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Linked by Race, Detached by Class: Intersectional Identities of Black and Latinx Students at an Elite College,

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Trinity College
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Linked by Race

Disconnected by Class

An Empirical Study

by Amber Montalvo

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Introduction

  Elite higher education institutions reflect the culture of the upper class population in the United States. Trinity College is ranked fifth on a list of schools with the highest ratio of students from the top 1% of income earners relative to the bottom 60%. While there have been successful efforts to increase campus diversity, such efforts focus on race and ethnicity more than social class. In this context, I asked the following research question: how does social class condition the experience of Black and Latino students at Trinity College? This study found that (1) though majority of the students criticized the campus dining services, students with more money are able to managing survival easier than students with less money. (2) Racial implications were talked about more with working-class students. (3) class conditions which support systems students rely on. Though this study involves two different racial groups, the comparison is between social class. Black and Latinx student share similar experiences at private predominantly white institutions (racial stereotypes, microaggressions, feelings of displacements), which is why these two groups are often studied together. However, I do recognize the uniqueness of each group separately and the complexities within each racial group. These did serve as a limitation for these findings.

Significance

  Higher education is an agent in classism in the United States. Though colleges are making successful efforts to increase diversity, such efforts focus on race and ethnicity. If we are to increase diversity on our college campuses, it is imperative that we focus on the intersectionality of race and class as they operate with one another. At Trinity College, as the racial diversity has increased, so has the cost of attendance. Since 2009, cost of attendance for a full year has increased to nearly $80 thousand dollars today.[1] Trinity College being one of the most expensive private colleges in the United States makes it an

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[1] College Tuition Compare,Trinity College Cost of Attendance Trends, 2017,

appropriate subject to study on the intersectionality of race and class. If the college's goal is to expand its diversity, we must cover diversity on all grounds and discover if the needs of students from different class backgrounds are being met by the college. Research has already proved that racist discourse exist in higher education. This makes us assume that every Black and Latino students experiences such spaces in the same way, but when class is involved that is simply not true, and that is what I am discovering.

Unpacking Social Class

Social class is a very difficult idea to define and sociologists differ greatly in their ideas on social class. Theories on social class date back to Marx Weber who argued that social class was based on capital (how much money someone has) and power (the ability to command resources in a particular domain). Weber's theory of social class expands more deeply, but these key components are the main operations for this research. In addition to Pierre Bourdieu, whose work was primarily concerned with the dynamics of power in society, especially the diverse and subtle ways in which power is transferred and social order is maintained within and across generations. In this study, participants were asked to define what social class they think they are members of. These responses, coupled with questions on family occupations, parental education levels, and engagements before college, allowed me to classify each participant into one of three groups: working-class, middle-class, and upper-middle class. All the while, recognizing that social class is a moving target. Because of the many components involved (capital, cultural capital, and social capital), characteristics of social class overlap. Nonetheless, perceptions of social class, as Weber described, are based on perceptions of power.

While some participants hesitated and pondered the question before classifying themselves, others answered confidently. After closely analyzing respondents interviews, the sample included 3 students from the working-class, 2 students from the middle-class, and 2 students from the upper-middle class. The working-class students in my study come from families whose parents are employed for wages. A mother of one participant is a house-keeper. Another participant is from a family who benefits from state public

assistance. Weber's theory that class perceptions operate under perceptions of power is demonstrated in one of the working-class students responses when classifying himself. Ian compared his income to that of the students at his private high school. "It was really obvious how much money they had compared to me. The cars, the clothes, the know-how. On a house-keepers salary I wasn't keeping up with that."(Ian, Latino, W.C.). I asked each student to describe what factors they are considering when they classify themselves, every student considered their understanding of their parents earnings. One of the middle-class students responded, "I wouldn't say that we are rich, but we are not struggling." All of the participants were financial aid applicants and responded that they would not be able to afford to attend Trinity College if they were not receiving financial aid. None of these participants were members of the 1%, my analysis and conclusions are based on the comparison within the sample.

