due to the highly social nature of the party pathway, students who engage with this system on average tend to perform the worst on campus. This poor academic performance in large part is offset by the outside resource's socialites have access to. However, for wannabe's, the resources these students have access to outside of the university

setting is considerably less. The lack of a social safety net puts these students at a higher risk of leaving college in a worse position than they came in as.

The second pathway that students engage with is known as the Professional Pathway. Literature suggests that the Professional Pathway is primarily constructed around the reproduction and improvement of class standing by students who have been “primed for success” (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013). These students are typically upper-upper middle-class students who have engaged with highly coveted educational institutions for the majority of their lives. They exist within a highly competitive social culture based around the accumulation of academic merit. While these students may engage with social systems such as Greek life due to their higher class standing, their primary focus is around the production of above average academic performance.

In this pathway, academic merit is a direct byproduct of class advantage. Similar to the students who engage with the Party Pathway, students within the professional pathway are oriented towards their position based on the class standings they had prior to coming to college. Students who have been engaging with private schools and boarding schools their entire lives do so because they are privileged enough to have the class standing to afford such an education. They have been essentially trained to perform at the highest of calibers within collegiate educational institutions and it shows with their attempts to produce high levels of academic performance.

The third pathway students may engage with is known as the mobility pathway. Literature suggests that the mobility pathway is primarily made up of lower middle and

working-class students who are primarily concerned with the upward mobility of their class standing through the use of collegiate resources and experiences. These students are engaging with the university in a fundamentally different way than their peers because they have not been afforded the same luxuries. While they may perform at a high academic level, their knowledge of institutional resources and general collegiate experiences is much lower than their peers.

These students are typically non-white or poor white students from urban or rural areas. They have spent the majority of their time within public school systems and have a much higher chance of being first gen (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013). Based on these pre-collegiate experiences and variables, students who engage with this pathway are primarily concerned with improving their overall class standing once they leave college. Unlike their Wannabe counterparts who may share a similar class standing, they are engaging with fields and on campus environments that will not require family intervention for success. This description suggests that there is a higher chance we will see Columbus city students engaging with this pathway on campus.

The fourth and final pathway suggested by the literature is one of alternative subcultures within campus life. While this was only hinted at throughout different projects, it is impossible to deny the fact that there are alternative social systems that non-white, first gen and urban students engage with due to the predominantly white and affluent nature of the collegiate experience. In one of the articles these subcultures were described as “protective segregation” (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013).

In essence, protective segregation encapsulates a wide range of different social subcultures that exist within predominantly white and affluent educational institutions that run counter to traditional social systems like Greek life. Anything from theater troupes to study circles to historically non-white Greek organizations like MGC and NPHC can be included within this category. These groups may overlap or contain those who engage with the mobility or achiever pathway and are usually distinct from the party pathway. Due to the large financial and time commitment needed to engage with the party pathway as well as its extremely exclusionary nature, many students choose to engage with these selective subcultures in an effort to find a community that is not inherently based in race and class-based segregation efforts.

But how does one engage with and find themselves within these certain pathways once they get onto campus? Literature suggests that there are several factors that dictate the outcome of students experiences besides prior knowledge or parental influence. One of the major factors that influences social integration is the living situation in which students either willingly or unwillingly partake (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013).

Dormitories or dorms have been a staple of college life for almost as long as colleges have existed in the United States. These mass occupancy buildings allow the university to house a large number of students from across the country as well as generate an extremely lucrative secondary source of income that is not always directly tied to financial aid or merit scholarships. Because of this, universities tend to place a heavy emphasis on dorm life for the first one to two years of college. Some schools even require housing for multiple years depending on the type of school and the housing availability off campus (Denison requires students to live on campus all

four years). This early emphasis on university housing allows the housing system to play a key role in the social experiences of students on campus in both overt and subversive ways.

Within the dormitory system there are a mix of officially and unofficially designated housing types that can largely impact the social experience of students on campus. Literature suggests that experiences within the dormitory system can influence students' choices with regards to which pathways are available to them or which pathways they may even be aware of on campus. While each school has its own unique social ecosystem, we can make the argument that there are three general housing designations from which we can base this research on.

The first of these housing designations can be best described as quiet housing. Quiet housing is a form of localized housing that is designed to promote an academic lifestyle through social obligation. Students who engage with quiet housing typically create a social environment in which rules are enforced to maintain a quiet living environment for the community. These students are typically engaged with primarily academic systems on campus or want to be removed from the party dorms (which we will discuss later).

According to the literature, quiet housing seems to produce as well as contain a large number of students who are engaged with the mobility, professional and alternative pathways on campus. These students tend to be extremely disinterested in the general social systems that are perpetuated within traditional social settings such as Greek institutions and athletics.

The second housing designation is known as general housing. General housing is the most ambiguous of the housing type and covers a wide range of student housing situations. Basically, anything that is not a party dorm and is not quiet housing can be seen as general

housing. Students within these dorms can engage with a mix of different pathways and end up in their living situations based on a random housing placement system.

The final and arguably most well-known housing designation is known as the “party dorm” (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013). These dorms garner an unofficial reputation by students within the university as well as by university administration as the place to live if you are interested in engaging with social functions on campus. These party dorms are typically mass occupancy dormitories with a semi-coed living situation (floors or sections of floors are divided by gender). Within the dorm setting students socialize with other students as well as learn valuable lessons about social life within the university. Some literature suggests that students come into college knowing where to live if they want to party based on parental experience or recommendations from close contacts within the university setting (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013). Because of this, many students who engage with this space are willing participants and are given access to information about social systems that come from previous experience.

One of the major outcomes of this sharing of information is that party dorms serve as access points for many first-year students to enter into the Greek system. Greek life institutions serve as a central focal point for the social interactions of students at predominantly white institutions, and access to their spaces is dictated not only by class-based markers, but also a knowledge base that is passed on through socialization forces outside of the university setting.

While in this space, first year students are able to learn not only what institutions exist on campus and which they wish to associate themselves with, but they also are able to create a

relationship with future members of those same organizations. It is through this socialization process that the party pathway (and by extension the university social setting) begins to embody its exclusionary nature. Students must either know how to gain access to the social spaces, be predisposed to the spaces themselves, or have knowledge about how these spaces operate in order to find themselves fully integrating into them. Without the knowledge and capital (both social and fiscal) necessary to enter the space, students will be institutionally and socially excluded from this particular pathway.

Methods:

Project overview:

In order to conduct this research, this project employed a mixed methods approach to both data collection and data analysis. By combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies, this project aims to produce a comprehensive understanding of social integration methods of Columbus City students. The quantitative data collected will produce a foundational understanding of what CCS students are experiencing as well as a snapshot of the current demographics of the group itself. Alternatively, the qualitative data collected will allow us to expand upon the quantitative findings in meaningful and more interpersonal ways.

The data collection and data analysis process for this project has occurred over the course of approximately two and a half years. During this time the project has taken on three distinct phases. The first initial phase occurred during the summer of 2019. For ten weeks, an initial pilot study was conducted in which sixteen students were asked to participate in either one on one interviews or focus groups. Six students participated in the one-on-one interviews

and ten students participated in the focus groups. One on one interviews lasted approximately forty-five minutes to an hour and focus groups lasted approximately thirty to forty-five minutes.

The second phase of the project occurred during the spring of 2020. During this time the Anthropology/Sociology department at Denison University provided funding for the continuation of data collection at this time. Over the course of a semester (14 weeks) four one on one interviews were conducted to continue collecting data on experiential themes. More interviews were scheduled, however, due to covid-19 the project was partially put on hold until returning in the fall. During the time in quarantine a survey was sent out to all DCA scholars who had not been previously interviewed or surveyed before. This allowed the data collection process to continue in a meaningful way while also working around covid restrictions at the time.

The third and final phase of the project occurred during the fall semester of 2020 and the spring semester of 2021. In this time, data collection was completed after another round of surveys went out to students and a final focus group was conducted. Due to the timeline of senior research, the project was completed in the spring of 2021.

Data collection:

In order to collect data a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodological practices were utilized over the span of the three phases. During the initial phase, data was primarily collected through two distinct operational systems which built the foundation of the collection process for the research moving forward. Qualitative data was collected through in person audio recordings on site and were stored on a personal drive that was encrypted with password

protection. After the transcription process all recordings were deleted in order to ensure confidentiality and protect participants identities. Participants were given informed consent documents as well as debriefing forms that informed them on the data collection process as well as a verbal explanation of how the interview was going to be conducted.

One on one interviews were designed around the collection of experiential data from participants. Participants were asked a wide range of IRB approved questions regarding general campus experiences, personal reflections and anecdotal evidence in order to gain an understanding of the general trend of experiences of DCA students on campus. Alternatively, focus groups were more directed with a singular topic being engaged with by five to six students. The first focus group focused on social stratification on campus and perspectives on systems of power with regards to the social hierarchy of campus. The second focus group focused on experiences of race and gender on campus and their effects on placement within the social ecosystem of the university.

