
RACE, RACISM, AND MATHEMATICS EDUCATION: LOCAL AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

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In this symposium we are interested in analyzing the ways wherein particular racial formations across societies manifest in the social space of mathematics education practices. It is aimed at facilitating discussion with colleagues to explore the current state of research directed to analyze and uncover the mechanisms and practices responsible for the reproduction and maintenance of racial domination within mathematics education as well as how mathematics education contributes to various forms of domination in local and global contexts.

RATIONALE

Racism and race continue to be controversial topics (Martin, Rousseau & Shah, in press) to the extent that some societies have tacitly agreed on almost making these terms be set in disuse and almost oblivion (Weiner, 2014). As a contingent and socially constructed category of social identity, race is not a static, rigid concept with a single meaning but malleable. Its very deep roots can be found in locally situated scientific, political, cultural and economic structures. Meanings of race and comprehensions of racial discrimination and inequality vary across racial systems (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). This manifests differently in the U.S., Latin America and Europe. In contrast to Latin America, in the U.S. society there exist a much clearer definition of racial categories (white, black, native) and a strong color line demarcation (Wade, 2008). Within the context of Latin American countries, the racial order responds to what Bonilla-Silva and Glover (2004) denominates *Pigmentocracy*, or the structuration of a racial hierarchy dominated by diffused in-between racial categories such as *pardos*, *morenos* and *mulatos*. Additionally, in contrast to the dominance of colorblind ideologies in the U.S. (Bonilla-Silva, 2010), nation-building ideologies such as that of *mestizaje* (Wade, 2005) have been prevalent in Brazil, Colombia and Peru among other Latin American countries. *Mestizaje*, as an “all-inclusive ideology of exclusion” (Wade, 2005) helps to configure the interpretations of racial affairs in Latin America in ways that make racism invisible or even appear non-existent and difficult to overly talk

about racial inequity. In Europe, the colonial history of many countries has generated long-standing categories to refer to the “other” as inferior and in need of civilization. A differential positioning of “whiteness” and “colorness” has been present in institutions and everyday practices. The extermination of certain populations during Second World War, –e.g., Jews and Roma– on the grounds of racial biology and eugenics connect to the desire of eliminating race as a category. Instead, ethnicity became a category to talk about differentiation on the grounds of culture. Such differentiation, nevertheless operates in everyday institutional practices and certainly have effects in access and participation to education (e.g., Dovemark, 2013). In conclusion, the processes of racialization as well as the ways wherein people’s racial experiences are interpreted and configured diverge in great extent in different parts of the world.

As a social institution, school is not exempt from racism and issues of power, but rather one in which racial ideologies, practices, hierarchies, and stereotypes find a fertile soil to grow and reproduce. Moreover, the field of mathematics education is a racialized domain, an instantiation of white institutional space controlled primarily by White and male researchers. Mathematics education is also a political project that serves larger racial projects (Martin, 2013). Yet, critical reviews of the extant research literature suggest that the realities and consequences of racism are not globally reflected as considerations in mathematics education research. Even in countries such as Denmark with an important tradition in critical mathematics education (e.g. Skovsmose 1994), these realities have not been addressed in research emanating from that context.

Our own research points out the ways in which mathematics education as a social institution and a field of social practices comes to be situated within the racial histories, prevailing racial order, and web of social meanings for race in our societies (e.g., Spencer & Hand, 2015; Valoyes-Chávez, 2015; Valoyes-Chávez & Martin, 2016). Yet, we do not assume that mathematics education simply mirrors the particular racial system in which it is embedded. Racial dynamics are complex, unstable, and permanently interwoven with other social phenomena such as class and gender conflict. However, we do contend that mathematics education tends to maintain and reproduce the dominant racial order by unequally ascribing knowledge, abilities, and opportunities along racial lines.

It is in this context that we intent to discuss and explore the ways wherein these particularities manifest in the social space of mathematics education practices. As a racialized domain of social practices, mathematics education is considered as a racial and political project that would contribute to the production of ideologies and mechanisms responsible for the reproduction of racism during the practices of teaching and learning mathematics.

AIMS

The symposium is aimed at facilitating discussion with colleagues to explore the current state of research directed to analyze and uncover the mechanisms and practices responsible for the reproduction and maintenance of racial domination within mathematics education as well as how mathematics education contributes to various forms of domination in local and global contexts.

The workgroup format will encourage participants to engage both the structural and material realities of White supremacy and anti-Black racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). A structural perspective is fundamental to the process of moving interpretations of racism beyond individual prejudices and psychological pathologies. Likewise, the materiality of racism in everyday life constitutes a cornerstone in understanding racial dynamics at different social and institutional levels. One key to understanding these dynamics is to unravel how the meanings for blackness (and Whiteness) have emerged and have been negotiated within and across global contexts and understanding the racial projects that give rise to these meanings and racial dynamics. For example, what are the implications of the emergence of a far-right, conservative racial project for mathematics education in Denmark and for immigrant families and their children who find themselves under attack by the right-wing Danish People's party (Wren, 2001)? How do experiences with everyday racism by Malays and Indians in Singapore –groups who occupy very different positions in the social hierarchy– play out in the context of mathematics education (Velayutham, 2007)? What are the implications for mathematics education of the maintenance of white supremacy in Brazil, a country that prides itself on maintaining a racial democracy even in the face of empirical research and everyday experiences that suggest otherwise?

The symposium will alternate three papers focusing on the issue in three different contexts with discussions. We invite participants to join us in discussing these difficult and unsettling topics to find ways of making visible racism in society and mathematics education in order to take a more active stance to fight against its reality.

PLAN OF THE SYMPOSIUM

The 90-minute symposium will be structured as follows:

1. Welcome and brief introduction of the goals the symposium.
2. Symposium organizers will present their respective papers:
 - *Valoyes-Chávez: Race, racism and math education in Latin America*
 - *Martin & Spencer: Race, racism and math education in North America*

- Valero & Chronaki: *Race, racism and math education in Europe*.
3. Short Q&A session about the papers.
 4. Symposium organizers will facilitate a whole group discussion about conceptualizations on race and racism within mathematics education. Possible questions would be:
 - *How does race locally shape and configure the social space of mathematics education?*
 - *In what ways do other identity markers, such as ethnicity and gender, intersect with race to shape the mathematics experiences of learners at school?*
 5. Conclusions/ Plans for further collaborations/Organizers.

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