Literature Review

Social Class & Higher Education

      Roughly one in four of the richest students attend an elite college – universities that typically cluster toward the top of annual rankings. In 2017, Trinity College ranked 5th in The New York Times for colleges with more students from the top 1% than the bottom 60% of family income.[2] The top 1% are defined as American families with an income at or higher than $630,000 annually. The bottom 60% is defined as having an income lower than $65,000 annually. Trinity was reported as having 26.2% students coming from the top 1%, while just 14.3% of all students come from the bottom 60% of Americans. This article relies on data on the income of students from the top 38 colleges in the country and findings from a study on how well colleges build economically diverse environments. One of their main arguments is that, through financial aid packages, colleges make it easier for poor students to afford to attend college. "Poor students who attend top colleges do about as well as their rich classmates." (Aisch, Buchanan, Cox, and Quealy, The New York Times. 2017). What's missing from this article is the extra cost for a working-class student to

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[2] Aisch, Gregor; Buchanan, Larry; Cox, Amanda; and Quealy, Kevin. "Some Colleges Have More Students From the Top 1 Percent Than the Bottom 60. Find Yours". The New York Times. 2017.

meet these standards, that do not include money. Because of the class privileges that come with rich students readiness for the college lifestyle, integration into the community is not as much as an additional stress on top of academic responsibilities. It's not just about how more or less prepared students are for the lifestyle of a student at an elite college, but also about how the institution reflects and serves students from the upper social class in the way the college operates. Familiarity with services, certain forms of social encounters and opportunities is what puts some students ahead of others. Participants in my study do not represent the top 1%, however, the students who classify as middle-class and upper-middle class do not represent the bottom 60% either, and have experiences and forms of capital that are similar to that of the 1%. This includes, attending private day schools and boarding schools, expensive athletic training programs, expensive excursions, and a clear understanding of the academy.

The operation of social class at elite institutions, is a fairly recent study. Kristia M. Soria's 2018 publication on disparities in higher education explains that disparities by social class occur way before students begin college. "Even as high school sophomores, students from high socioeconomic status backgrounds (as measured by parents' occupations, parents' education, and family income) are more than twice as likely to expect to earn advanced degrees as students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (52 percent compared with 22 percent)." Students from high socioeconomic status are prepped for elite institutions from birth. At the start of their first semester, low-income students are at a disadvantage. Soria suggests the following to address such disadvantages, "To disrupt the trends that perpetuate privilege among the middle and upper classes, we need to first acknowledge that class power and classism permeate the academy. Social class affects *every* student, whether positively or negatively. While campuses have devoted significant resources to diversity-related efforts, including creating multicultural student centers, hiring chief diversity officers, and offering courses on cultural identities, those endeavors rarely focus on social class as a critical element of individuals' identities." (Soria. 2018). Most colleges have a mission to address racial differences and focus on integrating every student into the community, especially one like

Trinity College who increases their international student population every year. However, the power in classism is that even the obvious indicators become invisible to college administrators. The fact that students are all members of the college community at their own merit, allows the college to hold every student at the same standard of expectations. However, as Soria described, claims that students should be able to graduate from college by their own efforts constitute microaggressions for students marginalized by social class. Faculty, staff, and administrators who promote middle-class cultural expectations for educational success—including independence and the ability to challenge conventions and engage confidently in situations of academic ambiguity—unwittingly construct a hidden curriculum that can seem foreign to low-income students (Stephens, Markus, and Phillips 2014) and can exacerbate their feelings that they are "imposters" (Soria 2015). This research was conducted because of this exact statement. To bring more awareness of the power of class at Trinity College.

In the United States, attaining a college education is a form of social mobility for students from poor-working class families. Which is why studying how class operates on campus, so much more complex. At this point in a students life, class is a moving target. They are straddling between the class they grew up in and that of which they are obtaining in college. As a result, characteristics of social class can overlap, as it did in this study and that of Anthony Abraham Jack, who studied working-class students at private colleges across the country. Jack created two classifications, the privileged poor and doubly disadvantaged. Both groups are from poor-working-class families, but the privileged poor had the advantage of accessing early college preparatory programs, private day schools and boarding schools. The doubly disadvantaged confronted the elite for the first time with their first step on campus. Jack concluded that working-class students who experienced the privileges of the upper-class elite had a more positive navigation of their elie colleges,than the working-class students who did not. This study differs in that I controlled for race, whereas Jack controlled for class and studied both white and non-white students. However, as anticipated the findings intersect. This will be expanded on more in the findings section.

