

An investigation of the impact of working in an international school context on the identities of English-speaking teachers at the International English School in Italy.

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Note

The whole dissertation, unless indicated to the contrary in the text, is the original work of Rosemary Fotheringham.

Abstract

Many educational researchers (e.g. Jansen 2001) argue that not enough is known about how teachers view their careers and identities as teachers and how they adapt to new educational policies and teaching situations. Researchers (e.g. Woods and Jeffrey 2002) have argued that a consideration of identity issues is of crucial importance when investigating the experiences of teachers in any institutional setting. The purpose of this research study is to investigate the impact of working in an international school context on the identities of English-speaking teachers at the International English School (IES) in Italy. The research aims to identify the issues of identity experienced in the new institutional context, to examine the identity work and strategies engaged in by the teachers and to analyse what kind of reconstruction of their identities has taken place.

Three main theoretical perspectives have informed the research. Firstly, post-structuralist theories critique an essentialist view of identity as universal or stable and argue that it is socially constructed and open to continual change. This view of identity works with an understanding that the research participants construct identity rather than report on a pre-existing identity. Secondly, critical theory emphasises the political nature of identity and that it is always linked to power relations in particular sites of practice. Thirdly, theories and research on ‘teacher identity’ and ‘teacher strategy’ from the field of education have been drawn on. Three studies from the sociology of education provide a fine-grained analysis of how teacher strategies operate in particular sites of practice and show how strategies are always linked to issues of identity. Insights from the literature on international education suggest that cross-cultural issues are key for teachers relocating to an international school context.

Qualitative research methods were chosen. The case study was the main method used: the International English School (IES) formed the case with seven English-speaking teachers at the school as the research participants. Mapping, interviewing and field observation were used to collect the data. The research participants constructed maps of themselves at IES as well as of their career history, and in-depth interviews were conducted. Finally, an on-site field visit took place at the school and included lesson observation of each research participant. The data was analysed thematically using grounded theory.

The findings show that the research participants' experiences at IES affected their identities in profound ways and that they experienced a fragmentation of identity. In order to respond to the issues of identity they experienced, the teachers engaged in identity work and particular strategies which allowed them to reinforce or reconstruct their identity as teachers. Each teacher experienced a reconstruction of his or her teacher identity differently. However, the majority of the teachers maintained their vision of education and the teacher identity they wished to subscribe to, although these would have to be realised outside the school. None of the teachers was prepared to invest their long-term commitment or careers in the school. The reconstruction ignored both the international and intercultural factors. None of the teachers defined themselves as international teachers with an international career path and the majority of teachers did not become significantly more interculturally literate through their experiences at IES.

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Chapter 1: Context and rationale

1.1 Background to the research

Educationists in South Africa and in many other countries have noted wide-ranging changes in education and the impact of these changes on teachers. For example, Woods and Jeffrey (2002: 90) have commented on the effects of the globalisation of education:

In education, these developments have been reflected in the growth of economic rationalism and technicism, an emphasis on marketability, efficiency and performativity, the growth of management systems and of audit accountability, and attacks on moral systems such as child-centredness, which appear to run counter to these.

South African educationists such as Mattson and Harley (1999, 2003) argue that education in South Africa has been profoundly affected by such developments. A significant amount of educational research both overseas and in South Africa has begun to focus on how teachers are responding to these changes. For example, researchers have focused on the new roles and 'identities' for teachers assigned by policy (e.g. Samuel and Stephens 2000; Woods and Jeffrey 2002) and how these may affect classroom practice and pedagogy. Many educational researchers (e.g. Jansen 2001) argue that not enough is known about how teachers view their careers and identities as teachers and how they adapt to new educational policies and teaching situations.

Research on teachers' careers carried out by sociologists of education in the UK (see Sikes, Measor and Woods 1985; Woods 1990; Woods and Jeffrey 2002) suggests that identity is a crucial factor in understanding a teacher's choices, actions and responses in a particular institutional setting during the different phases of their career. Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985) carried out research into teachers' careers and referred to the notion of critical phases or moments in a teacher's career. The critical phases may include changes in the education system, such as the introduction of a new curriculum, or change on a more personal level such as promotion or a mid-career move. They argue that these critical phases may provoke some kind of identity crisis for teachers, leading to a redefinition of the self as well as the use of particular coping strategies. Woods and Jeffrey's (2002) study of the introduction of new educational policies in the UK shows the profound effects of a critical phase on teachers' identities and the "identity work" (Snow and Anderson 1987: 1348 cited in Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 98) and strategies that teachers engaged in as a response. They argue, building on an earlier study by Woods (1990), that the way in which a teacher responds to particular incidents and challenges in an institutional setting, and the strategies he or she adopts, are closely bound to issues of self and identity. Thus, these studies suggest that it is essential to consider issues of identity when trying to understand the experiences of teachers in any institutional setting, particularly during a critical phase in their career.

In 2003, I relocated to Italy and became interested in the context of the international school as a site for teaching. I was interested in how English-speaking teachers, who had relocated to a particular school, the International English School (IES),

experienced the new teaching context, how they managed their roles and constraints (Sikes, Measor and Woods 1985: 11) and, ultimately, how they evaluated the impact of their experiences on their careers and on their identities as teachers. Relocating to the international school involved a mid-career move for the English-speaking teachers and, thus, in Sikes et al's (1985) terms, would constitute a critical phase in their careers. Examining the issues of identity that may have arisen for them seemed to have the potential to illuminate the actions and responses of the teachers.

My understanding of identity is informed by post-structuralist theories (e.g. Hall 1996) which emphasise that identity is socially constructed. Identities are shaped and constructed in particular sites of practice: they are fluid, shifting, constructed and reconstructed, rather than fixed, absolute or unchanging. Critical theorists such as Skeggs (2002a, 2002b) have offered insights into the political nature of identity and show how constructions of identity can be appropriated by different interest groups for particular agendas. Identity always has a value, Skeggs (2002a) argues, and thus is always linked to power relations. An institutional setting, the International English School, offered interesting potential for examining if the identities of the English-speaking teachers were unsettled or challenged by their experiences at the school and, ultimately, if they were reconstructed as a response to their experiences. An examination of the experiences of the teachers at the school thus also offered to be an examination of a site of identity construction.

My research interest, outlined above, became focused into a particular study, which is described in the next section.

1.2 Description of the research

In this study, the experiences of a sample of seven English-speaking teachers at the International English School (IES) are researched in order to investigate how individual teachers have experienced the new teaching context, how have they managed their roles and constraints (Sikes, Measor and Woods 1985: 11) and whether, or in what ways, the experience has led to a redefinition of their identities as a teacher and their teaching careers. The research seeks to answer the following questions:

- What issues of identity have these teachers experienced in the new institutional context?
- What identity work and strategies have these teachers engaged in?
- What kind of reconstruction of their identities as teachers has taken place?

My research will attempt to create a detailed picture of how individual teachers have experienced and made sense of a new teaching context, that of an international school; it will attempt to articulate teachers' evaluations of how this new teaching experience has impacted on their sense of identity as teachers and their careers as teachers. In my study, I draw on research (e.g. Woods and Jeffrey 2002) around the notions of 'teacher identity' and 'teacher strategy'.

