Diversity and Inclusion among Students at Hanover College

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Study Aims

The purpose of this study is to better understand the inclusivity experiences of Hanover College students. The secondary aim of the study is to propose and discuss campus initiatives that contribute to a more inclusive campus culture for all students.

Methods

A series of focus groups with students was used to gather qualitative interactions between group members in order to address the two study aims. The report concludes with a list of potential action items drawn from focus groups.

Procedure

The focus group question prompts and protocol were approved by the Institutional Review Board. The topics and probe questions were edited in consultation with faculty members with expertise in diversity education and research methods. The co-moderators of the focus groups (the two authors) were one faculty member (White, female) and one student (Black, female). Focus group moderators recruited all student participants to participate in discussions during a two-week period at the end of the academic school year. Participants were recruited through emails and personal invitation of individuals and clubs or organizations on campus, with emails directed towards organizational leaders and members of clubs that capture a diverse array of student interests. In addition to recruiting participants from established campus organizations, at the end of each focus group, participants were encouraged to share the research invitation with "any student on campus who wants their voice heard" regarding the issues of campus diversity and inclusion. In most focus groups, the participants were intentionally scheduled to include individuals with similar backgrounds or experiences (e.g., students of color, LGBTQ students, athletes) because previous focus group research indicates that participants are more likely to feel comfortable talking about sensitive topics when they perceive similarity in other focus group members (Liamputtong, 2011). The location for all focus groups was a neutral, social area of the student activity center on campus, with all sessions audio-recorded with participant consent. Each group discussion lasted approximately 90 minutes. Students received $10 for their participation.

The moderators asked questions regarding the campus climate, including questions about campus diversity, feelings of inclusion in social and educational campus events and groups, experiences with members of the campus community, and a variety of probing questions, which allowed a free-flowing conversation. Co-moderators regularly kept the conversation on important issues, asked for clarification, and encouraged participants to contribute equitably and honestly by using verbal and nonverbal responses and feedback. Throughout the process, the researchers were aware of bias and perceptions inherent in their organizational roles (as a member of the faculty and a White woman, and as a Black female student and member of several campus organizations). The co-moderators attempted to mitigate the influence of bias by discussing questions and responses before and after focus groups to ensure a consistent,

comfortable experience for participants and to encourage honest dialogue in each group. In addition to the audio recordings, each moderator kept individual notes of each session. Reflexivity was employed through conversations about notes following each session and throughout the research process.

Participant Demographics

Participants included 44 individuals across 11 focus groups with two to five participants per focus group. Participants included 24 women, 16 men, 4 non-binary undergraduate students, age 18-22 (modes = 19, 21). Thirteen were in their first year, seven were current sophomores, 13 juniors, and 11 seniors. Nearly all (95%) of participants were U. S. citizens. Half identified their racial or ethnic background as African American/Black, 25% White, 6.8% Hispanic or Latino/a, and several individuals were also African, Asian American, Native American, Latin American, with 9% reporting more than one race or ethnicity.

A majority (75%) of participants identified as straight/heterosexual orientation, 4 as bisexual, 3 pansexual, 3 queer, and 1 as gay. Three students noted that they had physical or mental impairments that limit their daily activities. Just under half (45.5%) identified as Other Christian, 20.5% identified as spiritual, but not religious, 18.2% as atheist/agnostic, 13.6% as Roman Catholic, 11.4% Protestant. Political views ranged from very liberal (11.36%), liberal (50%), slightly liberal (18.18%), moderate (11.36%), slightly conservative (4.55%), and unsure (4.55%). Highest education of parents ranged from less than high school (2.3%), high school or G.E.D. (25%), some college (18.2%), associate's degree (15.9%), bachelor's degree (15.9%), Master's degree (20.5%), and advanced professional degree (2.3%). Participants' high school percent of racial or ethnic minority students ranged from <10% minorities (25.5%), 10-25% (15.9%), 25-50% (18.2%), or 50% or more minority students in high school (31.8%). Students grew up in cities or urban areas (43.2%), a suburban areas adjacent to a city (38.6%), or rural areas (18.2%).

Analysis

One moderator transcribed the audio recordings following each focus group. As is recommended for qualitative focus group research, the data was analyzed simultaneously at the individual content and the group interaction level, paying close attention to interactions between members of each group which constitute a shared reality of the campus climate. After seven focus group sessions were completed, the co-moderators compared notes and together created an initial inductive thematic analysis of the data, listing out all initial impressions of themes individually (initial coding), then cross-checking the overlapping themes across emergent categories, using the constant comparison method in which each idea was compared to other emergent themes and connections were identified between each major theme and subtheme (axial coding, Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following the initial coding process between focus groups seven and eight, the researchers determined theoretical saturation was reached and conducted the remaining four focus groups for participants who were already registered to participate. At the conclusion of the final focus groups, researchers met again several times to analyze data at the individual and interaction level, comparing group dynamics, major themes, and the subthemes

that emerged. The researchers discussed whether each subtheme was a part of an emerging category or was separate (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and re-examined the audio recordings for consistent and accurate interpretation of the findings.

