Mixed methods in studying the voice of disaffection with school mathematics.

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Summary: Disaffection with school mathematics is a complex phenomenon as well as a serious problem. It is clearly related to affect, but the study of affect in mathematics education is also problematic. A case is made that it is necessary to study the phenomenon beyond the quantitative study of attitude in order to understand better the complex and multi-dimensional nature of disaffection and to understand the subjective experiences of students who are disaffected. In order to do this, new methods and approaches are needed. This paper reports on a study of disaffected students of mathematics in a further education college. It describes the novel methods used to understand disaffection as a motivational and emotional phenomenon. The paper outlines a range of quantitative and qualitative methods used to elicit the subjective reality of disaffected students in relation to mathematics. It provides an opportunity to evaluate these methods, and their efficacy in capturing the dynamic nature of the motivational and emotional reality behind the phenomenon of disaffection.

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