Black & Latinx Students at Predominantly White Institutions

As the enrollment of black students in colleges increase, scholars have been focused on understanding black student experiences and integration into the community and in ways colleges can improve. Colleges across the United States have been highly criticized for expanding diversity, but failing at inclusion. In other words, black students (and other marginalized racial groups) whose merit and efforts get them into elite colleges, haven't been enough to keep them there as practices and policies within the campus perpetuate microaggression, stereotypes, and prejudice that create barriers. A 2001 publication on the trends in black student involvement at predominantly white campuses report that marginal participation within traditional campus organizations is attributed to a campus climate described as cool or unwelcoming.[3] Researchers and authors, E. Michael Sutton and Walter M. Kimbrough, provide an example from Sergent and Sedlacek's 1990 research findings, "within volunteer campus organizations such as homecoming committees and student union programming boards, African American student membership comprised only 3% compared to 82% for their White counterparts." Furthermore, "Multicultural organizations promote mattering by offering support and confidence to persons who otherwise are made to feel alienated and desolate." (Person and Christensen, 1996). Studies comparing levels of sense of belonging among racially minoritized and White students show that individuals from racially minoritized populations, including Latinxs, are more likely to experience lower levels of sense of belonging than their White peers (Johnson, Soldner, Leonard, & Alvarez, 2007; Strayhorn, 2008).[4] Latinx students and other marginalized groups of students have to either acclimate to the dominant campus culture or establish sufficient connections with

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[3] E. Michael Sutton & Walter M. Kimbrough (2001) Trends in Black Student Involvement, NASPA Journal, 39:1, 30-40, DOI: 10.2202/1949-6605.1160

[4] Garcia, Crystal E., "Latinx College Student Sense of Belonging: The Role of Campus Subcultures" (2017). Educational Administration: Theses, Dissertations, and Student Research. 279. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehsedaddiss/279

"cultural agents" at their institutions. These are faculty, staff, and other individuals on campus who relate to their students either by race, ethnicity, class implications, etc. A level of respect and trust is built between the student and the mentor as a result of relatability.

Data, Methods, and Limitations

For the purpose of empirical research, this study relies heavily on informative interviews with juniors and seniors at Trinity College. The junior and senior class has extensive time at the college that allows them to make comparisons to their previous semesters and they are able to make more confident conclusions about their feelings towards their experience. Recruiting was volunteer based. I sent requests for participants in student-run organization groups chats, by which I followed up with emails to those who expressed interest. The three working-class students identify as hispanic. Four students identify as black, two of which are middle-class and the other two are upper-middle class. I limited the participation to only those who identify as Black and/or Latino because I am looking at class differences within this particular group. The duration of each interview was between 45 minutes-1.5 hours, depending on the depth of the participants responses. The interview guide is designed with 30 standard questions (of which every participant was asked to answer) coupled with thematic questions, by which each participant was asked to select two themes based on their individual interests. The standard 30-questions are divided into three sections: demographic questions about the students' background (high school, hometown, social class), academic experiences, and student involvement (*appendix A)*. To present the self-selected themes, I laid out 5 sheets of paper with each theme hand written on five papers. I adopted this interview style because (1) I did not have the appropriate time to include the thematic questions in the 30 standard questions. Since my participants are college students and this research was conducted while the fall semester was in session, time was sensitive. (2) It was important that I allowed participants to talk about what interests them, and (3) it became part of my

analysis to look for patterns in the selection of themes. Lastly, I also created a thematic coding sheet *(appendix B).*

Limitations

Conducting research during the fall semester can restraints on how long the interviews can be, which participants are willing to participate and how much time I have to analyze the data. As a result, the sample size was a lot smaller than anticipated. Though I have variance in social class, I do not have a hispanic student representing the upper-middle class. I do not think that affected the findings as much. However, having a small sample size prevents me from ruling out the possibility of other factors unrelated to class. There were some outliers and lots of mixed results. However, the themes that will be presented in this paper are those that had the least mixed results.

Findings & Analysis

Since students selected themes based on interest, some students answered questions that others did not. There were three themes that were selected the most: *Dining* (selected by 5/7 participants)*, Administration (*selected by 4/7 participants)*,* and *Night-life* (selected by 3/7 participants). This unique interview style ended up benefiting my study in that it strengthened the trends in the findings. Even if participants did not select these themes, they emerged from the responses to the standard 30-questions. As a result, though I will confine the discussion of my findings to the three themes listed above, evidence from testimony outside the scope of these themed questions will strengthen my arguments. The three main findings from this study are (1) though majority of the students criticized the campus dining services, students with more money are able to managing survival easier than students with less money. (2) Racial implications were talked about more with working-class students. (3) class conditions which support systems students rely on.

Finding 1:

Dining on campus was the most popular theme in the self-selection category, having 5 out of 7 participants who selected it. The majority who selected this theme were from the working-class (3), 1 from the middle-class, and 1 from the upper-middle class. All the students in this category heavily critiqued the dining options at Trinity College and expressed that eating off campus (the alternative) is impractical for a healthy lifestyle. I asked each student why they decided to talk about this theme and the most common response was that they were so disappointed with the meal plan, that they felt it was important to mention for the interview. "I have an unbalanced diet, I either eat or I don't eat.", "I only eat good if there are events on campus (providing dinner) or if I go home." Only one student reported that he was satisfied with the food here. Dominique (Black/MC) reported that he spent most of his time in Mather (the largest dining hall, with the most food options) during his freshman year because that was the only hall his meal card could afford him. He described Mather has being a social hub for athletes and this was more of an incentive to go there so often. "I'd spend well over 2 hours in mather just hanging out with the team." (Dom, Black/MC). All of the students agreed that the Bistro has the best quality food, but it's the most expensive dining hall. Even though they all agree that the quality of the food at Trinity College is poor, middle-class students have the privilege to manage the meal system more easily than the working-class students.

