Greatness in the Math Corps Family

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12:30 PM - 1:30PM
2339 Faculty/Administration Building
Free and Open to the Public

For twenty years, the Math Corps program at WSU has provided mathematical enrichment and social support for students from Detroit Public Schools. A key part of its social and moral framework is the core concept of *greatness*. This study uses ethnographic methods, metaphor analysis, and corpus linguistics to analyze a cultural model for *greatness* at the Math Corps. An analysis of moral and social discourse produced by Math Corps staff reveals eight interrelated metaphorical understandings of *greatness*, which is conceptualized as a resource inside all individuals that motivates success. These metaphorical understandings are not only verbal, but also gestural and graphic, and are rapidly learned and internalized by new students in the Math Corps family. This cultural model produces a framework for decision and action for students and staff; most importantly, it motivates and promotes student success in a challenging educational environment. The integration of linguistic anthropology, corpus linguistics, and discourse analysis in this study suggest ways that conceptual metaphor and cultural models can be studied in other speech communities.

Stephen Chrisomalis is an assistant professor of anthropology at Wayne State University. His research focuses on the anthropology and linguistics of numerals and mathematics. His book, *Numerical Notation: A Comparative History*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2010.