

## **Ethics and Identity Research in the Field of Mathematics Education: Reflections**

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As mathematics education researchers, we are increasingly aware of the importance of considering ethical issues and researcher positionality in our work (and the lack thereof) in the field. Historically, the values, commitments, identities, and dilemmas that shape mathematics education research have been hidden or unmarked. In this chapter, we argue for the importance of ethical research that examines and makes visible the assumptions, values, and motivations of the researcher. We recognize that for some mathematics educators, this idea is new and perhaps counter to what they learned in graduate school. In fact, Crespo and Herbel-Eisenmann first learned about researcher positionality early in their careers from nonmathematics education collaborators who challenged them to consider their positionality; they had to read articles from outside of mathematics education to learn more about it. In contrast, considering ethics and positionality has been front and center for Hand and Gargroetzi since they entered the field. For both, their positions as White researchers who attend to issues of educational equity in their work have involved navigating tensions related to coloniality. Both have studied and worked in schools with predominantly Black and Brown students, and grapple with the ways they participate in the reproduction of dominant processes by virtue of their presence as researchers.

The four of us came together at the 2017 Advancing Methods for the Study of Social Identities in Math (AMSSI) conference in East Lansing, Michigan, because we worried that too often conversations about ethics in mathematics education research remain superficial. Most conversations in graduate school focus on Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements, what constitutes coercion, what to write in a letter of consent, and how one gains access to research sites. This limited focus conceals assumptions, values, issues, and dilemmas that are at the core of conducting ethically responsible research.

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<sup>1</sup> We list our authorship alphabetically to reflect equal contribution to this chapter.

We attempt to address ethics and identity research in mathematics education from a stance that honors the complexity of these issues. In this chapter, we consider reflections about the ethics of engaging in identity research shared with us in conversations we had with 10 scholars. We realize readers may experience dissonance with the content and form of this chapter. We invite readers to join these conversations as they would in an imaginary restaurant. Consider the interview excerpts as glimpses into conversations overheard from surrounding tables; hear them as bits and pieces of stories without assuming access to the whole conversation that is taking place at those tables. Although some elements of these conversations will seem timeless and relevant to future conversations about ethics and identity research, it is important to contextualize these conversations in a particular historical moment (in spring 2018, the United States was midway through the Trump presidency and it was prior to COVID-19 pandemic). We emphasize that the snippets of conversations shared here are ongoing and evolving, and so are the identities, experiences, and perspectives of the people having these conversations. Given publication timelines, we note an ongoing ethical tension in our field related to “freezing in time” of individuals and their words.

We expect readers may feel uncomfortable or guilty as they realize they have not considered some of the issues highlighted in this chapter. We can assure readers that we too have experienced these feelings and are still figuring out how to be more ethical researchers. We discuss ethics here because, as Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) argued:

Research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized. It is regulated through the formal rules of individual scholarly disciplines and scientific paradigms, and the institutions that support them (including the state). It is realized in the myriad of representations and ideological constructions of the Other in scholarly and ‘popular’ works, and in the principles which help to select and recontextualize those constructions in such things as the media, official histories and school curricula. (pp. 7–8)

Accepting the role of imperialism and colonialism in education and mathematics education research is important; it is imperative in research focused on identity because it forces mathematics education researchers to grapple with aspects of ethics. Yet, editors and reviewers in mathematics education still do not require that researchers engage with positionality and reflexivity. When we conceal our motives, assumptions, and epistemologies, we position ourselves—as researchers—as all knowing, objective, and morally superior. Examining one’s positionality is necessary, but it is also not enough. Research related to identity can also do harm: Representations are taken as “the truth” (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999) and much past research has been produced in a racist society dominated by White researchers, thereby perpetuating White supremacy (Martin, 2009) and damage-centered narratives about communities and peoples (Tuck, 2009).

Accordingly, researchers increasingly argue the necessity of drawing connections between mathematics identity and social membership identities such as gender, race, or language (Langer-Osuna & Esmonde, 2017). Harmful representations of communities and people have been perpetuated through scholarship that

treats racial and ethnic identities as independent variables (Parks & Schmeichel, 2012). Martin (2009) writes, “Most studies of differential outcomes in mathematics education begin and end their analyses of race with static racial categories and group labels used for the sole purpose of disaggregating data” (p. 295). This is similar to Gutiérrez’s (2008) concern about “gap-gazing,” or the excessive focus on the achievement gap at the exclusion of broader notions of equity. This excessive focus, she argued, has the potential to spread deficit narratives about certain groups rather than illuminate or address how these demographic groups were produced or the nature of the experiences with mathematics that may be of concern. Researchers also point out that research on social identities that presumes homogenous experiences within a particular social group will miss the complexity of how individuals make sense of and navigate their social memberships within and across contexts (Nasir & Cooks, 2009; Radovic et al., 2017).

Along with these major concerns, scholars also suggest possibilities for embracing and highlighting the complexities in this work, including taking socio-political approaches to identity research (Gutiérrez, 2013; Valero & Zevenbergen, 2004). For example, different ways have been proposed to study identities. To examine these processes of interactional power and negotiation under a close lens, some scholars study micro-identities (e.g. Wood, 2013; Esmonde, 2009). Langer-Osuna and Esmonde (2016) use positioning theory to attend to interactional and power dynamics and identity as processes across the scale. Positioning theory has become a fairly common theory to study identities (Herbel-Eisenmann et al., 2016). Another perspective includes taking a personal narrativization approach (e.g., Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Larnell (2016) illustrates how a narrative approach illuminates the ways that particular identities in a given context are connected to broader societal narratives and stereotypes that are made meaningful through institutional structures and practices. Darragh (2016) suggested Butler’s approach to identity as performative, and Leyva (2017) and Bullock (2018) both proposed intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) as a powerful lens to address multiple intersecting forms of power and oppression.

These perspectives on identity have implicit considerations regarding ethics. Our aim in inviting scholars into conversations related to ethics is to begin to become aware of and interrogate our commitments in relation to the lines of research above, especially decolonization. Before proceeding, we invite you to consider the questions we asked these scholars:

1. What do you see as the connections between ethics and identity research?
2. How do you frame your scholarship in relation to the topic of our chapter, which is ethics and identity research?
3. What is the state of the field at present, seen from the perspective of researchers who are committed to justice, decolonization, and humanization and who study issues of identity?
4. How does the field begin to address the concerns and commitments you raise?
5. Given how you think about ethics or doing ethical work, how should we approach our work? How do we do our work in such a way that we do not continue to reproduce Western knowledge traditions?