Dominique's parents, after his freshman year were able to afford for him to switch to the 15-flex plan, allowing him to eat at the more desirable dining hall, Bistro. The working-class students, Nicole and Mark, on the other hand, had the opportunity to eat at these dining halls when the college changed its meal plan options (*Appendix C*) Even so, it is a burden to spend money when they run out of plan dollars. "I hate the damn food here. This has been the hardest part of my experience." (Mark, Latino/WC). Where Mark is from, there's only unhealthy options and fast food in his neighborhood. He wanted to change that lifestyle for himself, but the food here doesn't allow that. "Spending money on food feels like a waste when you pay so much money to be on a meal plan." Class implications emerge in how students manage this challenging lifestyle of maintaining a satisfying diet, in spite of the challenging on-campus dining options. While they all agree

that the food options off campus ae unsatisfying and limiting, the students from working-class families often times sacrificed skipping meals throughout the week.

Finding 2

In this study, perceptions of racial barriers and sense of belonging at Trinity College differed by social class. This trend resulted from both the standard questions that every participant engaged with, as well as those who selected to answer questions about night-life at Trinity College. Each participant was asked if being at Trinity College made them more aware of their racial identity, less aware, or if there was no affect. All of the working-class participants said that their experiences at Trinity College made them more aware of their racial identity. Mark is Latino, from a working-class family and said that being an outsider for the first time in his life forced him to recognize his racial difference at Trinity College. "I grew up surrounded by those who look and act like me. Now, at an institution where I am clearly a racial minority, I can tell that I am treated different because of it. Sometimes it is obvious why I'm being treated different, sometimes it's not, but nevertheless the difference is there and I have grown to be aware of this difference at all times." On the contrary, Jerry (Black/M.C.) said, "I've lived in too many places for me to determine that it was 'Trinity' that made me aware of my racial identity in the first place. I was already aware enough of it, but didn't let that affect my experience here." Dominique (Black/M.C.) also said that he has always been aware of his racial identity. Two major factors separate Jerry and Dominique, from Mark. Jerry and Dominique are both middle-class black men who grew up in predominantly white neighborhoods and attended private day schools, where they were also the racial minority. Jerry is unique in that his father was in the navy, which caused his family to move frequently. Therefore, he's had to readjust to new environments throughout his teenage years. As research suggests, when Black and Latinx students are the minority at elite institutions, they acclimate or find "cultural agents" in the college who relate to them. Jerry and Dominique's middle class cultural capital allows them to acclimate to Trinity College

because the campus reflects such culture. Mark, the other work-class students in this study, and related studies do not have such privileges.

Race was an emerging theme when talking with participants who selected the theme "Night-Life at Trinity College". 3/7 students selected this theme, one was a member of the working-class, one of the middle-class, and the other of the upper-middle class. All students highly criticized their experiences with partying at Trinity College. However, only the working-class student used racial barriers as a reason for her critique. The middle-class and upper-middle class students criticized night-life for its accessibility to drugs and preferences about wild behavior. Nicole (Latina/W.C.) said, "I just don't really like to party with white people. They remind me of people in my private (high) school." She described her experience with her private high school as one where she did not fit in because she was not white and did not come from wealth like her counterparts. Nicole, like many students who attend private high schools or boarding school, believed that Trinity College reflects the exact same culture. Even though the two middle-class students are also aware of their racial differences, they did not mention it as one that affected their experiences with night-life at Trinity College. The upper-middle class participants had very unique response. Sarah and James (both black and upper-middle class) expressed that Trinity College gave them the tools to think more critically about race in a positive way. Experiences with other black students at Trinity College shaped the way they view their own black identities. James is an international student from a carribean country. Getting to know black students at Trinity College made him think critically about the differences between black experiences in America compared to that of the island. Very similarly, Sarah credits her involvement with the multicultural organizations at Trinity College for the change in her point of view on the Black identity. "This really hit me in freshman year when other black students would introduce themselves as African-American. As to me, that identity has always meant 'descendants of slaves born in this country,' I was quick to ask these other students what Southern state their family has connections to. People would then respond saying that their parents were actually born and raised in a certain African country or that their family was Caribbean.