Findings

While the experiences of students on campus are an important first step in understanding the climate of inclusivity at a predominantly White institution, this study's secondary aim explored and proposed changes to the campus environment. The findings of the focus groups were grouped thematically into four primary themes, each with various subthemes. The primary themes included: 1) a perception of inclusivity is not reality, 2) microaggressions and cultural stereotypes occur in various forms on campus, 3) support is available in groups and places on campus, and 4) diversity education and training is needed.

Perception is not reality

In each focus group the discussion began with the same prompted question by one moderator, "We'd like you to talk about the extent you feel that Hanover's campus is diverse and inclusive" with follow-up prompts regarding different types of diversity, i.e., "and you can think of diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, political orientation, etc." In several discussions, there was agreement that the campus community included diverse groups of people and that the campus was "going in the right direction," but participants were quick to point out that there is room for improvement. "We are starting to build our resources" said one woman, "but we're not there. As this is a PWI, I'm not surprised, but I'm proud of the evolution." Moderator: "Can I ask what a PWI is?" Woman: "Predominantly White Institution. So out of the about eleven hundred students that go here, when we started, there's about a thousand White students." (subdued laughter from the group) Most participants discussed the campus climate from a position of awareness, noting that they knew they were choosing a rural, relatively homogeneous college but that they often believed the campus would be more inclusive than they found it to be. Some participants thought that the campus promised more than it delivered, in terms of resources for students with diverse backgrounds. One student captured this divergence between perception and reality: "I feel like the campus presents itself as more diverse than it actually is, if that makes sense. One of the reasons why I chose to come here is because I was told that there was a lot of LGBTQ inclusion and stuff on campus. And, while I've had some experience with that, it's not to the extent that it was presented as it was."

Public image. Many students noted that the institution marketed its public image (via website, recruiting materials, campus visits, admissions staff personal communication) as a safe, diverse environment and that it did not always deliver in this way. An international student felt as if no one helped him transition to living in the United States, "they drew us here and then leave us" he said, and "no one was consistently there" to help him get information and support when he first arrived on campus. Domestic students of color noted that the campus photos and marketing materials showcase racial diversity, "just to show that you aren't gonna be the only Black person here, to make sure they all know that there's not just White people here" but as one

participant noted, "there's an illusion of inclusion. It's easy to look up in a classroom and realize that you're the only one who is [a racial] minority." And because of this recognition, some racial minority students said that inclusivity can be uncomfortable and that racial segregation in social groups is common because "people don't want to go out of their way to be uncomfortable." There was fairly widespread agreement among participants that the campus "looked" more diverse and inclusive than it actually was.

Some participants said that the image issue was also apparent in peer to peer interactions. Although they noted that fellow students were friendly and welcoming, sometimes they felt "like it's a fake smile" and that "people treat you differently to your face." Several groups discussed hurtful social media messages posted by supposed friends or peers, or that some majority students might make comments to other students, but not to their faces.

Lack of action from administration. Another theme that emerged in talking about campus inclusivity involved placing blame on Administration for "all talk and no action" in regards to an inclusive campus environment. Students recalled specific events that raised questions about inclusion on campus. One student reflected on a 2017 incident involving the spray painted "Build the Wall" phrase on the campus spirit rock:

> Around election time we had the Mexican Consulate coming to give scholarships to student from Mexican heritage, and I had gotten one and people painted the rock and wrote, in my opinion, derogatory opinions on it and I just remember thinking, my family was supposed to come and important officials from another country were coming to give this scholarship away and that was what they were going to be welcomed to.

The participants discussed how their concerns were often brought to Administration (who they defined as members of the Cabinet, the President, and staff members whose primary role was not classroom teaching) and little or no immediate action was taken. According to one woman in a different group, "That rock was just left that way for way too long!" This theme was distinct from the "public image" theme in that the participants acknowledged that some action should be taken to make the campus more inclusive, but that the result of a complaint or an event was inaction. One student said that she felt the school's administrators cared more about the campus perception from potential students and alumni but not current students. Even worse, some participants noted comparisons between which minority groups on campus received the most administrative support, while other students did not report incidents of bias because they perceived there would be no action on the part of administration.