My research site is an international school and this international aspect forms an interesting part of the research. Many critical applied linguists and educationists are highly aware of the currency of the English language and English language teaching

both in South Africa and worldwide and the ‘cultural imperialism’ that can be associated with it (e.g. Pennycook 1994, 1998). The term ‘international’, too, seems to have currency and is “currently extensively practised, in name, in a wide range of schools, colleges and higher educational institutions around the world” (Thompson 2002: 6) although there is a “lack of agreement, among theorists and practitioners alike, concerning the fundamental nature of international education at the present time” (5). The name of the international school I have chosen as a research site, the International English School, suggests two interesting ‘currencies’ for investigation: ‘English’ and ‘international’. The research will consider how these terms are constructed at the school and what effect these constructions may have on the identities of the teachers.

1.3 Precedents for the research

The notion of ‘teacher identity’ is a current one in the field of education. However, the focus both in international and South African research has tended to be on teacher identity as a powerful factor in educational and curriculum change (e.g. Geijsel and Meyers 2005; Baxen and Soudien 1999). Many recent studies, for example Woods and Jeffrey (2002) and Mattson and Harley (2003), are concerned with the mismatch between a policy-assigned identity for teachers and the identities as teachers that teachers themselves experience and relate to. Unlike these studies cited, my particular interest is not in the concept of teacher identity as a possible explanation for how teachers have responded to curriculum change but, rather, is more open-ended in wishing to evaluate how teachers have experienced an international teaching context and the possible impact on their identities as teachers.

A research study carried out in the mid-1980s is an important precedent for my research. The study, which was published as *Teacher careers: crises and continuities* (Sikes, Measor and Woods 1985), developed a model of the life-cycle of the teacher and showed how critical incidents affected passage through it. It explored how a sample of 25 science and art teachers in the UK adapted to the teacher role and coped with problems and constraints throughout different phases of their careers. My research is similar in that it is also concerned with exploring teachers’ own views on a critical phase or incident in their careers, but it has a narrower focus on just one critical phase: that of the experience of teaching at an international school in Italy. Language is also a key factor in my research: the research subjects are either language teachers or teachers who are teaching their particular subject, for example geography, through the medium of English as an additional language. At the time of writing up their research in 1985, Sikes, Measor and Woods did not consider post-structuralist theories in identity construction, although in more recent work, Woods (see Woods and Jeffrey 2002) has drawn on such theories. Clearly, however, the Sikes, Measor and Woods study is an important precedent for my research project.

A survey of literature on international education indicates that there is a recognition of and interest in the concept of ‘identities’ in an international school context. However, the focus of much of the literature is on the international school *student* (e.g. Heyward 2002; Allan 2002), or is an attempt to classify the range of international *schools* that exist and thus define the term ‘international’ in so doing (e.g. Sylvester 2002). Joslin (2002: 33) indicates that “most of the literature on ‘international schools’ and ‘international education’ focuses on the students, and on the teacher in relation to the

students' learning and experience". One of the few articles to focus on the teacher (Joslin 2002), explores how to prepare teachers successfully for teaching in international schools but does not focus explicitly on teacher identity. However, a key theme to emerge in the international education literature is that of culture and some of the ideas, for example about culture shock, offer interesting insights that may be helpful when analysing the experiences of the teachers in my research sample.

Thompson (2002) indicates that there are a wide range of schools and institutions that offer education under the term 'international'. He (2002: 6) argues that they claim to develop characteristics such as "'international-mindedness', tolerance and cultural sensitivity" but that there is a lack of "detailed evidence that such claims can be justified in practice". My research study aims to do an in-depth analysis of the experiences of a range of teachers in an international setting and, although the focus is on the teachers, the nature of the institution itself will necessarily impact on their experiences and the research is likely to consider what makes the institution 'international' and what this might mean for the experiences of the teachers.

Thus, the literature on international education surveyed suggests that my research project will not be duplicating studies already done but, rather, will possibly be linking with and building on some of the ideas that have been written about, for example the culture shock that teachers may experience in an international teaching context. The survey also indicates that there is a need for more research that focuses on the teacher in the international schools context.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the background to my research. It contends that a consideration of identity issues is of crucial importance when investigating the experiences of teachers in any institutional setting. An outline of my study, which examines the experiences of a sample of English-speaking teachers at the International School in Italy, has been provided. Finally, it has considered precedents for the research and suggests that although there are important precedents for my research, it will not be duplicating any studies done in the field of international education. The next chapter provides a theoretical framework for the research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the theoretical framework for my research. Three main theoretical perspectives have guided and helped shape it: post-structuralist theories on identity construction, insights from critical theory, and theories and research on 'teacher identity' and 'teacher strategy' from the field of education. The chapter begins with an overview of post-structuralist theories of identity. This is followed by a consideration of insights from a critical theorist who develops some of the post-structuralist insights, with a particular focus on power relations. These two sections aim to provide a firm foundation for understanding 'identity' before moving on to examine teacher identity and teacher strategies in the third part of the chapter. In this section, theories and research drawing on notions of 'teacher identity' and 'teacher strategy' are examined. In the fourth section, relevant literature from international education is drawn on in order to identify key issues that may impact on teachers' experiences in an international school environment. In the final section, the different theoretical perspectives are drawn together and a summary of the extent to which they have informed the research is provided.

2.1 Post-structuralist theories of identity construction

Identity has been an important theme in the work of Stuart Hall (1992, 1996), a cultural theorist from the UK. Hall traces changing understandings of personal and cultural identity in western history from the time of the Enlightenment, the philosophical movement of the eighteenth century, to the era of postmodernity in the late twentieth century. Hall argues that a particular kind of structural change has been transforming modern societies in the late twentieth century, with the effect of fragmenting the familiar "cultural landscapes" which gave individuals "firm locations as social individuals" (1992: 275). This has led to a sense of dislocation or loss of a stable 'sense of self' for people. In his 1992 paper, Hall describes three conceptions of identity: those of what he terms the Enlightenment subject, the sociological subject and the postmodern subject. The three conceptions are a useful starting point for beginning an examination of the concept of identity and will be described in more detail.

2.1.1 The shift from an essentialist to an historical conception of identity

An essentialist conception of identity is the first of the three conceptions described by Hall. It is associated with the Enlightenment subject, a product of the philosophy of the Enlightenment which emphasised reason and the rationality of the sovereign individual. Hall says the Enlightenment subject

was based on a conception of the human person as a fully centred, unified individual, endowed with capacities of reason, consciousness and action, whose 'centre' consisted of an inner core which first emerged when the subject was born, and unfolded with it, while remaining essentially the same ... The essential centre of a person's self was a person's identity. (1992: 275)

Hall argues that this conception of identity is associated with Descartes and the Cartesian subject: the rational, conscious, individual subject (1992: 282). Such a view of the self has not been confined to philosophy but has become part of western culture: this is how many people conceive of the self. It is also how people are seen by

the law: that they are rational and unified agents responsible for their actions (Barker 1999: 14). This view of identity is called an *essentialist* view and it understands identity as stable, fixed, unified and permanent.

The second conception of identity shifts from an essentialist view to an interactive one and is associated with the sociological subject formulated by George Mead and the symbolic interactionists from the field of sociology. In this view

identity is formed in the 'interaction' between self and society. The subject still has an inner core or essence that is 'the real me', but this is formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds 'outside' and the identities which they offer. (Hall 1992: 276)

Thus, within this conception, there is the belief that identities are formed socially and culturally: they are *socially constructed*. However, the self is perceived as possessing a unified, inner core which is formed interactively between the inner and outside social world.