Explaining to these individuals my lack of connection to another country only strengthened my own understanding of what it actually means to be African-American." Both Sarah and James made me realize that there are factors unrelated to class that affects Black student's perceptions of race at predominantly white institutions. Though this is a small sample, these two findings are supported by current research about multicultural organizations at predominantly white institutions and the black identity in a cross national context. Research on these groups suggest that the involuntary act of immigrantation that is rooted in the Black American identity affects the perceptions of identity for voluntary caribbean black people. Therefore, when these groups connect, Caribbean people and African Americans, and Black Americans engage in an authentic conversation about their differences when they realize that they are very different groups, within and outside of the context of the United States. Class implications are very much alive in this discussion as the concepts of class differ in the U.S. versus the black Caribbean countries, versus African countries. This far exceeds the scope of this study on classism in higher education, but is most definitely a springboard for future research.

Findings 3:

This study found that there are three main avenues for academic and social support networks at Trinity College. Class cultural capital as well as monetary capital affects which avenues students take. The first is the academic advisor, which every student is required to have. In the first semester students are assigned an advisor based on their first-year seminar enrollment. When a student declares their major, they will switch advisors to someone in that department. What this means is that the first-year seminar advisor may not be in the field that a student is necessarily interested in studying. This may affect the professors' ability to support a student. However, it's believed that the professor's expertise and network with other faculty at the college will be enough to help their advisee's, nonetheless. My study found that there are potential class implications that affect this relationship. I asked every participant to described their relationship with the advisors and how often they relied on them for academic support.

Only two students responded that they had a proactive relationship and effective guidance from their academic advisor. Both of these students are from the upper-middle class.

James reported that his current academic advisor was also his advisor in the first semester. He has always felt very comfortable approaching his advisor and says that they built a strong relationship because of the constructive conversations they had outside of class hours about academic interests. "She thinks abstractly, like I do, so I always enjoyed going to her office hours and having conversations about different theories.", James said. James then explained that this was normal practice for him. From young, James enjoyed holding meaningful conversations with adults whom he admired. He described conversations at his dinner table holding substance beyond what the average teeenager might talk about. For someone who comes from an upper-middle class home, this is not surprising. Annette Laureu's infamous study on child rearing suggested that parenting styles differ by social class and this implies a different acclimation into the world and into schooling. In short, she found that middle-class parents adopt a style called *concerted cultivation* where children are conditioned to advocate for themselves, follow a strict schedule, as James described, harbor confidence in themselves to connect with adults on an eye-to-eye level. Since schooling and work environments most commonly reflect the middle-class, these transitions happen a lot smoother for children who experienced such parenting styles.

Sarah (Black/UC) felt similar confidence in her academic advising. Up to her sophomore year when she realized that her advisor didn't have the tools Sarah was looking for to feel prepared to successfully ace the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). Sarah came to this realization with help from her parents who both hold PhD's. She sought out test prep programs from external organizations and was able to afford their services. Sarah's upper-middle class afforded her two things: (1) the ability to recognize when her advisors' support was not enough, and (2) the ability to extend beyond the school's resources on her parents account. It's a middle-class privilege to know what is enough and what the best resources look like. First-generation and working-class

students are more inclined to trust the academy because of the power dynamics. This is what Weber meant that individuals understand class through power. Though the working-class students were able to recognize that their advisor's support was not benefiting them, it wasn't because they thought there were better programs or smarted fcaculty, but because they didn't trust the advisor.

The second and third avenues that students rely on for academic and social support are emerging themes that were found as an alternative to the academic advisors .The avenue of cultural agents was one that the working-class students in my study took on. This was the alternative for these students who did not connect with their academic advisor. The working class students responses for reasons for not relying on their academic advisors were alluding to a disconnect on a cultural understanding and trust. As a result, these students found "cultural agents". These are faculty, staff, and other individuals on campus who relate to their students either by race, ethnicity, class implications, etc. A level of respect and trust is built between the student and the mentor as a result of relatability. Mark reported that the person he goes to for academic advising is someone who identifies as black, is from the same working-class neighborhood as Mark, and is also a gay man. Multiple layers of relatability are involved. Similar reports were made for the other working-class students about their academic advisors. Anthony Abraham-Jack's study on working class students in elite institutions found that these students were less likely to go to their faculty office hours because of power dynamics, as well. Students are not necessarily knowledgeable on a professors income or upbringing (components of social class), but one does not have to be in order to witness power dynamics between classes. Class can expose itself through cultural references through conversations. This is one of the rapport building agents that can make or break a student faculty relationship.

