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The D Key

Paul Djupe
Denison University

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The D Key

Paul A. Djupe

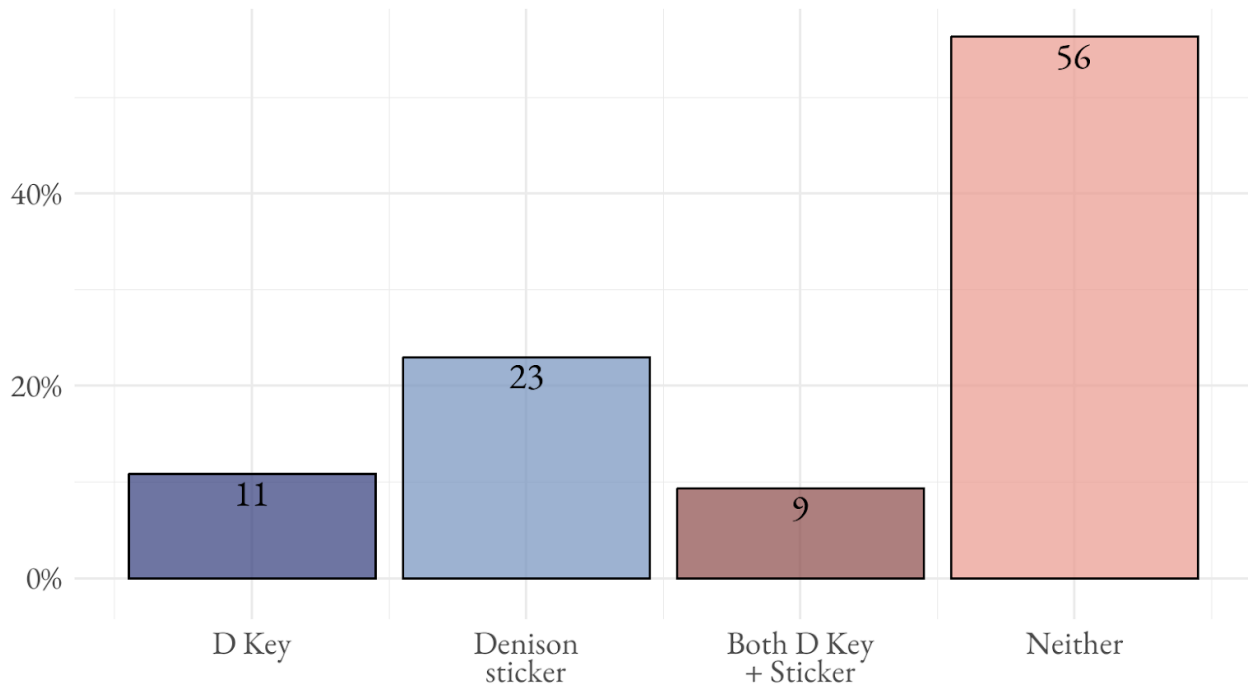
November 28, 2023

By Paul A. Djupe, Director of the Data for Political Research Minor

Congratulations, you've been accepted to attend Denison University! Here are some stickers. What do you do with them? Are you a sticker person whose laptop case color cannot be discerned? Are you proud to be accepted into this liberal arts college? Are others putting this sticker on their keyboards? It's easy to let these questions get in your head. Fortunately, 127 is here to help.

First, you're not alone. We asked about how students represent Denison on your laptop in our October 2023 survey. As you've no doubt noticed, sporting the D key is not exactly unanimous, but neither is it rare. From our estimates, about 20 percent have the D key and a third have a Denison sticker. But does it signify anything? Is it a biased coin flip or does it tell us something systematic about your campus experience?

