Building Racial Justice in Mathematics Education: A Seat at the Breakfast Table

Nicole Louie • *Chundou Her*
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What would it be like to treat building racial justice in math education as if it could only be done *with* and *by* marginalized students and families?

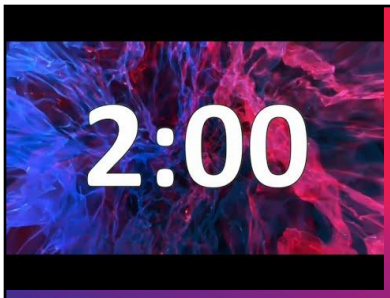
(Osibodu et al., in press)

Roadmap

Where we are coming from

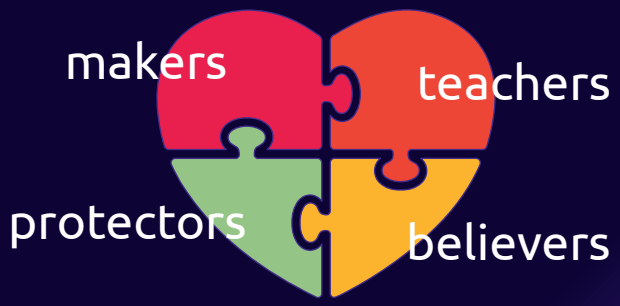
What we are doing

What we are learning



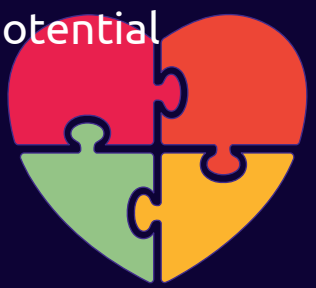
Who is in the room?

Auntie Ontologies



Auntie Ontologies

- Building children's capacity, place, and purpose
- Protecting shared past, present, and future
- Believing in children's dreams and potential
- Creating realities that challenge the reality of white supremacy



Extending our auntie ontologies

- Flattening hierarchies by centering those most affected by educational injustices
- Collaboratively generating new knowledge and practices by embracing heterogeneity
- Engaging in radical dreaming

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OUR PROJECT:

Advancing Racial Equity in Middle School Mathematics Through Engaging Students of Color and Their Families in Participatory Design Research (PDR)

NSF #2144506

Participatory design research (PDR)

(Bang & Vossoughi, 2016; Cammarota & Fine, 2008)

- Research should "link structural critiques of normative hierarchies of power and imagined possible futures"
- Research should center those most affected in designing and studying solutions


The Design Cycle
Identify our priorities
Gather information
Analyze information
Develop solutions
Enact the solutions
Assess and reflect


The Design Cycle
Building participants' capacity as researchers and designers
Nurturing our dreams and potential
Creating new realities

Research questions

- What are the possibilities and challenges of using participatory design research to advance racial justice in middle school mathematics?
- *How are these possibilities and challenges shaped by our context of Asian invisibility and hypervisibility?*

> "Marginalized and minoritized groups, including groups of color, too often suffer from *invisibility* in dominant institutions that reflect and value White, middle-class norms. In schools, for example, the perspectives, histories, and concerns of non-White students are often rendered invisible—they are erased, silence, excluded. In addition to invisibility, marginalized groups can also be subjected to *hypervisibility*, whereby their experiences and identities are essentialized, demonized, stereotyped and/or viewed from deficit perspectives."
>
> (Lee, 2022, p. 3)

Asian American hyper(in)visibility

- The myth of the model minority
- The trope "Asians are good at math"
- Treating "Asian" as a monolith (Asianization)

(Museus & Iftikar, 2013;
Chen & Buell, 2018; Shah, 2019)

Participants (planned)

- School-based core teams
- 3-4 students of color and 3-4 parents per team
- Ourselves as researchers, designers, and community members
- 1 school in Year 1; up to 3 schools by Year 5

Participants (actual)

- 2 (very different) schools
- About a dozen students of color at each school, nominated by teachers and staff
- No family members (yet)

Participants (actual)

Urban

- ~400 students
- Majority students of color
- 1 math track

Washington

- ~700 students
- Majority white
- 3 math tracks
- “Washingtopia”

Hmong Invisibility

- *"Most people don't know what Hmong people is, so when I say 'Hmong,' I have to explain all of what it means. And sometimes I don't wanna do that so I just tell people I'm Asian. Or sometimes I'll tell people I'm Chinese."*

podcast with Mai Neng Vang

Hmong Invisibility in Our Context

- Hmong and Asian students and parents left out in school affinity group structures
- Hypervisibility of Black students
- Who people think of when they hear "race" and "equity"

How are the possibilities and challenges of using PDR to advance racial justice in middle school mathematics shaped by our context of Asian invisibility and hyperinvisibility?

Manifestations of hyper(in)visibility

- District leader: we might not want to go to Washington, few Black students attend there
- Teachers at both schools nominated Black students almost exclusively
- A Black student on Day 1 read “students of color” and said, “So this is for Black kids?”

Manifestations of hyper(in)visibility

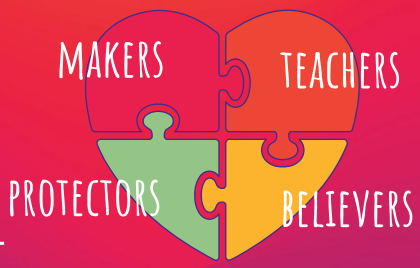
- Davonte (Black) interrogated in the hallway
- Amy (Hmong) presumed absent
- Michael (Asian) taking up as little space as possible, minimizing his own needs
- Evidencing what school wants, demands, and allows for differently racialized students

Youth challenging hyper(in)visibility

- Black student engagement and leadership, especially from Davonte
- Budding relationship between Hmong students Amy and Esther
- Putting race on the table

Us challenging hyper(in)visibility

- Giving subterranean race talk space as part of the official conversation
- Recognizing our own cultural wealth—auntie ontologies—as relevant
- Resisting essentialism



Car rides with Aunties

How is the way you think and see changing?

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