Some participants had the perception that campus action for the LGBTQ+ community was prioritized, while race-related action issues were "swept under the rug." Several students mentioned the LGBTQ+ Center as a safe space and a resource, though few students (including those who identified LGBTQ+) said they used the space. There was some contention that the LGBTQ+ community had access to more resources on campus. "I feel that the LGBTQ+ community, not disrespecting that community, any issues with that I feel like just from a nationwide standpoint, it gets fixed. Like that. [snaps]" and went on to discuss the gender neutral bathrooms on campus, "[the Administration] send out emails immediately saying this isn't

something that we tolerate, and they fix it." But the student felt that the action was not as swift for racial minority concerns:

> Where it's like with diversity training I remember being in student senate and had multiple times where we said something about like, "aw there has been racists stuff said," and nobody has even been like doing anything about it, like no panels. We suggest a panel, but nothing really happens.

Others said they attempted to bring attention to issues when they experienced stereotyping or microaggressions on campus, and nothing happened as a result. A senior student discussed her leadership role in a campus diversity organization, acknowledging that institutional action is challenging, "…a lot of us talk, but I feel like it doesn't go anywhere…we talk about a lot of things on campus, but they don't get resolved." At times, participants were reluctant to report race-related issues on campus because they had learned from past experiences, "Why report issues if nothing is going to be done about it?" The campus inclusivity conversations tended to evolve into discussions of the questions, "When and where do you feel included on this campus? When do you feel like you do not fit in?" and participants described stereotyping and microaggressions from members of the campus.

Campus Microaggressions and Stereotyping

Although most students agreed that negative events were relatively rare, "There are some ignorant individuals, but …a mostly positive experience," noted one woman, there was a prominent theme of insensitive language or a lack of cultural competency on campus. During the focus groups, many students spoke about instances that they have experienced direct cultural insensitivity from other students and faculty members on campus. Some of the discussions could be categorized as "a lack of cultural awareness about a different group of people" (put politely by one woman), and fewer others described interactions with racist undertones or indirect hostility. Participants' reactions to these events ranged from indifference to anger and resentment.

Language. The most commonly mentioned and offensive example of inappropriate language use was mentioned in every focus group, unprompted by the moderators: student use of the "n-word" is relatively common among student-student interactions on campus. When asked to give examples of campus inclusion, the conversations often took a turn toward discussing culturally insensitive language used by White students on campus. While all focus groups acknowledged that the use of the n-word was inappropriate, participants varied in how they reacted. To a few students, "it doesn't really bother me" captured their reactions. They felt that if they gave the word power and meaning that it would be insulting and they chose not to react in this way. A majority of Black students reacted negatively but did not have a consistent response for their reactions. Even though the word use was upsetting, some Black students reported they ignore its use or "go into survival mode by throwing jokes and being aggressive," in order to cope. A student felt as if she "secretly has to be okay with it. Because if I say that's not okay, they're gonna say I'm just pushing the liberal agenda and after four years I am just kinda used to it, which is sad." Many students in the focus groups said that when they approached a person about using the n-word, their White peers would justify "it's just a word" or "it's in a song" or

even "why can you use it if I can't" which often launched a debate about who could use the n-word and how it makes Black students feel. One woman was exasperated by having to constantly provide history lessons about why the n-word was offensive to others, "and in most situations, I'm not Whitespaining, which is a term I just learned about." Moderator, "what? Whitesplaining?" Participant: "Yeah, so if I were to try to talk to a group of White people, they would receive it better from a White person." Moderator: "Mmhmm." Participant: "So I'm like, okay, so even if I'm the person who lives this life, but alright."

Across all cultural and ethnic groups, participants reported self-censoring or "diluting" their cultural expressions as a way to deal with perceived or real stereotyping. Black students and transgender students reported being aware that they should dress and talk a certain way in order to "fit in" with mainstream culture. Racial and sexual minority students reported self-segregating into groups of other minority students because "it's not something we can turn off. I can't stop being gay or being Black" and "it's nice to be around other people who aren't trying to delegitimize my struggles." "I'm very aware of my sexual orientation," said one gay student, "because everyone else makes it constantly aware to me." Several Black males reported having to change their language or sensor themselves to fit in.

> P1: You might be uncomfortable here… even if you're a social butterfly… When I first got here, I had to be quiet. To be more observant, like low-key. And then once you do that, people kind of say "damn, Man, you don't even act Black!"

> P2: Yeah, and he was all quiet and stuff during the week. And then on the weekends, ya know… (laughter)

> P3: I personally feel like I still sensor myself, still. From where I come from, everyone's completely different so I can't act the way I wanna act. You're not really who you are. People say I live a completely different lifestyle here from what I do at home.

And in a different group, one man said, "Like even on campus, there's certain ways that people talk to each other. You have to codeswitch when you're on campus. One of the seniors told me last year, like, you gotta keep everything that you do, the way you talk and all that, back at home. When you come here, you turn on that proper side of you… but I get tired of that." The conversation then moved into how students are told how to fit in. One woman said that her roommate from the previous year left for a different institution because "having to change who she was took such a toll on her… she was very active on campus, but very much to what he said earlier, you have to be a different person."