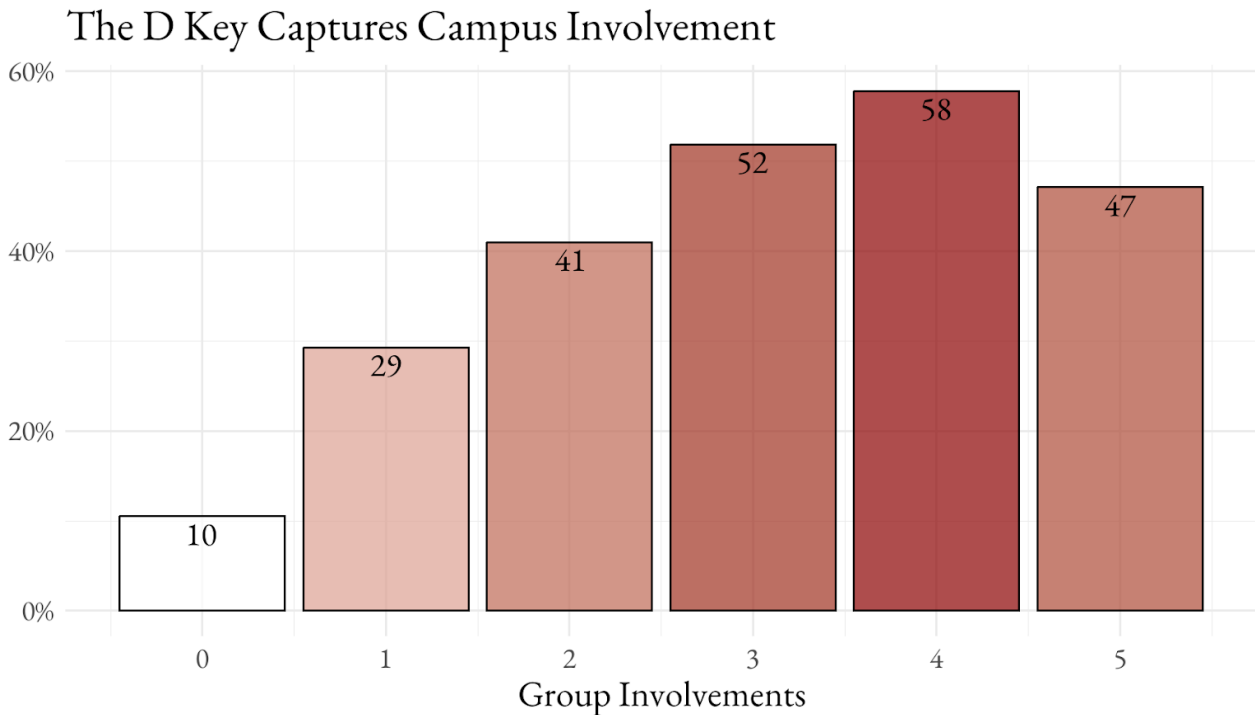
A Slim Majority Doesn't Represent DU on their Laptops



Source: October 2023 Survey.

It is pretty clear from the data that those who have the D key are much more involved on campus. Or, as the following figure shows, those involved in more group types (sports, arts, volunteering, governance, etc) are more likely to sport the D (or a sticker – I collapsed

those categories together for analyses here on out). A slim majority of those involved in 4 or 5 activities sport the D key compared to just 10 percent of those uninvolved. It's no surprise that those invested in campus find visible ways to demonstrate that commitment.

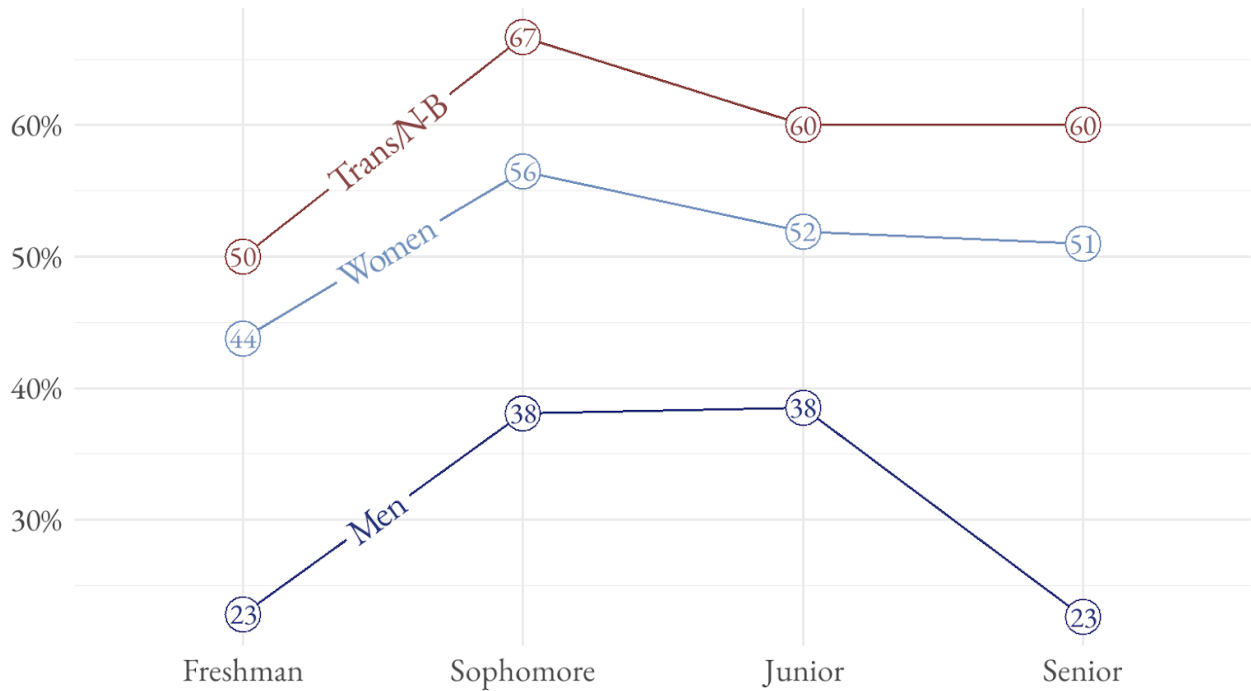


Source: October 2023 Survey.