6. What is the pushback that we may encounter as we continue to challenge dominant perspectives on mathematics education research and in particular identity research? What may we do in response?
7. What makes you excited or hopeful about moving the field in this direction?

As an author team, we discussed the questions and how we would respond to them to reflect on our positionality and stances prior to doing the interviews. We reflected as a group on the ethics of our own process as we interviewed, organized, and wrote this chapter. We explain some of our decision-making and then make explicit some of our own positionalities before sharing what the participating scholars said in response to our questions.

### **Some Reflections, Decisions, and Positionalities**

We chose 10 scholars in education with whom to have conversations, seven of whom participate in and contribute to conversations in mathematics education specifically. Three education scholars were included in the group because of their longer history of engagement with decolonizing and humanizing research methodologies than the mathematics education community. Most of the scholars were untenured and some were tenured. We chose participants through generating a list of scholars (who did not attend the AMSSI conference) who do participatory, humanizing, and/or decolonizing work and who focus their work, in various ways, on identities. Scholars included on the list work in many different types of communities and represent a range of social identities.

We met multiple times to write the questions for the interviews then emailed 10 scholars from our list. All of the scholars agreed to participate, and we sent them the questions. We interviewed the scholars individually, except for one case in which one of us interviewed two scholars together because they worked at the same institution. The interviews took 60–90 minutes each. During the interviews, we used videoconference software to record the conversations or recorded them in person. We took detailed notes and then used the recordings to clarify and complete our records. Each of us read the other's interview notes and highlighted sections that stood out to us and recorded why we thought they drew our attention. In our comments, we recorded similarities or differences we noted, sometimes asked clarifying questions, suggested additional interpretation or reflection, and started to note themes (e.g., naming things as issues, worries, various ways of thinking about identity). We then had discussions about how to group and represent the data.

To determine groupings, we all reread one another's notes in Google Docs™ and decided on a set of themes that we thought represented some commonalities across scholars, while also ensuring we included information that would be important for the field to consider. We grouped the contents of the interviews into themes based on repeating words (e.g., "positionality") and/or what we took to be repeating points or ideas the scholars made. We had multiple conversations about what we gained and lost in making our decisions. We then each selected one or more sections we were interested in reflecting on individually. The author who

reflected on a section then also became the person who ordered the quotations, paying attention to their interpretations and considering how to make the set of quotations flow for readers on the basis of content and/or our assumptions about what might be familiar to scholars in the field of mathematics education. We discussed and shared our thinking about the organization and realized many different possibilities existed, each telling a slightly different story. We know that the participating scholars may not agree with our selections and groupings, nor may they agree with our interpretations of their words. Our groupings and interpretations are our own—they are *an* interpretation, not *the* interpretation, of what the participating scholars shared with us.

We had discussions about the sections and made explicit why we put a set of quotations together. As we tried various approaches, however, we reflected on our concerns about turning a White gaze (Fanon, 2008) on these scholars' contributions, given that three of us are White scholars. We decided to personalize our framing, using words from the scholars in the subheadings and end each section by sharing an individual reflection, identifying ourselves by our names. We decided to reflect individually, rather than collectively, in order to support our points about the importance of attending to researcher positionality. To meet the page restrictions, we contemplated what and where to remove wording. Again, we decided to remove quotations that seemed to make similar points and to edit gently within quotations to arrive at these points.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, we sent a draft of the manuscript to each of the interviewees. We asked them to share their perspectives on the quotations we selected, to make edits to them for clarity, and to express their preferences regarding interviewee confidentiality. (The preference that was the best fit with all of their requests was to list their names at the end of this chapter.)

In terms of the focus of this chapter, none of us came to this chapter as experts in decolonizing identity research. Accordingly, we approached this chapter as a dialogue between us, the participant scholars, and you, the reader, through your interpretation and understanding of the text shared. Because we recognize the importance of researcher positionality in the construction and interpretation of data, we offer brief positionality statements, while also acknowledging that such brief positionality statements are insufficient.

**Emma:** As the child of White civil rights activists, and the grandchild of World War II refugees, I was taught that my role in the world was to work for justice and that all struggles for justice are connected. I became interested in social identities—how they are produced and navigated, and the role they play in relation to power and justice—precisely because my own experiences as White, middle class, and able-bodied often left me naive to the experiences of others with identity markers different from my own. I chose education and research as my

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<sup>2</sup> By eliminating words such as, “um,” “like,” “you know,” “I feel/think/believe,” we realize that we modified the voices of our interviewees in significant ways, shifting them toward normative, White academic discourse.

own avenues for participation in work for justice, but I also recognize that these very fields have long histories as tools of colonization. Both my awarenesses and my ignorances shape the questions that I ask as a researcher as well as the ways that I hear, analyze, and represent the role of social identities in the mathematical lives of children. My position as a White adult in schools predominantly serving Black and Brown children also shapes what is shared with me—what “face” is shown, what children feel they must share, and what remains private. For me, the question always lingers if it is possible for a person in my position to engage in education research on social identities ethically (anticolonially) at all. And if so, on what terms? I am deeply appreciative of the generosity of friends and mentors who have engaged with me as I grapple with this question, and equally appreciative of their refusal to relieve me of the tension of the question.

**Beth:**

Having spent the first 23 years of my life in rural North Dakota and Minnesota, I am aware of the fact that I was immersed in White ideology in ways that most people no longer experience. Having grown up female in the rural Midwest with a very authoritarian father also meant that there were strict rules and roles designated for me that did not apply to my brother. My resistance to these different rules and roles often resulted in punishment. This authoritarian patriarchal relationship crossed into my mathematics experiences—my father was also my high school math teacher for two years. I first made the connection between these experiences and my interest in positioning, voice, and authority when I wrote my tenure narrative. These stories and ideologies are something I always grapple with and try to understand in relationship to my work and life. I was also raised in a huge extended family of educators and taught mathematics for four years, which led me to try to counter the deprofessionalization of teachers in my work. I know that this sometimes makes me less critical of things that happen in classrooms due to a concern that some framings of critique dehumanize teachers. Finally, as a professor at a well-respected institution, I also wonder how our varying academic statuses shaped the conversations with the scholars I interviewed. As I reflect on aspects of my positionality, I am thankful for friends and colleagues who dialogue with me, hold me accountable, and help me continue to grow.