Stereotyping. Campus parties often provided the backdrop for instances of stereotyping. When asked about stereotyping on campus, students noted that they felt pressure to over-compensate with a friendly demeanor and "not just put a hood on or your headphones in" and "put on a smile when you meet someone" because of how people might perceive you when they see you so that "you don't want people to think that something's wrong with you."

Black men, Black women, and Latina women all reported feeling objectified or fetishized at parties and social events. Women reported feeling like the "liquid courage" of alcohol

coincided with male comments objectifying their bodies. Several women of all cultural backgrounds and sexual orientations said that they felt uncomfortable with the objectification. Black men described "the intimidation factor" and extra attention of being at social events, somewhat positively. "People are intimidated by me," recounted one Black man. "When I walked through the party, people would separate on their own. They were intimidated." One man remembered an experience trying to get in to a party at a campus fraternity:

> P1: It was me and like six other people. Five of us were Black and one White guy. And we were trying to get in and they stopped us and said that we couldn't get in. So we asked why and he said "because you're not freshman" and we all handed him our IDs and were like we were all freshman. So, then he lets the White guy in and tells us that we can't get in. They just didn't let us in. At first it was because they said we weren't freshman, but we showed him all our IDs. They just didn't let us in. After that we all left. I've never tried to go back to the [__] house after that. I don't know about the rest of them.

> Moderator: Do you think it was because you are Black?

> P1: I wouldn't jump to a conclusion.

> M: But you didn't go back though.

> P1: Yeah

> M: Was the White guy in front of you or was he like behind you?

> P1: I don't remember I just remember like he got let in and he was like waiting for us to get in. They just didn't let us in.

And other racial stereotyping and insensitive comments were noted by Black participants, who were aware that some public stereotypes in the broader social environment might occur on campus. One women lamented that other students often assumed she was awarded scholarships to attend; "It's just intimidating, [The assumption for Black students] oh you must be here for a reason. Like you can't be here just to go here, and I just go here." Another man said that, "When I moved in…the mothers and the fathers of the hall I moved into, [__] Hall. Ohh, so you're playing football or basketball, this that and the other… Like we couldn't get in purely on the academics. I graduated top 10 of my high school class."

Only a few students reported that they did not experience stereotyping on campus and did not have direct experiences with being treated differently because of race, religion, or gender identity.

Classroom interactions. The classroom for many students of diverse backgrounds was considered a safe place to express opinions and experiences. Many students praised specific courses and professors for their ability to draw out student discussions regarding diversity issues. Specifically, some participants felt inclusion when they were asked to speak in classroom conversations about race and sexuality. Participants recognized that the questions came from "a learning stand point" and that there was "no pressure to be a certain way." But not all students felt comfortable speaking up in their classes. Minority students experienced *stereotype threat*

(Steele & Aronson, 1995), in the classroom, acknowledging that they felt pressure to counteract negative stereotypes about their groups. For example, one man said, "You have to be the best version of your race" when talking because "everyone else is watching me and how I might react." This sentiment was prevalent among Black men, who sometimes reported disengaging from topics in class because they did not want the pressure of speaking on behalf of their race, "on some of these topics, you just put your head down. You just know your experience is going to be different from everyone else's." This pressure was sometimes exacerbated by professors. Racial minority students, even though they recognized that professors' "hearts were in the right place" said that they regularly felt uncomfortable in classroom discussions, even when the topic of discussion was not about race or ethnicity. On a couple of occasions, participants recounted stories when a professor made a comment that made them feel less competent than others in the class. Some felt their professors put them on the spot, while others felt that the professor did little to encourage other (majority) students to be open-minded or to reprimand students if an insensitive comment was made in class. Participants reported exchanging information with other students about which classes and professors were safe and inclusive and (more likely) which were not. One queer student recalled feeling uncomfortable when talking about an assigned reading with an offensive word in the title, which seemed to give fellow classmates a free pass to repeatedly use the word in a class discussion. Another student was in a class when a student used the n-word repeatedly as part of a song lyric and reportedly the professor did nothing to interject. A Black woman recounted:

> "[in a] class about human rights. I would sit there every day and my professor would just stare at me when I had something to say and then completely move on like I didn't say anything, unless it was about Black people then he wanted to know everything I knew about Black people and then if he mentioned a Black person he would always gesture to me." And later in the focus group, the same student reported feeling singled out by having to read a slave monologue during class "without making anyone in the class ever read anything."

When participants described situations in which insensitive comments or microaggressions occurred in the presence of a faculty member, moderators asked follow-up questions to find out who students turned to for help or support. One student reported the incident to the Dean of Academic Affairs; several students reported incidents to an employee in Student Life; two students brought the issue to the Department Chair of the professor; most students said they (or the person who was the target of the comments, in the cases where students told stories that happened to a friend) did not report the incident. When asked why, answers frequently circled back to the theme discussed earlier: lack of action by administration. Whether the administration took concerns and acted upon them with the faculty member or not, students *perceived* that no action was taken to address past problematic behavior, which limited student efficacy in reporting current and future issues. Finally, several students said that they did not know of a person or place to report concerns of bias on campus.

