We Real Cool: Reconsidering the Cooling Out Phenomenon in a Remedial Mathematics Education Context

Recognizing the gatekeeping function of mathematics as curricular discipline has been a longstanding subject of mathematics education research and scholarly debate. Difficult and complex questions about how this gatekeeping occurs, however, have been explored less frequently. Furthermore, everyday social occurrences by which mathematics gatekeeping and racialized inequity intersect have received even less attention. In this talk, I will re-introduce and discuss the cooling out phenomenon in education (COPE), a concept that originates in sociology and has re-emerged across several academic disciplines, including higher education. This time, the purpose is to understand how COPE functions amid Black undergraduates’ experiences within remedial mathematics courses. Drawing on two recent studies in which I analyzed series of interviews, I discuss the ways that COPE unfolds amid study participants’ experiences, who and what processes may be involved in COPE, and implications regarding COPE for mathematics education research more broadly.

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