The third conception of identity is an historical one and is associated with the postmodern subject. According to Hall, there is nothing unified about the postmodern subject: rather than a stable, coherent identity, there are shifting and fragmented identities. He says that in this conception

Identity becomes a 'moveable feast': formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways in which we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us... It is historically, not biologically, defined. The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a 'coherent' self. Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continually being shifted about. If we feel we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or 'narrative of the self' about ourselves. (1992: 277)

Hall argues that the notion of the fractured, decentred self has arisen from advances in social theory and the human sciences in the twentieth century. He (1992: 285) describes five major "ruptures in the discourses of modern knowledge" that have contributed to a decentring of the Cartesian subject. These are Marxism, psychoanalysis, theories of language, the work of Foucault and feminism. Each of these areas will be examined by drawing on Hall (1992) as well as the work of other theorists.¹

2.1.2 Five 'ruptures' which decentred an essentialist view of identity

The first of the major decentrings that Hall (1992) describes is Marxism which highlights the historically specific character of identity and how the subject is formed in ideology. What it is to be a person is not universal but is the result of time and place. Hall uses insights from Althusser (1971) to show how "the subject formed in ideology is not a unified, Cartesian subject but a shattered and fragmented one ...

¹ Hall (1992) cautions that any attempt to give a brief outline of some of the major sites of contemporary knowledge, for example Marxism or feminism, runs the risk of being somewhat crude or oversimplified and will not show the level of contestation that those working from within the particular site might feel it is necessary to acknowledge. However, it is hoped that the outline will help develop an understanding of why there has been a shift away from essentialist understandings of identity.

cross-cut by conflicting interests” (Barker 1999: 18) such as gender, class and politics. There is no homogenous, unified identity: a person has gender, class, political and racial interests, for example, and “there is no necessary or automatic connection between [these] various discourses of identity” (Barker 1999: 29).

Secondly, Freud’s psychoanalytic theory destabilises the notion of the unified self. Hall (1992: 286) shows how Freud’s theory of the unconscious “which function[s] according to a logic very different from that of Reason, plays havoc with the concept of the knowing and rational subject with a fixed and unified identity”. Hall points out that this aspect of Freud’s work had a major impact on subsequent thinkers, for example Lacan, and that identity was viewed as being formed “through unconscious processes over time, rather than being innate in consciousness at birth” (1992: 287). Psychoanalytic theory shows that identity is never complete but is always ‘in process’ (1992: 287). The role of other people (the Other) is significant in identity construction: “Identity arises, not so much from the fullness of identity which is already inside us as individuals, but from a *lack* of wholeness which is ‘filled’ from *outside us*, by the ways we imagine ourselves to be seen by *others*” (Hall 1992: 287-88).

The third decentring of essentialist understandings of identity is concerned with theories of language, particularly those of Ferdinand de Saussure, the structural linguist, and Jacques Derrida, the philosopher of language. De Saussure argued that we can never in any absolute sense be the authors of language as it pre-exists us and that “we can only use language to produce meanings by positioning ourselves within the rules of language and the systems of meaning of our culture” (Hall 1992: 288). The implications for identity are that language cannot be said to represent an already existing identity but, rather, *constitute* the identity. As Weedon (1987: 21) argues, language is “the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed”.

Hall (Hall 1992: 288) draws on Derrida’s theories of language which show that an individual speaker can never fix meaning “including the meaning of his or her identity”. Derrida, according to Hall, suggests that words

always carry echoes of other meanings which they trigger off, despite one’s best efforts to close meaning down. Our statements are underpinned by propositions and premises of which we are not aware, but which are, so to speak, carried along in the bloodstream of our language... Meaning is inherently unstable: it aims for closure (identity), but is constantly disrupted ... It is constantly sliding away from us. There are always supplementary meanings over which we have no control, which will arise and subvert our attempts to create fixed and stable worlds. (Hall 1992: 288)

Thus, these theories of language suggest that identity is unstable or, at best, a position which is temporarily stabilised.

The fourth major ‘rupture’ which has challenged essentialist notions of identity is the work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault’s theories of discourse link closely with the ideas on language described above. Like other post-structuralists, Foucault sees language as a system with its own rules and constraints; language has particular effects on the ways in which people express themselves and see themselves and the world. Foucault’s interest is less in the actual utterances produced by people than in the system which enables utterances to be produced (or not) in the first place.

His definition of discourse as a “a regulated practice which accounts for a number of statements” (Foucault 1972: 80 cited in Mills 1997: 6) and his exploration of some of ways in which discourses work in society have had a profound effect on theorists such as Pecheux (1982) and critical linguists such as Fairclough (1992, 2001), Kress (1985) and Pennycook (1994, 1998). Pennycook’s definition (1994: 104) of discourse draws on Foucault:

Discourses are organizations of knowledge that have become embedded in social institutions and practices, a constellation of power/knowledge relationships which organize texts and produce and reflect different subject positions.

A discourse affects the way that individuals think, speak and act. For Foucault a discourse sets limits on what can be thought and “what can be classified as ‘knowable’” (Mills 1997: 33). The effects of discourse on identity construction are profound as this example from Sara Mills, a feminist discourse theorist, shows:

the discourse of middle-class femininity in the nineteenth century consisted of the set of heterogeneous statements (i.e., those utterances, texts, gestures, behaviour which were accepted as describing the essence of Victorian womanhood: humility, sympathy, selflessness) and which in fact constituted the parameters within which middle-class women could work out their own sense of identity. (Mills, 1997: 62)

A discourse thus is a way of organising meaning that works to structure our sense of reality and “our notion of our own identity” (Mills 1997: 15).

Power is key in Foucault’s notion of discourse: some discourses become produced as the dominant discourse in society while others are marginalised. However, as Mills (1997: 20) points out, Foucault is critical of a repressive model of power and works, rather, with a productive model that sees power producing “possible forms of behaviour as well as restricting behaviour”. Rather than regarding people as oppressed by power relations, Foucault sees them as *effects* of power relations:

The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus ... on which power comes to fasten. ... In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. (Foucault 1981 cited in Mills 1997: 22)

Mills comments that Foucault is very much part of post-structuralist thinking in critiquing and decentring the notion of the sovereign individual, the unified, stable, rational Cartesian self. However, she argues that he goes further than the models of the self developed within psychoanalysis as he tried to move away from the notion of the subject. Foucault sees the subject as an effect of power, or discursive structures, and “in a sense [charts] the death of the subject” (Mills 1997: 34). His interest, rather, focuses on how the notion of subjectivity came to be of importance for Western societies since the eighteenth century:

One had to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that’s to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. (Foucault 1980: 59 cited in Mills 1997: 35)

Thus, in Foucault's view, identities are constructed within discourse: they are "produced within specific and historical sites within specific discursive formations and practices" (Hall 1996: 4). Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982: 159) comment that the "modern individual – objectified, analysed, fixed – is a historical achievement" and Foucault (1982) discusses which historical forces gave rise to the modern individual and the particular form of subjectivity associated with 'him'. Foucault shows how in the eighteenth century the modern nation state adopted a particular power technique used by the church: the technique of pastoral power. The power was individualising: it focused on the individual. No longer were individuals told what to think and how to act; rather, social and institutional mechanisms were put in place whereby individuals internalised the new forms of social control themselves. Foucault argues that modern, twentieth century forms of power are a continuation and legacy of this form of power. He describes how

this form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word *subject*: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. (Foucault 1982: 212)

Foucault argues that the current political, ethical, social and philosophical problem is to liberate people "both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries" (1982: 216). Thus, although Foucault has been seen to stand for the 'death of the subject', in one sense, in another sense he is profoundly concerned with the subject and modes of subjectivity.

Foucault's theories have had a major impact on thinkers in the social sciences. While many theorists, for example, Hall (1996) and Mills (1997), have pointed out that Foucault offered an account of the construction of subject positions within discourse but revealed little about the capacity of individuals to resist as well as 'perform' the positions constructed by discourse, many have found his work liberating. Feminist discourse theory, discussed below, has used Foucault's theories to call into question the 'self' produced and privileged by western feminism (Mills 1997: 103).