Quantitative data during this phase was primarily collected through the use of google forms surveys. After each interview, participants were sent a five-minute survey to fill out while still on site. These surveys collected demographic information such as class, race and major as well as asked questions concerning general perceptions of experiences on campus as well as participants' overall feeling of comfortability. Surveys were also sent out to other participants who were unable to come to interview sessions due to limited availability or geographic restrictions during the summer. This survey was utilized in all other phases. Results were saved on an encrypted server using a password and referenced throughout the research process.

During phase two of the project similar data collection processes were utilized. Qualitative data was collected using audio recordings generated on site with participants. These recordings were saved on an encrypted server using password protection and deleted after the transcription process. Like phase one, interviews focused on general experiences on campus and looked to illuminate trends amongst DCA students and their experiences within the university's social ecosystem.

Similarly, quantitative data was collected during this phase using a process similar to phase one. Surveys were administered to interview participants after each interview and collected through Google Forms. It was also during this phase that a mass survey was sent out to all current members of the DCA on campus. Due to Covid, restrictions were placed on the ability to meet with students in person. Because of these limitations, it was decided that a mass survey would be the most efficient way to collect data during this difficult time.

During the final phase, minimal data was collected due to the project coming to a close at the beginning of May 2021. While beginning preparations for the final research thesis, the project team noticed that there was not ample data on the social integration timeline students experience with regards to the development of friend groups and student's integration into their respective social organizations. Because of this realization, a singular focus group was conducted in order to gain information from a wider variety of students in a short amount of time. The focus group was audio recorded over zoom due to covid restrictions and the recording was deleted after the transcription process was completed.

Data analysis:

In order to analyze the data collected, a collection of quantitative and qualitative methodologies was used. For the qualitative data, first and second cycle coding methods were employed to analyze the transcripts generated from each interview and focus group. For first cycle coding, a simultaneous coding method was employed which combined Holistic coding and Initial Coding. A holistic coding approach allowed for large sections of data to be understood “as a whole instead of line by line” (Saldana n.d). When applicable, entire paragraphs of a transcript were summarized under a single code using holistic coding. Initial coding allowed more complex interview responses to be analyzed and broken down into multiple codes. If a response had multiple dimensions, then initial coding was used to separate the different aspects of a response into discrete codes. By combining these two coding methods, the data was able to be analyzed from both a macro and micro level. Entire paragraphs that answered a single question could be synthesized into a manageable code while more complex responses could be easily broken down into their individual parts. For second cycle coding, a Focused Coding approach was used. Focused coding allowed the codes developed from the first cycle of coding to be categorized into prospective groups. By creating discrete categories for the first cycle codes, the overall trends of the data were developed across transcripts.

In order to analyze the quantitative data generated by the research, descriptive and inferential statistics were developed from the electronic survey. Survey responses generated nominal and ordinal variables for ten questions. These variables provided demographic information as well as information on the overall integration experience. The inferential statistics generated helped to create a greater understanding of the correlation between student demographics and overall feelings of comfortability on campus, while demographic

information was used to contextualize the research itself. It is important to note however that the population of this survey was relatively small when compared to other surveys because of the low overall population of DCA students on campus. With only approximately 30 students responding to the survey (n=30), generalizations cannot be easily made. This is why a heavier emphasis was placed on descriptive statistics rather than inferential (see limitations for more).

Results:

Based on the data collected, we can see that there are three distinct systems of knowledge that can be generated. What was found was that DCA scholars have a distinct perspective of the university, unique integration methodologies and clear advice for future cohorts and the program as a whole. These systems of knowledge, while independent, feed into each other and create a comprehensive understanding of how DCA scholars experience Denison University.

Who is DCA?:

Before we can begin to deconstruct these systems of knowledge however, we must first understand what the population of our study is. DCA scholars are predominantly Black (53% of total population) with the next closest being white students who come in at approximately 20% (figure 1). DCA Scholars are also primarily enrolled in Social Science (40%) and Interdisciplinary majors (23%) (figure 2) and are approximately 53% first gen students (figure 3).

Race

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Black/African American	16	53.3	55.2	55.2
	White	6	20.0	20.7	75.9
	Biracial	1	3.3	3.4	79.3
	Asian	2	6.7	6.9	86.2
	Latinx	3	10.0	10.3	96.6
	Middle Eastern	1	3.3	3.4	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

(figure 1)

(Figure 1)

Major

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Undecided	1	3.3	3.4	3.4
	Social Science	12	40.0	41.4	44.8
	STEM	5	16.7	17.2	62.1
	Interdis	7	23.3	24.1	86.2
	Humanities	3	10.0	10.3	96.6
	Arts	1	3.3	3.4	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

(Figure 2)

firstgen

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	16	53.3	53.3	53.3
	No	14	46.7	46.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

(Figure 3)

Social systems from the perspective of Columbus City Students:

Now that we understand what populations make up DCA, we can begin to understand the integration methods of DCA scholars. However, we must first understand how these students perceive the social structure of the university. This understanding will contextualize the overall trends of DCA scholar's integration methods and provide a foundational understanding of the more complex aspects of their journey.

Upon entering the university, a significant number of DCA scholars expressed feelings of initial displeasure and initial discomfort with the campus. Regardless of positive or negative dispositions in students' later careers, statements like:

"I didn't want to come to Denison at all. It was my last choice" (R)

"So, I hated it!" (K)

"I did not see one African American. And so I was like "ohhh this is like... this is gonna be a little tough." (AD)

Shaped many initial conversations of the interviews. From their perspective, Denison was a space that was unfamiliar in a multitude of different ways. From racial and cultural backgrounds to class standings, DCA scholars did not see themselves as sharing the same disposition as many Denison students and this was extremely evident to them upon entering the space.

Most DCA scholars came into Denison aware that the space was not necessarily reflective of their own background. POC students in particular voiced this perspective the most, with many scholars pointing out what they described as an extremely white and upper-class institution. While this designation was extremely evident to many scholars, they did not necessarily understand the complex and nuanced ways in which predominantly white collegiate institutions operate, causing greater initial discomfort.

"Um I knew it was a predominantly white institution. So I knew I would be around a lot of white people but I didn't know exactly how much, like exactly what that meant. I guess in terms of how it would impact me." (Becky)

“um, it seemed very elitist.. it was just like a weird environment and I wasn’t super comfortable with it. Just because I know like, it just like, it made me feel weird that I wasn’t gonna be surrounded by diverse people.” (K)

Almost all students interviewed described some form of disconnect with their peers. However, these disconnects were not always the same. POC students described a disconnect stemming from both class and race-based structures. As discussed in the literature, the inability to enter certain spaces was contingent upon not only one’s physical presentation, but also the financial means to engage with the activities at hand. Alternatively, white students described a social disconnect that primarily stemmed from the class differences they perceived on campus.

“they’re just more flashy with things that they have. They talk about these boujie experiences that they had before coming to school and I just can't relate. Like super luxurious vacations that I just can't relate to.” (D)

These accounts are indicative of racial disparities within the overall integration process itself. While white DCA scholars may come from a similar cultural environment, they have the added benefit of physical assimilation.

It is also important to note that there were several white male students interviewed that had generally positive dispositions with regards to their campus integration experiences. These students were highly involved in Greek and athletic organizations on campus and primarily came from Whetstone high school.

“I always felt that like... it (Denison) was different than whetstone because I felt like there were more people that were like me. The biggest change I noticed was a lot more people liked doing the things I did, and I think that was kind of inviting.” (J)

While these feelings were not expressed by all students from Whetstone, it is interesting to note that a predominantly positive disposition with regards to a student's perspective on campus came from the same school. This phenomenon will be further discussed within the discussion section of the paper.

Aside from not understanding Denison as an institution, students within the DCA program also lacked an overall understanding of what it would be like to go to college in general. This informational gap along with the distinct differences they perceived helped to create a negative initial perception of the university which translated into how a majority of DCA scholars approached their initial experiences on campus.

“They encourage students to go to college but they don’t prepare you to go to college.” (P)

When asked to describe the typical Denison student, DCA scholars articulated several key characteristics. They see the majority of their peers as wealthy, white and extremely socially active individuals. When asked how they would describe the typical Denison student interviewee’s stated:

“the group that ive mostly interacted with are people that are wealthier than I am, white um straight, heterosexual (Becky)”

“um, (a Denison student) puts a lot of emphasis on involvement. I feel like people think the more you are doing the better. The more people you know the better. I think people really value social status and standing. Um and like the general consensus the more people you know the higher the social ranking you have. Um uhhh I feel like the majority of people are wealthier. Probably come from small towns. But I do feel like that is changing. So I don’t know if I can say that’s the typical student anymore. Um, but yea. I feel like there is a lot of emphasis on social status.” (S)

I mean like if you look at the statistics then it's like our top majors are like biology, econ and communications or something like that. And the majority of students are white and come from like a middle upper, middle class to upper class background. Um and that’s the most common, that’s the most represented student on campus. Overwhelmingly female. (Jimmy)

Interestingly, this categorization is also paralleled by observations of students refusing to interact outside of their social circles. DCA scholars describe their peers as being unwilling to step out of their comfort zones when presented with new social settings. When one interviewee was asked to describe a typical Denison student, he assessed that they were

“A student that doesn’t necessarily want to step out of their comfort zone when it comes to interacting with people that look different than them (R)”.