Supportive Campus Organizations for Diverse Students

To better understand how and where students felt included in the campus community, the moderators asked all participants to reflect on where they found campus friends and about spaces that made them feel most included and comfortable. The responses revealed a theme of organizational support for student diversity through existing campus organizations. Not surprisingly, these campus organizations were mostly student clubs or interest groups, because the students were primarily recruited through their membership in these campus organizations. Other prevalent organizations that support diversity and inclusion were Student Life, student relationships with mentors, and athletics. Academic advisors and Greek organizations were discussed as support structures that provided an unreliable form of support for students from diverse backgrounds.

Student Clubs and Interest Groups. Sexual and racial minority participants revealed that their primary form of support and inclusion were the student clubs. Focus group participants who identified as White and/or straight were also often members of one or more of these inclusive groups. Student organizations were identified as sources of information, a place to find like-minded friends, and a way to work together to advance causes or issues of importance. These groups discussed included: Kaleidoscope, Black Student Union, Love Out Loud, International Club, and others. The defining characteristics of these clubs and interest groups were that they are all student-led. It is noteworthy that students did not mention academic clubs or religious or spiritual clubs as forms of support.

Student Life and Campus Organizations. In tandem with student clubs and interest groups, the Student Life department on campus was recognized as a source of support for students with diverse backgrounds. Specifically, Student Life houses the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the Haq Center for Cross-Cultural Education, Benjamin Templeton Scholars, and the housing system, in which students reported feeling supported and connected through their peer advisor (the upper-class student assigned to mentor their first year seminar class), and their residence hall assistant. Although students identified these campus organizations as supportive to diverse students' needs, each group followed up this support conversation with a caveat, noting that staffing issues in the Office of Multicultural Affairs (a lack of Director for a period of time) left them without support and that the lack of Director reflected the College's low priority for diverse student support.

Mentoring. When asked about campus inclusion, several students discussed specific members of the student body or employees who were their mentors. The role of campus mentors was discussed from two perspectives: a perspective of feeling heard and understood by someone on campus, and a person to advocate for change or get help or assistance. Most often, students discussed mentorship among students, talking about ways that older or more experienced students mentored them. Sometimes students found mentors in their academic major or athletic team, other times in roommates or fellow members of student clubs. Regardless of who was identified as a campus mentor, nearly all participants who discussed mentoring mentioned how important it is for mentors to be a member of their minority group(s). In discussing mentors on campus, one senior student recalled the important roles that fellow minority male students played in his adjustment. Now he feels he should "pay it forward" and look out for younger students, "If

they have an issue they have all of us to back them up, whatever that racial issue is or something like that... because we know no one else is going to stand up for him unless we all stand here with him." And students strongly desired more racial minority staff employees, in particular Black males. In discussing who he went to talk about issues, one Black male noted the names of several women who were helpful in his transition to campus, "but she is a White woman, so you can't tell me how to live a Black man's life… like, you can't tell me how to do this and fit into the community. You're not me. You can't teach me how to be something you're not."

Athletics. Current and former athletes brought up their athletic teams as a place where they felt included and supported. Athletes cited their coaching staff and teammates as reasons why they came to the College and reasons why they felt included and stayed. Some student athletes said that athletics was the primary reason why they came to the College, even though they may have been wary of the low numbers of minority students. Most athletes talked about their sport as an "equal playing field" in which fellow athletes bonded, regardless of race or ethnicity. In one case, a student athlete discussed tensions on his team regarding race conflicts that emerged in a recent season. The coach stepped in to offer support for the minority students on the team, and the issue was quickly quieted, but the athlete suspects that the issue was not completely resolved.

Academic advisors. There was mixed feelings about academic advisors. Only a few students brought up their academic advisor as a person who they could go to for help and guidance. When asked directly about faculty advisors, some students said that the relationship they had with their advisor was more transactional or informational and less supportive in regards to diversity topics. Most commented that their academic advisors were not a person who they trusted with personal issues because their advisor was perceived as unable to relate to their experiences. Sometimes students reported talking with academic advisors when they wanted assistance or an advocate beyond what their mentor(s) could provide.