But sporting the D is also a cultural phenomenon with some interesting and not entirely explicable patterns. Take class year. I would expect that commitment grows across years as involvement in the major and in campus activities deepen. But the results suggest that commitment peaks in the middle years among men and kicks up after freshman year for women and trans/non-binary (I'd rather not combine these categories, but I had to in order to have enough cases to analyze). It's not clear from just one year of data whether this is a typical trend or whether it's just particular to the classes matriculating at the tail end of covid.

Speaking of gender identity, the gaps here are really something. It is no surprise that men are the least engaged – this is a national problem that applies to work, marriage, organizational life, sex, and more. And it applies here too; men are involved in about half a group less (2.3) than women (2.7) and T/NBs (2.9). Women are much more likely to show a Denison sticker, but T/NBs do so even more. Are men just less into stickers than others?

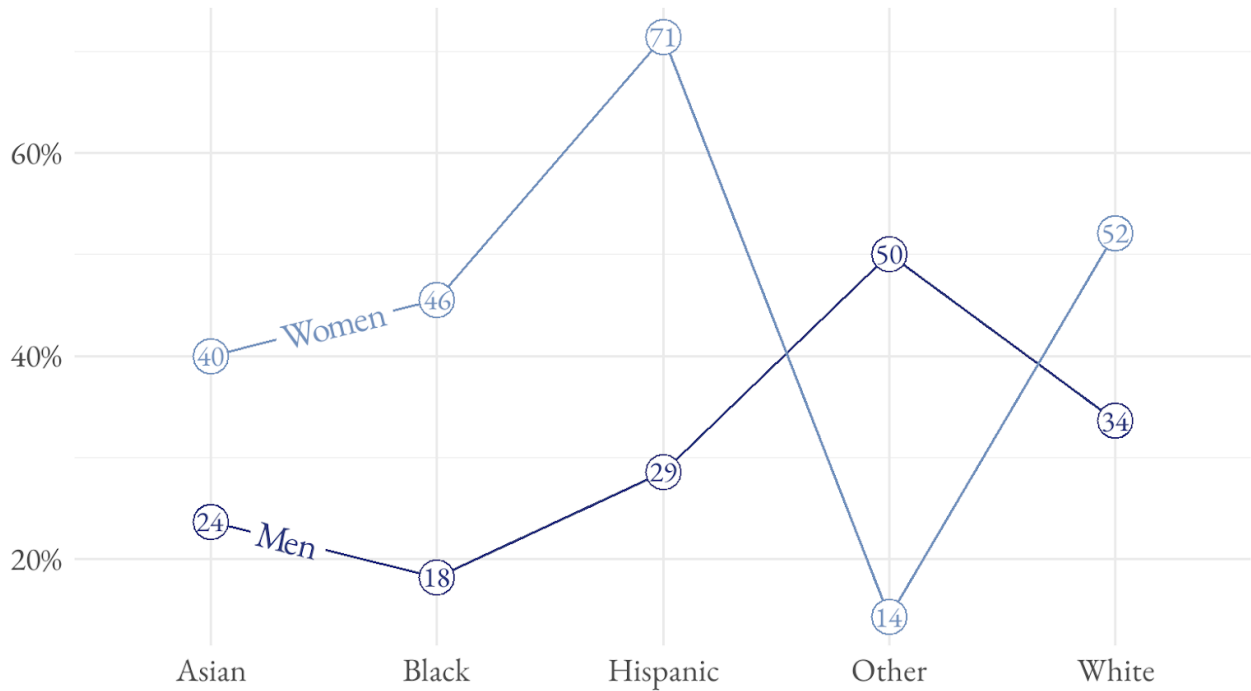
Large Differences in D Representation by Gender ID and Class Year



Source: October 2023 Survey.

I was curious if the gender gaps would hold across racial identities and it does for the most part. Women are 20-30 percent more likely to sport the D, but that gap swells to 40 percent among Latino students. There aren't many "other" racial ids in the sample (just 3 percent), but the gender gap flips among them.

Large Differences in D Representation by Gender ID and Race



Source: October 2023 Survey.

It is also interesting to note that there is a class pattern to sporting the D key, at least among men. It is the least common among those men who indicate their family as working class as well as upper class. Only the middle three class categories have substantial D representation. For women, representation rates are pretty high across the board, though women from middle and upper class families show school spirit at somewhat lower rates. We didn't ask about this, but I wonder if class correlates with whether Denison was a first choice school.

Large Differences in D Representation by Gender ID and Family Social Class



Source: October 2023 Survey.

It's also important to note what is not connected to the D key display. They don't really approve of Weinberg more (73-69), they don't really like Alex Pan more (58-55), they don't like the concept of mindfulness anymore (74-74), and they like the Sunnies just the same (54-53), but they like the 127 blog just a little more (51-46). Thanks D keyers.

It's just a red sticker with a white letter. Some decide to put it on their keyboard, especially after freshman year. It doesn't seem to mean a whole lot, but the D key probably does send some signals. On the basis of the sticker alone, you could profitably guess that stickered student is involved on campus. Beyond that, they think and feel about the same as others, though they may cut a distinctive profile by their typical gender ID and race.

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 and spread accurate knowledge about campus and what goes on there. He also writes about [religion and politics in the US](#).