The third avenue was the athletic network. There were fours athletes in this study, all of whom possess middle-class cultural capital. These students reported that their athletic networks highly influenced their academic and social experiences. The athletic network encompasses coaches, students from all academic years, additional academic

advisors, scheduled study hall meetings, and other forms of support in helping them to navigate the college. Jerry and Dominique (Black/MC) both reported that those components of the network is what helped them select courses and manage their transition during their freshman year. The intensely structured lifestyle of an athlete changes the sort of challenges that black students at predominantly white institutions might encounter. However, this does not mean that racial conflicts for black athletes do not exist, but this study did not find those implications. There are class implications here in the participation of the athletic department at Trinity College. Athletics not only holds weight on the social hierarchy at the college, but also in the world outside of it. It requires lots of money for training and extended involvement before students ever get to college. Additionally, a large population of the wealthier Trinity College students are athletes. When athletes arrive on campus, there status is there waiting for them to collect it. Therefore, these students have a stronger pool of resources to pull from during their acclimation process. Since many of them have been on these teams for a majority of their academic careers, they possess cultural awareness of how to utilize them.

Conclusion

Black and Latinx students at predominantly wihte institutions have similar needs, when you control for forms of capital. When you look at the intersectionality of race and class within these groups, you will find that needs differ. Higher education values the cultural capital of the middle class. Marx Weber set the tone for our understanding of power and privilege in social class. Obtaining in degree in higher education, employs one's power. Since higher education has for years been a space that only the white elite engage with, when these spaces diversify, we have to ask ourselves if the operation of the space is changing accordingly. As we diversify racially, we must then understand how class dynamics within racial groups affect how we move forward. This study sought to understand if class conditions how Black and Latino students experience Trinity College. My study found (1) though majority of the students criticized the campus dining services, students with more money are able to managing survival easier than students with less

money. (2) Racial implications were talked about more with working-class students. And (3) class conditions which support systems students rely on. Though my sample is not large enough for me to make overarching statements about the larger population, my findings are supported by prior research in social class and higher education, expandings on them, and leads to potential research to be conducted. Anthony Abraham Jack is one of the latest publishers on research about the operation of the social class in higher education. His research on the most selective colleges in the United States concluded that the early access to the upper-class culture (private day schools, boarding schools, early college prep programs, etc), privileges the working-class in college in gaining the cultural capital that is reflected in these elite institutions. This study found similar results in the working-class students responses to academic advising. Research on Black and Latinx students experiences at elite colleges suggested that black students have a marginal placement in traditional college activities, however a majority of my sample were black athletes. All of these students however, were from the middle and upper-middle class. This implies that class trumps race in student involvement on campus. Since my sample is small and my findings are larger than what has been expressed in this report, I have been lead to many potential areas to expand my research.

Future Research

There are two major areas for future research in this study. One of them involves the black student athletes at Trinity College. Though my study found that the black upper-class men relied heavily on their athletic network, I am certain that there are differences within the network in how white and black students experience athletic culture. In the spring 2019, a group of students start the Athletes of Color Coalition at Trinity College. This could imply that there were racial conflict within the athletics department that resulted in this group to be organized. The findings in this study would imply that this group would include less upper-middle class students. Additionally, my findings on the avenue students take in academic and social support lead me to question the effectiveness of programs at Trinity College, like Posse, the Bantam Network, and

PRIDE. These programs are designed to fill in the gaps for students who do not have the cultural familiarity of the academy to acclimate. However, I am curious if these programs are successful in these efforts.

Policy Implication

Conceptually, these findings nuance our understanding of the intersection of race and class at an elite college. Practically, they suggest a need for life coaching and more proactive mental health service provided by the college. Acclimation to college is highly affected by cultural capital. In essence, every single student has the chance to work closely with a professor throughout their college career to ensure they are making the best academic decisions possible for them to thrive at Trinity College. However, academic support does not translate to mental wellness support. Checking in on a students mental health is not a requirement at Trinity College and is far less likely to be part of these mandatory meeting minutes with faculty advisers. I am not suggesting that we turn academic advising into therapy sessions. Not only is that too much weight for a professor to carry on top of the duties outlined in their position, but professors are not necessarily equipped for such a role. The college defines and outlines the purpose and responsibilities of these positions on their website. It states:

"First-year advisors and mentors work collaboratively to support the academic experience of first-year students, connecting students to the resources and opportunities of the College. In addition to helping students navigate curricular requirements and begin the process of selecting a major, they ensure that students are integrating well into community life.

