

Denison University

## Denison Digital Commons

---

Faculty Publications

---

2023

### How do Denisonians Feel about Lacrosse on Campus

Paul A. Djupe

*Denison University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/facultypubs>



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Djupe, Paul A., "How do Denisonians Feel about Lacrosse on Campus" (2023). *Faculty Publications*. 1790.  
<https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/facultypubs/1790>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Denison Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Denison Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [eresources@denison.edu](mailto:eresources@denison.edu).

# How do Denisonians Feel about Lacrosse on Campus

Paul A. Djupe

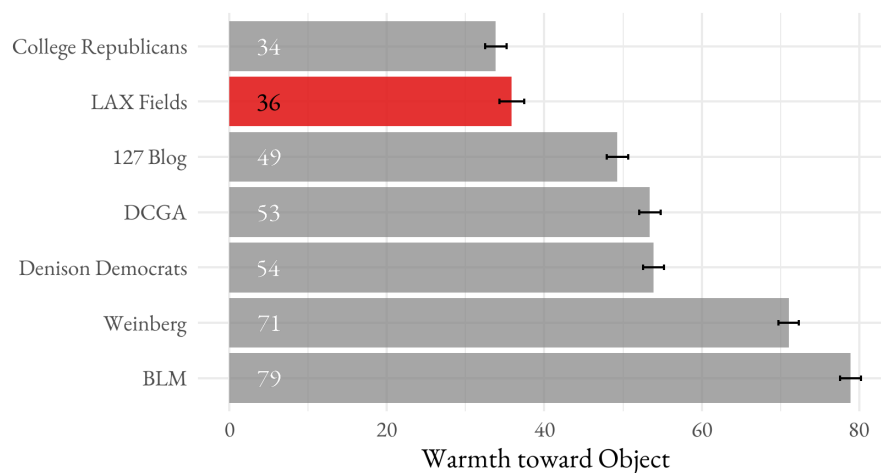
February 21, 2023

By Paul A. Djupe

Many sports do not have strong demographic connotations. Football, baseball, basketball, and soccer are all interracial and span social classes. But lacrosse, like yachting or equestrian, would seem to say a lot about the participants. The [Salt Lake Tribune headline](#) says it all, “Lacrosse is known as a sport played by rich white people.” So when the Denison Administration released plans via Instagram in fall 2022 to claim some of the IM fields for a dedicated LAX field/stadium, this did not sit well amongst the studentpeople and [student trust](#) for the administration may have taken a hit.

We at 127 couldn’t pass up an opportunity to assess what students actually thought about the LAX fields (which has since morphed into a soccer/lacrosse stadium mashup), which we did in our survey in October 2022 of just over 500 students. Echoing Henry Gamble’s September 2022 editorial, feelings toward the LAX fields run cold – with an average “feeling thermometer” score of 36 out of 100 – in the same space as the College Republicans (though well above Trump’s score of 16).

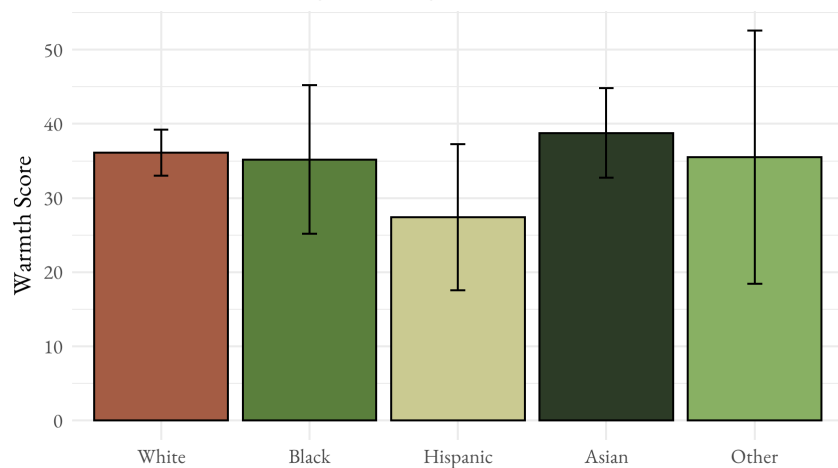
The LAX Fields are Not Well Loved



Source: October 2022 Survey.

It seems too obvious to gravitate toward race as an explanation, especially when a quick scan of the [team roster](#) appears to confirm the stereotype. So that’s why it’s so interesting that there are effectively no differences (statistically significant ones, anyway) between racial groups. Latinos have slightly colder feelings, Asians have slightly warmer ones, but all groups are cool toward LAX. There’s a new maxim in the study of the US that if it’s not about race, it’s probably about politics. Is that true here?

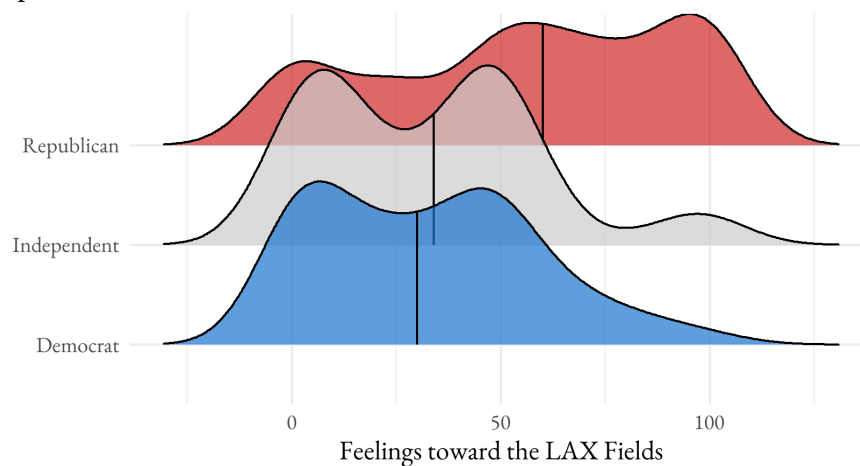
### LAX Feelz Don't Vary Much by Race



Source: October 2022 Survey.

