

Looking Beneath The Surface

African American Student Retention at
the University of San Diego

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Who gets the most out of college?

"On predominantly white campuses, white males benefited most on measures of cognitive growth, social participation, assertiveness, academic success, satisfaction, and general social-psychological adjustment."

-Flemmings, 1984

Activities of the Black Student Retention and Recognition Committee (BSRRC)

- Black student orientation fair
- Black student graduation (now in its 3rd year)
- Black student mentorship program
- Increased Black student Summer Bridge involvement
- Black student preceptoral course clustering
- **The development and teaching of EDUC 379**

Members:

Pamela Gray Payton

Pauline Berryman Powell

Joseph Davidson

Linda Dews

Shaney Fink

Pelema Morrice

John Mosby

Erika Nash

John Schlichtman

Joi Spencer



Course Features: Designing to support student retention

- 1-unit research seminar
- Immersion in an African American academic community
- Required study group sessions
- Challenging readings & assignments
- Focus on writing development
- Guest speakers / role models



Education as Freedom
Noel Anderson & Haroon Kharem

Background & Theoretical Grounding

- Focus on access (beginning in 1960's)
 - Stereotype threat (Steele, 1997 & 2010)
 - From access to quality of experience
 - UG Calculus Students (Fullilove & Treisman, 1990)
-

Chinese American students:

- studied in groups
- visited office hours
- developed an social/academic community

African American students:

- studied in isolation
- avoided office hours
- academics separate from social life

Research Questions

- What is the role of EDUC 379 in the academic & social development of students?
- How do the course features (study groups, guest speakers, challenging assignments, etc.) support/shape student's first year experience?
- What is the impact of the course on student's ideas/decisions about graduate school?

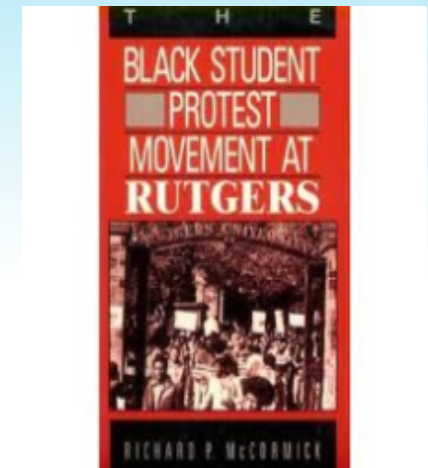
How might we:

- Develop an academic community amongst enrolled students?
- Support the development of writing for enrolled students?

Methodology

This is a mixed-method study in which the following were collected...