… The advantage of having the adviser know the student in the classroom is substantial. As a student's academic interests unfold, advisers also connect students with relevant colleagues and opportunities across campus."

The responsibility to provide academic guidance is clear. What's unclear is the meaning behind "integrating well into the community life." Integration comes in many different forms, even more so for marginalized students, international students, and students from the poor-working class. Because this cannot be easily defined, more often than not, academic guidance takes precedence during one-on-one meetings between student and faculty adviser. This is absolutely understandable, given that that is the professor's role as an educator. How does the college ensure that students are taking advantage of these support systems, even after they have moved on to a new academic adviser?

There is not a single student who does not have a faculty adviser. But there are many students who do not have a trusted, well-trained, professional coach focused on supporting the students mental and emotional well being. Trinity College students have the opportunity to speak with a specialist at the counseling center. Students can have scheduled visits with a counselor or see them one time and never again. "The American College Health Association (ACHA)–National College Health Assessment II survey found that 35% of female and 28% of male participants report that they "felt so depressed it was difficult to function" some time within the last 12 months, and 14% of female and 8% of male participants report that they were diagnosed or treated by a professional for depression within the last 12 months (ACHA, 2014)." *(Mark A.Whisman Emily D. Richardson. Normative Data on the Beck Depression Inventory – Second Edition (BDI-II) in College Students).* A recent study found that 85% of students with moderately severe to severe levels of depressive symptoms were not receiving any form of psychiatric treatment (Garlow et al., 2008). Nonetheless, young college adults are prioritizing academic success over mental health and wellness because that seems to be most valued by the institution. By making counseling or some form of personal development meeting part of the expectation as a Trinity College student, students will take their wellness more seriously and have the opportunity to integrate it into their lives. If students choose to attend more than just the 3 session requirements, they can continue to use the counseling services as they normally would.

The College has attempted to set up such services through the first-year mentor program, the P.R.I.D.E. program, Residential Assistant, The Bantam Network, and various events held throughout the year for students to "destress" during midterm and final exams. However, these programs do not solve the issue I am addressing in the same way as my proposed program. What most of these programs have alike are that they are all designed for freshmen. This makes sense, as freshmen are impressionable and are the newest members of the community. However, what happens during sophomore year? Junior year? Or even senior year? Though the personnel in these programs foster relationships that can last throughout a student's career at Trinity College, their primary focus are freshmen. The needs of freshmen are different than that of a junior. Furthermore, these programs are distracted with hosted events and going on trips. We need more serious measures than manicures, face masks, and messages claiming to promote "self-care". We need a service whose focus is one-on-one meetings for the purpose of mental awareness, personal development, and growth. And lastly, probably most importantly, none of these current services are run by experts in clinical psychology, emotional and mental awareness or related fields. In fact, almost all of them are run by current upperclassmen who themselves are fragile. Though students go through training to learn how to respond to a mentor who opens up about a traumatic event, many students cannot hold that weight.

If we are to "ensure that students are integrating well into community life" then we must ask ourselves: are we over prioritizing the scholar and neglecting the human underneath? An unstable student cannot and will not function properly in their academic career. Even if students are scoring well on exams and managing a 4.0 GPA, most of the time it is at the stake of their well being. The services we currently provide are functioning as they should, but what if we can reach students before the emotional break down that sends them to the hospital. Our college needs to demonstrate the seriousness of mental health by incorporating it into policy.

Appendix A: *Interview-guide*

Demographics
1. Tell me where you are from?
2. How do you racially identify?
3. What is your gender?
4. What high school did you go to? (public, private, boarding)
5. Do you have siblings in college or completed a college degree?
6. What's the highest degree completed in your family?
7. How would you describe your social class?
8. Did you apply for financial aid?
9. Did you receive financial aid?
10. If you didn't receive FinAid would that have changed your decision to come to TC?
11. Did you apply for scholarships? Did you receive any? (which ones)
12. Why did you apply for this scholarship?
13. Do you have a job on or off campus? (email students to ask this question)

Standard themes:
Academics:
- What is your major(s)/minor(s)?Why did you select this major?
- Are you currently satisfied with your choice?
- How much and for what did you rely on your FYS faculty advisor? Did you rely on others for academic advising, who else? Why did you go to them?
- Being that your near the end of your time at TC, do you know what you're going to do next/feel prepared? Whether or not you know what you're going to do, do you feel you've gained valuable knowledge from TC and/or from X department.

Student Run Orgs
- Are you a member of any student run organizations or clubs?

If yes:
- How long have you been a member?
- What's your position?
- Why did you join?

- If no:
- Why not?