While upper class and white students are to be expected at a university like Denison (specifically because of its cost of admission and general reputation as a liberal arts school), the students disconnect can sometimes translate into what one student described as “imposter syndrome”.

“I came here and I truly don’t belong here. Just coming from a socio economic background. Not like finding a group of friends is what got me, even me trying to be friends with poc’s I wasn’t

able to find a group. and that's when I was really like, hit. Like even the poc's are different. I can't really find that support that I need to I had a lot of imposter syndrome.” (Ro)

DCA Scholars feel as though they don't belong within the university and are not worthy to be on campus. These feelings of not belonging within the social systems of the university are also magnified when students realize that their educational experiences are not congruent with the experiences of their new peers.

Like from a money standpoint they such an advantage with resources. Like schooling, and act prep, and private schools before college. It kind of blows my mind. I kind of grew to be more uncomfortable as the year went (D)

So it is very different. just hearing the people talk about their highschool experiences, I was like we didn't do none of that. We didn't have none of that. So it, the academic thing is the main thing. (Dr)

The socioeconomic, racial, and cultural disconnects students are facing combine to create a social structure that can be very difficult for incoming Columbus city students to navigate. According to the data, social segregation and stratification are primarily based around class and race-based structures.

“Like as much as I do try the only thing we can, I can I feel like I can talk about is class. And the things we are doing outside of that we don't have similar experiences. Because the topics they talk about are far from my socioeconomic background. So I am not even able to relate to how they shop, or what kind of foods they eat. Like me not being able to do that I don't even talk.”

(Ro)

“I’ve definitely noticed this classist feel. Like the high ups hang with the high ups and lowers hang with the lowers or whatever. However you describe it. But I definitely see that trend and think that’s definitely a reason why you don’t see different groups interacting on campus” (D)

“I feel like a lot of it is based around race. Cause you have the white people, and then you have the poc community. But then the poc community is split into a few different groups” (S)

These structures dictate group and clique formation as well as the overall campus culture.

When discussing the division on campus scholars describe two distinct campuses’.

“it’s definitely cool to see both sides of the school...I’ll be with my fraternity people and I’ll pass somebody from the alliance and obviously they’ll look different than us and they’ll be like “well how do you know them”. And I’ll be like “they are from, I am part of their group. I am from Columbus and I went to the same school district as them. We’re in the same group. like that’s my alliance”. Like they’re kinda like prejudice about it.” (D)

POC students and white students are socially segregated from each other with social groups on each side forming around a desire for a community with individuals from similar backgrounds. Major social institutions such as multicultural organizations and Greek life operate parallel to each other by providing spaces for students to surround themselves with people that share class and racial similarities as well as a similar world view.

“I definitely noticed when i’m in clubs or events that are centered around a multicultural identity at Denison its just. Yea. Its just, you feel more relaxed, you feel more, the school around is shut out and you are present in that room. But yea going to class, going around campus just

generally or being in a dining hall, its just in a way like, like something as basic as my skin color or hair and I feel as though people are watching.” (F)

I wanted to be around people who looked like me first of all. Especially since this is a majority, like a white campus (R)

I have friends outside of those groups for sure. Um, but I would say that I find myself hanging out with people in my fraternity most often. Not so much with frisbee. Um I don't hang out with everybody in my fraternity all the time, but there are the smaller little groups that i'll hang out with my fraternity. (D)

This segregation also presents itself in physical settings as groups congregate in ways that are obviously visible.

“think about Curtis your freshman year. People are all like scattered over the place. I mean like you still have some like racial division um, but like people are scattered all over the place. And then you have like all that changes late first semester into the beginning of second semester. After like Greek life and rush and everything. Um and the whole like party scene shifts. Um, and then you go into a place like Huffman where like you have these long, like even the lay out of these two dining halls tell us different stories. Like at Huffman you have these long tables where you'll have like whole sports teams sitting down. And whole like Greek chapters sitting down um or like ASA sitting at a table or BSU sitting at a table.” (Jimmy)

Common spaces such as dining halls and the student union serve as models for the physical segregation these students are experiencing on a daily basis.

Within these physical spaces there are also leader groups that operate with greater social capital. Greek affiliated students, athletes, and Posse students are understood to be leaders on campus and have sway over the social settings at large.

Like I feel like a lot of boston or Chicago posse people put themselves above everybody. (Ro)

Dr: I think the social hierarchy starts with fraternities and sororities. That's where it starts. Like, I feel like if you aren't part of a fraternity or sorority you already at the bottom for one.

P: also sports team (Dr/P)

"they're the ones that throw a lot of the parties. And then like... like this week like tonight it's the sigma rho sorority that's throwing a party like. It those people... all of them are seniors and juniors too. And so they're like the... most of them are on the black student union exec team. So I definitely say they're the leaders of the black community. And like those... those councils those execs" (AD)

These students have a clear sway over the general social organization of the campus itself and provide needed structure with regards to party organization, community activities and general group disposition.

From a structural perspective, the university has two distinct types of groups: goal oriented and social. Goal oriented and social groups operate parallel to each other and provide different experiences to their members. Goal oriented groups such as Sisters in Dialogue and Green Team were created to serve a purpose within the Denison community and the greater world.

(Sisters in dialogue) it's a space to just talk and um for others to listen as well and to come up with solutions or ways to further the dialogue outside of the meetings. (Becky)

Social groups such as Greek life and multicultural groups serve the specific purpose of providing community to their members.

I think its different when you get to like cross cultural communities or C3 groups um or like religious clubs um or like Greek life. Cause their purpose is not necessarily like to um, like, improve the greater campus. The job is to like provide community within their members. And to make their members feel inclusive. And like their main objective is to establish closer bonds and establish relationships so they make friends there. Um and that's their main like purpose (Jimmy)

This strict group distinction runs counter to the previous experiences of many DCA scholars.

Depending on the high school, students talk about how cliques and defined social circles either didn't exist or were easily circumvented. Many of these students are used to experiencing a greater social fluidity within and across communities. DCA scholars that describe a socially fluid experience also describe experiencing a lack of a solid connection to a single group on campus. In order to be socially fluid, they cannot commit themselves to a single group and have to form strong bonds outside of their organizations.

"yea I think that, the fact that im not necessarily super heavily involved in like a certain like concrete group of the college allows me to meet people all over the college" (Jimmy)

"I don't really like to have friend, I don't know if this is the right word, I don't like to have friend groups. Like I talk to a variety of people" (R)

As discussed previously, when navigating these larger social structures DCA scholars describe race as playing a large role in their day-to-day interactions with certain groups. Students of color describe being tokenized within primarily white communities as well as having a pressure to represent their specific community to a majority white population.

people look to me as a validation for beliefs that are sort of like uh, aligned with social justice movements right now. And, it's just very, I'm very fearful of that dynamic. Like oh im the czar of what you can believe. And this is how you should go about the world and interact with uh people like me or others. (F)

I was kind of like the only Filipino student around in my year and only one of two in my school. And there was no specific space for filipino students on campus, and there still isn't. even in the poc communities I felt like I was alone. I still kind of feel that way. I feel like there is a pressure, I woke up feeling like there is a pressure to represent an entire community and it kind of makes me, and I woke up angry sometimes. (M)

People are kind of like attracted to me because I look different than everybody else. So I have to act a certain way to, im put together and everything like that, and If I act out, it will look bad on Denison and the coach. So I definitely feel like I have to act a certain way in that group (P)

Integration:

Overview:

According to the data, students integrate into groups and organizations that primarily are reflective of their unique social locations. Multi-cultural groups and C3 organizations such as

the BSU (Black Student Union), Alpha Phi Alpha (historically black fraternity) and ASA (African Student Association) serve as the main social groups that students integrate into. Approximately 47% of students surveyed said they were involved in multi-cultural organizations and approximately 16% said they were involved in Greek Life institutions (figure 4).

This data reflects the majority POC population of the Denison Columbus alliance scholarship group. White students within the Denison Columbus alliance integrated into primarily goal-oriented groups (club sports such as rugby and frisbee), however it is important to note that there was one white student who was involved in an unnamed, primarily white Greek life institution. Almost all DCA scholars were involved in some form of goal-oriented groups such as athletics or organizations like the Redcorps. These organizations still reflected their unique social locations, but also provided them with activities on campus that matched their interests outside of social interaction.

Students also tended to primarily make friends outside of goal-oriented organizations.

