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## Constructing identities in multicultural learning contexts

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FINAL DRAFT

**Title:**

Constructing identities in multicultural learning contexts

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## Constructing identities in multicultural learning contexts

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the multiple identities of an ethnic minority pupil and teacher in an attempt to examine two concepts which aid our understanding of identity in multiethnic schools. The first concept focuses on the complementarity of ‘three processes of identity’ (identifying the other, being identified and self-identification) and this is brought together with the process of coupling, which describes a process of regular change and transformation as the individual moves from different activities, at different times and in different places. The analysis draws on an interview with Monifa, a Black African (Nigerian) girl (aged 10 years) and on an interview with a Pakistani teacher, Shazia. Although Shazia and Monifa belonged to different generations (i.e. a pupil/daughter and a teacher/mother) and different cultural groups (British born Black African and Pakistani) the same identity processes were manifested. They shared in common the experience of sociocultural coupling (or hybridity) in their construction of identities.

### **Introduction**

This paper explores the cultural identities of an ethnic minority pupil and teacher in relation to mathematics learning within multicultural home and school communities. Against a backdrop of research which attempts to understand learning as situated in socio-political and cultural contexts (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) this paper will attempt to examine two concepts which aid our understanding of identity development in multiethnic schools. The first concept focuses on the complementarity of ‘three processes of identity’ (identifying the other, being identified and self-identification; Duveen, 2001; Abreu & Cline, 2003) whereby identities are reconstructed through belonging to, and engaging with, communities of practice. The second concept focuses on sociocultural coupling . It is argued that within the transition

between different communities of practice (in this case home and school) a process of ‘coupling’ (Beach, 1999) may occur. Coupling describes a process of drawing on different practices and combining elements to generate new forms of knowledge, strategies, meanings and identities. Coupling can account for regular change and transformation as the individual moves from different activities, at different times and in different places. By combining the three processes of identity development with the concept of coupling it is possible to see that at least two of the processes can be evoked simultaneously, leading the individual to experience an identity coupling (or hybridity) through generational or locative transitions.

For 30 years now there has been a growing body of evidence which suggests that home and school mathematics is not only a culturally situated practice (Cole, 1989; Lave, 1988; Saxe, 1991), but a mediational influence on the construction of representations, meaning and identities of the learner (Abreu, 1995; Abreu, 2002; Nasir, 2002; O’Toole & Abreu, 2005).

The transition process between home and school, as well as the mediational role of significant others (i.e. parents, teachers and friends) in multicultural settings has a potentially powerful impact on the learner identity. Ethnic minority children may have to manage diverse cultural and social practices in their transitions between home and school (Abreu, 2002; Hedegaard, 1999). The ways in which they experience their learning in these contexts could have a big impact on what they do (their practices) and also in how they develop identities.

A particular interest for those studying learner identities in multicultural contexts is the processes by which ethnic minority learners represent their identities, the ways in which different communities of belonging impact on those identities and in what ways do significant others mediate the identities. Nasir (2002) suggests that understanding the processes involved in the development of learner identities in communities of practice is pivotal to understanding the mediational role of culture on the individuals within those communities. Next we wish to explore the notion of identity as it is constructed through the communities of practice

framework presented by Wenger (1998), whilst taking into consideration the added complexities of the transitional process between communities of practice of home and school positions.

### ***Framing learner identities around communities of practice***

When addressing issues of identity we take the view adopted by a sociocultural perspective that identity is socially and culturally situated, developed and constructed by individuals partaking in cultural activities. If we think of identity as represented through participation in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), with the onus on learning, identity is formed in the process of 'doing' while making the transitions to and from different communities. At the root of these transitions are the social and cultural experiences of the individual. The theoretical positions presented in this paper seek to emphasise the importance of both the home and school communities in mediating certain representations like meaning and identity.

Representation refers to a way of understanding the way the world works in a meaningful way (Moscovici, 2000). If something is unfamiliar we create meaning or a way of comprehending, which then becomes a representation. Representation then is more than a "discursive" device, it is a concept that enables the social actor to re-present their past experiences and also to anticipate the future and to make sense of the present.

Wenger suggests that being a participant in a community shapes what we do and the way we do it, as well as influencing who we are, hence identity becoming a facet of Wenger's framework. When Wenger talks about identity, he does so by looking at 'learning by becoming' in the context of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). Social identity is not merely a label or a way of seeing ourselves, but a way of interpreting our experiences through participation in a practice, which Wenger suggests is done through negotiating

meaning. Identity through ‘learning as becoming’ suggests that it is an ongoing and constructive process.

However, there are a number of problems with using Wenger’s focus on identity as part of a practice to understand the phenomenon. When Duveen (2001) writes about social identities he acknowledges that identity exists, not just through practice, but also through broader social relationships and symbolic realities. Duveen (2001) describes this process as ‘extended identity’ because ‘others’ identification of ‘ourselves’ precedes our self-identification. Duveen’s work with Lloyd (1993; Lloyd & Duveen, 1992) on gender identities is a vivid example of a form of identity that has already been constructed externally at the time of birth, before the infant is old enough to be engaging in a practice. Succinctly put by Duveen (2001) “identity is as much concerned with the process of being identified as with making identifications” (p. 257). Verkuyten and de Wolf (2002) also acknowledge in their study with Chinese who grew up in the Netherlands that the reactions of others has an impact on personal identity. They note that their participants talked about identity in terms of ‘being’, ‘feeling’ and ‘doing’. And that being Chinese was accounted as an inevitable feature of the way in which others define them. Despite these useful insights into the multiple ways that cultural identity is understood we continue to seek ways of understanding the process of identity reconstruction at a given point in the social and historical context in which it is situated. To explore this we will draw on the work by Duveen (2001) and Abreu and Cline (2003) looking at the three complementary processes of identity development.

### ***Exploring the three processes of identity development***

Abreu and Cline (2003) have explored the processes through which identity is developed, that acknowledges the transition from the extended identities provided by ‘others’ to the internalisation of that identity. Taking a sociocultural stance they examined three

complementary processes which are; (i) identifying the other, (ii) being identified and (iii) self-identification. 'Identifying the other' is the process through which the individual comes to gain an understanding of social identities of others that are given by society. 'Being identified' is an amalgam of community and personal identity since it begins with the individual coming to understand identities extended to themselves by others. 'Self-identification' refers to the internalised and individual level of identity, which ensues after the previous levels have been negotiated in the course of their participation in communities of practice. These three complementary processes provide enough flexibility in the emergence of identity construction for the development to be unique and one of change. They are not fixed, but evolve through the interaction between the person and the social world.