- Course demographics
- Pre/Post Surveys
- Running notes
- Focus groups

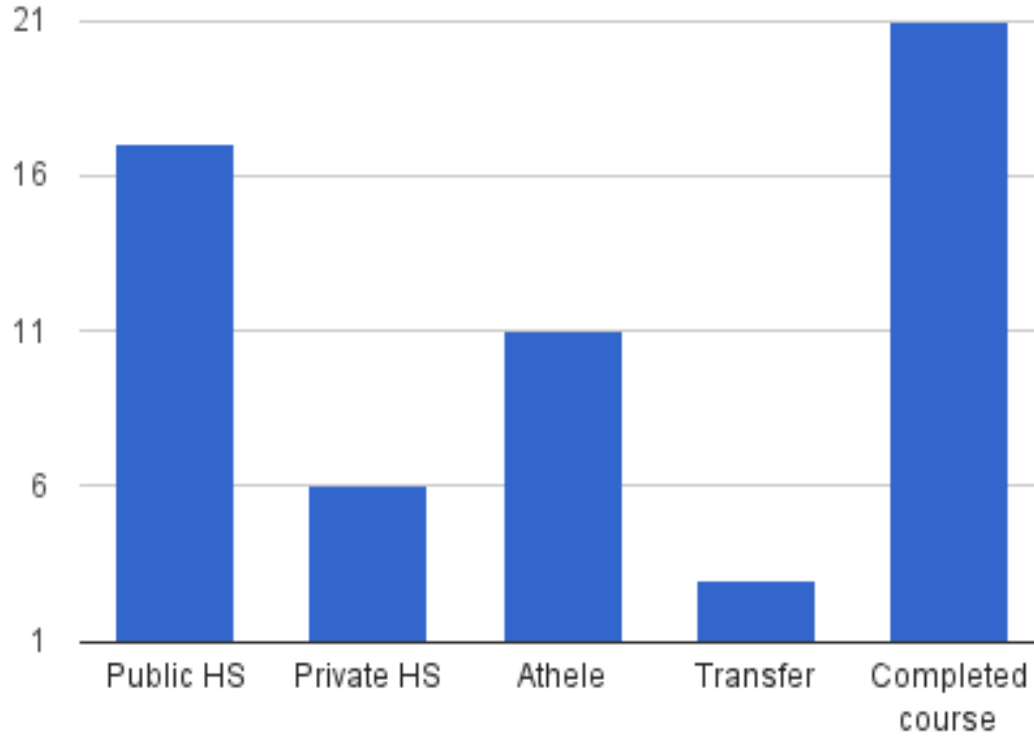


The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers
Richard P. McCormick



Findings - Course demographics

Student Data of EDUC 379



Findings - Campus Climate

Pre-Survey (n=10)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
I know where to go if I need academic assistance	7	3	0	0	0	0
I know at least one person who I can study with for each of my classes	2	3	2	1	1	1
I feel like I am part of the USD community, or, I fit in at USD	4	2	3	1	0	0
I know at least one person that I can talk to if I need assistance (social, emotional, etc.)	2	4	1	1	2	1
I have made friends here at USD	6	4	0	0	0	0
I can be academically successful at USD	3	2	3	0	2	0
I plan to attend graduate school	8	0	1	1	0	0

Post-Survey (n=17)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
I know where to go if I need academic assistance	7	7	3	0	0	0
I know at least one person who I can study with for each of my classes	3	10	2	1	0	0
I feel like I am part of the USD community, or, I fit in at USD	5	7	3	0	1	0
I know at least one person that I can talk to if I need assistance (social, emotional, etc.)	4	5	5	2	0	1
I have made friends here at USD	10	3	3	0	0	1
I can be academically successful at USD	5	3	9	0	0	0
I plan to attend graduate school	11	0	6	0	0	0

Findings - Financial support

Pre Survey (n=10)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have sufficient financial support (I can comfortably pay for books, food, materials, etc.)	0	1	2	2	4	1

Post Survey (n=17)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have sufficient financial support (I can comfortably pay for books, food, materials, etc.)	2	2	5	1	7	0

Findings - Use of academic resources

Pre Survey (n=10)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have attended the office hours of each of my professors	0	0	4	1	4	1

Post Survey (n=17)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have attended the office hours of each of my professors	2	3	6	1	5	0

Findings - Participation in social life

Pre Survey (n=10)

I am/plan to be involved or hold a leadership role in the following types of organizations:

	Participate	Leadership	Unsure
Arts (theatre, choir, etc.)	3	2	2
Academic (study abroad, honors program, etc.)	5	4	3
Athletic	2	2	1
Cultural (Spanish club, Black Student Union, etc.)	5	2	3
Religious/Spiritual	3	0	2
Sorority/Fraternity	0	0	3
Community Service/Service Learning	6	3	3
Other:	2	1	4

Post Survey (n=17)

	I am/plan to be involved or hold a leadership role in the following types of organizations:		
	Participate	Leadership	Unsure
Ambassador's club, RHA			
Arts (theatre, choir, etc.)	3	2	3
Academic (study abroad, honors program, etc.)	6	4	2
Athletic	9	9	2
Cultural (Spanish club, Black Student Union, etc.)	6	2	5
Religious/Spiritual	2	1	5
Sorority/Fraternity	0	1	5
Community Service/Service Learning	7	6	3
Other:	2	1	4
	Ambassador's club, RHA		

Findings - Social impact of EDUC 379

Pre Survey (n=10)

I interact with students I've met in EDUC 379 outside of class.		
	Yes	No
Socially	6	4
Academically	8	2
Comments:	(1) we all have a lot to learn from each other, so I think it's very important that we communicate and share our ideas	(2) don't have time

Post Survey (n=17)

I interact with students I've met in EDUC 379 outside of class.		
	Yes	No
Socially	15(88%)	2(12%)
Academically	14(82%)	3(18%)
Comments:	(1) I find the students to be a great source of information as well as encouragement, (2) we are alike, so naturally, I'm attracted to people who understand me, (3) we see each other and chat but are not in my other classes, (4) we're such a tight-knit class that we all have gotten to know each other and want to see each other succeed.	

Themes - Running notes & focus groups

- Unique student-athlete experience
- Differences in student experiences prior to coming to USD
- Navigating the limited race-related experiences of white students
- The role of support structures in the first year experience



Unique student-athlete experience

Built-in social and academic community

- *“You gravitate towards other athletes because they get your schedule and other stresses and dealing with the coach. Other non-sports friends don’t really understand.”*

- Student female discussing “athletic culture”-Focus group notes, week 14.

Athlete versus Intellectual

- *“The staff automatically assumes I’m an athlete. It would be nice if they thought otherwise...that I’m not necessarily here because of sports.”*
- Athletes taking the course just for a grade.

- Focus group notes, Week 14.