Feminism, both as theoretical critique and as a social movement, is the last major rupture described by Hall which challenges essentialist notions of identity. Feminist theories "challenged the notion that men and women were part of the same identity and replaced it with the question of sexual difference" (Hall 1992: 290) Thus, feminism deconstructed any notions of a universal identity and showed how culture forms us as gendered subjects. Feminism's agenda was social and political as well as theoretical and it questioned distinctions between 'private' and 'public' as captured in its famous slogan 'the personal is the political'. Thus, it highlighted the political dimensions of identity and identity construction.

As mentioned above, feminist discourse theory has been strongly influenced by the work of Foucault. Mills (1997) comments that Foucault's highly unstable view of the

self has been productive for many feminists who have chosen not to turn to psychoanalytic theory for a model of subjectivity but, rather, to discourse theory which has worked with and modified the notion of discourse “by setting it more clearly in its social context and by examining the possibilities of negotiating with these discursive structures” (Mills 1997: 103). Feminist theorists have used Foucault’s theories to examine how discourses have constructed the gendered subject and to explore alternative discursive roles for men and women.

The discussion in this section so far has developed an understanding of the term ‘identity’ but has also referred to the term ‘subjectivity’. As Kathryn Woodward (1997), a cultural theorist, points out, the concepts are closely related but they are not identical and it is important to distinguish between them. Like Weedon (1987), Woodward defines subjectivity as our sense of self. She says that it

involves the conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings which are brought to different positions within culture. Subjectivity involves our most personal feelings and thoughts. Yet we experience our subjectivity within a social context where language and culture give meaning to our experience of ourselves and where we adopt an identity. Discourses, whatever sets of meaning they construct, can only be effective if they recruit subjects. Subjects are thus subjected to the discourse and must themselves take it up as individuals who so position themselves. The positions which we take up and identify with constitute our **identities**. (Woodward 1997: 39)

Woodward thus suggests that subjectivity is wider than, or encompasses, identity. A person’s identity can be seen as the subject position they take up in a particular social context. Similarly, the critical theorist Beverley Skeggs (2002a) defines identity both as a concept and as a subject position that is discursively constructed. Skeggs (2002a) argues that taking up a subject position is a complex and contradictory process which may involve being positioned by more powerful others into a particular category of identity. Hall (1996) argues that individuals engage in a complex process of accommodating, negotiating and resisting particular subject positions. Skeggs’s ideas will be discussed in further detail (see 2.2).

2.1.3 The linguistic construction of identity

A key insight that has emerged in the discussion so far is that that language and discourse do not transparently reflect the external world but, rather, constitute it (see 2.1.2). Wetherell and Maybin (1995: 228-9) argue that language, talk and discourse provide “raw materials for the construction of the self ... People are embedded in conversations and we constantly make sense of the world through narratives and stories”. They show how in any conversation, there is an ongoing negotiation of meaning in which the speakers take turns, engage in both verbal and non-verbal presentation of self and respond to one another’s utterances and silences in particular ways. They argue that the talk is “not merely about actions, events and situations” (1995: 244) but helps constitute those. The speakers are “building a world, they are constituting their social reality, manufacturing and constructing their lives” (1995: 244). In locating themselves in particular actions, events and situations, speakers construct particular kinds of identities for themselves: “The ways in which we talk and are talked about make different kinds of self possible” (1995: 229).

Speakers construct themselves, others and the world through making particular lexical choices. The following extract, from an interview with Margaret Thatcher, discusses why Britain invaded the Falkland:

But of course it showed that we were reliable in the defence of freedom and when part of Britain we: was invaded of course we went we believed in defence of freedom we were reliable I think if I could try to sum it up in a phrase and that's always I suppose most difficult of all I would say really restoring the very best of British character to its former preeminence. (Fairclough 2001: 145)

As Fairclough comments, Thatcher's use of 'we' is an important lexical choice that suggests an inclusiveness: "it assimilates the leader to 'the people'" (Fairclough 2001: 148) and excludes any opposition. In addition, Thatcher uses particular lexical choices to construct the British people as "reliable" with "British character"; they believe in freedom and so they "defend freedom". The act of war against Argentina is constructed as a "defence of freedom" which restored "the very best of British character". The silences in this text are, of course, the words 'war' and 'Argentina'.

The grammar of the language that the speakers communicate in, for example English or Japanese, has important implications for identity construction:

The ways in which people can position themselves in social interaction and conversation depend intimately on the patterns of self-reference which are possible in their language as well as other aspects of their social situation. Grammar and the pragmatics of everyday language can highlight certain kinds of identity and social relationships. (Wetherell and Maybin 1995: 232-3)

To give an example, Wetherell and Maybin (1995: 232) discuss how the English and Japanese languages "represent two extremes in the use of personal pronouns". While there are only a few pronominal devices in English, Japanese has an elaborate and detailed pronominal system. In terms of identity, the English pronoun 'I' "encourages a belief in a whole bounded subject who can move unchanged from situation to situation ... English allows its speakers to distinguish strongly between the 'I' and the context" (1995: 232). Japanese speakers, however, through the range of pronouns and verb choices available to them, will "constantly register, as they talk, their shifting relationships and movement across the social scene" (1995: 232). Wetherell and Maybin argue that it is grammatically impossible for any Japanese speaker not to be aware of, and to engage in, complex social positioning whenever they speak.

This section on the linguistic construction of identity has argued that people construct themselves, others and the world as they engage in talk with one another. The lexical choices that people make in their talk are crucial and construct subject positions, or identities, for themselves and for others. The grammar of the language in which people communicate, too, has important implications for identity construction. When analysing the data of my research participants, which has been gained mainly through oral interviews, the linguistic construction of identity will be a useful theoretical tool to help analyse how the research participants construct their own identities and those of other people, and how they construct their experiences at the school.

2.1.4 The implications of a non-essentialist understanding of identity

So far in this section, it has been shown that post-structuralist theories have deconstructed an essentialist view of 'identity' as universal, fixed or stable (it is the name for the true, real, unified self). Post-structuralist theorists adopt a non-essentialist understanding of identity as socially constructed and open to continual change. According to this position, a person will never 'have' just one identity but rather multiple identities which may be experienced as contradictory with real tensions and conflicts. Post-structuralist theorists would not speak of 'having' an identity but rather refer to it as a process in which 'identity' is continually constructed and fashioned. Skeggs (2002a: 7), however, cautions that identity construction smooths over the contradictions that people may experience: "Fractal selves ... never quite add up to an identity. Identity forces a coherence on that which is not".

Post-structuralist theorists recognise that non-essentialist understandings of identity run counter to mainstream social discourses and theories. Weedon (1987: 76) comments that

From early childhood we learn to see ourselves as unified, rational beings, able to perceive the truth of reality. We learn that, as rational individuals, we should be non-contradictory and in control of the meaning of our lives. This understanding of subjectivity is guaranteed by common sense and the liberal-humanist theory of meaning which underpins it.

Popular discourses tend to perpetuate essentialist notions of identity as statements like "I need to find myself" and "Pull yourself together" show. Many individuals are interpellated into subject positions of the dominant social discourses and thus assume identities that sit comfortably within the mainstream, for example 'the good mother', 'the good citizen' and, in the field of education, 'the good teacher' and 'the good learner'. However, as Hall (1996: 13-14) argues, while individuals fashion and 'perform' particular subject positions "to which they are summoned ... [they] are in a constant, antagonistic process of struggling with, resisting, negotiating and accommodating" the normative rules associated with the positions.