Other authors have also written about social identity, as it first exists externally to the individual before becoming self-internalised. When Dien (2000) writes about the evolving nature of self-identity, she looks to four different levels of understanding, which include the influence of history, society, the individual and psychological systems in the construction of identity. Modified from previous frameworks by Vygotsky (1978) and Scribner (1985), Dien proposes four levels of history; (i) the general history of humanity, (ii) the history of individual societies, (iii) the life history of the individual in society and (iv) the history of a particular psychological system (known as self-identity). Most psychological research following the sociocultural tradition will address identity from the levels of three and four. Dien's (2000) paper is particularly novel in the way she portrays her own changing identity in the context of level two, the history of individual societies. Dien is able to show how the history of society, and her place within that changing society had an influence on the construction of her own self-identity. Significant others in her life, like her parents and teachers, were fundamental in influencing changes in the shared ways of perceiving her world. Furthermore, she pertains to the ways in which developmental age can influence the

ease with which self-identity is transformed when an individual's place in society changes as a result of that historical moment. Dien describes how changes from Japanese rule to Chinese rule in Taiwan were considerably harder for the children who were going through adolescence than their younger counterparts. Dien's construction of self-identity is retold as a life story whereby self-identity is constructed through 'dialoguing with oneself' (p.15) and bears resemblances to Skinner, Valsiner and Holland's (2001) look at the multi-voiced nature of identity as it is expressed through a narrative. This is a strong way to represent an identity and can be viewed through the way the individual shifts their social position and sustains different identities in different contexts (Iverson, 1998).

Hodges (1998) discusses those times when there are no identificatory feelings of 'learning by becoming' because conflictual moments with the practice cause dis-identification to occur. In a school setting, participation may be compulsory but an identification with the school subject does not necessarily take place. If that is the case then the level of participation, whether it is full or peripheral, must be socially constructed and negotiated as part of the individual's identity. Other authors describe a similar facet of the rejection of an identity extended to them by others. Duveen (2001) looks at the notion of resistance, whereby "an identity refuses to accept what is proposed by the communicative act, that is, it refuses to accept an attempt at influence" (p. 269). Resistance is arguably a more appropriate way of speaking about the rejection of an identity than 'dis-identification' because the term 'resistance' implies there is fluidity to the process. It is possible that an individual chooses to resist some aspects of a social identity while adopting other aspects of that extended identity. Deaux (2000) describes how some people come to accept their extended identity because they have little choice in the matter. Resistance implies the possibility of failure to reject an extended identity, thereby leading to conflict.



***Transitions between communities and the potential for ‘sociocultural coupling’***

Research conducted by educationalists and developmentalists has to date tended to focus on one community, thereby neglecting the process of change as the individual makes the transition across multiple contexts. When Gorgorio, Planas and Vilella (2002) write about transition, they do so in relation to the reconstructive potential of meaning for the learner between the classroom and the home. They suggest that the dynamics of the two institutions of home and school are such that meanings are constructed in these learning contexts, which are carried back and forth between the cultural communities the child is engaged in. Added to this complex situation is the multicultural classroom, where the children come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Each child brings to the classroom various culturally constructed meanings that have made the transition between home and school. Within Wenger’s (1998) communities of practice framework, new meanings can lead to new identities. Gorgorio, Planas and Vilella’s (2002) definition of transition is an interesting one, they write:

We understand the construct of ‘transition’ not as a moment of change but as the experience of changing, of living the discontinuities between the different contexts, and in particular between different school cultures and different mathematics classroom cultures (p. 24)

Based on this definition, the child in transition needs to be adaptable in reinterpreting new meanings across the different contexts if they are to succeed. As Hedegaard (1999; 2005) points out, in a school where there may be a wider bridge between the meanings represented between home and school, conflict may occur. If the culturally mediated meaning systems of home and school are not similar, then the transition for the child between these two institutions may not be smooth. More specifically, tensions in the way mathematics is

experienced and understood between home and school communities in multicultural contexts can complicate the transition process (Gorgorió & Planas, 2001).

Beach (1999) refers to transitions as consequential, because not only can they be a struggle, but also they have the potential to alter 'one's sense of self' (p. 114). In other words, they usually have an impact on the individual and the social context that they inhabit. He also makes the point that transitions come in different forms. The type of transition that a child makes between home and school is called a 'collateral transition' where, historically speaking, activities are taking place simultaneously. The child is in a continuous process of moving between these two major communities of practice and therefore the construction of meaning and identity is ongoing for all the key players of those communities.

The negotiation of meaning and identity during transitions between contexts can be explored using Beach's (1999) concept of coupling. When Beach first introduced the concept of coupling he used it to describe the means by which mathematical strategies employed at one socio-historical point in time can merge with mathematical strategies used at a different point in time (Beach, 1995a, 1995b). What emerges are hybrid strategies which alter the practices of the people using them, thereby enforcing new meaning systems. Coupling is understood as a unit of analysis for those activities, which cause the individual to move across "space, time and changing social activities" (Beach, 1999; p.120).

Borrowing the underlying principles of this concept we have adapted the notion of coupling to include a similar process which emerges from hybrid meanings, representations and identities. While the child is experiencing two different contexts of home and school there develops a meaning system that utilises aspects of both of these. These aspects may be the construction of new knowledge, identities and representations. The process is one of regular change and transformation, so that children going between home and school find themselves

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in a situation of constant re-development. In light of this, 'sociocultural coupling' aptly describes this inclusive phenomenon.

The meaning systems developed by the child in the transition process are partly formed by the mediational role performed by key others in the communities of practice. In light of this we turn now to the concept of social mediation.

### ***The role of social mediation in learning contexts***

The notion of social mediation used in this paper builds upon and moves away from the restricted ideas about mediation studies during the 70s and 80s, and foreground by Vygotsky (1978). New formulations of mediation include cultural and social representations, such as, the meanings and identities that a community attaches to particular uses of cultural tools and social roles. Moreover, both cultural and social representations evolve in the history of societies and individuals and this is another dimension in mediation, which has been considered (O'Toole & Abreu, 2005).

In order to explain how mediation works when it is used as part of a community of practice it is worth turning to Cole (1996) for assistance. Cole (1996), drawing on Wartofsky (1979), described three levels of artifact mediation, which are primary artifacts (concrete and symbolic tools directly used in the production of material goods and social life), secondary artifacts (representations of primary artifacts and modes of action) and tertiary artifacts (notions of understanding or representing the world). Level three, tertiary artifacts, is most appropriate for describing the kind of mediation, which corresponds with social and cultural representations formed as part of participation in a community of practice (Abreu & Elbers, 2005).

