Understanding the Impact of Racial Attitudes on Pre-service Teachers’ Perceptions of Children’s Mathematical Thinking

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Abstract: Despite college mathematics often being seen as culturally-neutral, there is a growing body of literature documenting the ways in which college mathematics classrooms are gendered and racialized spaces (Leyva, 2016; Borum & Walker, 2012; McGee & Martin, 2011). This often results in additional labor for historically marginalized college students, as they try to both navigate these racialized-gendered spaces and succeed mathematically (Battey & Leyva, 2016). This study sought to understand ways such labor manifests itself within student responses to discouraging classroom events in undergraduate mathematics classrooms. We examined 19 students’ responses to events in introductory college mathematics courses that historically marginalized students had noted as discouraging. Findings suggest that students responded to such events by moderating their participation, dealing with additional cognitive and emotional labor, and managing other’s perceptions by proving people wrong.

Dan Battey is an Associate Professor in Elementary Mathematics Education in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. Dr. Battey’s scholarship centers on understanding teacher change in response to mathematics PD in urban schools. Drawing on research of students’ mathematical thinking, he studies teacher knowledge, identity, and practice within the context of urban schools. Because of his focus on spaces where educational systems often underserve students, Dr. Battey’s work also focuses on understanding the sociological contexts in which teachers work, including policy and social ideologies and how these mediate what and how teachers interact with students from historically marginalized backgrounds.