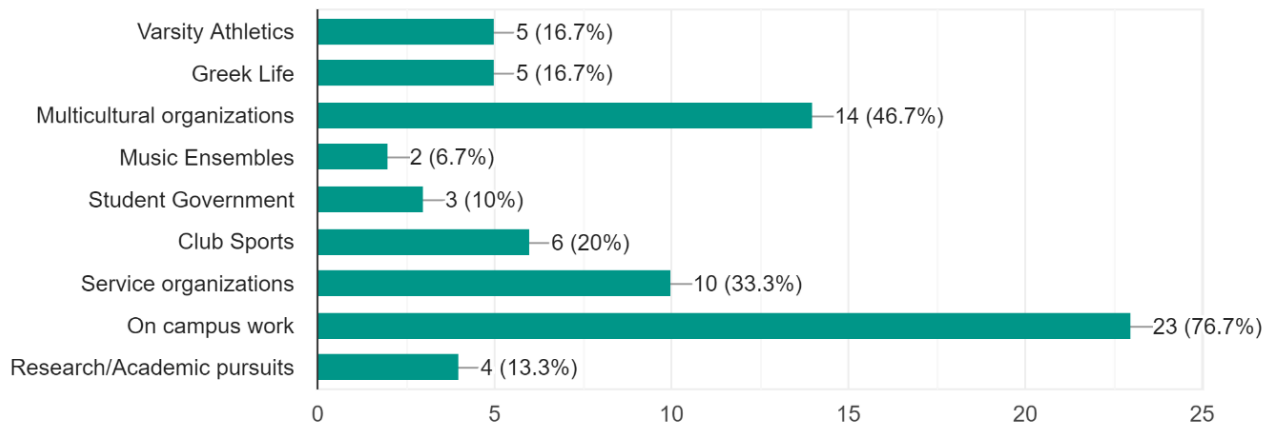
"I have a totally separate group of friends." (Jimmy)

I have one friend that I met through frisbee and we're super close. But my main group of friends

is like outside of that. (K)

Groups Involved with on campus

30 responses



(figure 4)

Unless students were mainly involved in social groups such as Greek life or socially oriented multicultural organizations, their primary friend groups were found outside of their respective organizations. For example, athletes within the program described strong ties to their sports teams, but they also stated that they made other friend groups outside of just their teams. This indicates that primarily goal-oriented organizations do not produce long standing friendship structures for DCA scholars, with students instead forming bonds with students outside of organizational alignment.

but I would say that I find myself hanging out with people in my fraternity most often (D)

I talk to a variety of people. So very rarely I will be with the same group almost every day. You

will very rarely see me with the same group unless its my fraternity brothers (R)

Like I hang out with my teammates but they're not the main ones I hang out with. I just see

them so much I know i'll see them at practice 5 days a week (P)

While interviewing the final focus group, these findings were expanded upon in a variety of ways. Students pointed towards forming bonds with those they shared relative proximity to upon entering campus. Other DCA students, preorientation students and students within their respective social organizations all shared closer social ties to DCA scholars than their respective goal oriented counterparts.

“So I met a few people at June o. then some more people at my august orientation like dso. But I would say my friend group got solidified like 1 month in. and now I spend every day with them.

That’s my friend group. (MARN)”

“I feel like I was kinda drew to people that were like me. even if they weren’t from columbus, just from the same struggles. But we all might not be here paying out of pocket. Most of my friends

are on scholarships. So people who was just like me basically. (T)”

Looking at the general construction of friend groups, DCA scholars note that group formation occurs early within your collegiate career. As suggested by the literature, friend groups are typically formed within the first six weeks of getting to campus and go through varying levels of reformation once students enter new social spaces (specifically Greek life institutions). This reformation can be sparked by a variety of reasons (new students, new social alignments with regards to organizations, etc), however students argue that the core group that forms within the first six weeks is relatively consistent across their time on campus.

“But I would say my friend group got solidified like 1 month in. and now I spend every day with them. That’s my friend group”. (Marn)

mine too. (the friend group) Stayed practically the same. Other than my roommate had to move back home. But other than that I just kind of added people on like there was no one who got cut off. (Mat)

Obstacles:

Before these students were able to integrate into organizations and form friend groups, they had to navigate obstacles within the social structure of Denison. Approximately 34% of DCA scholars surveyed stated that it was either difficult or very difficult to find their place on campus. Approximately 27% stated that it was neither easy nor difficult and approximately 37% stated that it was easy or vary easy (figure 5).

How easy was it to find your place on campus?

29 responses

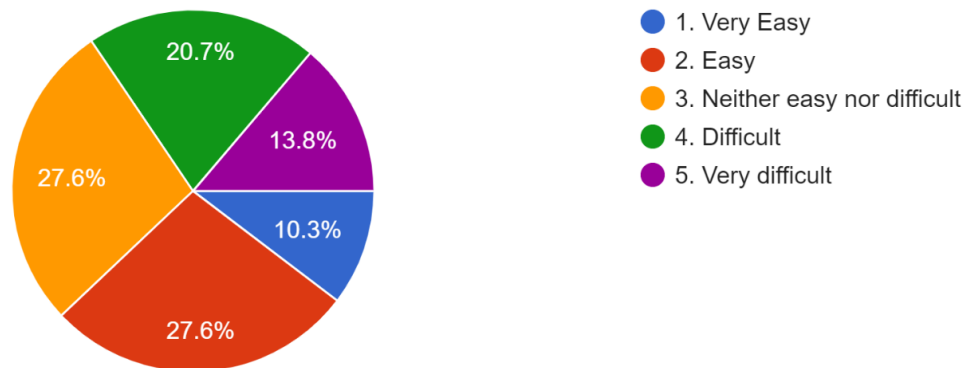


Figure 5

According to students, the main obstacles DCA scholars had to face when integrating were class and race-based structures.

I think it depends on experiences mostly. Experiences, identities. Um, yea but a lot more of an emphasis on experiences more than like racial and ethnic identities. Just because I feel like, it seems to be driven more by people that had the money to do certain things, or have had access to um certain privileges and experiences compared to other groups of people on campus (Becky)

“I mean class is a big thing. Um, like people are able to recognize which class you are from. Being able to hold a conversation with someone about their experiences, like someone talking about their spring break in Vienna and like I just stayed home and in Kentucky um or like rural Colorado. You’re not really able to relate to those people. And that provides some division”

(jimmy)

cause they always preach about diversity, but im still the only black one (V)

These structures created strict divides amongst students, making it difficult for DCA scholars to integrate into groups unless they share a visible class and racial standing that aligns with the group’s majority population. For example, groups such as IFC fraternities (historically white) were described as only being available to white upper-class students while multicultural organizations were only seen as open to students of color. This divisional force was only circumvented by having a preexisting social connection to certain groups or personal connection with individual members.

I, don’t necessarily see there being a space for low income students or like middle class students in the Greek life organizations cause their basis is to, I mean like in order to be involved you have to have a certain amount of funds or resources....Even if you’re financially able to pay for these organizations um, again like how I talked about earlier about relating to people and their

experiences um like if someone has grown up in like Nantucket um or like they grew up in manhattan and they spend their summers in nantucket you're like born in Chicago or the south side of Chicago and you spend your summers in Chicago. Like even if you guys have similar interests like on paper, you view the world totally different. And it's hard for students to relate. Um. And that shapes who you're able to be friends with. Cause people gravitate towards people that are interested in things similar to them. (jimmy)

C: yea Im not gonna lie i've been to a multicultural party before and I kinda was feeling out of place because there was just uh, there was Hispanic music playing and everyone was dancing in a certain way and I didn't know how to dance that way

Dr: that's me. You don't even got to trip

C: yea. I was feeling like, you know that stereotypical awkward white dad. At a picnic

Without a visible class or racial profile that aligns with the group, students feel closed off from interacting with or integrating into said organization.

There is also a general lack of interest in cross communal outreach which keeps students from feeling as though they can easily integrate into communities that are not their own. When discussing cross community event planning with a DCA member who was a former high ranking member of the Panhellenic council (the historically white sororities on campus), she discussed how there was very little being done within the Panhellenic community to reach out because members are unaware of who is aligned with cultural organizations as well as a general disinterest in actively engaging with the work necessary to facilitate the work.

"I think that everyone always says that they want to get more involved with supporting other councils but when it comes time to do it people are hesitant to do it. Like including myself. I was very hesitant cause I didn't really understand or know like other councils ways of doing recruitment or doing events or the kind of culture behind their organizations (SJ)."

She also discussed how the different ways in which cultural organizations like MGC and NPHC operate in comparison to Panhell create barriers between organizations making it difficult for groups to come together in meaningful ways. These differences are also greatly influenced by the sheer population differences between the two organizations. Panhellenic sororities can have over 100 members while MGC and NPHC organizations tend to have much smaller populations on campus.

"I think that a lot of people in panhel don't understand how different mgc and npmc work. Like it's a very um... oh what is that word? Um... they have a lot of discretion when they go through their recruitment and their intake processes. And that's very different from ifc and panhel recruitment where it's very open and you tell people and it's a very open process. And when people learn that I think they think it's secretive and private and oh if I can't know they're going through that process then I can't... I don't know it's weird. Cause I've never got that like people not know about what events are going on or what if I show up like will it.. I guess that was always my thing. How will it be taken if I show up to an event for a different council? Like not that it would even be perceived weird but if not anyone else goes and I'm the only one from a different council it's like me stopping myself. And I think other women in the panhel community feel that way. that they're intimidating which they're not. I think that's a big thing. And I think panhel can come off as intimidating just cause in sheer numbers there's just more of us." (SJ)

DCA scholars also describe an emphasis on labels within the communities at Denison. White passing and even some white students feel as though they exist in a middle space where they are unable to join white institutions due to class-based restrictions, but also cannot fully integrate into POC organizations due to the protections their racial ambiguity provides them.