In this study we attempted to understand the ways in which the transition between the home and school community in multicultural contexts mediated the identity construction of an ethnic minority pupil and teacher. In particular, we are using the ‘three processes of identity construction’ and the concept of ‘sociocultural coupling’ to understand their identities in learning contexts.

### **Exploring identity: understanding Monifa and Shazia**

In order to illustrate the three processes of identity and the process of sociocultural coupling described above we have drawn selectively from a wider study exploring parents and teachers mediational representations of their children’s mathematics learning in multicultural schools. In this study we used an ethnographic approach which combined extensive participant observations, semi-structured interviews and a story completion task with children in year 2 (ages 6/7 years) and year 6 (ages 10/11 years), along with some of their parents and teachers (O’Toole, 2004).

This paper will use the semi-structured interview of Monifa (a pupil) and Shazia (a teacher) to exemplify the theoretical concepts presented here. The reasons for using the cases are twofold: firstly both are from an ethnic minority group and have had experience of making home/school community transitions within the British school system. Both Monifa and Shazia were able to clearly articulate their own roles and the roles of others within their communities. These revealed how they linked these representations of self-identification and the identification of others, and how others identify them in the every day relationships with significant people (e.g. parents, teachers, friends).

Monifa was the high achieving daughter of a Black African (Nigerian) family (aged 10 years old). She belonged to a multicultural school in a fairly large industrial town in the South East

of England. Her father was a 40 year old I.T. consultant who was in the process of producing an interactive mathematics website marketed at schools. Her mother was self-employed and in the process of starting a new business as a party organiser. Both parents were educated to degree standard. Monifa's father had lived in Britain until he was seven years old, when his family had returned to Nigeria for the rest of his school education. He later returned to Britain as an adult. Monifa was born and educated in the UK and was the oldest of three siblings. She told the interviewer that at home with her parents and grandparents she spoke English and Nigerian.

Monifa described three significant communities in her life: (i) her home community, which mostly revolved around her parents, (ii) her school community, that revolved around her teacher and (iii) her friends, who physically crossed over into both the home and school community. Two dominant representations emerged within the context of her descriptions of these communities. These were Monifa's representation of academic achievement and her representation of her home and school cultural practices. This part of the paper will reveal that the teachers and parents were particularly key contributors to the ways in which Monifa experienced the impact of these representations of achievement and culture in her identity as an ethnic minority pupil.

Shazia was a class teacher of year 6 (ages 10/11 years) pupils in a school which mostly catered for children who were from a South Asian (Pakistani) background. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds in this school was 96%. Out of all the children in the school 88% were from South Asian communities (Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi).

Shazia's interview has been used to understand issues of teacher identity because (i) as a fourth-generation immigrant in this country her experiences may echo those of the children in a multiethnic classroom (ii) she was the only ethnic minority teacher interviewed and (iii) she reflected deeply on cultural aspects relating to identity. Since Shazia teaches such a high

proportion of pupils from a South Asian background many of the comments she makes throughout the interview refer specifically to this general ethnic group. The analysis of case studies will examine the three processes of identification described above and may be summarised in the following way:

- i) Identifying the other – how the individual comes to gain an understanding of the social identities of ‘others’ that are given by society.
- ii) Being identified – how the individual comes to understand the identity extended to them by ‘others’.
- iii) Self-identification – how the individual comes to internalise and take positionings in relation to identities that had previously existed in the social sphere.

The case studies of Monifa and Shazia are used as exemplars to illustrate the potential ways in which transitional identities in multicultural contexts may be understood by those representing them. Furthermore, they are particularly useful in attempting to explore the use of the three processes of identity in relation to sociocultural coupling. It is important to note that the case studies only capture expressions of these processes in a particular occasion, the interview. Understandably the direct focus of their individual narratives will be slightly different because of their different roles (i.e. pupil and teacher) and points in the course of their lifespan. The conceptual processes underpinning the narratives remains the same.

***Monifa identifying the other: a focus on parents and teachers***

‘Identifying the other’ allows the child to construct meaningful representations, which may eventually become reflected in their self-identification system. For example, like many children Monifa used descriptions of her classmates as markers for understanding achievement, and was very much aware of the positioning of herself and her classmates in terms of mathematics performance. Even more significant than the role of classmates, were

the roles her parents and teachers played in developing her representations of cultural practices to explain the identities of ‘others’.

Monifa openly described the cultural divides between home and school brought about by what she perceived as the power struggles between the teacher<sup>1</sup> and her father. Throughout this case analysis it will become evident that she placed a great deal of value on the home community as an influential aspect of her success in learning. Monifa showed an awareness that her school performance in mathematics was very positive, and used her grades on tests to understand her achievement in the school community. However, the explicit reinforcement from home appears to be more powerful in helping to inform her identity as a good mathematician, as she expresses ‘nearly all of my family are good at maths’. The emergence of the dual influence from home and school in her narrative revealed that she felt some tensions between her teacher and her father regarding her mathematics learning. Although neither the teacher nor her father mentioned the episode described below, it clearly had a significant impact on her. She initially began talking about differences in mathematical practice between home and school, but as the narrative progressed it transpired that she believed conflict existed in the relationship between her father and teacher:

Sarah: Does your dad explain it [mathematics] in the same way your teacher does? Are there any differences?

Monifa: My dad explains it very differently actually. Like the teacher explains it so everybody can understand but because my dad knows me, cos we’re father and daughter, he explains it to me so I can understand it properly, so it’s better for my dad to do it

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<sup>1</sup> Monifa’s class teacher was White British and for the purposes of this paper will be called Anna. Monifa refers to her as Miss Durham.

Sarah: Are the differences in the way he explains it, in the words he uses, or in the strategies he uses, both?

Monifa: Yeah, because I figured that out one day when Miss Durham and my dad, I don't know why but I don't think Miss Durham is too keen on my dad any more because once when I took my homework to my dad I told him that Miss Durham said this, and that this is how you do it, and then my dad said 'no, that is completely wrong' so when he told me it then I understood more. But then when I took it to Miss Durham, Miss Durham said 'no, your daddy's wrong, that isn't how you do it. You can go and ask my husband in the high school'. And I wasn't too keen but I understand my dad's more so I went with my dad. But she's my schoolteacher in school, so.

Sarah: Which do you think is the proper way, the way your dad does it or the way the teacher does it?