Differences in student experiences prior to coming to USD

Students from under-resourced, inner-city high schools

- *“I can relate to those kids in the video...The quality of our school was not like the quality of the kids in the suburban schools. We had 4 different principals in the 4 years that I was in high school. I had 7 different math teachers last year alone. So, I get here and I’m taking math and...”*

-Female student, Week 2

Differences in Black Identity and connection to the Black freedom struggle

- Tiffany: *“I don’t see myself as Black or anything. I’m just human. That’s all.”*
Monique: *“Oh my gosh, don’t you get it. It’s not just about how you see yourself, but how others see you.”*

-In-class exchange between two students

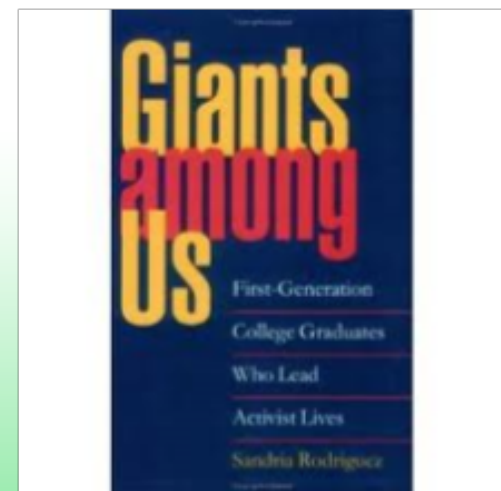
Navigating the limited race-related experiences of white students

- Female student: *There are a lot of students on campus who have not been around people of color. When they see like are like naturally curious and want to ask questions, but **I don't think they know how to do it in a way that's appropriate.***
 - Female Student: *I've been asked questions like, "Oh my gosh I have never seen the texture of your hair!" and people just want to touch my hair. Or "Are all black peoples hair nappy?" Like I have had stuff like that said to me and so its just like I want to educate people on things.*
- Focus group- Week 14

The role of support structures in the first year experience

- Student: *I know that SSS has helped me a lot. They help me with my classes. They helped me plan my schedule. If they didn't show me the course catalog I would be lost.*
- *"My teachers are everything I wanted. Their not just like a normal professor. They are always there, like open office. They are always there for me."*

Giants Among Us
Sandria Rodriguez



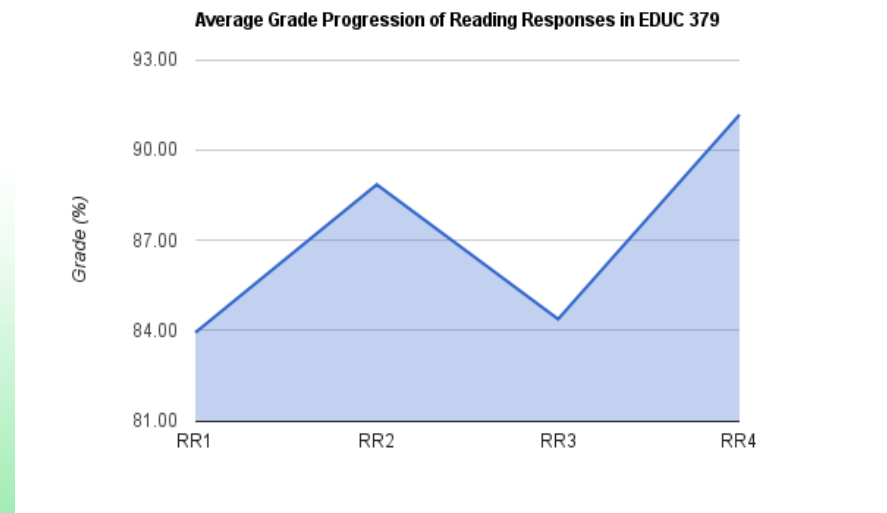
Analysis - Revisiting research questions

1. How might we develop an academic community amongst enrolled students?

At the culmination of the course, 82% of the students surveyed stated that they interacted with fellow classmates for academic purposes outside of the EDUC 379 class.

2. How might we support the development of writing for enrolled students?

- Progressive grading
- Extensive feedback
- Clear rubric



Analysis - Revisiting research questions, con't.

3. What is the role of EDUC 379 in the academic & social development of students?

This answer has not yet been determined.

4. How do the course features (study groups, guest speakers, challenging assignments, etc.) support/shape student's first year experience?

Male role models & the Focus on Black students' educational struggle resonated with students.

Analysis con't & Persistence of Racism

5. What is the impact of the course on student's ideas/decisions about graduate school?

There is evidence that students enrolled in the course had an interest in graduate school. There continues to be a question over student-athletes plans for graduate school.

Racism continues to shape the day-to-day experiences of our students

- Dorm issues
- Racial slurs / Verbal attacks
- Stereotypes
- Selective dating



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- Raketa Ouedraogo-Thomas, TA