I don't like physically, visually, fit in. I don't know if its just in my head, even in spaces like sisters in dialogue ill just be there like alright I feel like I don't fit in with these people either and I don't feel like they view me as fitting in. um. And so that's been. Its been difficult to find a space because I feel like everything is based around like race and like I don't know (S)

This emphasis on labels also extends beyond the experiences of white and white passing students. Scholars describe a social ecosystem where if a person is not labeled a certain way, i.e. they do not exist within or around a certain organization, they become socially ostracized.

I hear things like "oh hes not in our fraternity so he can't come to the party" that type of stuff. So I definitely feel like it starts with sororities and fraternities. (Dr)

So that also has presented issues when it comes to like being around people of color. Because I feel like especially being at Denison its kind of a like, oh if you aren't a person of color you can't understand us or you don't belong in this group. its very segregated even within the poc community here... Because I don't feel like there is a specific community that I fit in or belong to. And I feel like at Denison people just expect you to have a community... But if you don't fit into these labels you are just floating in the middle of nowhere and theres a lot of emphasis on like labels. (S)

Interestingly, even the dorm system works to segregate students from one another. One DCA scholar described her experience of living in Morrow House (a designated quiet house located away from the mass occupancy freshman dorms) as socially isolating, especially during her recruitment process.

“I realized how secluded it was when I went through recruitment and ended up getting into a house. Because everyone, mostly everyone in my member class knew each other or had formed close knit bonds because they had met in shorney and smith and Curtis. So going into that from living in north quad was “oh no one else here lives on north quad”. So if I had to hangout with them I had to go to them.” (SJ)

DCA scholars also face a major gap in both knowledge and in resources. Approximately 53% of DCA scholars describe themselves as being lower or lower middle class (figure 6). Scholars describe how being of a lower-middle class background makes it harder for them to integrate into environments frequented by upper class students. A lack of financial security keeps DCA scholars from being able to partake in activities that their peers enjoy causing feelings of isolation.

“I think that there’s a lot of like, there a lot of students on campus that are inconsiderate to the fact that not everyone can get Donatos every night or go off campus and eat every night. I don’t know do things that involve a lot of money every night and every weekend. And it kind of weighs on you when you walk out into the parking lot and there’s my crappy Toyota right next to a brand new BMW or Jeep or something. And you’re like oh right, ill never achieve that level of fitting in”. (K)

Class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Middle	13	43.3	44.8	44.8
	Lower Middle	7	23.3	24.1	69.0
	Lower	9	30.0	31.0	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

(Figure 6)

Scholars also describe feeling as though they are underprepared for the academics of the university. Students recounted stories of being afraid to take certain classes due to a lack of educational preparedness.

I didn't know what the workload was gonna be....I was scared to take math classes (R)

Part of this information gap stems from their high school experiences. DCA scholars vary across levels of preparedness in regard to academic and social skills. Schools like Centennial, Whetstone and CAHS have students who feel somewhat academically prepared whereas

students from schools like South, Mifflin, Independence, Northland and Fort Hayes don't feel academically prepared at all.

"I felt like I would be prepared for that based on the rigor of my high school classes. I was taking mostly IB AP courses. Um and overall just CAHS was really difficult and pushed you a lot."

(Becky)

"I have never in high school (Fort Hayes), I never typed a single essay. Never! We wrote them in my notebook and my teacher collected them and he would just put a check and be like this is great. And we wrote them in pencil and we didn't know any kind of citation. I had no idea. I was like what are citations?!? This is plagiarism? Like since when. And I was like super not at all prepared in that sense" (K)

While educational levels seem to vary, students do share similar experiences due to the nature of Columbus city schools. One of the major shared factors was a lack of resources within their schools. During a focus group one scholar described how there were paper droughts throughout the district at the end of the year.

"And that shows why students are struggling. So making up those gaps and filling those gaps. If you go to ccs like we had paper droughts near the end of the year. That shouldn't happen." (R)

Coping Strategies:

In order to overcome these obstacles, DCA scholars employ multiple different coping strategies. One primary coping strategy is the acquisition of both formal and informal mentors.

Mentors provide DCA scholars with social support as well as provide them with knowledge that helps to bridge the gaps they are facing.

um, Dr. G has been a really big mentor for me.. through those constant weekly one on ones I got more comfortable talking to her about how I felt here at Denison. Um and oh also through the fact that she saw something in me and told me that she would like me to get on the leadership board for SID (Sisters in dialogue) (Becky)

And then people who saw my potential kinda like reached out to me and grabbed me. Like ok "I see this potential lets grow together. Let me help you grow". So like Val for example, was a major one. Will was a major one. They kind of like took me in. they were like dads on campus. They kinda like showed me the way. they knew more about navigating Denison than I did so it helped having people pull me in, that was important for me, cause mentors you can't take them for granted. (R)

DCA scholars also overcame the obstacles they were facing by joining social groups that reflected their individual interests and unique social locations. These organizations provided them with both a sense of social security as well as perceived personal growth.

So starting to hang out with those people and people in different groups and organizations like the bsu, my fraternity, Denison sports network, really helped me overcome those fears. (R)

It's given me a group of guys that are like a new set of mentors. Guys, I mean it gets me involved in the community. (D)

Another way DCA scholars overcame social obstacles was through the use of a social-linguistic tool known as code switching . POC scholars discussed the use of code switching as a coping method for existing within predominantly white spaces. Code switching allowed students to navigate in areas that they felt uncomfortable in and allowed them to gain access to resources and social capital that would have been more difficult to receive due to their visible class and racial differences.

I can tell that I act different. I code switch. I talk more sophisticated when I talk to professors and people in general. And going to Columbus theres a lot of people that look like me and talk like me. So I can just be myself and when I come here I have to be a totally different person. (P)

most people try to code switch to fit into groups and mine has been to finally relax properly (Fa)

However, the most common coping strategy that DCA scholars employed was utilizing the social network created within the DCA scholarship group. The Columbus alliance provided scholars with a social network that they regularly rely on. This network gave them social security as well as access to parts of campus that they may not have originally had access to.

I think its given me a group of people I can come back to and talk to (Becky)

all of the friends I have I feel like can be traced back to somebody in the scholarship group (S)

DCA scholars recognized that the scholarship provided other resources such as the advising circle that should be taken advantage of and showed immense pride in the Denison Columbus Alliance Program. By utilizing this network of resources and social connections, DCA scholars

were better able to cope with and overcome the obstacles they faced while integrating into the university.

The advising circle was definitely great. People dreaded it, but I never dreaded it. I'm not gonna lie that's 100% truth. I really enjoyed my advisor, i'm really sad he's not gonna be my advisor anymore. But I just feel like I got a lot of useful information and it was nice to see my alliance because I got to see them (D)

Now when I get here everyone rep's their city so hard, and ever since I took pride in being part of alliance I feel that even more. I feel like, I like Columbus now. I have pride in the struggles that we went through and I have pride in the struggles my family went through and what it implies (M)

Future:

By understanding where these students are facing obstacles and how they are overcoming them, we have a better understanding of how we can help these students. Throughout the research process DCA scholars provided many suggestions and insights into how the program could be improved and what they wish they had known when coming into Denison. DCA scholars wished they knew three main things; how financial aid and administrative aspects of college worked, how important mentors and networking were, and overall how hard college would be.

Scholars feel as though they lacked an overall understanding of the administrative side of Denison and wished they knew how to navigate applying for loans and asking for help sooner.

something I wish I knew coming in was how hard the finances would be. And how complicated they. And how to me the financial aid office does not work for students. (F)

Similarly, they felt as though they lacked an understanding of how to network and find the mentors, they need outside of the ones provided by the scholarship program.

I think I know how to network better. Networking is a big thing. My mom always said you need to network, you need to talk to that person. And I was always scared to do that. But now I know how important that is

I have not found somebody within my department so I would love if the alliance would help me find somebody in my department so that would be super helpful if they were to guide us through setting up uh an academic advisor in my major. (D)

They also feel as though they lacked an understanding of how rigorous Denison's class load would be and how to navigate this new educational space.

I wish I knew how to study for an exam before coming here. Cause I remember first semester first year I had a physics exam and a calc exam on the same day. I did not do well on either (C)
so one thing I would like to know is, um... how hard college is actually going to be. Especially time management. Time management for me was the absolutely hardest thing. I go to class, then go take a nap, then im up till 2 o clock in the morning doing work. And im talking half the time so I have to prioritize my work before social life (P)

The scholars also provided advice for the new incoming groups independent of ideas to improve the overall program. They advised that students:

don't put pressure on yourself to find a group. and academics really matter so do not slip. (Ro)

So my advice is to study but if you fail an exam don't shut down. Its not worth the time. Its just a letter (C)

So some advice I would give to the new group is really like use your resources. If you have questions or you know someone whos been in the situation you're about to be in don't be afraid to ask them. (Dr)

yea im just gonna say to find the healthy balance. And to get involved. And not that school isn't everything, but school is also getting to meet new people that you wouldn't have gotten to meet in Columbus. Um getting involved in things that you couldn't get involved in Columbus. And taking the opportunities at Denison. Yea. Finding the healthy balance between getting involved and school. (D)

Inferential Statistics:

The final part of the results section of this project will focus on the inferential statistics generated by the surveys collected. It is important to note that this data, while significant, is generated by a population of approximately thirty students. While this is around 45% of the total population of DCA scholars on campus, the limited population indicates that results can and will change as more scholars come to campus.