Monifa: I don't know. Sometimes they just explain it differently but it's the same because, well I think it's the **different ages**. Because my dad would have done it differently and it's where we come from because **my dad was taught in Nigeria, and he taught in Nigeria**. And Miss Durham has been here so. They do it in different ways. But my dad teaches it so I can understand even though, sometimes I don't understand him because he's been taught in Nigeria

Monifa uses a number of different identity markers to understand the divide between her home and school communities when it comes to mathematics learning. Initially, Monifa identifies age differences as the reason for the disparity between her father's and teacher's numeracy practices, but she also draws upon cultural issues to make sense of the relationship between her father and her teacher. That relationship resides in Monifa's representation about who has the greater ownership on the mathematical knowledge in terms of the hierarchical positionings of these two important significant others. Subsequent to this episode in the interview, Monifa frequently returned to culture when reflecting on her home community. When the researcher spoke to Monifa's class teacher, Anna, about the different strategies that children brought from home, the scenario that she presented was very different from the one Monifa describes above:



Anna: I think with the top maths set as well, especially if we have some children whose parents are very keen on maths because, they tend to always have their homework done and they will say; if I say to them ‘so how did you work that out?’ often they’ll say their way or whatever and they say ‘but my dad showed me another way’, we do have that. It does tend to be in my set with Maneesha, and her dad is a maths teacher. And who else, Monifa, who has a maths tutor so it’s other mathematicians I suppose who are showing them different ways ‘oh yeah, you can do it that way but here’s another’. And so **I never dismiss it** and say ‘lets see how Maneesha’s dad has done it and have a look at it’. **And if they’ve understood that, then that’s fine**

Anna believed that Monifa had a mathematics tutor but neither Monifa nor her father mentioned a tutor in their interviews. Furthermore, in the next quote from Anna, she mentioned an uncle who helped Monifa with her mathematics but again, this was not mentioned by Monifa or her father. It appeared that in this respect, Anna’s account of Monifa’s home mathematics learning was incorrect. But the tension between the home and school community relationship revealed itself in a minor way through Anna’s description of Monifa to the researcher. The teacher seemed reluctant to praise Monifa’s mathematics skills even to the researcher, and quickly moved on to talking about other children after this brief description:

Anna: Yeah, she, her uncle tutors her. But she did come in with a GCSE<sup>2</sup> book and we sort of thought, ‘well not quite at that standard Monifa’ so how much the uncle’s actually helping or, I don’t know. And I would have thought that he could be giving parents false hopes

Sarah: Do you have their mock SATs scores?

Anna: Yes I have

Sarah: How did Monifa do?

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<sup>2</sup> GCSE is the level of attainment reached at sixteen years of age in the UK

Anna: Monifa got a level five<sup>3</sup> and she got a total of 81

When taken in the context of the whole interview, and comparing the teacher's descriptions of Monifa with her description of the other children, it seems that Anna redirects the conversation away from Monifa very suddenly. It may have been that she didn't want the researcher to share the same perception of Monifa's achievement that she thought her family held. This is despite the fact that Monifa is clearly very successful in her mathematics examinations. To acknowledge Monifa's success at school would be seen to support home learning to the same extent as school learning. Moreover, there is an accepted construction of the level of knowledge a child in Monifa's age bracket can master. If the child is beyond that level it could create conflict for the teacher because it challenges their own established social identity and the status that comes with knowledge. It must be mentioned however, that neither Anna nor Monifa's father spoke about any incidents of conflict between them. Monifa's father gave no indication that there was any tension or negativity between himself and the teacher.

More importantly, for Monifa there was a 'gap' between the home and school communities of mathematics practices, which she attributed to culture. Her father's upbringing in a different country impacted on the way Monifa learnt mathematics in the home, and supplemented and sometimes contradicted the mathematics learnt in school. But the tension between the home and school becomes more than the difference in mathematical strategies for Monifa, as she extends to her teacher and her father cultural identities which are at odds. Perhaps the tension is so powerful for Monifa because, as previously mentioned, she identifies strongly with the

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<sup>3</sup> Children in year 6 are expected to achieve a level 4 (mark range 45-75) in their SATs examinations

home community and the positive notions of achievement surrounding the home. However, in the context of the educational world of the child, school is the focal point for academic learning and according to societal representations, the teacher is granted heightened status.

***Shazia identifying the other: the parents of the pupils***

As a class teacher, Shazia's focus when 'identifying the other' was on the way she represented the parents of the pupils who attended her school and the mediational role that culture plays to help her cement her notion of parental identity. As part of the interview I asked Shazia to comment on the role of culture in the home/school relationship:

Shazia: Again, it goes back to that parents... I don't think it's a conscious thought, I don't think it occurs to them to think like that. I think sub-consciously it's not a top priority to have an influence in the school. Well since, I've been working here close to eleven years now, and I do know before I started parents' evenings were very rarely attended, we now have literally almost a hundred per cent attendance' for parents evening. And that mostly has to do with the fact that we now have dual-language staff. We have community language staff. So parents are far, far more comfortable with coming in... I know some schools translate literally every document, but saying that the same thing happens because they're still, the parents who can't read English, usually can't read Urdu either, so it's a bit pointless. The ones who can read Urdu, are educated enough to be able to read English anyway. And sometimes it's better to send it in English because at least that encourages the parent to ask the child, so there's that communication between them as well.

It is first important to note that at this stage, Shazia uses a discourse which separates her own identification from the community through the objective pronoun 'them'. During her later discussions where the 'other' is transformed into a self-identification she takes ownership of her identity with the community by personalising her narrative.

Although Shazia was critical of the parents she recognised the improvements in parental involvement over the preceding decade, certainly when reflecting directly on the number of

parents attending consultation evenings. Interestingly, the other teachers interviewed as part of the larger study (all of whom were White) centred any narrative about culture around language issues. Here, Shazia challenges some of the dominant ideas about language held by schools, such as the beneficial effects of sending home information in the second language that is used in the home community. Furthermore, the White teachers stressed the importance of treating each child's individual needs within the context of their classroom and avoided focusing on culture as a factor influencing their teaching practice. Shazia tended to speak in generalities about her representations of the parents of the children in her school, particularly parents from her own Pakistani community.

To explore Shazia's cultural representations of parental involvement, she was asked about the type of parent she considered would be engaged in the children's learning at home:

Sarah: In your experience are those parents either, possibly well educated in the country that they come from or have gone through this system?