Lay cards out on the table *I am placing sheets of paper on the table that are have some words that may look familiar to you. Select 2 topics you'd like to talk about. We'll do it one at a time.*

Counseling center/health center
- Why did you select this card?
- Which office do you want to talk about more?
- Have you ever gone to the CC? (HC)
- What was the reason you went? (HC)
- When/How often do you go? Do you still go? (HC)
- Why did you stop going?
- Did you find them helpful? (HC)

Student Success
Career Development Center/FinAid Office/Student Accounts
- Do you know where X office is? How often have you been there?
- Can you describe your interactions with either of these offices?
- Do you feel as though they are helpful for you personally? Why or why not? How? '

Night Life
- Do you engage in the party scene at Trinity College? How often do you go to parties at the frats?
- Can you describe your experiences on Vernon St. and or Allen?
- Was there a shift in your experiences from freshman year to now?

Clothing/Attire
Tell me what these items mean to you here at Trinity College.

Meals
- Can you describe your experiences with these dining halls.
- Describe your dieting choices?
- What would you change?
- How does this affect your life at Trinity?

Appendix B: *Thematic Coding Sheet*

Appendix C: *Meal Plan Changes and Costs at Trinity College*

19 Traditional Plan
$2,670 per semester

19 meals a week in Mather Dining Hall only.

(All Freshman and transfer students will automatically be enrolled in this plan, but have the ability to change to any of our other plans)

15 Flex Plan
$3,110 per semester

15 meals per week, for use in Mather Dining Hall, the Cave or the Bistro, and $300 in Meal Plan Dollars.

15 - 5 Flex Plan
$2,670 per semester

15 meals per week in Mather Hall, 5 of these meals can be used in the Cave or the Bistro, plus $50 in Meal Plan Dollars.

225 Block Plan
$3,110 per semester

225 meals per semester for use in Mather Dining Hall, the Cave or the Bistro, and $300 in Meal Plan Dollars.

19 - 10 Flex Plan
$3,370 per semester

19 meals per week in Mather Dining Hall, 10 of these meals can be used in the Cave or the Bistro, plus 5 guest meals and $100 in Meal Plan Dollars. Students returning from student aboard were billed for this plan.
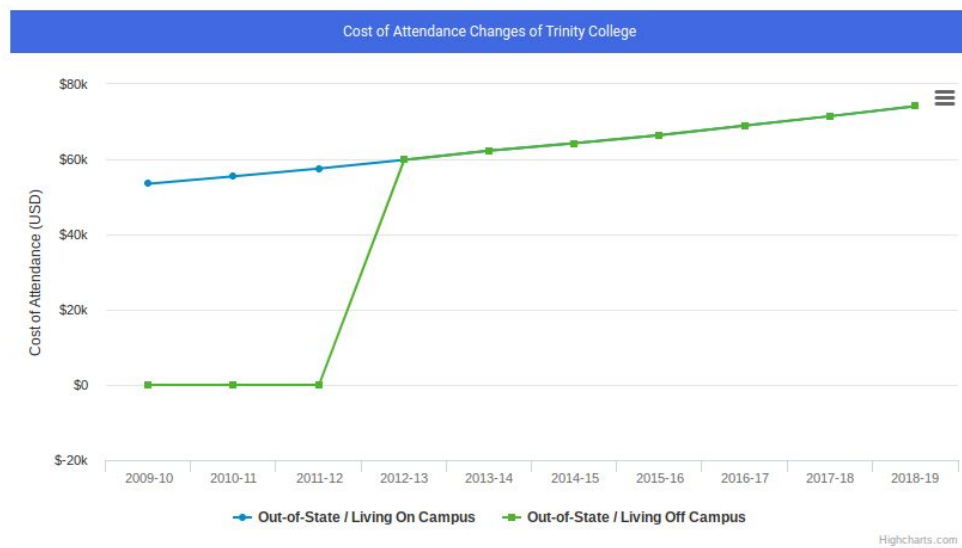
285 Block Plan Flex Plan
$3,630 per semester

285 meals per semester for use in Mather Dining Hall, the Cave or the Bistro, plus 5 guest meals and $100 in Meal Plan Dollars.

Appendix D*: Increase in Cost of Attendance at Trinity College*

Table   Chart

Cost of Attendance Changes of Trinity College

Legend: Out-of-State / Living On Campus · Out-of-State / Living Off Campus

Highcharts.com

Tuition & Fees Changes

The tuition & fees has increased 39.69% for last 10 years where the 2019 tuition & fees are $54,340.

The undergraduate tuition & fees has raised from $40,840 (2009) to $56,910 (2019). The graduate

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