Why does identity matter? Theorists such as Woodward (1997) argue that identity is a profoundly political issue and that notions of identity are constructed and privileged by powerful groups of people. For example, there are racial and national conceptions of cultural identity which tend to privilege particular identities. Billington, Hockey and Strawbridge (1998: 56) argue that the so-called 'universal' voice in modern culture "has slowly shown to be that of dominant social groups, primarily white, Western and male" at the expense of other identities, usually those of marginalised groups. Woodward (1997) points out how identity is marked out by and depends on difference, for example men have an identity which is different to women; similarly white and black, coloniser and colonised, heterosexual and homosexual are defined in relation to one another. Identity has become a core political concern around which feminists, blacks, gays and lesbians, national minorities and other marginalised groups have organised in order to claim rights and recognition. The term 'identity politics' which Woodward (1997: 24) defines as "claiming one's identity as a member of an oppressed or marginalised group as a political point of departure" is often used in this connection and thus "identity becomes a major factor in political mobilization".

Woodward (1997: 9-10) shows how symbols are important in marking out identity: “there is an association between the identity of the person and the things a person uses”. Symbols of nations and different groups and movements in society are well-known signifiers of identity. However, symbols work on many levels: consumer goods, for example, can be symbols of particular lifestyle, cultural and even political choices.

To sum up this section on understanding identity, there are several key insights that have arisen from an overview of the theories. Post-structuralist theories of identity critique an essentialist understanding of identity as unified, stable and coherent and argue that identity is socially or discursively constructed. Discourse constructs identity rather than reflects a pre-existing identity that is somehow autonomous of social relations. A post-structuralist approach emphasises multiple, shifting, contradictory identities and some theorists argue that ‘identity’ offers coherence where none exists. A post-structuralist approach recognises that notions of the self and personal identity can feel very natural to people, who may experience a desire for unity or for finding a ‘real’ or ‘true’ identity. However, post-structuralist theorists would argue that these notions ignore the tensions that people may feel as part of their lived experience with contradictory, competing identities, and the theories argue for resisting unchanging notions of fixed identity. An important insight of post-structuralist theories is the recognition that if a person’s identities are socially constructed, then personal identity is a political issue. This means that groups can resist dominant notions of self, for example, feminism has questioned, critiqued, challenged and redefined dominant notions of what it means to be a woman.

These understandings guide my research in fundamental ways. For example, a post-structuralist perspective will not allow an assumption that research will ‘uncover’ each research participant’s ‘real’, pre-existing or unchanging identity as a teacher. Rather, I am working with an understanding that in the process of the research the participants will be constructing an identity rather than simply reporting on a “ready fashioned” identity (Sikes, Measor and Woods 1985: 240). Thus, my research can be viewed as a co-construction of knowledge rather than an “excavation” (Mason 2002: 226) of what is already there. What will emerge will be a ‘snapshot’ of particular teacher identities as teachers experience them at the time but they will be partial, provisional, emergent and subject to change. However, Hall’s insight that individuals may “construct a comforting story or ‘narrative of the self’” (Hall 1992: 277) suggests that the accounts of the teachers whom I interview may reflect a desire to create unity and coherence and ignore tensions and contradictions that may be felt.

My research also works with the understanding that although “occupation can and often does confer identity” (Sikes et al. 1985: 23), ‘teacher identity’ cannot be viewed in isolation from other aspects of identity. For example, the teachers in my study may have experienced other possible identities during their time in Italy including ‘traveller’, ‘tourist’, ‘New Zealand woman’, ‘South African man’, ‘spouse of Italian national’, ‘non-Italian speaking’ and these may intersect with their experiences as an international school teacher in significant ways.

The political nature of identity, identified by Hall (1996), Woodward (1997) and other post-structuralist theorists, is the focus of the next section of this chapter.

2.2 Insights from critical theory

In this section I draw particularly on the work of Beverley Skeggs (2002a, 2002b) who develops and extends many of the insights concerning identity from post-structuralist theories. She interrogates and critiques the notion of 'identity' by examining its history in western culture. Skeggs argues that identity is a position not equally available to all and so operates as an unequal resource that only some can use, while others are positioned by it. She discusses how identity is generated from "discourses of the self and possessive individualism which relied on the conversion and knowledge of experience via practices of telling and representation which were always about exclusion, authority and morality" (2002a: 1).

Arguing that identity has an etymology from a western colonialist discourse "that expresses and authorises the relations of the privileged" (2002a: 1), Skeggs suggests that discourse and power are always inextricably linked and, like post-structuralist theorists, she highlights how identity is always linked to power relations.

In her examination of the history of identity, Skeggs emphasises that identity "is just one way of thinking about personhood, a way that is particularly western" (2002a: 1). Skeggs locates the history of identity in the western discourse of possessive individualism dating from the seventeenth century. This discourse, she argues, was

the central political frame through which concepts of personhood, self and individual became known. Its premise was that you became an individual through owning your experience ... you could prove you owned your own experience through particular techniques ... [but] only some groups were seen to be capable of having, telling and owning their experience. (2002a: 3)

Women, for example, were excluded from the category of the individual through ownership rights and the law. Only "a few were offered the subject position of selfhood, ...[for many] their experience was not considered to be worthy of becoming a coherent identity that could be inhabited with authority" (2002a: 8). Possessive individualism as a discourse provided the newly forming bourgeoisie with particular perspectives by which they could view and know themselves and establish their moral authority (2002a: 5). To do this, they necessarily needed to exclude others by privileging their own experience and perspective. Institutions of the state such as the law played a major role in legitimating this.

In the twentieth century, as marginalised groups have resisted powerful discourses, part of their strategy has been to rewrite existing stories or tell new ones. In this way, they started using some of the techniques of possessive individualism, such as using experience and the telling of experience as a resource. But, again, Skeggs is critical of whose stories have been allowed to be told. Within the feminist movement in the US and the UK, she claims that

white middle class women have been able to enter the space of identity through the techniques of telling, testimony and trauma, in a way which black and white working class women have not, as their stories of endurance and survival are read as daily skills, not special or exceptional; their experience is not seen to be of the sort that can be interpreted as a complete coherent identity with value and authority. (2002a: 7)

Here Skeggs shows that class factors determine access to the discourse of identity and argues that identity is “a discursive position, that privileges those with access to specific cultural resources to both know and produce themselves” (2002a: 2).

Skeggs gives another example of how power relations determine access to identity. She uses the example of ‘national identity’, a category which is used to control who can and who cannot belong to a nation. In some countries ethnic minorities and immigrants need to prove before the law that they can occupy personhood and so

identity becomes a category that is imposed and inscribed on some who have to perform to it, but doing so does not give them belonging to the nation but rather separates them from it. It may however give them access to limited resources. It is forced identity and forced recognition. (2002a: 9)

The notion of people performing to ascribed identity is similar to Hall’s (1996: 13) point, made earlier, about how individuals ‘perform’ the “positions to which they are summoned”.

Arguing that not only is identity a particularly western way of thinking about personhood, Skeggs (2002a: 1) claims that it is also “particularly useful for global capitalism”. She argues that the politics of identity plays a crucial role in the world today; it is no longer restricted to previously marginalised groups but is at the heart of labour processes and the organisation of production. In the neo-liberal market economy, globalisation and consumer choice have become the “dominant ... discourses through which new ideas of personhood are formed” (2002a: 2). There is a shift in the western world from a ‘politics of redistribution’, premised on class and inequality, to a ‘politics of recognition’, premised on competing identity claims. But the crucial question to ask, suggests Skeggs, is “who can play the game of recognition in the first place?” (2002a: 2). She argues that power relations always determine access to the ‘game’.

