

Everything Everywhere All at Once: Asian Math Ed Edition

Session Summary

Abstract: This structured poster session includes seven contributions that speak to the question of what it can mean to visibilize Asian and Asian American youth, educators, and researchers in mathematics education beyond the “Asians are good at math” stereotype. The contributors—twelve scholars and educators, all of whom identify as Asian American—collectively seek to call into being a universe in which diverse Asian and Asian American identities, struggles, and cultural assets are integral to work toward racial justice in mathematics education, drawing on a variety of tools including AsianCrit, critical race spatial analysis, intersectionality, and autoethnography. The session will contribute to understandings of race, racism, and racial justice, not only for Asians and Asian Americans but for the field as a whole.

Objectives

In discussions of race in mathematics education, Asians and Asian Americans have been simultaneously *hypervisible* and *invisible*. As Lee (2022) has explained, racialized invisibility involves the erasure, silencing, and exclusion of “the perspectives, histories, and concerns” of people of color, while hypervisibility involves processes “whereby their experiences and identities are essentialized, demonized, stereotyped and/or viewed from deficit perspectives” (p. 3). On the one hand, Asians and Asian Americans are hypervisible as the “model minority.” Asian and Asian American success—in mathematics in particular—is present in ubiquitous comparisons of achievement on both international assessments and U.S. tests. As previous scholarship has argued, narratives foregrounding Asian and Asian American mathematical prowess are not complimentary but dehumanizing and essentializing; moreover, they are used to obscure white supremacy and to pit Asians and Asian Americans against other racially minoritized and marginalized communities (Chen & Buell, 2018; Shah, 2019). On the other hand, Asian and Asian American marginalization, struggles, and resistance to racism are typically invisibilized and ignored. Thus, when it comes to discussions of (in)equity and (in)justice in mathematics education, Asians and Asian Americans are frequently positioned as not quite mattering.

Our session will explore what it can mean to visibilize Asian and Asian American youth, educators, and scholars in mathematics education—seeking to restore not only our dignity as learners, teachers, researchers, and doers of mathematics (education), but also our full humanity. This project is especially necessary within mathematics education, because of the persistent essentialism and dehumanization Asians and Asian Americans face in this field.

Overview of the presentations

The posters in our session advance rich, multidimensional understandings of who counts as “Asian.” They highlight intersectional identities, including gender and dis/ability (Paper 2) and attributions of Blackness to Asians (Paper 5). They highlight Asian American agency and relationships to activism, among educators (Papers 1 and 3) and youth (Paper 4). They highlight mental health challenges Asian Americans face (Paper 6) and Asian American cultural wealth as a tool for advancing racial justice (Paper 7).

Contributors use a diversity of frameworks and methodologies, including AsianCrit, intersectional lenses, critical race spatial analysis, and creative autoethnography.

Significance

As a collection, the papers in our session contribute to expanding conversations about Asians and Asian Americans in mathematics education. They compellingly make the case that the continued invisibilization of Asians and Asian Americans is harmful not only for these groups, but for understandings of race and intersecting identities, racism, and antiracism in the field as a whole.

Session structure

This session will be highly interactive, comprised of:

- Introduction from the chair (Nicole Louie) (5 minutes);
- Gallery walk (12 minutes), with attendees jotting questions and comments on sticky notes to ensure that all participants, including presenters, have a chance to see each of the posters and make their own sense of how they fit together and the questions they collectively raise;
- Interacting around the posters (45 minutes);
- Discussant remarks (8 minutes);
- Whole-group discussion of participants’ noticings, wonderings, and directions for future work (20 minutes).

7. Car Rides with Aunties and Cousins

Chundou Her and Nicole Louie

Here, we share work that sprouted from a larger project that aims to engage Asian American, Black, and Latine middle schoolers as co-researchers and co-designers of racial justice in mathematics education. We have been asking ourselves what it could mean to show up for the youth not in typical teacher or researcher ways but as aunties and cousins, drawing on our backgrounds as Asian Americans—specifically, as a second generation Hmong American and a third generation Chinese American. With this poster, we draw on our conversations during car rides to and from schools to explore the intersections between our multiple ethnic, familial, and professional identities, and the possibilities for teaching, learning, and researching that can be created when adults and youth bring their full selves and their communities' intergenerational cultural wealth to the table. Below, we share the journey of this work as a creative dialogue, true to our process and our goals.

CHUNDOU: I'm tired. These early mornings suck.

NICOLE: Me too. And our meeting today felt like busy work, just doing school. I don't think they saw the purpose of the research skills we were trying to teach.

CHUNDOU Is this even what we want to do? It doesn't feel right. Like we're not really *reimagining* math ed or math ed research yet.

NICOLE: Yeah. Maybe it's not the direction we need to go. –You know how you talked about big family dinners at your aunt's house growing up?

CHUNDOU: (*triumphantly*) Yeah! A feast to feed thousands!

NICOLE: (*laughing*)

CHUNDOU: For real, it felt like that much food. My aunties were seriously bending reality to create this space outside of white supremacy where we were all royalty.

NICOLE: I love that. It makes me think of dinners at my aunties' houses, too. Although at the same time—did this ever happen to you, where your auntie would give you a job just to give you a purpose, and like a place in the family?

CHUNDOU: Oh yeah for sure. Like washing grapes. I was such an inefficient grape washer. But it made me feel so important.

NICOLE: What would it be like to do that in math group? (*tentatively*) Could we like, cook together?

CHUNDOU: I totally have a hot plate we can use.

NICOLE: We should! (*pause*) Okay wait, before I get all carried away, can we talk about our presentation for a sec?

CHUNDOU: Yeah, I'll look at the slides Friday. I'll be in a car for 7 hours driving to a wedding.

NICOLE: Oo who's getting married?

CHUNDOU: My cousin. I haven't seen these cousins in a long time. Maybe since my grandpa's funeral? I'm really excited. Like I think this will be a good chance to reconnect. I'm trying to be a better cousin.

NICOLE: Same. Like I can reach out even if I'm not sure they'll answer. –I feel like this is related to what we're trying to do with the kids in math group. Like, rebuilding, and protecting our families.

CHUNDOU: OMG yes!