The inferential statistics generated throughout this process were generated by analyzing linear association between the dependent variables of race, class, major and first gen and the independent variables of feel (how do you feel about Denison?), findplace (how easy was it for

you to find your place on campus?), comfortable (how comfortable do you feel on campus?), and welcome (how welcome do you feel on campus?). For the purposes of this analysis, all statistically significant relationships will be presented for each dependent variable.

The first variable, Race, shows statistical significance with all independent variables. What this indicates is that race and racial experiences correlate to feelings about Denison, perceptions around how easy campus integration is and how comfortable students feel on campus. The second variable, major, shows statistical significance with feel and welcome. This is indicative of that fact that certain majors have a correlation with how welcome students are feeling on campus and how they overall feel about the campus itself. It also points to the fact that an individual's major has no correlation with feelings of comfortability and how easy it was to find your place.

The third variable, class, only shows statistical significance with findplace. Unsurprisingly, this indicates that class is closely tied with students ability to find their place on campus, but it does not necessarily effect overall perceptions of the institution itself. Feelings about the university, feelings of inclusion, and comfortability are all disconnected from class, however, the way in which one finds their place is connected to their class. Alternatively, the fourth and final variable, first gen, shares statistical significance with all independent variables. What this indicates is that the experience of being a first-generation student not only affects how you feel about the campus, but also a student's overall feelings with regards to finding their place on campus.

Race * Feel**Crosstab**

Count

		Feel				Total
		Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
Race	Black/African American	1	8	7	0	16
	White	1	2	3	0	6
	Biracial	0	1	0	0	1
	Asian	0	0	1	1	2
	Latinx	0	1	2	0	3
	Middle Eastern	0	0	1	0	1
Total		2	12	14	1	29

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.643 ^a	15	.230
Likelihood Ratio	12.062	15	.674
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.543	1	.111
N of Valid Cases	29		

a. 22 cells (91.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

Race * Findplace**Crosstab**

Count

		Findplace					Total
		Very easy	Easy	Neither	Difficult	Very difficult	
Race	Black/African American	2	5	6	2	1	16
	White	1	1	2	1	1	6

Biracial	0	1	0	0	0	1
Asian	0	0	0	1	1	2
Latinx	0	1	0	2	0	3
Middle Eastern	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	3	8	8	6	4	29

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.114 ^a	20	.451
Likelihood Ratio	18.676	20	.543
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.332	1	.037
N of Valid Cases	29		

a. 30 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .10.

Race * Comfortable

Crosstab

Count

		Comfortable					Total
		Very Comfortable	Comfortable	Neutral	Uncomfortable	Very uncomfortable	
Race	Black/African American	0	11	4	1	0	16
	White	1	3	1	1	0	6
	Biracial	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Asian	0	0	0	1	1	2
	Latinx	0	1	2	0	0	3
	Middle Eastern	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total		1	16	8	3	1	29

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	28.912 ^a	20	.090
Likelihood Ratio	20.338	20	.437
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.241	1	.072
N of Valid Cases	29		

a. 29 cells (96.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

Race * Welcome

Crosstab

Count

		Welcome					Total
		Very welcome	Welcome	Neither	Unwelcome	Very welcome	
Race	Black/African American	2	13	1	0	0	16
	White	2	1	2	1	0	6
	Biracial	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Asian	0	0	0	1	1	2
	Latinx	0	1	2	0	0	3
	Middle Eastern	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total		5	15	6	2	1	29

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	42.473 ^a	20	.002
Likelihood Ratio	31.884	20	.045
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.050	1	.014
N of Valid Cases	29		

a. 29 cells (96.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

Major * Feel

Crosstab

Count

		Feel				Total
		Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
Major	Undecided	0	0	1	0	1
	Social Science	0	5	6	1	12
	STEM	1	1	3	0	5
	Interdis	1	3	3	0	7
	Humanities	0	2	1	0	3
	Arts	0	1	0	0	1
Total		2	12	14	1	29

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.020 ^a	15	.923
Likelihood Ratio	9.576	15	.846
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.339	1	.126
N of Valid Cases	29		

a. 23 cells (95.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

Major * Welcome

Crosstab

Count

		Welcome					Total
		Very welcome	Welcome	Neither	Unwelcome	Very welcome	
Major	Undecided	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Social Science	0	8	2	1	1	12
	STEM	2	3	0	0	0	5

Interdis	2	2	3	0	0	7
Humanities	0	2	0	1	0	3
Arts	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	5	15	6	2	1	29

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	23.345 ^a	20	.272
Likelihood Ratio	24.444	20	.224
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.411	1	.235
N of Valid Cases	29		

a. 29 cells (96.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

Class * Findplace

Crosstab

Count

		Findplace					Total
		Very easy	Easy	Neither	Difficult	Very difficult	
Class	Middle	2	4	4	2	1	13
	Lower Middle	1	3	1	1	1	7
	Lower	0	1	3	3	2	9
Total		3	8	8	6	4	29

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.351 ^a	8	.400
Likelihood Ratio	9.026	8	.340
Linear-by-Linear Association	.300	1	.584
N of Valid Cases	29		

a. 14 cells (93.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .24.

firstgen * Feel

Crosstab

Count

		Feel				Total
		Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
firstgen	Yes	1	4	9	1	15
	No	1	8	5	0	14
Total		2	12	14	1	29

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.446 ^a	3	.328
Likelihood Ratio	3.870	3	.276
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.222	1	.136
N of Valid Cases	29		

a. 4 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .48.

firstgen * Findplace

Crosstab

Count

		Findplace					Total
		Very easy	Easy	Neither	Difficult	Very difficult	
firstgen	Yes	1	2	4	5	3	15
	No	2	6	4	1	1	14
Total		3	8	8	6	4	29

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.973 ^a	4	.201
Likelihood Ratio	6.356	4	.174
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.511	1	.034
N of Valid Cases	29		

a. 10 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.45.

firstgen * Comfortable

Crosstab

Count

		Comfortable					Total
		Very Comfortable	Comfortable	Neutral	Uncomfortable	Very uncomfortable	
firstgen	Yes	0	7	4	3	1	15
	No	1	9	4	0	0	14
Total		1	16	8	3	1	29

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.222 ^a	4	.265
Likelihood Ratio	7.148	4	.128
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.076	1	.044
N of Valid Cases	29		

a. 8 cells (80.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .48.

firstgen * Welcome

Crosstab

Count

		Welcome					Total
		Very welcome	Welcome	Neither	Unwelcome	Very welcome	
firstgen	Yes	3	6	3	2	1	15
	No	2	9	3	0	0	14

Total	5	15	6	2	1	29
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Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.770 ^a	4	.438
Likelihood Ratio	4.930	4	.295
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.228	1	.268
N of Valid Cases	29		

a. 8 cells (80.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .48.

Discussion:

By analyzing these results, we see that there are several important trends being experienced by DCA scholars that effect integration experiences. Based on these findings we can not only build our understanding of the university as a social institution, but we can also generate recommendations for future members of the cohort, as well as structural recommendations for Denison University to pursue. By engaging with the data in this way, we can create culturally competent intervention strategies that will improve the overall integration experience of DCA scholars.

The first trend we need to discuss is the socially complex makeup of the DCA cohort itself. While there are many overarching trends to be discussed, the data points to an extremely

diverse set of students whose experiences are shaped by a variety of variables. Class, race, educational attainment, high school and individual personality all combine to construct individual experiences on campus, and it is important that this project acknowledges the individual experiences these students have while attending Denison University.

For example, the majority of DCA scholars that were interviewed pointed towards negative initial perceptions of the university due to racial and class-based perceptions. However, several students also indicated positive perceptions of the university upon entering the space. One student even indicated that they felt more comfortable here than they did while in high school. The common factors these students shared were that they were predominantly white, male and from Whetstone high school. These situating factors contributed greatly to these students being able to integrate more easily into the space initially. Being white and male helped these students because it removed the racial and gendered barriers that separate students from integrating into socially oriented organizations such as Greek life and party culture on campus. Upon initial examination by their peers, these students shared a presumed similar cultural background as well as a physical presentation that mirrors the majority of students on campus, making the initial integration experience relatively smoother.

Even their high school background set these students up for a relatively positive integration experience. Whetstone High School is located in a small predominantly upper middle class white community in Columbus. Like other schools within the district (namely CAHS and Centennial), many students opt to lottery into this school because of its relatively higher academic performance. This means that there is a complex and diverse mix of students from a variety of cultural and class backgrounds operating within this individual educational institution.

However, due to the physical placement of the school and the cost of living in Clintonville, many white students attending Whetstone operate within a higher class than their peers. This experience, while not the same as the predominantly upper middle class, suburban white upbringing of a large population of Denison Students, arguably puts them in a position to have had more similar pre-collegiate experiences than their DCA peers. As stated by one DCA scholar from Whetstone, “I felt more comfortable here” (J).