Skeggs makes the point that it is the *value* attached to a particular identity that is more important than the particular identity itself. Identity can become a resource or a commodity to be used and many previously marginalised identities are now being used in the interests of corporate business. For example, a multicultural identity is important in the branding of many businesses: it pays “diversity dividends” in a “new world of visibility” (2002a: 13). However, in the politics of recognition, only particular kinds of visibility are valued: race, class or femininity are only resources for those who are not positioned by them. For example, Skeggs draws on research into the workplace to show that women are often asked to perform the ‘emotion labour’ “which is seen to be a naturalized part of women’s selves” (2002a: 13). She also gives the example of how white working class men in the UK were constructed as the champion of the nation in the 1970s but have been reconstructed by the Blair government as a major threat to the modern British nation with their welfare dependency, so-called ‘yob culture’ and backwardness.

Skeggs shows how a powerful weapon in the politics of recognition is misrecognition. Drawing on Bourdieu (2000 cited in Skeggs 2002b), she argues that, “there is no worse dispossession, no worse privation, than that of the losers in the symbolic struggle for recognition ... power relations are set up and perpetuated through

knowledge and recognition” (2002b: 366). The capacity of an individual to resist successfully being positioned, to resist misrecognition, relates to how individuals “are accommodated within wider cultural views with respect to belonging” (2002b: 366). Achieving “any sense of belonging with any value” relates “to the attributes the person possesses within the given constellation of social relations” (366), including the resources that a person may have at his or her disposal.

Skeggs’s articles contains many insights that are pertinent to my focus on teacher identity and how it is constructed in a particular site of practice, that is the International English School in Italy. Skeggs points out how ascribed identity can become a category that is imposed and discusses how people perform to the requirements of this imposed identity. She also shows how *value* is always attached to particular identities, thus identity has a currency and is vitally connected to power relations in society and particular sites of practice. Recognition and misrecognition of an individual’s value can be powerful weapons in establishing and perpetuating power relations.

These insights have assisted my investigation of how notions of teacher identity/ies can be constructed by those in power, and the effects that these constructions have on individual teachers and groups of teachers. Some of the key questions I explore in my study are:

- How does the institution construct an ‘international teacher’ identity?
- Is there a ‘preferred teacher’ identity that teachers are expected to perform to?
- How is a ‘good’ teacher recognised? Do any of the teachers feel that they have been misrecognised?
- Which teachers are privileged by particular constructions of teacher identity in the institution? Which teachers are excluded?
- What are the effects of each of the above on individual teacher identities?

Skeggs suggests that an individual’s position in a particular social context and his or her perceived capacity to ‘belong’ relates to the resources at his or her disposal and will ultimately affect an individual’s capacity to resist being positioned and to the recognition or misrecognition of his or her value. This is a very interesting insight to apply to the teachers in my research sample and I have formulated it as an additional question:

- If teachers feel they are being positioned or misrecognised, what resources do they have at their disposal to resist this?

Skeggs argues that identity can become a resource or a commodity to be used in the global marketplace. This suggests a line of enquiry into the branding of the International English School as ‘international’ and ‘English’. Many critical applied linguists and educationists (e.g. Pennycook 1994) are highly aware of the currency of the English language and English language teaching worldwide. The term ‘international’, too, is “currently extensively practised, in name, in a wide range of schools, colleges and higher educational institutions around the world” (Thompson 2002: 6) although there is a “lack of agreement, among theorists and practitioners alike, concerning the fundamental nature of international education at the present time” (Thompson 2002: 5). In my study I investigate how the teachers in my research

sample understand the terms ‘international’ and ‘English’ and consider how the identity of the institution itself, the International English School, may be a factor in the identity construction of the teachers at the school.

I have used Skeggs’s insight that identity is a resource for some and a fixed position for others in relation to the terms ‘international’ and ‘English’. Two questions I explore in my research are:

- For whom at the International English School are ‘international’ and ‘English’ identities resources and for whom are they fixed positions?
- Whose interests are being served by the currencies of ‘international’ and ‘English’ at the International English School?

The next section considers the third strand in my theoretical framework: the notions of ‘teacher identity’ and ‘teacher strategy’ from educational research.

2.3 The concepts of ‘teacher identity’ and ‘teacher strategy’ from educational theory and research

The concept of identity in relation to teachers has been an important focus in recent research carried out in South Africa and the UK. In South Africa, Jansen (2001) and Mattson and Harley (1999, 2003) and in the UK, Woods and Jeffrey (2002) have highlighted the mismatch between a policy-assigned identity for teachers and the identities that teachers themselves experience and relate to. The researchers argue that teacher identity is a powerful factor in educational change and they examine teachers’ responses to the situations of change: the *strategies* that they adopt. However, the concepts of ‘teacher identity’ and ‘teacher strategy’ are not new in education. ‘Teacher strategy’ is a concept that has been used in several research studies since the late 1970s, particularly in the work of the sociologists of education, Peter Woods (1980, 1990) and Andy Hargreaves (1980, 1983). A consideration of some of this research, and the theoretical insights it has generated, promises to yield important insights for my focus on teacher identity.

Three research studies in particular are most pertinent for my focus: research by Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985), Woods (1990) and Woods and Jeffrey (2002). The studies offer a theoretical understanding of ‘teacher strategy’, showing how it is integrally linked to ‘teacher identity’, and present detailed findings of teachers’ strategies in operation in particular institutional settings. These studies provide a useful basis for understanding the construction of teacher identity and the teacher strategies that I might observe in my research site. In this section, I will discuss the key insights highlighted by these studies that are most pertinent for the focus of my research.

2.3.1 Critical phases and incidents in a teacher’s career

Research carried out in the 1980s by Sikes et al. (1985) was prompted by a concern that the UK was experiencing “an unprecedented crisis in teacher careers” (1985: 11) brought about by several factors in education such as the introduction of the 1980 and 1981 Education Acts, the reorganisation of the secondary school system and fewer career opportunities for teachers. The researchers were

interested in how individuals adapted to, or sought to change, situations; how they managed their roles and constraints; and ... *their* perceptions of their careers (Hughes, 1937). We wondered how the 'crisis' was affecting teachers' views of their jobs, whether, for example, it had weakened their sense of commitment, or caused them to re-define the teacher role or to search for new career routes and timetables. (1985: 11)

Little research conducted before this time had considered teachers' own views on coping with problems they experienced and this was an important guiding principle for Sikes et al. who conducted in-depth interviews with a sample of 48 teachers. In analysing their findings, the researchers found that their interests went beyond a focus on the immediate crisis described above.

Inevitably, as we investigated deeper and deeper into teacher careers, we journeyed beyond the present crisis ... For there have been other crises and critical points in many teachers' careers, and other powerful influences. Gradually, therefore, we built up a picture of teacher careers consisting of typical ages and stages, and of critical transitional periods, in which the present crisis must be situated. (1985: 11)

The findings relating to the 'critical transitional periods' or critical phases offer useful insights in relation to both identity issues and teacher strategies. Sikes et al. (1985) argue that teachers experience a number of critical phases throughout their career and they identify three types of critical phase amongst the teachers in their research: extrinsic, intrinsic and personal. 'Extrinsic' critical phases can be produced by events in society, such as war, or events in the education system such as the introduction of a new educational policy or curriculum. 'Intrinsic' critical phases occur naturally throughout a teacher's career and Sikes et al. (1985: 58) identify the following phases that their sample of teachers experienced:

1. Choosing to enter the teaching profession
2. The first teaching practice
3. The first eighteen months of teaching
4. Three years after taking the first job
5. Mid-career moves and promotion
6. Pre-retirement

'Personal' critical phases, the third type of critical phase, can arise from family events such as marriage, divorce, birth of a child or illness of parents. This kind of phase can influence the direction of the teacher's career in new ways.