Greek Organizations. A few students were current members of Greek organizations and spoke mostly positively about the support they received from their fraternity or sorority. But this support was often tempered by an awareness that other minority students did not feel that the current Greek organizations on campus were inclusive and diverse. Several current Greek members discussed appreciation for the support of their fraternity or sorority members. "We are trying to be really open, and like, inclusive and welcoming. And if we see something happen, we try to address that right away." A woman who was a member of a Greek organization said, "I didn't realize how toxic that environment can be… Greek life really builds walls, amongst each other, and then among people who are not in Greek life and those who are. But that has been my personal experience." Moderator: "Do you think that once people get in a sorority, like that's *their group* on campus?" Participant: "Yes." And another man in the same focus group who was also in a fraternity agreed, saying that a difference could be among those who live in-house because, "you live there, you eat there, you spend all of your time there." The moderators asked follow-up questions when students brought up Greek organizations to find out more about how participants felt about the role of Greek organizations on campus. When asked about whether current Greek organizations are inclusive for all members of campus, there was agreement that

the current system lacks diversity (even current members discussed this lack of diversity in both sexual orientation and ethnicity) and there was a perception among Black women that, "I wouldn't fit into the houses. Nobody looks like me." Moderator: "Do you mean their outlook on life, the world, or, what barriers do you see?" Participant: "No, I mean, aesthetically. People are not Black. Or, they aren't… they're White. I'm sorry-" Moderator: "No, you don't have to apologize."

Greek organization social events came up several times, both as positive and negative aspects of inclusivity. Some participants said that they felt the social events and parties were times when they felt included and part of the campus. They enjoyed having fewer social barriers and found that people were more willing to talk with them. Some students said that the parties at Greek houses left them feeling excluded or "like a piece of meat" on the dance floor. One group of men who regularly participated in Greek parties discussed the campus party atmosphere, noting how different fraternity party themes could be perceived as offensive to different minorities on campus. There was some discussion about the perception that Greek communities were not very welcoming to people with differing socio-political views, gender non-conformers, and ethnic minority students.

Because several of the earlier focus groups discussed Greek organizations specifically, the researchers then invited leaders (President or a liaison) of all current Greek organizations to participate in a focus group. The questions and topics discussed in the Greek leader focus group were modeled after the same questions discussed in other groups, focusing on the role of Greek organizations in the campus climate. We found that Greek leaders, unsurprisingly, thought that their organizations were welcoming and inclusive to all students. They discussed recruitment efforts, rules, and values that were geared toward ensuring that their organization was viewed positively "from the inside and the outside." Greek leaders desired diverse membership, and three Greek Presidents discussed events and seminars that were planned or had occurred regarding diversity and openness. Several Greek leaders discussed their chapter's bylaws, which held diversity and inclusiveness at a high standard, openly welcoming people from diverse backgrounds. Chapter leaders said that it is difficult for outsiders to know what goes on inside the organization and to understand the close-knit, family environment. But all Greek leaders seemed to recognize that their organizations may not reflect the interests of *all* students on campus. One President acknowledged that some of the music played during social events could invoke "discomfort" or "a deeply negative reaction" from some racial and sexual minority students, which "is completely warranted." The participants, who were all White, also said that they felt uncomfortable when music included the n-word:

> P1: it's just a huge room full of White people shouting the n-word. And if it makes me feel uncomfortable, then I wonder how are the people of color feeling on this campus when the majority of campus is White Caucasian.

> Moderator: Do you think people might not feel comfortable going to parties or being a part of your organization? Do you ever talk to people, people who are not in your organizations, and do you ever get the impression that there's a reason why they don't

feel comfortable in your organization? (multiple people: "Uhh, I don't know. Yeah, hard to know.")

P2: I don't think these sentiments are relegated to people outside of the organization… there are some members of the social organization that are not party-oriented. During the craziness of a party, you can't really put a stop to it, in the moment. And if you did, you know, you would really be almost risking social suicide in the moment.

In previous focus groups, some participants brought up the ideas they had about chartering a historically Black or a multicultural Greek organization to campus. The participants who had this idea felt as though the current Greek leadership would not be welcoming to the idea of adding another campus Greek organization.

Moderator: There is some interest among current students in establishing a multicultural Greek organization, a fraternity or sorority (interjections: "Oh, okay, oh.") and some of the students expressed interest in doing this, and I was wondering, as current Presidents and Council members of Greek organizations, how you might respond or react to this? (interjection: "So supportive.") Yeah?

P1: Yeah, absolutely. (numerous yesses)

Moderator 2: And people were concerned, like how would this be perceived, or would other Greek houses feel like they were stepping—(multiple "no" responses)

P2: Not at all. If you are to say that you disagree… then we're not acting as Hanoverians. At all.

P1: Especially for [sorority council] to openly advertise that there's a house for everyone, and you don't think there's a house for you, then by all means… create a house for you.

P2: That's not your problem, that's ours.

P1: And I think, you know, if it's becoming an issue of people not feeling uncomfortable, that the Greek community needs to make sure that the new house feels welcome, like part of the community.