This specific example points to a larger phenomenon that needs to be explored. That being that DCA scholars, while from the same city, do not share a cohesive experiential background. The extreme levels of gentrification experienced across Columbus as well as the overall diversity of the city itself makes it so that many students exist in pocket communities that are not reflective of the predominantly white population of the city itself. These pocket communities experience varying levels of income, access to resources, health disparities and educational support. The high schools these students attended vary in quality and because of that there is an additional layer with regards to how these students are interacting with systems at Denison. What this means for the further development of the DCA scholarship program is that the program must begin working to recognize these disparities at both an individual and communal level. Students from Whetstone will not have the same experiences and needs as students from Linden McKinley when they arrive at Denison. If the program wants to maintain its longevity, then it must begin thinking about how it can adapt to these different student experiences as well as implement institutional guidelines for students who may need more resources than their peers.

Another major trend present throughout the data is a general lack of understanding with regards to how colleges operate. Much like in our discussion of the varying levels of income and resource accessibility across DCA scholars, there are also varying levels of collegiate training experienced by this group. While there are some students who feel more prepared due to the overall higher quality of their individual high school, almost all DCA scholars interviewed stated that they felt that Columbus City Schools did not entirely prepare them for a Denison experience.

This preparation can be theoretically summarized as Performance Preparation. Whether it is the ability to perform within a rigorous academic setting or the ability to perform within social settings, DCA scholars struggled in varying ways with regards to their overall performance on campus. These performance disparities were in large part exacerbated by students' pre-collegiate experiences. As discussed previously, certain students were predisposed to cultures similar to Denison making it easier to perform within social settings. However, even for students who felt socially prepared, this performance preparation did not always extend to academic settings. For the majority of DCA scholars interviewed, feelings of academic and social preparation were relatively non-existent. DCA scholars did not fully understand what college was, how it operates (both at a social and academic level) and how to best navigate their new challenges.

This presents a relatively large problem for the university and the scholarship program itself. If students are coming to campus without fully understanding what college is and how it operates at multiple levels, there is a higher potential for students to not perform well upon entering the university (see Tinto's Integration Model from the Theoretical Framework). While

this is to be expected (most students go through a transitional phase upon entering college), the level of investment that the university is putting into this scholarship program indicates that the university wants these students to not only succeed but thrive here. Four years of tuition at Denison university is approximately \$250,000. If a cohort has 15 students, they are investing \$3,750,000 in a single cohort over four years. That level of funding is extremely difficult to attain and is wasted if students are unable to fully take advantage of the opportunities available at the university.

If the university is interested in improving these students' experiences and ensuring that their integration progress is as smooth as possible, the implementation of comprehensive intervention programming is extremely important. While not all students will need this intervention, by making it explicitly available in a variety of ways (through mentorship programming, advising circles, optional classes etc) the university will not only be ensuring students have a better time on campus, but they will also be protecting their investment.

A similarly important trend in need of discussion is the social construction of the university and how students are navigating the social structures within the university. The university itself is comprised of a complex network of pocket communities that engage with each other through different social nexus points.

Social nexus points can be described as both physical locations as well as planned events within communal spaces. Physical locations like the student union, the Moonies (the new university sponsored party space) and other university common spaces allow prominent organizations to associate with each other in a singular area without requiring true

intermingling of groups. However, most of the time organizations tend to associate and organize within these spaces with other organizations that run parallel to their demographics and social disposition. Historically white fraternities and sororities, sports teams and cultural communities operate relatively independent from each other, with only several events per year being sponsored by groups of students from different demographics or social backgrounds. When discussing cross communal communications with a former Panhellenic president (see results), we can see that there is a general lack of comfortability with regards to predominantly white organizations reaching out to non-white organizations to facilitate communal activities.

This lack of comfortability helps to fuel the cultural segregation experienced by students on campus. Without a clear line of communication between organizations, groups of students can operate on the same campus without even knowing who is involved in organizations that are not their own. The hierarchy of these organizations is mainly constructed through class and race-based relations and are primarily formed around socially oriented organizations. Students who are affiliated with Greek life, athletics and other social institutions such as cultural organizations like the BSU and La Fuerza Latina, have access to greater amounts of social capital on campus. These institutions are the basis by which social organization is constructed on Denison's campus and membership is a large determinant of access to events and social spaces.

Communal spaces on campus also take on the physical construction of this segregation and hierarchical force. Slayter, Dining halls, and party spaces physically embody segregation on campus in a variety of ways. For example, one student noted how in Huffman the long collection of tables scattered throughout the dining hall are inherently designed to sit large sports teams and social organizations. Alternatively, smaller two seat tables are placed around

the periphery of the room to sit unaffiliated students or students who are not engaging with their respective organization at that time. This in turn creates a space where organizations are physically able to embody the space in tangible ways. Similarly, in Slayter before covid, the round tables on the first floor were almost exclusively used by white students while the fourth floor MCSA office has historically operated as a social nexus point for students of color. It is ironic that the student union, which is designed to be a common meeting spot for all students on campus has segregated areas that have been constructed through the social relations on campus. Even classes and majors embody this physical construction. Several students noted how they were the only or one of the few students of color in their Economics, Global Commerce and Communications classes. Alternatively, majors like ANSO, Black Studies, Women and Gender studies and even the new Global Health department are recruiting higher numbers of diverse students.

The clearest depiction of the physical construction of segregation can be found in the party scene. It is within this social experience that the organizational segregation and physical dispersion of students becomes fully realized and experienced. Parties are typically hosted by socially oriented groups such as Greek institutions and community organizations. Due to the lack of cross communal organization, these institutions operate completely separate from each other and hold distinct physical places on campus. White fraternities have historically thrown parties in the senior apartments but due to covid have moved their gatherings to the back of their old fraternity houses. Alternatively, due to the lack of institutionally recognized space on campus (that being houses and spaces that have historically been owned by POC organizations),

predominantly POC organizations rent out large gathering spaces such as the Moonies and Sunset Lounge.

It is not to say that these presentations of segregation are entirely explicit and deliberate (though an argument can and should be made that some are). It is important to note that these experiences are largely byproducts of a lack of pre-collegiate experiences with people who are not from the same class and racial background as one's own. Based on Bandura's social learning model we can understand that the social environment students are brought up in has a major impact on their socialization process. For upper middle class white students from the suburbs (the perceived majority of students on this campus), their lack of pre-collegiate experiences with diverse and urban populations as well as their different upbringings makes them less likely to share experiential backgrounds that mirror minority populations on campus. Similarly, the lack of pre-collegiate experience urban students have with upper class suburban students means that they are also less likely to engage with social institutions in ways that are similar to their suburban white peers.

Another extremely important variable that affects the construction of social spaces on campus is class and an individual student's access to financial resources. There are two layers to these class-based restrictions: organizational fees and individual financial stability.

Organizational fees refer to the money necessary for students to engage with social organizations such as Greek life. These institutions operate behind prohibitive cost models that make it so that students must be able to afford hundreds if not thousands of dollars a year in order to continue their affiliation with the social organization. This affiliation grants them access

to a hierarchy of desirable social spaces as well as a network of individuals that they can call upon for social and institutional support.

Individual financial stability refers to a student's access to financial resources that allow them to engage in activities that require either consistent cash flow or access to a considerable amount of money. For example, one student discussed how not everyone is wealthy enough to eat out every weekend like some of their peers. This experience, while only one of the few that were explicitly noted, highlights how some social relations on campus can be in large parts constructed through a student's ability to afford on and off campus activities. If someone is not able to afford eating out every weekend or going shopping regularly, that limits their ability to engage with certain members of the Denison community who develop social relations around activities that require money.

So, what is the impact of this multi-layered social segregation on DCA scholars? As discussed previously, DCA is a complex and diverse group of students with a variety of different needs and experiences. However, the group is only 20% white which means that approximately 80% of the population within the program have a chance to experience different forms of social segregation from their white peers. Similarly, over 50% of DCA scholars identify as lower and lower middle income which provides another layer to the scholars ability to interact and connect with their wealthier peers. What these factors indicate is that there is a large portion of the population that are going to experience these class and race-based restrictions while they are on campus.

While these restrictions are not always explicit, they are inherent and built into the social structures of the university. The cost prohibitive nature of Greek life and other social organizations, the racial segregation that is built into the physical construction of the university the interpersonal relations that are inherently formed around class-based activities and the lack of collegiate training serve as the foundational forces impeding integration for DCA scholars.

In order to cope with and overcome these barriers DCA scholars engaged in distinct four distinct methodological practices. The first of these practices is the use of formal and informal mentorship. These mentorship programs, whether they are oversight from a peer or from a faculty advisor, serve two roles for the incoming students. The first role is the acquisition of institutional information. The mentor provides students with an understanding of how the university operates through either personal experience or institutionally granted knowledge. Peer mentors, faculty and academic advisors serve well in this role. The second role of the mentor is that they provide a nexus point for connecting students to social and institutional resources. Peer mentors connect students to other like minded students and student organizations while faculty members connect students to department resources as well as other faculty members who can help them with their academic and professional goals.