Within each critical phase, particular events or *critical incidents* take place that are important for teachers' careers and identities. Common examples of critical incidents are altercations with a learner or head of department. Critical incidents offer the teacher an opportunity for choice and change, argue Sikes et al. Teachers may experience emotions such as shock, surprise, anxiety or anger as they realise that their response to an incident did not have the consequences they intended or they no longer feel the response was appropriate. In reflecting on the event, they consciously reassess the way they see things and decide on a future course of action.

Sikes et al. (1985) give several examples recounted by teachers of critical incidents that arose in the first 18 months of their teaching. Many of the incidents related to

discipline which, Sikes et al. comment, is one of the most common critical incidents for this period of initiation into teaching. One of the examples they describe is an account by 'Mr Tucks' who tells of how he lost control of his temper in an incident with a student. Mr Tucks was so distressed by this incident and his response to it that he determined to avoid making any such response in the future. Sikes et al. analyse why such an incident is critical for Mr Tucks:

The account involves a set of claims about the self. For the individual particular claims are made about their ability to maintain discipline, and their authoritative image. It represents a claim to the identity of being 'a proper teacher' ... The critical incident involves a challenge to this identity. As a result some of the claims are dropped, some are made real. Some parts of the identity are confirmed, others renounced. In addition, the critical incident can involve a discovery about parts of the self hitherto unknown, about, for example, one's capacity for anger, and this can be difficult to cope with. The incident provokes a series of choices, as the individual sorts out which kind of behaviour, and which parts of the self are appropriate for display in the teacher role. (1985: 69)

Thus, Sikes et al. suggest that critical incidents have very important consequences for the formation of a new teacher's identity as a teacher. Mr Tucks's reflections on an incident involving discipline pertain to the critical phase of initiation into teaching, which all teachers experience.

Many teachers also experience a critical period that is occasioned by promotion or a mid-career move. Sikes et al. argue (1985: 231) that such a move takes the teacher "into new sub-cultures, or new parts of the system with new roles." There may be a number of known factors for the teacher but there will also be several unknowns which will form challenges. In this way, a promotion or mid-career move can be regarded as a critical period and has the potential to have a significant impact on the teacher's career and sense of identity.

The research participants in my study are all teachers for whom the experience of teaching at an international school will be a mid-career move and so it will be useful to investigate their experiences as constituting a critical period in their career and to examine the kind of critical incidents that they might have experienced. These incidents may have particular consequences for their identities as teachers.

2.3.2 Different types of constraints that teachers experience

Sikes et al's (1985) research has highlighted that teachers experience critical periods throughout their career. During those periods, a number of critical incidents occur which highlight particular choices a teacher can make: these choices have consequences for the construction of their identity as a teacher. But Sikes et al. emphasise that teachers by no means make choices in a vacuum and that the "critical incidents are occasioned by the conjuncture of particular sets of constraints" (1985: 71). Overall, they identified three sets of constraints that teachers experience:

Societal constraints

- a) Large-scale socio-economic conditions, general political and cultural climate and nature of the educational system.
- b) More specific aspects of educational policy, for example the comprehensivization of schools.

Institutional constraints

- a) The teacher role.
- b) The management context.
- c) Pupils.
- d) The subject.
- e) Managing the hierarchy.
- f) Work context, equipment and resources.

Personal constraints

- a) Personal biography and early life influences.
- b) Family.
- c) Private interests.

(Sikes et al. 1985: 71-2)

Sikes et al. (1985) argue that teachers respond to these constraints by engaging in particular strategies. Before moving to a discussion on teacher strategies, I would like to focus on the constraints in more detail. As my discussion of Woods and Jeffrey's (2002) research will show, societal constraints, such as the introduction of a new educational policy, can have a profound effect on the experiences and identities of teachers. But also significant, argue Sikes et al. (1985: 232), are the institutional constraints:

Teacher careers are made and experienced within schools. The organization of the school, the personality, views and values of the head, and how the teacher relates to them, are profoundly important factors in a teacher's life. Headteachers are gatekeepers par excellence to preferred ends. [They] control advancement through promotions within the school, and the allocation of a significant element of job content through timetabling and resources.

Other institutional constraints, too, impact on a teacher's experiences. Building on work done by Hargreaves (1980), Sikes et al. discuss how status, competence and relationships at a school are major influences on a teacher's identity. Status relates to how the teacher perceives his or her status within a school and may also relate to the status of the subject he or she teaches, for example science is usually perceived to have higher status as a subject than home economics. Competence relates to the teacher's academic competence and ability to teach but also to his or her ability in "handling constraints, managing the role and career, devising and executing strategies" (Sikes et al. 1985: 242). Relationships include those with colleagues and management as well as relationships with pupils who, Sikes et al. argue, are for many teachers "the main reference group. They define teacher identities and affect their careers in a variety of ways" (1985: 242). The teacher's subject is another major consideration in teacher identity. Colleagues associated with the subject form another major reference group for teachers and this group may be based in the institution or beyond it.

Regarding personal factors such as family life and early life influences, Sikes et al. (1985: 92) comment that "there is enormous variation, and it is difficult to draw generalizations". The factors need to be considered in relation to the individual teacher. They argue strongly that a teacher's career has to be located within the whole life of a person and that it cannot be understood in isolation.

The constraints identified by Sikes et al. will be useful to help guide my data collection and the analysis of my findings. The constraints they list provide a useful checklist but also allow for individual teacher and institutional variation. As they comment: “Teachers do work with a number of given structural constraints, but they perceive them differently, and they react to them differently on the basis of their personality, biography and their work context” (1985: 8).

2.3.3 Teacher strategies

Sikes et al. (1985) suggest that teachers respond to the constraints they experience by engaging in particular strategies and they distinguish between public and private strategies. Public strategies are “those that involve a group of teachers acting together to gain their aims” (1985: 95), for example union activity and teachers working together within a school to deal with a particular issue or problem. Private strategies are those used by “individual teachers to gain their own individual objectives” (1985: 97) in dealing with a particular situation.

Sikes et al. (1985) present findings in relation to various private strategies that they observed in their sample of teachers, and from these they develop in finer detail the concept of ‘teacher strategy’. However, Woods refers to and further develops this work in *Teacher Skills and Strategies* (1990) and so it would be helpful to move to an examination of some of his research and the theoretical insights relating to ‘teacher identity’ and ‘teacher strategy’ that it has generated.

2.3.3.1 Relationship between commitment and accommodation

In *Teacher Skills and Strategies* (1990), Woods’s broad focus is to construct a theoretical model of teaching, the ‘opportunities to teach’ model, drawing on several research studies which took place in the UK from the late 1970s to 1990.