Shazia: Always, almost always. Either that, or you have someone extremely dedicated and doesn't want, you have, and this is the probably that the fewest ones of these is, didn't have anything themselves, didn't have the education, didn't have the opportunities and want their children to, and they will **go out of their way to make an effort**. Whereas, all of those, all of the people whether they're themselves educated, or whether they want their children to be educated, or they went through the school system or whatever, makes up less than half. I would probably say in total that makes about a quarter, or a third. The remainder, they just don't.

In this section of the interview Shazia projected a multitude of identities on the parents of the children in her school. However, the parents to whom she gives a positive identity are then said to be in the minority. The negative ways in which she identifies the 'other' have the power to impact on the children in the classroom. Monifa's interview revealed how the construction of meaning and the undertaking of a practice were bound up together, and that they were implicit in her identity construction. More importantly, that the teacher played a

role in helping to construct her achievement identity. In the same vein, Shazia's construction of achievement, if reflected through the negative generalisations about the home community, might also influence the meaning systems and practices she adopted in the classroom.

Stressing her point about the identity of the 'other', namely the Pakistani community, she reaffirms the point by talking about the value placed on educational achievement by the Pakistani community (to which she belonged):

Shazia: Unfortunately, I suppose I shouldn't really say this, in the Pakistan community particularly, there's a very strong attitude that education [takes place] in school, that's it, full stop, you don't have to do anything towards it. So regardless of who they are, how they're brought up, they don't do it.

Throughout the interview she was increasingly critical of her own community with respect to parental involvement, which reflected the changes in her own values. She was aware that the changes in some of her educational values and practices had come about because she was educated in the British school system, which arguably led to the construction of a hybrid identity which shows evidence of sociocultural coupling. Added to this is the fact that her family was now the fourth generation to be brought up in this country, which could increase the gap between herself and some of the parents in the school further. Her heightened criticism of her own community may also have attributed to her role as a teacher and the frustrations associated with a lack of parental involvement stemming from her struggle to get the children to complete homework:

Shazia: As far as **I'm** concerned, and **I'm** speaking strictly personally, um, parental involvement used to be to the degree where for us, **at a school like this**, where, if they can simply acknowledge the fact that their children get homework and encourage them to do it, that would make a huge difference to us...I think this is, that the parents don't actually ask them. It's not an automatic, 'do you get homework, do you have any?' We

actually send out, um, a home-school contract which all the parents sign, it's signed by the school and by the children to say that they will be getting it, it tells them exactly how much homework. But it's just, **because a lot of our parents are Asian it's just not one of those priority things**. There's other things, family, this and that, and they come up with things that are much more important and it ends up at the bottom of the pile. Nobody bothers to query it. And a big problem is that a lot of our parents, I won't say all, but a big majority of our parents very subconsciously I suppose, but very strongly feel that, anything to with work is the school domain. Their parents, they feed them, clothe them, but apart from that, if they're sending them to school, anything to do with school is not their problem. So they don't deal with it.

Here we really see the shifts in the ownership of the discourse to the 'other'. Shazia suggests a direct association between a particular cultural group and a lack of parental involvement. It is unclear what Shazia means by 'at a school like this' but given her continued reference to the South Asian community one assumes this is the focus. However, despite the qualification of the 'other' her knowledge of the community provides insights which are not available to teachers who are not in this position. For teachers who work in a multicultural classroom it would not be possible to gain this depth of understanding about every cultural nuance for each child. Therefore the preponderance of one cultural group may increase the appearance of the qualities of that group. Arguably, Shazia's tendency to speak in generalisations could have become a hindrance to the knowledge she imposed on the children and parents in her classroom.

***Monifa on Being Identified: the role of parents and teachers in the extended identity of the child***

Duveen's (2001) proposal that self-identification first begins with an identification with the community is evident in Monifa's extended identity as a mathematics achiever. As described earlier in the paper 'being identified' is a process whereby the individual comes to understand

the identity extended to themselves by others. It has already been suggested that the home community played an influential part in Monifa's representation of achievement. Monifa used the roles of significant others to understand what achievements she needs to accomplish for satisfaction in her adult life. She identifies with certain jobs and excludes others (like being a builder) as requiring a certain standard of achievement. The following excerpt indicates how she has reflected on this identity extended to her by her parents, although revealed in the quote are the contradictory messages received from her mother and father:

Sarah: Do you know what you would like to do when you grow up? Can you tell me about it?

Monifa: I was gonna be either a singer or I would be doing computers and like a business where I would be doing computers and all that. Because my dad has really taught me so I understand a lot, so that's what I would be

Sarah: Do you know what your mum and dad would like to see you do? Can you tell me about it?

Monifa: My dad wants me to do computing and my mum wants me to be a singer. And like my mum is saying that she wants me to be in a choir and all that, but my dad wants me to stay at home so he can teach me a lot of things. And he takes me to his office and all that so...

It is relevant to note that opposing extended identities do not necessarily reside only in the relationship between home and school. Monifa's narrative reveals that within the home there are some conflicting views between her parents. This has consequences for her own and her parents' projected notion of her future. The job identities proposed for her by her parents were quite different, one being artistic and the other academic. Given her strong representations of achievement in other parts of her interview, her father played a more influential role in her learning, as is indicated by the fact that he was the main homework tutor. Certainly, the influence of her parents is strong because she has accepted and internalised the job roles they projected for her and made them her own.

One of the ways in which the home community as an environment of learning was augmented, was through Monifa's involvement in her father's work practice. Her father's work as an Information Technology consultant required specialised skills in programming which would be inaccessible to most computer users. For example, her father told me that he had taught Monifa some basic programming skills. The next extract reveals how this tutelage impacted on her extended identity:

Sarah: What is your favourite subject? Can you tell me why you like it?

Monifa: My favourite subject, erm, I.T. because I'm around, cos my dad is like an I.T. consultant and all that, I'm around him a lot and he's doing some fuses and things and teaching me stuff. And at school I get to do more things in I.T. than at home, cos my dad's on the computer. So if I get to learn about that I'll be able to get my own website, cos my dad wants me to learn about it so I can get my own website

Once again, we see her identification system residing with her father, as her mother's projection for the future is pushed aside. The father cements her identity for the future by developing her competence in the practice of computing at home.

In the construction of job roles, Monifa's parents have extended an identity, which she has then internalised and made her own. In her narrative Monifa has described the way that conflicts in identity can occur within the same household when parents have different representations of the child's current education, and projection for the future. Research using a sociocultural perspective has not accounted for the divisions between parents in their expectations for their children, and the projection for the success of their child in the future. One interesting observation is that her father's extensions of identities also extended to the activities they did together. Monifa's father tutored her, took her to his place of work and gave her resources that put her in an advantageous position at school. These activities were not evident in Monifa's mother's extended identities.