Well, yeah, politics is part of it. Republicans aren't united behind it, but they do have much more positive feelings than others, in the same way that Democrats and independents host very few in their ranks with strong positive feelings, but also aren't strikingly cold toward the lacrosse fields. There has to be more to it.

### Republicans Like the LAX Fields A Lot More



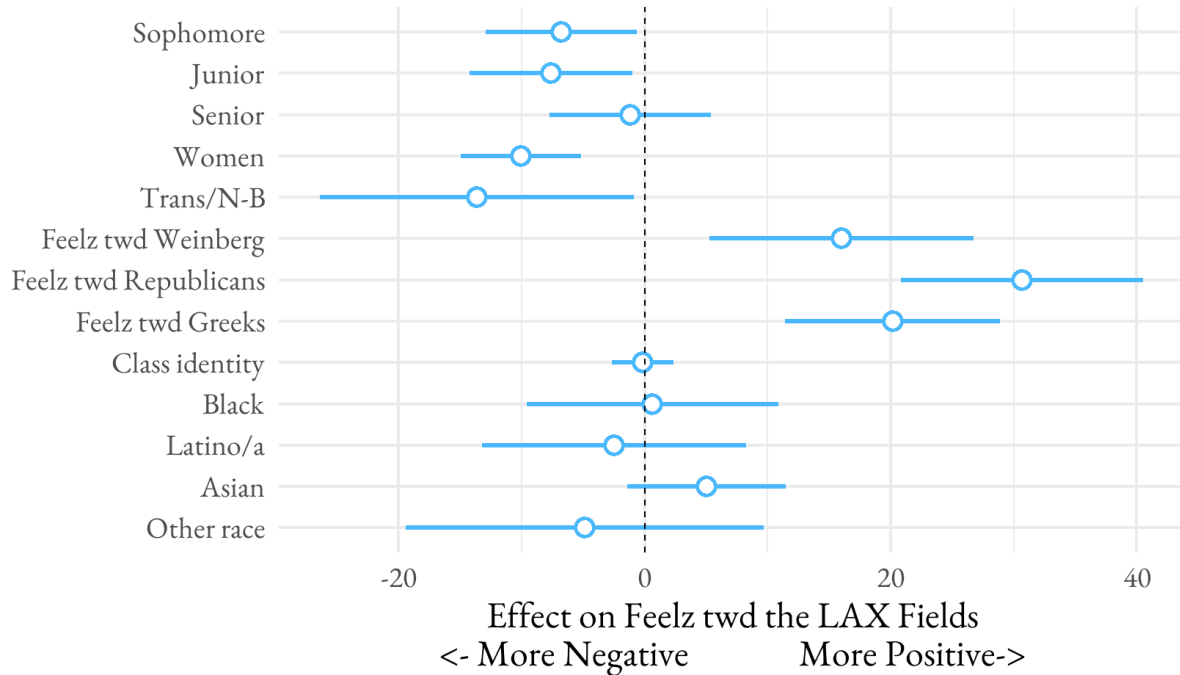
Source: October 2022 Survey.

If you would have bet me that positive feelings toward Republicans, Greeks, and Weinberg were all positively related to feelings toward the lacrosse fields, I would have absolutely taken that bet (betting that they weren't). But here we are. We saw the other day in a [piece by Will](#) that feelz toward the LAX fields were positively linked to feelings about President Weinberg. But maybe that's a function of other things like race or partisanship. We clearly need a model that can give us a sense of the independent effect of all these variables. And below are the results from a regression model of feelings toward the lacrosse fields.

Sophomores and juniors like LAX less (about 7-8 points less) than firstyears and seniors, but bigger gaps exist between men and women and trans/non-binary Denisonians – the latter two like LAX (10+) points less. As noted above, race doesn't play a role in this and,

shockingly, neither does social class. Instead, positive feelings toward Weinberg, Republicans, and Greeks do much of the explaining, each positively linked to sizable shifts in feelings toward the LAX fields.

## What Affects Feelings toward the LAX Fields? Gender, Culture, and Politics



Source: October 2022 Survey.

The question is why are those things linked so tightly to LAX? My best guess is that feelings toward Weinberg are partly about appreciation for the state of the college and the building boom that carries over to the LAX fields (itself the result of a generous donation by alums). I suspect that LAX is pretty strongly associated with private schools, wealthy folks, and guys, which smacks of conservatism (hence the Republican link). Before we get too carried away with that link, though, it's important to note that while greeks are twice as likely to be Republicans, that amounts to 24 percent compared to 11 percent of non-greeks; and greeks are equally Democratic compared to non-greeks (67 vs 69 percent, respectively). There seems like a pretty tight tie between varsity athletics and greek life on campus, not to mention that greek life is similarly institutionalized with buildings on campus. Why not fields to recognize the LAX bros, too?

I think it's no surprise that the LAX fields created some furor among students. Change almost always does, especially in a time where students are concerned about the environment and any loss of green space is going to be viewed negatively. But the tension also reflects some enduring fault lines on campus, sparked when a white male (perhaps upper class) sport is blessed with a shiny new stadium/field.

*Paul A. Djupe is a local cyclist who runs the Data for Political Research minor. He started onetwentyseven.blog a few years ago in a bid to subsidize collective action. He's on Twitter and you should be too, along with your president.*