The second coping mechanism utilized by DCA scholars is the use of protective segregation. This is best understood as the alignment and utilization of specific spaces that reflect students' unique social locations. These could be cultural organizations, and other social organizations that are arranged around specific cultural and class-based variables. DCA scholars overwhelmingly aligned themselves with c3 organization and historically Black or multicultural

Greek institutions because they were inherently reflective of themselves and operated in ways that made them feel welcomed and comfortable.

The third coping mechanism utilized by DCA scholars was code switching. Code switching refers to the intentional utilization of linguistic structures that mirror those of dominant groups (specifically white academics) as a way of avoiding social sanctions and persecution. DCA scholars, especially black DCA scholars, utilized code switching as a skill to deal with the overwhelmingly white environment they were now engaging with.

The final and arguably most important coping mechanism utilized by DCA scholars is the construction of a loosely connected network of students from the scholarship program. DCA scholars noted how their connection to each other was arguably the most useful tool they had while trying to integrate into the universities various environments. For one, DCA scholars are extremely spread out throughout the varying social systems on campus. While not everyone is best friends with each other, general recognition allows students to enter into spaces that they may not necessarily have predisposed access to or knowledge about. These relationships also allow students to have a network of people to feel comfortable with in different social settings. Incoming scholars have the benefit of recognizing a loosely connected coalition of people, which comes in handy when entering largely populated unfamiliar locations such as parties or other social nexus points.

The final theme in need of analysis is the inferential statistics generated by the survey data. This data, while limited in nature, is significant for understanding the potential trends future research should be keeping in mind. To start we must first acknowledge the limitations of

the statistics themselves. The population from which the data was generated is comprised of thirty DCA scholars from cohorts 2021-2023. This extremely small pool of students to draw data from means that the data itself could potentially change once a large population of students have engaged with the research process. However, the data does point towards trends that are supported by the literature as well as the interview data, which means that it does support the general implications of the research itself.

The first important thing to note is that race is associated with feelings of comfortability, perceived welcomeness, the perceived ease of finding one place. We see the same trend with data representing first generation students. These findings point to and support the notion that the large majority of racially diverse and first-generation students on campus are having issues with regards to integration due to their social locations.

Interestingly, the findings with regards to class show that there is only a significant correlation between class and the perceived ease of finding a student's place on campus. While class may not affect general feelings about the university, it does in fact affect students ease of finding their place on campus. This points towards the fact that many of the prominent social organizations as well as many general social interactions are designed around the need for financial resources. Greek orgs, off campus activities and even the regular procurement of alcohol (a general desired resource for engaging with the party scene on campus) require either steady income or financial backing from an outside source (usually parents). Without the capital necessary to engage with these activities, it can be extremely difficult for students to engage socially and "find their place".

Finally, we see that there is a significant correlation between major and feelings of welcomeness as well as general feelings towards the university itself. While this is arguably the most ambiguous of the inferential statistics (due to the general lack of discussion around majors within the qualitative data collected), it does point to the organization of students and how association amongst students within academic systems can be reflective of personal experiences within the universities social setting itself. Specifically, the discussion around students of color within predominantly white academic environments as well as the lack of diversity within certain departments points to the idea that students of color report higher levels of discomfort within predominantly white classroom settings.

Limitations:

This research is primarily limited by the size and scope of the project itself as well the limited population of DCA scholars on campus. The biggest limiting factor of the entire project is the small population size of DCA scholars. DCA is a small, but growing cohort of students. Each year new scholars are added to the universities roster, expanding potential research participants. However, there can only ever be a total of 80 DCA students on campus at any given time due to the structure of the scholarship program itself. It is important to note though that this is only a potential maximum. Of the four cohorts to date, there has never been a full group of 20. This in turn limits the potential data that can be collected in a multitude of ways. As seen with the inferential statistics, only thirty people responded to the survey. This small population makes it extremely difficult to engage with the data in a more general manner. Such a small population makes it so that even one or two more additional participants can skew the data in such a way that the trends are completely changed. While it is important that we explore the

data that we have, it is also important to understand that these findings are potentially subject to change if the population were to increase. Future research should focus on generating a larger foundation population in which to base the statistical analysis on.

Another limiting factor of the research is the timetable in which the research was conducted. The research has been conducted over a several year period, however, the timeline of the project has gone through several unique stages. More specifically, the project was started in the summer of 2019, continued in the spring of 2020 and completed in the academic year of 2020-2021. As the project was being conducted, the social landscape of the university as well as the structure of the DCA program has shifted due to global pandemics, aging participants and just general changes across time. Based on this analysis, future research should focus on analyzing how the program changes over time as well as how students' perceptions and integration experiences change over time.

Another limitation of the project that needs to be noted is the implications of the covid-19 pandemic. This pandemic not only shaped the research process, but completely shifted the structural operations of the university. Firstly, the project itself had to be put on hold during the spring of 2020 due to the pandemic affecting general research operations. With the uncertainty posed by covid as well as the lack of resources needed to conduct one on one interviews at the time, the project was prematurely put on hold, impacting the data collection process. Secondly, the covid-19 pandemic has completely changed the way students operate socially within the university itself. Mass gatherings, social inclusion, Greek institutions and orientation programming have operated in entirely new ways due to the threat of Covid-19. Because of this, the traditional integration experience of the freshman and sophomore cohorts

has been completely upended. While the data collected for this project does not fully reflect these structural changes, future research should take note of how this experience has affected the social organization of the university itself. While many social institutions operate in similar manners, it is hard to see how these institutions have changed without the proper data analysis.

The final limitation of the project that needs to be addressed is the fact that I am a part of the DCA scholarship. While this position has benefited my ability to understand and sympathize with these students, it is also incredibly important to note that my experiences within the program as well as my experiences with Denison have been a major driving force behind my desire to conduct this project. From this, we can see that the arguments made here are in many ways informed through my experiences as well as the experiences of my peers. While a considerable amount of effort was put into trying to produce a project that is as objective as possible, we know as Sociologists that objectivity does not exist. This is why it is imperative that readers understand my own connection with the program and the university itself.

Conclusion:

The goal of this project is to generate positive change with regards to the integration process of DCA scholars at Denison University. By analyzing the data collected throughout this multi-year research process, we can see that there are several structural changes that can potentially be imposed based on our structural analysis as well as the recommendations provided by the DCA scholars. The first change that could potentially be imposed is the strengthening of the scholarship network through formal and semi-formal activities. For

example, by creating a required meeting or activity for all DCA scholars, you would create a space where upperclassmen who understand the university would be able to create natural connections with younger students who are still trying to find their space on campus.

If required meetings were not an optimal model, an alternative methodology would be to have the institution keep a database of student activities and alignments which could be utilized if an incoming DCA scholar was in need of a peer mentor. By understanding where students are situated within the campus environment, the program can help incoming students gain access to spaces they are interested in. For instance, if a student was interested in club basketball and NPHC but didn't know how to get involved in those organizations, the university could put them in contact with a student or students who already exist within those spaces. This in turn would expedite the integration process for incoming students who are struggling to find their space on campus. Based on the Coping Mechanism subsection of the Results, we know that the most effective coping mechanism described by DCA scholars was in fact the network provided by the program. By institutionally supporting this program, we can subtly strengthen the bonds between students and hopefully improve their experience as a whole.

The second structural change that could be imposed by the university to improve the integration process is the generation of formal and informal educational systems designed to help students understand the many different aspects of institutions that aren't inherently social in nature. By providing students with opportunities (whether formal or informal) to speak with financial aid officers, administrators, and other faculty members, you are providing them with the opportunity to gain a better understanding of how the institution itself operates. By better understanding how to engage with different aspects of the university's structure, students have

a better chance of solving problems that will inhibit their integration experience. For example, if students are having a problem with their financial aid, but don't know who to talk to, it can disrupt their experience on campus. By providing them with knowledge of who to go to, you can help a group of students who have a majority first gen population.

Similarly, if the institution worked to inform students of potential academic support resources on campus, they could help the overall academic performance of students who are struggling in their classes. As shown within the results section, many students felt underprepared with regards to their academic skill set. By explicitly teaching them where resources are located on campus, you have a higher chance of students engaging with those systems.

The purpose of any research project should be to produce a positive change for those you are studying. While it is interesting to understand the social structure of universities, that knowledge is meaningless unless it can be used to help those who are at a disadvantage within that given structure. The DCA scholarship program is an ambitious attempt by a liberal arts university to provide a quality education to a population of students who have historically been underrepresented within their institution. However, while bringing these students on campus, the university must also be willing and ready to provide resources that are designed to help those who may not have the experience or knowledge necessary to succeed within an academically and socially rigorous space. DCA scholars are a diverse cohort of students with a variety of needs and expectations with regards to their academic experience. The university cannot realistically address everything all at once, but by focusing on the most immediate problems at hand, the university can protect its investment while also ensuring students have a

generally positive experience on campus. By strengthening the social network of the scholarship program as well as providing students with the option of educational resources designed to strengthen their knowledge of university life, the program can begin working to ensure that scholars are having the best possible integration experience. It is not enough to simply provide students with an academic advisor that may not even be in the students chosen field and leave them to fend for themselves. There must be expanded institutional support from the university in order to ensure that these students are benefiting from taking part in this program as much as the university is benefiting from having them within their student population.

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