### ***Shazia on Being Identified***

Shazia did not reflect on how the parents or children might identify her. There was evidence in the interviews with some of the other teachers that they reflected on how the children, in particular, perceived them. These reflections were often strongly influenced by their past experiences and teachers from their own childhood. It is notable that Shazia did not raise these points herself. The pervasive impact that parents past experiences have on their children's learning has been reported elsewhere (O'Toole & Abreu, 2005).

### ***Monifa on Self-identification***

As previously discussed, Monifa's identification systems centred on her construction of the meaning of achievement. Similarly, that the community which featured the most in establishing this construct was the home. The next quote reveals how she internalised her identity following her association with her home community, and in particular, her father:

Sarah: What subject do you feel you are best at? Why do you feel that way?

Monifa: Maths, um, because my dad is very good at maths, he was once a maths teacher. And he's taught me a lot, so I know quite a lot about maths. And I get extra lessons on maths, he teaches me at home

Sarah: Your dad teaches you, do you think that helps you in your classroom?

Monifa: Yeah, 'cos he can explain to me. Because he's my dad it's more personal so he can explain it to me. So that's why I feel comfortable with him. But with a teacher it's different because you don't, like, know them personally, they just tell you what they have been taught and then that's it. They don't really explain it to you like, like so that you'll be able to remember it

Sarah: Is it, having your dad on your own are you able to discuss things more?

Monifa: Yeah, cos like teachers have to handle about thirty people in one classroom, and it's very hard to go around everyone telling them, telling them this, telling them that. But if it's just one person with another person, then it's easier

The strength with which she described her home gives some indication why her father's input has a pronounced effect on her learning. The fact that her father had the skills to tailor his home mathematical practices to suit his daughter's needs, adds a personalised element to her home learning. But more importantly, her father's confidence in mathematics imparts to her, her own self-confidence:

Sarah: You said that [mathematics] was one of your best ones, how do you know, what gives you the idea that you're good at maths?

Monifa: Because like, when I do it I understand it more, I don't know why. Maybe it's because my dad was a maths teacher and that it just runs through the family because all his family is good at maths. **So I'm just good at maths as well**

The other representation of difference, is that of culture and her father's education abroad. The conflict for Monifa arises because her home practice has a stronger influence on her because she is able to understand her father's methods better than the teachers. But she shows that she is aware that school should be the prevailing community and this leads to Monifa displaying contradictory messages throughout her interview:

Sarah: Do you think your parents understand what you do during your school day? Can you describe that for me?

Monifa: No, I don't think they do cos it's different from where they've been taught. So sometimes they don't understand because, like if they teach us something and we stick to that, then I stick to it. But then when I get home they ask me 'what have you done at school?' and when I explain it to them they don't understand because of what they've been taught in Nigeria. So it's pretty different, and it's hard for them and it's hard for me because I get mixed up sometimes. And when I like say it in class, they tell me 'what are you talking about?' **I just try and stick to what the teacher has taught me**

Sarah: Do you have to quite adaptable, do you try and be like your teachers want you to be at school and then be like your parents want you to be at home?

Monifa: Yeah, yeah. It's pretty confusing and hectic so I'm just all over the place in my mind. **It's like I'm two people at the same time and it's just hard.**

Sarah: Do you try and take a bit of each thing to make up the person you are in the middle?

Monifa: Yeah

Sarah: Is one influence stronger than the other at the moment?

Monifa: At the moment I think, I'm not quite sure, **I think it's the influence from home that is bigger because even though I am, I'm mostly at school, but at home it's different and I know my parents well and so it's pretty complicated.**

Here we see evidence of sociocultural coupling in Monifa's awareness of the differences in the demands of the two communities of home and school and the emergence of two identities as a consequence. Monifa was contradictory in the messages she conveys through this quote. At the beginning of the narrative she says she uses mathematical strategies provided by the school. At the end of the passage she maintains home has the strongest influence because of the emotional way she can connect with her parents. On one level her cognitive allegiance is to the school and is reinforced by the fact that her parents were taught in a different country, and therefore use different methodologies. On the other hand, the quote previous to this revealed that she understood her father's strategies better. In essence, there is a conflict here for Monifa on a cognitive level, while her representations of achievement on an emotional level hold her alliances firmly in the home community. Equally, it is left to Monifa to make the mathematical strategies of home and school compatible, when she struggles to do this the solution is to create a separation. It is this situation which may lead her to describe herself as being two people.

The discussions on Monifa's sense of identity have contributed to understanding how powerfully a projected identity, extended by others, influences the construction of self-identity. At times this extended identity becomes a conflictual part of self-identity, but an individual 'chooses' what elements of their extended identity to internalise and what elements to resist. Monifa's choice about what to internalise and what to resist exist on two levels and are interwoven in a complex way. On a cognitive level Monifa borrows from the home and school community, which has led to her perceiving some tension between her father and the

teacher. When addressing academic achievement from an emotional perspective, the home community is more powerful because of the positive representations of achievement in existence. One must be tentative in the suggestion that an individual has the ability to 'choose' what elements of identity to borrow from their communities of practice and what to resist. The choices available may be restricted by the experiences around the individual. Monifa is fortunate that many aspects of her home and school community life were positive, which enabled her to fulfill her full achievement potential and construct dialogical identities that matched that.

### ***Shazia on Self-identification***

Shazia's own self-identification is a complex combination of stable cultural affiliations with the Pakistani community and transformed meaning systems and practices brought about by being raised in a different education system and country. One of the stable aspects of Shazia's self-identification was her maintenance of certain cultural traditions, such as wearing the traditional Pakistani dress, the Shalwah Kameez, and honoring religious festivals. Miller (1995) in her study on adolescent Hindu hair practices in North America suggests that hair and dress serve as cultural markers or statements, which may be connected with cultural identities. Shazia's biggest change in self-identification was manifested through the change in practice with her own children. Her own experiences as a child had altered some of her own practices:

Sarah: Have your experiences, either as a teacher or at school, helped with your own children's education, can you tell me a bit about it?