**Sandra:**

As a first-generation immigrant to the U.S. from what many call a “developing” country, I am positioned as an uninvited guest when crossing national borders and even as I move from one meeting to the next within my own institution of higher education. I am constantly battling and working against stereotypes and assumptions that people make about me based

on the color of my skin, the language I speak, the accent I speak with, and so on. My lived experiences make me especially sensitive to the deficit discourses, labels, and cultural stereotypes that researchers use to portray minoritized students and their communities. Early on in my graduate education, I became concerned with the relative ranking of students, countries, and communities and made a commitment to steer away from adding to the deficit narrative that was so prevalent in the research literature I was reading for my graduate course work. I have found Elizabeth Cohen's sociological lens of status generalization to be especially helpful to disrupting deficit narratives in mathematics education. But this lens is not enough; I try to operate under the assumption that my understandings are incomplete and I need colleagues to help me notice and see what I am missing. I have not explicitly used the lens of identity in my research work and come to this work as a learner and educator interested in educational equity and justice. Conversations with generous colleagues have been and will always be crucial to my continued education and growth as a mathematics educator.

**Victoria:**

As a person who has researched identity in mathematics education for over 19 years, my whiteness (and other nontarget identities) has only recently become an object of analytic and personal focus for me. Racial equality was an explicit family commitment, and I was taught to be colorblind at a young age. I also did not conform to traditional gender norms, which was met by ridicule from classmates and shaming by my mother, positioning me as an "other." Becoming aware of "othering" led me to connect racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression to everyday processes, yet I continued to ignore my privilege. As an early-career mathematics education researcher, I sought to understand equity as a function of identity and learning processes by investigating positioning in mathematics classrooms of predominantly Black and Brown students. Although whiteness was clearly operating in these classrooms and through my analyses as a White researcher, I did not have the tools, nor depth of awareness, to address it. Hence, although I positioned myself and was positioned by others as studying issues of "equity" in mathematics education, this has been rightly challenged by scholars of color who critiqued my lack of self-reflection related to my dominant identities and relatedly, ethical choices. Thus, I find myself straddling a position as a learner who takes a back seat in gauging the legitimacy of research perspectives, ethics, methods, and agendas, and a seasoned researcher who advocates for the recognition of mathematics education as a system of invisible racism.

Although we have only briefly shared some aspects of our positionalities here, we see these statements as just the beginning of being transparent about the fact that our values, beliefs, epistemologies, and experiences shape everything any of us does during the research process. That is, we see this as one way to make the invisible visible. To carry through this idea that our positionalities matter to our interpretations, we include our names along with the individual reflections we offer later in this chapter.

### What We Learned From Participating Scholars

This section includes raw and edited quotations from the 2018 interviewees that we organized into sections based on themes we identified among them. As suggested earlier, the quotations represent opportunities to overhear snippets of longer conversations that a particular author had with an interviewee. We again invite you to actively “overhear” these conversations, recognizing that they are from a specific moment in time, and paying attention to your interpretations, questions, assumptions, and so on, which may be different from our own because of researcher positionality.

Each set of quotations is followed by a brief analysis of emergent themes and tensions, as interpreted by one of the authors. We intentionally chose to make visible which author analyzed and reflected on selected interview excerpts to further illustrate that we are offering *one* possible interpretation not *the* interpretation of these scholars’ interview excerpts. As a brief and oversimplified example, consider how one of the authors made decisions about how to order the scholar’s quotations to invite dialogue among ourselves and with the reader. In her section, Herbel-Eisenmann included a first quote that suggests scholars reflect on what they think is worthwhile, followed by a quote that highlights power and suggests that we consider, specifically, “for what,” “for whom,” and “with whom,” then the ideas of refusal, solidarity, and colonization. Herbel-Eisenmann thought this sequencing would make sense as it begins at a general level and becomes more specific, and then names ideas she has not seen addressed to the same extent in mathematics education research (i.e., refusal, solidarity, and the implications of colonization). Finally, she chose to end with points about the obligatory positionality statement because she hoped this would make clear that merely including positionality statements in what we write would not suffice. In each of the sections that follow, we made such decisions and our decisions were informed by our own interpretations and positionality. We invite you, the reader, to keep this in mind as you read each of the sections and to also consider that these kinds of decisions are not unique to our process or to this one study, and that all presentation of research demands myriad ethical considerations that are not made visible in the reporting and publication of a research study.

### Understandings and Tensions in Identity Research

**Scholar 2:** I think one of the most important things for me is we have developed . . . over a long period of time, who a mathematician is or who, like this sort of profile of what it means to have a math identity or a productive math identity or a positive math

identity. And . . . when researchers take this up, that it's sort of unethical, in my mind, to begin with that profile. . . . I don't know if beginning with the end is the right phrase, but, basically we walk into the research having done a literature review using theoretical frameworks, or whatever, and sort of feel like we understand, based off literature what math identity is and what it looks like, to a certain extent. . . . So, that's a really important connection for me, how to deconstruct the . . . long-standing conceptualization of what a math identity is and what it looks like. . . . I think that we have constructed it through . . . White logics and White imaginaries.

**Scholar 5:** I find the concept of identity quite difficult to talk about, because there are so many tensions to navigate. For example, on the one hand, identity is social, and our identities take on meaning from our participation in social practices, in community with others—but on the other hand, we have to be careful about assuming that two members of any particular community share an identity in any straightforward way. Even intersectional analyses often miss that. Another tension I experience . . . is that it is easy to think of identity as stable, and many people often do, especially when it comes to identities as demographic characteristics. But we know that identities are constantly being negotiated, and they shift not only over long time scales but also from moment to moment. But we also have a core sense of ourselves, of continuity in who we are. How do we account for all of that when we talk about identity?

**Scholar 8:** One of the primary lenses I use in my work is ideology. Through this lens, I'm particularly interested in how identity is related to the larger historical and sociopolitical contexts. Scholars in this tradition have argued that identities are about power and are always constituted in relationship to the Other. They consider identification as processes through which people invest in subject-positions that are made available through ideologies. I appreciate the attention to power and see how this perspective might underplay other dimensions of identity such as affirmation, resistance, and the negotiation or rejection of imposed identities. I worry that many sociocultural theories of identity are taken up, especially in mathematics education, without a close consideration of power (although power is abundantly evident in the Marxist and neo-Marxist roots of sociocultural scholarship).

**Scholar 3:** There has also been a large shift towards interdisciplinary research that draws on frameworks and perspectives that are outside of mathematics education. The perspectives provide more nuanced and complex perspective on identity constructions in our work. Going back to how I position my work, one

of those lenses is intersectionality to be able to ground the more complex understandings of these lived experiences beyond single-axis analyses of identity and power relations in math students' experiences.

