

Building the RBG Bridge: Expanding the Capacity for Research into Diversity and Inclusion in Economics Classrooms

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Related working papers and policy briefs can be found at the MCDE website:
<https://www.stkate.edu/academics/shas/political-science-and-economics-department/mcde>

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Motivation

There is a gender and racial gap in economics that relevance, belonging and growth mindset (RBG) has the potential to bridge

Institution type is a potential mediator of RBG and persistence and conversations around these two ideas encouraged a team of economists from St. Catherine University to conduct a multi-year study to investigate RBG in economics classrooms

NSF has a Build and Broaden grant program intended to build research capacity at minority serving institutions, and the QR code is here:



Multiple Goals

1. To expand work on RBG and persistence in economics to a wider range of institutions including primarily white institutions (PWIs), minority serving institutions (MSIs), co-ed institutions, and women's colleges
2. As per the goal of the NSF Build and Broaden grant program, to enhance research capacity at minority-serving institutions
3. To develop a network of interested researchers and instructors, especially those at MSIs and two year schools who might not typically have opportunities or resources to participate in research

Results Preview: We concluded with more questions that we started with! Nothing really predicted change in RBG or change in persistence... but still interesting things to explore.

Intentional Sampling of Institutions

Targeted three schools from each of six strata: 2-year and 4 year schools, women's and co-educational schools, and PWIs and MSIs

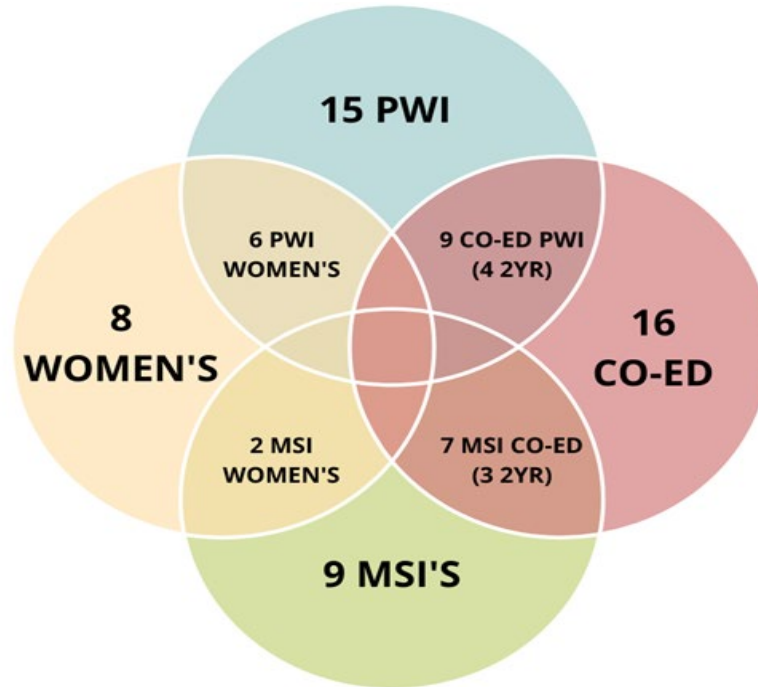
Selected schools from four states with a sufficient number of women's colleges and MSIs and undertook bootstrapped random stratified sampling designed to balance the characteristics of institutions across strata

Reached out to all faculty with available e-mail addressed at each of the included institutions.

We offered honoraria of \$1000 to participating faculty in recognition of the disproportionate burdens that often fall on underrepresented faculty

Initial analysis plans and tables were registered with the Open Science Foundation prior to data collection to assure research fidelity.

Resulting sample



Project Timeline

Fall 2022 – Baseline surveys with responses from 805 students in 105 classes taught by 49 faculty at 24 institutions in 4 states

Spring 2023 – Preparation of baseline paper and policy brief based on baseline survey results. Presentation of “Relevance, Belonging, and Growth Mindset in Economics: Differences Across Institution Types” at CTREE in May, 2023

Fall 2023 – Endline students survey with responses from 199 students in 75 classes taught by 45 faculty at 21 institutions

Winter 2024 – Presentation of baseline paper at ASSA in January, 2024. Preparation of endline paper and policy brief

Project Timeline, continued

Winter 2024 – Baseline paper rejected from the first journal to which it was submitted. Preparation of endline paper and policy brief.

Spring 2024 – Mini-conference in conjunction with CTREE in May 2024, with invitations to and travel stipends for participating faculty, including 26 faculty from 18 institutions who spent the day focusing on RBG in economics. Presentation of endline paper, “Persistence in Economics: Differences Across Identities and Institutions” at CTREE conference.

Summer 2024 – Work on persistence paper and revisions on baseline RBG paper

Mini-Conference

Was originally intended to be held at St. Catherine University in Spring 2024, with either virtual or face to face participation

Goal was, in particular, to network with faculty from MSIs and women's college who participated in the study

We pivoted to doing a mini-conference in conjunction with CTREE in Atlanta in May of 2024. The grant included a budget for a conference and we use this for expenses and for travel stipends for participating faculty and others working in this area, and this facilitated participation in CTREE for people who may not have been able to attend otherwise, furthering the build and broaden mission

Mini-Conference

A lot of the day was dedicated to data exploration and brainstorming.

Participants were given access to the anonymized data and their school's identifier, so they could compare their institution with other similar (i.e., 2-year or 4-year, MSI or PWI, and women's college or men's/co-ed schools) institutions

Had breakout sessions focused on institutional affinity groups and geography

The day ended with thoughts about promising interventions and directions forward for this research

Faculty from small departments and community colleges were particularly appreciative

What Did We Learn?

Research Take-Away – Identity isn't as predictive of RBG or persistence as previous findings suggest, and institution type impacts RBG in some unexpected ways

Process Take-Away – Bringing community colleges, regional schools and identity-focused schools into the fold is critical for including a broader array of perspectives and identifying interventions that will be scalable across a wide variety of programs and will impact students in introductory classes who are underrepresented in more advanced levels of economics

Conclusions

Economics has an inclusion problem that needs to be addressed in order to attract the best minds to the field and to have researchers better understand the breadth of the human experience

Addressing this diversity problem will mean including the perspectives of people at schools that work with a large percentage of people from these underrepresented groups and bringing faculty who may not have previously participated in this research into the fold

Our Data are at Open ICPSR



Working Papers and Policy Briefs are at MCDE Website



Thank you!

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