Shazia: I have to admit that I have never ever sat them and taught ...and I don't know whether this is an experience of being a teacher or a student but just the fact that I grew up in this country, and I think **I was always envious of all my English friends who did go home and bake cakes at the weekend**. I just got told to get home and cook dinner. I was really young when my dad, my dad taught me how to cook, he just taught

me for the sake of having an extra person in the house who could cook. I appreciate it now, but I didn't then. So I never experienced, you know, things like going to the seaside and going to the cinema. And he would never allow me to go the cinema, taboo. So doing things like that, I think that's more to do with experience of growing up in this country, rather than teaching ... a pupil. I mean saying that, things like going on school trips, I would never have gone to those places if it hadn't been with the school, and because it was school, school says 'fill on the dotted line', and my dad would say 'ok, go and do it'. My dad was very much into, get your education, not that it will do anything to help you, but you've got to get your education, so.

Shazia drew on the childhood practices of some of her British friends, to inform her practices for her own children. There were aspects of Shazia's childhood where she felt both deprived and separated from her classmates at school. She was evidently aware of the differences in the home practices of her English friends, from those of her own family. At this juncture Shazia could have chosen to accept or reject the practices of her home and past. It is the ability to reproduce or transform which makes each self-identification unique. Shazia's difficulties with the home-school transition process has resonance with Monifa's narrative. Monifa describes at one point during her interview that she invited a friend to her church club so that while socialising, her friend could get to know her parents better. To some extent friendships offer the means by which the divide between home and school is reduced if she chooses to share her participation in the home community with her friend. Monifa also assumes that her friend will need to make changes in her cultural representations to cope with access to her home community. In a similar vein, but with a different focus, Shazia describes the gulf between the home practices of her English friends to that of her own home life.

Up until this point Shazia has predominantly described the ways in which she has distinguished her own identity from that of a woman in the community to which she belongs. Perhaps Duveen's (2001) description of resistance is useful here. Shazia attempts to resist part of the extended identity given to her by her community. On the other hand, being part of the

community means she has a greater understanding about the evolution of her cultural community. This bears resemblances to Dien's (2000) descriptions of her return to Japan as an adult after living in America and having an American husband and child. Though accepted by her Japanese friends she was aware that she did not wholly share in their Japanese identity. Evidence of sociocultural coupling are visible through the combination of her experiences as a teacher and some negative experiences of her own schooling, Shazia had made changes to the practices with her own children. It is here that the concepts of 'identifying the other' and 'self-identification' seem to work simultaneously. The practices, which she had deemed necessary to change, like 'practical like' numeracy skills (such as cooking), were aligned with British schooling. The stable cultural affiliations with the Pakistani community do not centre around the act of learning per se, rather around ways of dressing, religion and representations of child development, so therefore have been reproduced. By these means, self-identification is a complex mix of reproduction and change. This phenomena is echoed in our work on parental past experiences and their mediating role on children's current school learning (O'Toole & Abreu, 2005).

It is through Shazia's description of the parents of the children in her school, and the subsequent comparison of her own family life that sociocultural coupling of 'identifying the other' and 'self-identification' continues to emerge. Shazia began by recalling that the school held a numeracy exhibition for parents, particularly for those who were going to be new to the school (approximately sixty children) and only two of the parents attended. Shazia dismisses the normal mode of explanation for the low turnout, that of language difficulties:

Shazia: As a school we are, fifty per cent of our staff here speak community languages, parents are totally aware of that. They know that when they do come they can always speak to someone who speaks their language, yet, very few of them come in. And we always try and do it at a time when, you know, three o'clock, so they can stay for half

and hour and then collect their children at three thirty. Its not even, you know, a difficult time it just doesn't happen, unfortunately.

Sarah: Do you have any idea why you can't bring them in?

Shazia: Well I mean basically, as I said before, **having grown up in the community**, having gone through the same problems that my family, because we're now fourth generation. My kids, well my parents are very much like my parents are here now, at the school. And it was, more or less, well you go to school, that's it, you know, their responsibility stops the moment I step on to the school's doorstep, as it were. And things like homework and schoolwork is all to do with the school, it's got nothing to do with them. **Whereas, I now, having gone through the education system here, I personally as a parent, if my son brings homework, I have to. Also I want him to be responsible, but I also need to make sure that I back up that responsibility** and remind him, he is a child at the end of the day. 'Have you got your homework?' 'did you do it?', 'have you done it correctly', 'Oh, mum I'm stuck', 'ok, let me have a look and I'll explain'. Like I said, some of them simply can't, some of them simply don't. And then you get perhaps about, twenty-five per cent who always do.

With this quote there is a shift in her identification scheme which instigates the interaction between her own experiences as a member of the community with notions of 'other' brought about by belonging to the teaching community at school. One of her most stable cultural representations that she attributes to the Pakistani community is the value of education. But it is her own transformation in values and practices, which are most telling. She described that her own changes resulted from her participation in the British school system. It is also important to recognise, according to some of the teacher informants, that drawing parents into the school for exhibitions and workshops is problematic for many schools, regardless of their ethnic make-up. Another relevant point is that while Shazia perceived the school as reducing the gap to a technical language issue, she herself refused this explanation preferring to locate the explanation in identity. These identities have as resources cultural representations of what it is to be a parent of a school child. However, as she illustrated, she drew from a cultural representation that incorporates the British upbringing.

This next quote reveals how her negative representations of the home environments and the practices of the children she taught was different from her representations of her own home practices. Shazia had made changes to the ways she engaged in home numeracy practices with her own children which, at least partially, will have been influenced by her experiences as a teacher. The practices she tells she engaged in, and the implicit ways in which she conducted them were very similar to those promoted in the school community:

Shazia: I think, things like, just as an example, things like multiplication tables. Because, it's very factual knowledge, it's very there, you know, it's something that I suppose almost, needs to be learned for the child to tackle other problems and things like that. So, if they can even just participate. **You know, the way I taught my son, well, I didn't actually teach him, but helped him to learn his tables was by games. You know, we did square numbers and one morning we'd walk to school and it wasn't even something at home it was ten minutes to school, it would be 'ok, let's do our square numbers today, ok, let's do our three times table today',** and just by that, um, just participating, it's not even a specific, you know I can't pinpoint and say 'I want them to help with their tables', it's just little things, you know, when you do send something home where you expect the child to come back with an acquired concept or an acquired knowledge, we just want parents to participate. **And I do appreciate the fact that so many of our parents either have a different way of doing things or have little knowledge of how to do things, I do appreciate that. I mean, you know, in that sense then they at least could encourage the children to do it themselves, but they don't.**

Her use of practical help at home with her own children, from her perspective, separates her from her community, and she uses it as a marker to cement her self-identity. At the same time, Shazia reveals an appreciation of the varied ways in which educational practice is represented in the home community. What Shazia appears to seek is an emotional level of transformation from the parents in the form of encouragement. For the White teachers, home numeracy practices like incorporating timetables into everyday practice was not an issue of



culture but one of experience. Shazia further elaborated on why she thought parents in her school weren't engaging in the kind of practical activities she describes above:

Shazia: I mean, it's not, I don't know...if you look at it historically, it stems back to when they were living in villages in Pakistan or in India and things like cooking is done on an open fire, it's dangerous I suppose. If you go back that far, then there's probably reasons behind it, but it becomes, things like that which start as habit or necessity become cultural, don't they, it becomes part of the culture. And you do tend to, and children are very much seen as a blessing and they are there to be pampered and looked after until so-and-so age and then they start taking care of themselves, although there's no specific age. **They're** not taught to be independent, again, I think I was discussing this with someone, that our children are so, so dependent...and I'm talking in the context of our school, a lot of our Pakistani families in particular, have quite large families. If you've got eight to ten children, by the time you've bathed, fed, clothed, bedded, it's probably eleven o'clock, you haven't got time to stand in the kitchen making biscuits with one of them. And if one of them does it then they all want to do it, and they've all got different attitudes, different behaviour patterns, different, you know...as I said, changing with the different, **as you go down the generations, I've only got two children, I don't intend on having any more, therefore I have time. We do make biscuits, and we do, you know, whenever we go to Sainsburys my daughter always, she always, this is her job now, she always weighs the fruit out.**

Shazia embeds the South Asian community identity within the context of historical cultural tradition, but accentuates the 'other' with the word 'they're'. The text highlighted in bold indicates the ways in which Shazia had made an explicit change in her self-identity different from that of her ethnic community. She also perceives her own evolution of practice as a product of being the fourth generation of her family to have been raised in Britain. History of culture plays an important role in the way she identifies the 'other' and the traditions and practices she attributes to them. The finer nuances of practice, like cooking, are given a cultural status because of her tendency to connect culture and history. Many of the practices which Shazia would like to see parents engage in, such as learning times tables in a game-like way, are not necessarily prevalent in White British households. This was true for some of the

White British parents sampled in this research. For Shazia, the concept of culture was much more salient than other explanations which could be attributed to other cultural groups. Shazia retained cultural differences as her fundamental explanation of the parental involvement by using a non-academic example of practice to legitimise her point:

Sarah: Some of things you've mentioned would be what I would describe as quite middle class things to do as well as White cultural things

Shazia: Yes, they are. But I mean, things like, just silly things like bath time. In Pakistan, and everybody comes to my house and says 'why have you got a bucket in your bath?', we do not fill the bath up with water and lay in it, that is unclean. You don't have bath, you have a shower, or get a bucket, fill it with water and you keep wash yourself, you don't fill the bath up, you washing yourself and pouring clean water over yourself. It's just not the done thing. Whereas my children had little letters and bath toys and, you know, I still took them out and washed them, still took the water out and the bucket and cup, but they could play in it. But things like that, and counting cups of water, fitting them into the bucket. Silly things that you wouldn't, I don't know, a lot of things our children still don't use. Um, so I suppose some of them may well ... but some are just experience

Shazia describes a situation where she has combined a traditional cultural practice with a practice for numeracy learning. This is a fascinating example of how complex it is to draw on those mundane activities as contexts for learning basic mathematical concepts. There is one instance in Shazia's narrative where her 'self-identification' and 'identifying the other' match and she aligned herself with the Pakistani community:

Shazia: This probably applies more to our children because they have very little experience, one of the other teachers was asking me, don't these other children eat anything at home? Because whenever you ask them they don't seem to know what they eat. I said that's mainly because, and again this is a cultural thing, children are very much pampered to quite an age. I notice, you know, this is the problem that the nursery has here, whereas an English child or a Western child may well come in being able to dress themselves and feed themselves, you will find, and **I'm guilty of this as well**, but

six year olds and seven years olds are still being dressed by the mums and fed by the mums and it's just cultural, it's very much a strong cultural thing.

In this quote Shazia is drawing on a meaningful construction of child development that is attributed a cultural status. Moreover, Shazia's examination of this representation as 'cultural' lends weight to the idea that culture mediates subtle differences in the way the educational world of the child is understood. It is these finer representations of culture that those outside (and often inside) a particular community cannot recognise because they are so embedded in cultural practice. Furthermore, this is another example of sociocultural coupling whereby there are borrowed representations (in the form of a 'them' and 'us' narrative) and practices (with the maintenance of certain parenting practices).

### **Conclusions**

The data in this paper has revealed how the three levels of 'identifying the other', 'being identified' and 'self-identification' are interactional processes used to negotiate a way of perceiving ourselves within multiple communities of practice. Moreover, it seems that these levels of identification can occur simultaneously and at different times in different contexts (as suggested by Dien, 2000). For example, Shazia was able to use her representation of her own Pakistani community to cement a self-identification that was different. In light of this it is possible to see how individuals do not necessarily use identity as a means of establishing a shared way of perceiving their community, but as a means of asserting change. Another example of simultaneous levels of identity being put to use were seen in Monifa's narrative. Her identity as a mathematics high achiever borrowed elements from the process of 'identifying the other' and 'being identified'. At the same time she was choosing some elements and resisting others for her self-identification.

Significantly, it is important to recognise the unique way that change is as much a part of identity construction as stability. Individuals are not merely receivers of a community's representations. This is where sociocultural coupling becomes a useful theoretical concept. Individuals have the potential to borrow or resist extended identities imposed upon them by the communities they inhabit (see Duveen, 2001). This paper has provided examples of instances where hybrid identities have formed which have been borrowed from two communities of practice, indicating the emergent importance of the transition process between the home and school communities for the child learner. Monifa, for example borrowed mathematical strategies from home and school but tended to use home as her main source for self-identification of high achievement. Shazia too revealed a hybridity in her formation of her self-identification, which combined her experiences within the Pakistani community and the British school system. Her experiences growing up in the British school system and as a teacher in Britain had influenced her engagement in mathematical activity with her own children. For both Monifa and Shazia, issues of culture held more saliency as an explanation for behaviour over other explanations such as social class. The reverse is true of the White British participants in the wider study, whose lack of mention about culture is conspicuous in its absence.

Overall, using these levels of analysis has provided some evidence towards understanding how powerful the construction of achievement is in the formation of identity. For Monifa, the construction of her achievement identity was given a cultural status, however the data from her interview also holds implications for other ethnic minority children and White British children, whose own identity could be closely tied in with notions of achievement, but might not necessarily be associated with and understanding of how it is tied with culture.

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