**Scholar 10:** From my perspective, the field is moving a little fast. . . . There is a lot of movement toward, what we might call, the next big thing. Intersectionality and rehumanization have a lot of fire right now. I wonder if in the movement toward theorizing these fresher ideas, if we move too quickly on from understanding the things that might have started this work. For example, my commitment is to understanding the function of racial identity in learning mathematics. . . . Specifically, I think about how it functions for Latino students. . . . There is a lot more that we can do to understand the specific intersection of racial identity and learning mathematics. . . . I was at a conference a couple of years ago where a math colleague . . . was talking about, "how we've done all this research on race" and "we kind of understand that." . . . I was really shocked with the idea that, "We've got it." . . . A lot of the branching out is really necessary. There are a lot of different ways that people are pushing on the field when it comes to the question of "who are you in relation to mathematics?" . . . It's a question of how do we go deep and long.

**Scholar 4:** Moving forward, I think that more nuances are important. I think that criticality has been applied in different ways. I don't know if we need an agreement or need some type of—maybe we don't need to unify what criticality means, but I think there's some, there's some work that's being done that's being called critical and sometimes they don't really address—sometimes they talk about experiences of minoritized communities from the point of view of people who are not from those communities. And so, I think that's one of the issues that I have. Not that we cannot have interracial, intercommunity research but we need—because of that situation, these studies should be more ethnographic, and more critical ethnography.

**Scholar 8:** As we see approaches and terminology become more prominent, they also tend to lose their analytical sharpness. We've seen this phenomenon in concepts such as "equity" and "social justice," or the difficulty in sustaining the reappropriation of nuanced usages of "culture" by educational anthropologists. They began as powerful political analyses, but lose their "edge" as they became more mainstream. Perhaps it's more accurate to think of this phenomenon as ebbs and flows: Prominent research on identity in mathematics started off as seemingly apolitical, began to address power more explicitly in the last decade and a half or so, and now

- Scholar 1:** we are starting to see constructs such as the racialized identities of students in mathematics get slowly reincorporated in scholarship that doesn't explicitly address whiteness. My biggest fear is that people are going to ask, "Why are there so many different strands in the identity work?" Because identity is an idea and puts a name on something that people are talking and thinking about. And then, does this idea of identity and ethics become too popular . . . and watered down? Then these words become co-opted or overused.
- Vicki:** Striking to me in these quotations is the different ways that the scholars conceptualized identity, which reflected different epistemological and even axiological stances. It might appear that there is no agreement among them—that the field is divided. I hear in these comments that no one framework captures the complexity of what we are hoping to accomplish with the identity construct. As scholars suggest, the tendency toward a single framework or "truth" has echoes of our colonialist tendencies in academia. Yet, I also believe there is value in developing an approach to identity that integrates the perspectives. I hear in many of the comments a clear break from theories of identity that tend to impose categories on (groups of) people and their lived experiences. (The ideological approach makes this process explicit.) I hear that intersectional approaches appear to be gaining traction in the field, as a way to stay close to the ground and honor the myriad ways we transact and perform identities. It's interesting, then, to consider the cautionary statement of Scholar 10, that the field appears to be rushing toward intersectionality, without having a deep understanding of the perspectives that came before it—in this case, racialized identities. This point seems related to the idea, from Scholar 8, that there is a danger that identity will come to signify everything, and nothing.

### **Stigmatizing Narratives and Articulating Counternarratives**

- Scholar 9:** Another [ethical consideration] is thinking really carefully about the stakes of different identities for people in the contexts where they're working or where you're conducting your research. And, what is involved, or what kinds of vulnerabilities are characteristic of that context? So, for me especially, it means, having to anticipate stigmatizing narratives that already circulate about particular kinds of populations, and then making sure that my research is not contributing to that in any straightforward way. It doesn't mean, necessarily, that if I find something that might correspond to some of those stereotypes, that I don't say anything about that, but, that if I'm going to address those

kinds of things, then I address them in relation to the stereotype as well.

**Scholar 7:** I do try to think carefully about the kids that I work with, and the stories that I am already telling myself about them and how those stories overlap with, connect with, disrupt or challenge, or perpetuate existing stories. So, that's really important to me. I think I do sometimes try to respond to these existing narratives. A lot of my work could be called reactionary because it's sort of anticipating . . . these existing narratives that are circulating and trying to talk back to them. Like, intentionally trying to articulate a counternarrative to what I know already circulates. So, I think that can be one intentional kind of project—to speak back to existing dominant narratives. . . . To me this is sort of the center of ethical approaches to working with marginalized communities: understanding the kinds of stories that exist and thinking about what you are contributing to in relation to those stories and the broader projects that those stories are a part of.

**Scholar 5:** I'm interested in aspects of teachers' racial identities. I recently moved to [a new institution], and I realized the other day that this is the first time that I am a faculty member in K–12 or postsecondary education at a predominantly White institution, and so much of the conversation here—as well as in the literature on teacher education—is about how we can support White middle-class preservice teachers to teach for social justice. There are a lot of preservice teachers and teachers who are not White middle-class women, and I feel that they then get left out of a lot of the conversation of teacher education. Exploring their most important experiences, strengths, and areas for growth is a direction that I'd like to move in. I am also frustrated at times with how the framing of White middle-class teachers is always coming from a deficit perspective, and in some ways I get it. But [earlier I argued for] holding people responsible for learning things that they're not comfortable with, without blaming them or writing them off. That's probably a better way to support the learning that we want them to engage in.

**Emma:** What stands out to me in these three excerpts is the intense need to be aware of the history and current stakes of harmful stories that have been and can continue to be perpetuated about many communities. Ethical approaches to research on social identities require researcher vigilance with regard to existing harmful stories—this may entail deep self-reflection as well as research into the historical contexts surrounding a community. It's not enough to simply avoid deficit perspectives—they must be anticipated and confronted,

including proactive work to make visible counternarratives that unsettle or at least significantly complicate existing harmful ones. Another form of narrative harm is to be left out of the conversation altogether, as comes up in Scholar 5's interview.

As I reflected on the interviews, it struck me that many of the scholars spoke specifically about research in racialized or otherwise minoritized communities. I found myself reminded that "social identity" often functions as a coded way of indexing racialized populations while dominant groups go unmarked (see Shah et al., Chapter 2). As is visible in Scholar 5's reflection, dominance is a process of centering while normalizing that position of center: While whiteness itself goes unmarked, White, mostly middle-class, female teachers remain the central focus of teacher research. Even scholarship that portends to pursue ways to support students of color is most often presented as *for* White teachers. Ethical approaches therefore may not only seek to change the narrative through avoiding (re)stigmatization but also by shifting *who* or *what* sits at the center.