P3: That's just going to create more opportunity. An opportunity for more inclusiveness and diversity on this campus, and I think that while we can work on providing that sense in our own chapters, that Greek life as a whole community can do that with a new organization. And I don't think there would be a sense of the predominantly White Greek community against the multicultural Greek house, I don't think so. It makes us stronger.

Diversity Education

Diversity education and training was a topic that came up frequently when participants were asked, "What would you like the campus to keep doing or to start doing in order to improve inclusion on campus?" Students are craving a way to connect with one another in meaningful ways, and they acknowledged that there are already several formal, informal, and immersive educational opportunities available on campus. Unlike the previous theme regarding campus

support structures already utilized by participants, this theme emerged as one that opened up diversity and inclusion topics to the entire campus, including majority students.

Formal Diversity-Focused Initiatives. Some diversity-related academic programming is already occurring regularly on campus. Participants wanted continued, and sometimes an expansion of, current diversity education. When discussing events that were helpful in promoting inclusion on campus, students often noted that their first experiences when arriving on campus in peer groups (termed Peer Advising, or PA groups) was foundational. In the week prior to their first semester, all first year students participated in a socialization experienced termed "August Experience." The weeklong socialization included academic components, social events, and an introduction to the college experience. Many students recalled a diversity education component in their August Experience, though the clarity and value of these events was different for students who were in their first or second year compared to those in their junior or senior year. Some students recalled an activity when they made snack mix bags that represented the different forms of diversity. Others had a discussion with the Dean of Student Life. Participants were nearly unanimous in two aspects of these conversations: they felt that diversity education components should be better attended during the August Experience (some felt that the programming should be mandatory, as many students opt out of the diversity experiences), and that the diversity focus should extend beyond the first week of classes and into a regularly occurring, campus-wide educational initiative.

In addition to the initial socialization event for first year students, many students recognized that part of their liberal arts education included a curriculum with diverse academic components. There were discussions and suggestions about how to more fully integrate diversity content and activities into graded assignments in the first year seminar course. The College's curriculum includes requirements in religious, philosophical, and cultural diversity; many of these courses and professors were mentioned as "diversity champions" on campus, with some even advocating that all students should be required to take a class in a certain discipline, or by a certain professor. For some focus group participants, it was through the required curriculum that they found their academic major or passion and that they were exposed to the complexity of diversity, from religious, social, and political lenses. Several students advocated for additional curriculum requirements, including a required course in global or international topics and a separate course requirement for domestic diversity topics.

In addition to the diversity training geared towards first year students and the academic course requirements, a few students recalled specific workshops or guest speakers who were invited to campus with the goal of promoting diversity and inclusion. There were some junior and senior students who recalled a diversity training workshop geared towards student athletes, and the panel discussion hosted by current student athletes was well-attended because attendance by athletic teams was encouraged or mandatory from coaches. Other campus diversity-themed speakers or events, although open and promoted to the entire campus community, were not well-attended and were therefore perceived as ineffective for campus diversity education. One common suggestion for improving attendance and participation at diversity training was to involve athletics and Greek Life because of the large number of students who are involved.

An important note that was brought up by participants who self-identified as racial and sexual minorities involved attendance at formal campus diversity education events. While the students recognized many different events and clubs on campus were focused on creating an inclusive educational environment, "it's the same 20 or 25 students who are attending all of these events." The issue is compounded because students who often attend diversity-themed discussions were the ones in clubs which sponsored the events, and, "they're there to be supportive, but they're not the ones who need to have these conversations." A transgender participant said, about a recent poorly-attended panel about gender identity "this was an event designed specifically to ask questions. There were 8 people there. No men. Instead of taking the time to learn about these issues, people… just… didn't." One woman recounted:

> "It's like group reinforcement or groupthink, in an unproductive way… And it's on both sides, where people in the minority are together sharing the same ideas and experiences… and you only surround yourself with the same ideas, you don't grow. And it's happening on both sides. Whereas people who are not minorities don't go to these things, surround themselves with people who think like them, look like them. Don't have to talk about anything different. And then the minority students are constantly surrounded by these issues and this is the basis of most of our conversations. So that reinforces the position we are already in."

Informal Diversity Education. Some campus events were "disguised" diversity events, in which attendees may have participated without the expectation that the event was intended to promote diversity. As examples, many focus group participants brought up a recent campus celebration, Unity Fest, which included inflatable games, food, and music in the center of campus. Participants noted that this event was well-attended and open to everyone in the campus community. The most common point of dissent was that Unity Fest was purely celebratory and did not contain any formal diversity education experience or encourage conversation or cooperation between different groups. Participants noted that some other fun and engaging social events could reinforce inclusion.