### **Considering Ethics as a Constant, Ongoing, Contextualized, Changing Process**

**Scholar 4:** I think [the sociopolitical part] is one of the major issues, I guess, in research: how people define what matters to them, what is worthwhile, and as they define what is worthwhile, their ethics kind of change, you know. So, I think that's what I'm saying, what we can see as humans should guide our work but I think sometimes our definitions of ethics are contextualized to our epistemologies and therefore, they don't match sometimes.

**Scholar 8:** In terms of ethics and identity research, it's important to consider the political context and political consequences of our research. There are ethical dimensions to considering the ideological assumptions that undergird our research, grappling with awareness that our questions emerge from a stratified society. Similarly, our processes and products of research enter a contested field of power and privilege. With my colleagues, I've been trying to be more deliberate about articulating my research in concert with questions such as "for what," "for whom," and "with whom." These questions aren't easy, particularly when we consider our relationship and the relationships of our participants to dominant power structures and ideology.

**Scholar 6:** I've been thinking a bit about the notion of refusal. And, that no matter how much you might want to research something or know something, that maybe sometimes it's not appropriate to share. And, sometimes it's OK for communities to say "no," which is, again—from my colonial perspective—something I might struggle with because I really want to

know this. But, at the same time, just honoring that piece that, especially when you're working with vulnerable communities or people who have been historically marginalized or traumatized by research, just to know that sometimes things just don't get shared.

**Scholar 7:** I have sometimes maybe erred on the side of not trying to position myself as an uber-insider [even when I'm doing work in the same community where I grew up and was a teacher]. Maybe sometimes I've sort of downplayed my commitment to the communities I've worked in, and my histories there. I haven't always talked about those things. Because, I've been trying to be real honest about the fact, you know, these are kids, and sometimes very young kids. I'm clearly not them. I'm not trying to align myself with them even as I'm very much trying to signal solidarity with them and the communities.

**Scholar 6:** I think that you need to always be aware of that [the fact that you've been immersed in colonial perspectives]. I mean, I've had a long time of working on my whole identity as a settler . . . [who is] implicated in the whole colonization of the country. So, it has been about, kind of, learning your own history and learning your own truth and then recognizing those moments. And I've spent a lot of time thinking about what is colonizing and then how do I counter that. It's not perfect by any stretch of the imagination. You always catch yourself slipping into those moments of, "Oh, no, we have to do it this way." Well, no, maybe we don't have to do it that way 'cause maybe that's not the thing. I think you have to hold it at bay, and part of it is the notion of recognizing that in yourself. I'm very lucky that I have lots of people who will check me in that I have deep relations in Indigenous communities with people who will point out when I'm being colonial.

**Scholar 9:** I worry about the obligatory positionality statement. Because, for me, it ends up reducing, when I see education job talks that draw on this or conference papers or whatever, it ends up reducing for me a really complex set of issues to a slide. . . . So, I've now said that I'm whatever, and then what happens? The whole point of a feminist standpoint theory is not just to locate yourself in relation to the work that you're doing but then to interrogate the analytical implications of that. That's the more interesting question. Not what you are. But, in the context where you're conducting your research, what the analytical implications are, how that shapes the sorts of questions you are asking, the ways you went about collecting data, and analyzing data, and representing those data. That's the more interesting thing. And I don't think a lot of people really take that seriously.

**Beth:** In reading these quotations, I am reminded how our research process is grounded in issues of power, and I am pushed to

think further about the processes I engage in and the questions I ask myself when I consider my own positionality. I'm drawn to focus on Scholar 8's point about our society being stratified and that, as a result, some groups of people have been afforded unearned privilege, while other groups (nondominant social groups) are systematically marginalized by systems and structures that have been put in place by dominant groups. When Scholar 8 talked about the "political context" and the "political consequences," I am reminded of conversations with other mathematics education researchers who thought of "political" in terms of our political system instead of associating the word "political" with issues of power and experiences that shape our ideologies, assumptions, and epistemologies. We all need to continue to learn our own histories and our own truths (Scholar 6).

Our definitions of ethics are "contextualized to [our] epistemology" and are always changing (Scholar 4). We continually need to think deeply about what it means "to know" something and how our beliefs about knowing shape our research processes and our own ethics. We also need to articulate: for what, for whom, with whom (Scholar 8)—and we need to interrogate our responses to these questions in relationship to power and ideologies; our questions, data, analyses; and what we choose to report (Scholar 9). Nothing in our research process is neutral. We cannot assume that the variables and concepts we choose, for example, are those that our participants would find relevant to their experience. We choose them because we are interested in them or past research may suggest they are important.

Scholar 6 also reminds me that part of this process is being willing to make mistakes and recognize that this work will never be perfect. I think about Scholar 7 feeling as if they need to "downplay [their] commitment to the communities" and think about colleagues of color who have shared stories about being told they were doing "advocacy work" rather than "research." This is an overt power move: naming what "is" and "isn't" research. As Scholar 7 pointed out, even if I am from a community and taught in that same community, I am "still not them." We need to learn and explicitly reflect on such dilemmas, while still "signaling solidarity." I chose to put the quotation from Scholar 9 last because I think the concerns they raise about the "obligatory" positionality statement are real concerns for the field of mathematics education research. In the research that we do in mathematics education, the implications of turning this process into an obligatory positionality statement can (and have) harm(ed) people and communities—this harm can happen in both our "processes" and "products" (Scholar 8).

### Representing Whose Perspectives?

**Scholar 1:** I think about how to honor the way that people position themselves and telling their stories in authentic ways. The relationship is so intertwined, you can't do identity work without some ethical work. . . . I worry about how to do research in meaningful ways that are not exploitative—and how can we

represent the fact that real life is messy? Hear their stories as opposed to fix them. That's a struggle. . . . What are the stories that we are unpacking? Are we reifying stereotypes? Are these stories exploiting the communities that we work with, or are they making things better? We have to question that.

**Scholar 3:** The first thing that comes to mind when I think about that is about the distinction between researching “with” versus researching “on” or “about.” In terms of designing studies—especially when you are thinking about reading texts—you read close to the texts. When I'm doing my work around students' experiences, I want to be able to remain as close to the text as possible, which is their lived experience, to be able to document what's actually happening in their day to day. . . . I try not to bring an analytical lens that distorts what the students are sharing from their lived realities. Related to positionality, I have to be aware that shared racial identity might grant me some “insider” awareness around the experiences of Latinx student participants, but my own experiences in terms of cultural dynamics, family relationships, etc. might not be the same. Even though I have my own lived experiences as a member of the Latinx community, I have to be constantly cognizant that they don't insert themselves into the analyses to the degree that it shifts the lived experiences of my participants.

**Scholar 9:** I think that's, ethically, one of the difficult or complex parts about work that is taking identity seriously, that can be so distinct depending on one's position as a scholar in relation to the community where one's conducting one's work. In the sense that, I've had some of my advisors and colleagues talk about their research participants as their friends or in sort of intimate ways, in ways that I think are intended to demonstrate that they don't just view people as objects. And yet, it's very clear that there's a line between who their research participants are and what their lives look like apart from that. Whereas, in a lot of my work, the people and communities where I'm conducting my research could be my family, are intimates in a very different kind of way, and not in a metaphorical way, in a way where if it weren't for my research, I wouldn't interact with those communities. It's very different. And so, that shapes the ways that I'm inclined to represent populations too, because there's something different at stake in it, for me.

**Scholar 2:** I also look for ways to humanize my research. One of those ways is to sort of let people speak their whole truth and to not go in with my “understanding” of what this looks or what it sounds like, or feels like or whatever. And I look for how participants describe their experiences that are, of course, different from Eurocentric frames and positioning kind of

things and then CRT [critical race theory] helps me to say, “And this knowledge is legitimate and this knowledge is real.” So, do not dismiss it because it doesn’t line up with what you think, Scholar 2, or it doesn’t line up with what your research, you know what the research has said.

**Scholar 4:** I think that, what I was saying [earlier], is that more critical ethnographic work, it’s important and, like what we’re trying to do, this kind of more participatory process will be more illuminating to understand the community from an emic perspective. You know, otherwise, of course we can never do that, but we can get closer. Because in our research, we can never be able to completely capture what others are saying but the more we allow and promote participation from both sides, just like what we’re trying to do. How can we have teachers meet with the students and, I don’t know, mixing, I guess. So, they learn from each other, with each other and do something together. And, that’s not so much of a Western perspective.

**Sandra:** As I reflect on the collection of comments from our colleagues, I am reminded of how much potential there is for exploitation and misrepresentation when we are doing research on, about, and with people. I also notice the very issue that we (the authors of this chapter) have been experiencing in attempting to represent the perspectives, voices and the comments of the colleagues who we interviewed. Whose ideas are represented here—the ideas of the authors or/and of the colleagues we interviewed? We also grappled with the notion of trust that I see in these scholars’ comments. We were privileged to hold these interviews because these colleagues’ trust made it possible to have candid conversations about difficult and challenging topics that have no clear answers. We also resonated with our colleagues’ awareness of the ethics associated with writing about people and communities that have welcomed us into their private worlds. The very act of chunking the scholars’ interview statements to highlight themes or to synthesize their comments into a collective statement seemed counter to the very point of this manuscript, but more so we considered our roles and responsibilities as education researchers committed to equity and humanizing research. Similarly, I hear in these scholars’ comments the desire to not impose their frameworks or analytical lenses on what they hear and notice in their participants’ stories. The desire to stay close to the text and to amplify the perspectives of those who are most typically silenced or rendered invisible in mathematics education research. Yet choices have to be made about how to share those stories with considerations of the audience, purpose, and ethics. This is a tension for those in a position of

privilege. I hear in these comments the recognition that as professors associated with institutions of higher education, we have the responsibility of always checking our privilege, motives, and goals for inviting others to our research world. We also must question our and their roles in the process of knowledge production, what is at stake, and how to engage in research in ways that are mutually beneficial. These scholars suggest that a community with whom to have honest and open conversations is important.

### Imagining and Invoking Audiences

**Scholar 7:** What makes it tricky for me, . . . the little bit that I've written about my positionality in relation to the kids that I work with, . . . I've tried hard to own the privileged position I occupy in relation of these kids, but feel like maybe I'm doing it for an audience that maybe doesn't need or deserve or will necessarily understand that in the right kinds of ways, right? I haven't reflected a whole lot on this. I think sometimes I imagine and invoke particular audiences that aren't necessarily the ones that are going to read what I write. And maybe they need to hear something different, from me. . . . If I'm imagining what I'm doing in writing as teaching, as being a pedagogical space or encounter, then maybe that's not what I need to teach these people. Maybe the people who are going to read my piece, maybe I don't need to teach them, "Oh yeah yeah, look how humble I am as a researcher." Maybe there's a different kind of message I need to convey as a researcher. . . . Struggling and owning how you struggle with the ethical dimensions of your research is necessary and important and is healthy. I just don't know that I need to struggle with it in the same way for all audiences. And I feel like maybe in the past I've struggled out loud in front of the wrong audiences. . . . I think in research on identity, increasingly, you see people, at least in education, there is the obligatory positionality statement. And I feel like—it serves a particular purpose, and it imagines and invokes a particular audience. It's like a *mea culpa*. But, who are we apologizing to? What are we apologizing for?

**Scholar 9:** On one level, I don't think I write for a White audience, I almost write *at* a White audience in a way that, it's not quite written to or for a White audience because I don't want a White audience to feel comfortable reading it, I want a White audience to be unsettled. It's almost written to an audience of color in a way that it presumes upon White overhearers, because I think there are White overhearers everywhere, you know, White surveillance. . . . A lot of audiences of color read it and it resonates, and a lot of White audiences read it and

are saying, “What’s going on here?” So, I almost know there are both audiences there.

**Emma:**

As I read these interview excerpts, I am reminded of a quote from Darragh (2016), who calls for identity research that “keeps in mind the audience at all times as the ultimate identifier and enables us to consider the ways in which power is exerted in this recognition” (p. 11). Both in doing research and in presenting research, audience shapes what is shared and how it is read and understood. As scholars, we need to be asking, Who are we as audience to those we interview or observe? How does this change the “data” we collect? When we write, we again have an audience. We might ask ourselves, when we don’t actively consider our audience, “Who are we presupposing as our audience?”