The most commonly discussed form of informal diversity education occurred in what we have coined "teachable moments" on campus. These teachable moments were always spurred by an event or an interpersonal interaction. Often, roommate situations prompted teachable moments regarding food choice, hair care, language, sexual identity, and family. Nearly all participants who discussed teachable moments discussed situations with mixed emotions, but the examples generally ended with a positive tone, in which a question from a roommate prompted a discussion or information that may have been uncomfortable but was remembered as a positive conversation. In one example of a teachable moment, the conversation surrounded discussing offensive flags in people's rooms. Participants recalled seeing Confederate Flags and Donald Trump flags at fraternity and private residence rooms. Their reactions varied from leaving immediately to tearing the flag down, to discussing the personalized meanings of the flags. One student admitted to both tearing down a flag and to talking with a friend about the flag, on different occasions. He said:

"I walked in, and I saw it. And I got pretty mad about it, and I tore it off the wall. And they got mad at me for tearing down their flag… and I don't think these people understand the meaning of what they're hanging up in their rooms." And he later said that he had a teachable moment with a friend. "He had some stuff like that, and he was not racist, so I asked him, 'Do you know what that means to me?' and he said that he'd never looked at it like that and he took it down immediately and threw it away."

In the broader context of teachable moments among several members on campus, the Klu Klux Klan had planned a rally in the county and students reported feeling both scared, alarmed, and also unified and positive as part of the campus response process. Several individuals brought up the KKK rally as an example of why they feel their community is not an inclusive place to live, and others joined in to discuss why that rally and the coordinated campus responses were indicators of how the campus was more inclusive than the surrounding area. Rather than focusing on the rally itself in their discussions, students talked about the ways that their fellow students and the campus community as a whole worked together to coordinate meetings, activities, and a reaction that they remembered as a positive, teachable moment.

The teachable moments were not universally positive for all focus group participants. While most students said that they had come to expect that they would have to teach other [majority] students about their culture, ethnicity, or gender identity, a few students thought that these teachable moments were exhausting and "not my job." Sometimes, it was the older participants who had less patience with culturally insensitive remarks.

P1: It is also completely exhausting to be the (…) only minority person in the room. Like, I'm fine being the gay guy in the room. I really am. But I need like a heads up, because it's like really emotionally draining to talk about certain things and how social issues affect me. Cuz I am not prepared to have that conversation, to be an advocate, for every second of every day. But that's sort of what's expected when you're out and people know that.

P2: I think there's this desire to add that lens to every conversation and that's really exhausting.

P1: It's awkward to have that conversation all the time. To be an advocate all the time.

P2: And it's like it reduces you to that one thing all the time.

P3: Like you don't have an identity outside of that because you're constantly being reminded of how you are the only voice for people in every setting.

Immersive Diversity Experiences. Participants also recognized that sharing cultural experiences with people who are from a different background can be an effective way to learn about diversity. In several focus groups, participants brought up the value of their study abroad experiences as a way to gain exposure to different cultures. Students praised the off-campus trips and semester-long exchange programs as ways to immerse themselves in a different cultural environment and felt that the experience would be valuable for all students. Another form of immersive diversity includes the students' living arrangements, a topic often discussed when

asked to reflect on the questions "Who is *your* person? and Where do you feel most comfortable being yourself on this campus?" Some students thought "they [Student Life] put minorities together as roommates," with the idea that students might be able to relate more to one another or that they would be "more tolerant of each other" but when the moderators followed up with, "Do you think this works, to put two minority students together as roommates?" the consensus of responses was that pairing minority students together as first year roommates was not helpful because it takes away the potential for two people from different backgrounds to learn to live together in an immersive diversity experience. One student identified the potential for tension between roommates from different backgrounds and recommended mandatory hall meetings to help roommates with different backgrounds learn to live with one another.

Conclusion and Suggested Actions

In conclusion, participants were simultaneously hopeful and skeptical that the campus climate would change. When talking about different ideas for improvement, many students said that open conversations and real action were the most important ways in which the campus could improve, and most of the expectations were pointed at campus leadership. Students wanted action from the Administration and noted change is possible:

> On my [off campus course] trip that I just went on, one of the White males and I were talking about the climate on campus. And he asked me, 'Well, if you have so many issues, why don't you just leave? transfer?' And I don't wanna leave. I just would like for there to be change.

Potential Action Items:

Hire more faculty and staff of color

- ◦ Formal and informal mentoring and resources for academic, social, and professional success

Curriculum and Extracurricular Diversity Education

- ◦ FY 101: add diversity focus, Cultural Perspectives course requirements

- ◦ Add a Multicultural Greek organization

- ◦ Include diversity education in August Experience and regularly after (improve or incentivize participation via Greek or athletics) and include faculty and staff

Financial Support

- ◦ Scholarships or direct loans for high-achieving current students

- ◦ Continue Study Abroad Scholarship program

- ◦ Benjamin Templeton Scholars scholarship reorganization

Investigate bias reporting communication, living arrangements

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