Scholar 7’s perspective, which comes from a line of education research where positionality statements are more common than in mathematics education, complicated my thinking about positionality statements. I struggled initially to understand Scholar 7’s meaning, asking numerous follow-up questions in the interview itself. I eventually came away with this understanding: If, as people who do research in historically marginalized communities, we are going to actively challenge harmful deficit narratives, those challenges must be taken seriously by our audiences. Because many of those perpetuating dominant, harmful narratives do so in the context of social science research that positions itself as capable of discovering empirical truths, and may not take as seriously scholarship that includes reference to researcher positionality, doing so could potentially undermine the power of our work. Moreover, even if reflection on researcher positionality is valuable, if the only people expected to prepare positionality statements are those doing work in historically marginalized spaces—which oftentimes also means scholars of color—then positionality statements could end up working contrary to the goal of disrupting and unsettling traditional dynamics of knowledge production.

Finally, I also hear both of these scholars asking with regard to representation and audience, “Who are we trying to please?” The production of counternarratives highlighting the brilliance and inventiveness of children traditionally presented through damaging and deficit lenses is one form that scholars describe their ethical commitments taking. At the same time, if the primary audience for these counternarratives is White educators, we must also ask if narratives that are uniformly uplifting unwittingly participate in allowing White educators to ignore or remain ignorant of the literal forms of violence and marginalization impacting students of color and otherwise marginalized children. These scholars illuminated for me how *who* we imagine as our audience can be highly consequential for *what* and *how* we choose to write.

### **Facing Colonial Legacies as Teachers and Scholars**

**Scholar 6:** Marie Battiste always says that we’ve been marinating in colonialism or Eurocentrism for so long that it’s hard for us to see beyond it because it’s all we know. Even if we’re not

White, we've been educated in a colonial system, right? So, it's like these stories that play out over and over again that we live out because they are so part of our nature that we see them as normal. So, until we become aware of those things, it's really hard to counter those things. In research, we need to tell those stories in a way that are palatable in the sense that people will actually read them.

**Scholar 4:** I'm tired of people who see research as dogs. . . . Just like, OK, this is my territory, and I'm going to start peeing here and here. . . . And, so like that territoriality, to say what is mine and not yours, I think it's going completely against the ethics. . . . So that kind of war-position, you know, like belligerent position, is what worries me the most. That people are not willing to engage in a dialogue but they are willing to just kick your ass. And, that worries me because that attitude is becoming not only hegemonic but discriminatory and colonizing and all things we don't want. . . . Those narrow perspectives are the things that worry me the most, not only for researchers but for the kids themselves and the families of minoritized groups.

**Scholar 5:** I am also learning within my own work how to recognize my own blind spots and biases, and subconscious or even totally conscious investments in current power relations. I think we need to be critical but also gentle with each other. . . . I feel lucky that I get to hang out with cool people who, at times, call me on my shit but in a way that is loving. . . . This means cultivating relationships with people who can say to me . . . "You've been colonized, and you need to be decolonized," and that's where I feel I am, still in the process of being decolonized.

**Scholar 2:** I think this is probably one of the most challenging questions. . . . The way that it feels right now is that there are two big camps: One is the woke camp; the other is what's happening on everyday practice space. Very . . . theoretical and Wakanda experience [from the movie *Black Panther*<sup>TM</sup>] around reimagining, pushing the notion of refusing the reform and bringing in Black fantasy and Black Crit. This is very powerful work, but only one of the camps, and there are versions and variations of that. Then another camp is the on-the-ground, practice camp, the "What happens when the bell rings, teachers and students come and they are in class?" . . . Trying to work with teachers and trying to do a lot of PD [professional development]. That work needs to happen. Being a teacher myself, up through K-12 and math coach, I really see myself as somewhere in the middle, but with a little more Wakanda. But we have to think about both things. Theory and practice are both big camps to

me. . . . What is happening when we [break into dueling camps], we're upholding, perpetuating White supremacy.

**Sandra:** These scholars' comments made me think of the unavoidable tensions of doing critical mathematics education research. One tension is that we should all know better, but somehow we still find ourselves repeating and reproducing the same frameworks, methodologies, and analyses that categorize, rank, and exclude groups of people, especially those with much less power. We are all implicated in this because, as Scholar 6 points out, we are all marinating in a legacy of colonialism. I connect Scholar 4's point about oppression and discrimination within our own field and Scholar 2's point about dueling camps and how an us-versus-them culture pervades our field with the legacy and tactics of colonization that sort people into camps and rank order them according to hegemonic standards and values. I also connect this struggle with the pull and push many scholars, me included, feel about playing the game while also working to change it. Beyond being self-aware and recognizing how we are all part of an oppressive and colonizing system, then what else is there for a math educator to do? Perhaps the first step is to acknowledge the tension and better understand it, but the following steps remain unclear. I also see in these scholars' comments the call for reading more broadly and not getting ourselves so entrenched into our own echo chambers. Yet the idea of opening up the conversation much more broadly is also a scary prospect when not everyone is willing to engage in this type of dialogue. Scholar 5 reminds me of the need for cultivating a critical and loving community in which to have real and difficult conversations about our challenges and failings as mathematics educators.

### **Being Hopeful, Excited, and Joyful for the Possibilities of Identity Research**

Here we include each scholar's response to the question about hope, excitement, and joy in the future possibilities of this research. We list every response in their assigned order and have ended this section of quotations without our commentary. We encourage readers to imagine their own response or reflection to this set of quotations.

**Scholar 1:** I think that the more the work in identity is pushed out there, the more the idea of the "messiness" of the term identity is defined, then maybe this will make it easier for my own work and ideas to become a part of the conversation. I [also] think that we as a field haven't ever really talked about the importance of identity in mathematics education from a critical perspective, and I'm using the term critical here as defined by critical race theory. Because identity is narrative, because

identity involves the intersections of multiple oppressed social identities, and because identity is constantly negotiated, a focus on the issues of identity in mathematics education gives us more ways of talking about and confronting the ways that oppression operates in our field.

**Scholar 2:** . . . What's exciting about it is . . . some of the newer graduate students and junior faculty are trying to take up these ideas and trying to bring them to the field and to other faculty to begin to have conversations. . . . When we get rid of "this is what a math person looks like"—when we get rid of that and get more flexible, I think that there will be a more complete picture and narrative around who is a math person or who has identities, positive math identities. . . . Because it's so dynamic and it can change depending upon, you know, the space. A student can have a certain math identity when studying with their friends, and there's a different kind of identity when they're in the classroom and answering questions. . . . When I talk about belonging, I'm not talking about wanting to belong in a space that is designed to . . . assimilate somebody to be in that space. So, now you become a sanitized Black girl that, you know, then White people will receive you or, you know, whatever, right? I'm talking about someone taking up who they are as special and important, you know, and seeing math as something that's not distant and defining it for themselves.

**Scholar 3:** The hopeful piece is around being able to inform change, especially since mathematics is a huge gatekeeper in higher education. Being able to change that rhetoric. Even now, when I do literature reviews around the work, authors often start off with the perspective of mathematics as a gatekeeper of access to STEM majors and professions. In thinking about my work and other folks' work in undergraduate mathematics, I wonder how we change the rhetoric, so we no longer have to start off with those mathematical gatekeeping ideas that make up part of the significance of our research.

**Scholar 4:** I am hopeful, I guess. Because I remember where NCTM [National Council of Teachers of Mathematics] was at the time I was a doctoral student and see where it is now and I have seen shifts. Like from being open to these kind of critical perspectives. . . . I think I felt more pushback before and then suddenly, as the math education field started opening more explicitly toward these topics, I turned hopeful because more people have started talking about. . . . I think, too, seeing the kids. . . . That's what makes me hopeful. When you see changes, when you see teachers getting excited about wanting to know about the kids and wanting to support them, or wanting them to be empathetic with other people, other

communities and teachers working hard with their kids to develop empathy because they want their kids to be empathetic and we have a world where people talk to each other. That is, ah! That is so beautiful. You know, what else do you want?

**Scholar 5:** There's not much that makes me hopeful. There is so much that influences kids' lives that is outside of mathematics education. And the whole "us" and "them" thing feels so basic to the organization of human society. This might sound crazy because of all the work that I do about finding the ways that every child is brilliant and an intellectual contributor, but at the social organization level, I just don't think humans are that smart. We have so much more power than we actually know how to manage in a way that is sustainable and humane, and so for me it's about finding my little corners and communities where I feel safe. . . . When I get a new group of students I feel hopeful that the tools of oppression that are at their fingertips will become more visible to them, so that instead of using them invisibly and without thinking, they can recognize, for example, when they're using classification systems to label kids and be more critical of that, and learn to see kids' strengths in much more expansive ways. . . . There's something about the word "hope" that is not quite resonating with me—maybe it's "joy"—there's joy in this work.

**Scholar 6:** For me, I find that I don't have to fight as hard now as I once did, in the sense of like, to justify the work that I'm doing. . . . So at least there's a space there to bring forward ideas that I know will make children's lives better and that, to me, is the ultimate reason why I do the work that I do. I'm just hopeful that I see lots of positives. . . . Just changing what we mean by mathematics or changing how we think about mathematics, and creating spaces for more voices to come in. I'm also hopeful for the field of mathematics. . . . When we create space for people who have different worldviews to see themselves in math class and who can look at problems from different perspectives because of their language traditions or cultural traditions or just their way of seeing the world. That gets me excited, too. Just thinking about kids from diverse cultural backgrounds, just coming into math class and be open enough that everyone can see themselves in there and be successful with what we call math in school, through their own ways of knowing, doing, and being, and then allowing them to grow the field of mathematics because maybe they'll bring new ideas and perspectives. It doesn't mean we throw the Western way of doing mathematics away. It's still there and it's growing, but all kinds of ways of thinking about mathematics are growing around it.

- Scholar 7:** I still feel committed to highlighting what we might call agency or highlighting these fugitive acts of learning. To me that's super exciting to see, to see, not schooling, but learning happening, in school, and other places, like school is not the only place where learning happens, as we know. And I think that's totally connected to identity. . . . There's something exciting and something dignified about learning, wherever it happens. Problem is, it just doesn't happen in schools often enough because of how violent schools are. But it can, and does. And so there's this potential, the potential to confer dignity. And that's what I get excited about, is seeing kids learning, and not just learning but showing what they know. To me that's super exciting. There's an aesthetics, a poetics, a beauty, a joy there that I want to celebrate.
- Scholar 8:** I feel we are at a powerful moment when we consider the work of graduate students and junior scholars who are building on scholars before them while profoundly pushing the boundaries of the political dimensions of learning and identity. When I talk with these new scholars who will shape the field, there's an immense amount of energy that stems from a commitment to address the inadequacies in how we've demarcated disciplines in the past.
- Scholar 9:** I think the question is, how is it that science and math are realized fundamentally in completely distinctive ways depending on the contexts. . . . So that what we think math is, is only a tiny, tiny fraction of what math could be. It's just a tiny, tiny iteration of what math could be imagined as.
- Scholar 10:** I think it's always exciting to feel like you're getting close to understanding humans. That's the psychological aspect to me—developing ideas about how we look at students, at communities, at instruction, with respect to those people who we do not traditionally attend to. Centering their experiences. Understanding better from different perspectives that challenge the old ways we look at classrooms. That's where the fire is! To really be hopeful that by better understanding identity, we better understand what we are doing in schools and how people experience schools. To be able to make policy decisions that are based on the experiences of human beings, and in particular those who are traditionally marginalized.

### **Unfinished Wonderings and Struggles**

Mathematics education research has tended to omit its historical grounding in coloniality, reliance on coded language and settled stories, and its embodiment of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993). There appears, to us, to be general agreement among scholars working at the intersection of decolonization and mathematical identity research that it is impossible (and irresponsible) to research identity

without considering and revealing the ethical implications of this history. Further, the degree to which we, as a field, have worked at this intersection has yet to lead to more humanizing experiences for Black and Brown students inside and beyond mathematics classrooms. There is a need for dialogue across the field around what we each consider to be ethical research and ethical identity research. No doubt that this process of dialoguing will require constant interrogation of dominant ideologies while creating openings, pauses, and spaces (Patel, 2015) for the perspectives and desires of people and communities whose lives are most deeply implicated by the categorizing and sorting practices of mathematics education. It will also require humility and love. Who should be at the table in these conversations? This is also a critical question—based on the sentiments above—that centers issues of representation, of telling other people’s stories, and of the forms of knowledge that are privileged in the academy. There is also a tension that if ethical considerations are to reach the policy sphere, some kind of consensus might be required. In moving toward agreement, how do we resist the tendency to fall back on whiteness and the need for polite agreement?

These are complicated and thorny issues that require urgent attention, particularly in the current political context. Thus, we are extremely grateful to the (largely) untenured scholars whose perspectives are reflected in this chapter for their honesty, vulnerability, and wisdom. They give us hope for the future of mathematics education, and we urge the reader to read closely and engage in the conversation these scholars are starting. Our goal was not to “solve” the problem of ethical identity research but to begin to make some issues transparent and invite more colleagues to be part of this conversation.

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