Woods (1990) argues that there are both internal and external factors influencing teaching and learning that take place in any given situation. There are factors internal to the teacher, namely commitment and interests, and external factors, notably societal constraints and institutional constraints. The two sets of factors interact upon each other and teachers accommodate the problems by engaging in particular strategies. Woods suggests that pressures on teachers differ according to the type of school they are at and the extent of the teacher’s commitment: “the less the commitment, the less the accommodation problem” (1990: 96) and “the firmer the commitment, the greater the accommodation” (1990: 117). For most teachers, Woods argues, there has been considerable investment in teaching as a career and

because of the concomitant sacrifices, for most people there is no second chance, no closing down and investing in another career. Teachers are stuck and must do the best they can. They cannot leave their positions, they cannot change the social order, they must therefore adapt. They must accommodate these problems ... Teachers accommodate by developing and using survival strategies. (1990: 96)

The relationship between accommodation and commitment promises to be an interesting one in my research site. Teachers who have left their home country in order to take up a position at the international school will already have given up a particular job and possible career structure in order to do so, thus it is likely that they will be committed to making the new international teaching opportunity work.

However, if the experience proves disappointing, the possibility for them to return to their home countries may be easier than for other international teachers, for example those married to Italian nationals. For them, alternative job possibilities may be fewer and so they may feel greater pressure to accommodate the various problems that arise.

2.3.3.2 Strategies closely bound to issues of identity

Woods shows that teachers never simply choose strategies in a vacuum: they are not a technical choice but are closely bound to issues of identity. Woods shows this by focusing on the experiences of two teachers, 'Dick' and 'Tom', who were teaching in the same school and who had

similar educational interests, aims and dedication, [but] one succeeds, and the other does not ... The answer lies, I argue, within the self and identity that each has constructed and seeks to promote, which in turn affects how they realize their interests, namely the coping strategies that they devise. (1990: 25)

The analysis that Woods provides of Dick, the social studies teacher, and Tom, the Head of the Art Department, is useful for my focus on identity and teacher strategies and is described in more detail.

Woods (1990: 125) outlines three main strategies that Dick uses at the school. Firstly, Dick made *constructive progress*: he was the instigator and major developer of a new social studies curriculum. Secondly, he engaged in *ambitious experimentation*: Dick experimented with progressive forms of teaching, strongly influenced by A.S. Neill's philosophy of education at Summerfield. He met with a mixed reception from learners and colleagues as the culture of the school was "much narrower" (1990: 125) than Summerfield. Thirdly, Dick engaged in *radical departures* from the school's "usual customs and structure" (126) in his attempts at reform: he established a School Council and used his position as editor of the school newspaper to call for a change in the power structure of the school. However, after a series of incidents "when the head had exerted himself and reinforced the status quo" (127), Dick resigned.

To help analyse Dick's use of strategies, Woods uses Lacey's (1977 cited in Woods 1990) model which proposes three modes of strategic orientation among teachers. Firstly there is "strategic compliance where the individual accepts the prevailing system though holds private reservations; (ii) internalized adjustment where the individual believes the prevailing system is the best; and (iii) strategic redefinition, where individuals actually achieve change" (Woods 1990: 129) by causing those with formal power to see the situation differently.

In applying Lacey's model of strategic orientation to Dick, Woods concludes that Dick is a "failed attempt" (1990: 130) at the third strategy. Woods, like Lacey, argues that for individuals to engage successfully in strategic redefinition, they need to have sound sociological awareness and he suggests that in Dick "there were shortcomings of an awareness which was necessary in a situation in which radical political change was attempted" (130). However, Woods argues that it is too simplistic to attribute Dick's lack of success to this factor alone. He argues that it is necessary to consider issues of identity in order to understand more fully Dick's use of strategies.

Woods draws on a number of conceptions of identity for his analysis. While he does not mention post-structuralist theories of identity construction, he does not have an essentialist view of a unified self and he continually highlights the social and political forces that influence construction of identity. He draws on Ball's (1972) work to distinguish between personal identity: "the image one has of oneself" and social identity: "the image others have" (Woods 1990: 138). He also uses Ball's concept of situated and substantial identities where substantial identities

have a more stable and enduring quality. Situated identities are more transient, more dependent on time, place and situation, though they interact with substantial identities and may affect them. If there is a wide divergence between the two, a great deal of negotiative work may be required by both actor and audience to salvage the substantial identity. (1990: 138)

Woods uses these concepts in his analysis of Dick. He argues that Dick was

concerned to claim a particularly radical personal and substantial identity, and that this was one of the main factors, ultimately, behind his eventual surrender. This would help explain the consistency of his behaviour, in fact *escalation* of attempted innovation, despite the evident lack of success. (1990: 138)

His actions, Woods suggests, were

in the service of [this] ... preferred identity ... Moving fairly rapidly from place to place was Dick's way of managing his identity as radical reformer, dedicated to certain ideals and principles, which admitted of no compromise ... Dick could only preserve his sense of who he was by leaving. Had he stayed, he would have been a changed man. (1990: 139-141)

Important, too, for the construction of Dick's radical identity, Woods argues, was the oppositional feedback Dick had from others, notably the headteacher. Similarly to Woodward (1997) who points out how identity depends on difference, Woods argues that in "shaping and honing [our] identities we need not only supportive feedback from others, but also contrastive" (1990: 139). Woods reflects on several clashes Dick had with the headteacher and concludes that for both of them the opposition from each other was necessary for the construction of a particular identity.

I suggest this was why he was so frequently outraged at the head's behaviour, and *vice versa*. They both took it personally, the headmaster who was so traditionalist 'it wasn't true' and the 'bloody anarchist' bent on nihilistic revolution. Having affixed these labels to each other, they seemed determined to make each other live up to them. Tom could have stepped outside these labels. Dick and the headmaster seemed to revel in them ... But in their outright condemnation of each other, each was reinforcing his own identity. (1990: 141-2)

Woods contrasts Dick's ultimate lack of success at the school with Tom's experiences. He identified the following strategies from Tom's account of his work at the school (1990: 152-3). The strategies include, firstly, *fighting for things he believed in*: Tom felt so strongly about the head that he and a colleague spearheaded a major complaints exercise against him. Tom used the strategy of *compromising*: he compromised on many issues but did so strategically so that he would give way in small issues in order to win on larger ones. Thirdly, Tom was seen to be *seeking a*

more conducive situation: he considered moving out of teaching and made this known to the head, which exerted pressure on him. Fourthly, Tom *cultivated marginality*: as head of the art department with his own art room, Tom developed a space where like-minded members of staff could meet. *Compartmentalising his self* was another strategy used by Tom. Woods suggests that Tom compartmentalised his self to the extent that he felt that his 'real' self was reserved for his home and that his public self as a teacher was comparatively unreal. Lastly, throughout his time at the school, Tom *engaged in creative coping strategies* to cope with the daily life of teaching and the ongoing challenges that working in the institution entailed. Woods argues that Tom's creativity became displaced from art and teaching to coping.

In applying Lacey's modes of strategic orientation to Tom, Woods argues that Tom displays the third orientation, strategic redefinition, with some of the first, strategic compliance, as well. Woods attributes Tom's success in remaining at the school, and in a position of relative power, partly to Tom's sociological awareness: he "appeared to have sound theoretical knowledge of the situation geared to practical knowledge" (1990: 130). Tom's strategies were "characterized by opportunism, testing out chances on a limited front, and seizing whatever possibilities present themselves to further one's aims" (131). Whereas Dick tried to revolutionise the power structure of the school, Tom "worked to gain power in the system, and to influence those in the upper hierarchy" (129). He used his position as Head of the Art Department and his friendship with the Chairman of the Governors to further what he believed in when difficult situations arose.

However, in relation to identity issues, Woods argues that Tom's success in remaining at the school, seemingly on his own terms, was at the cost of his identity as an artist and as teacher. The energy that he needed in order to cope with difficult situations at the school was channelled away from his teaching and his art. Tom recounted to Woods that he made a decision later in his career to continue at the school for economic reasons so that he could provide for his family. Woods argues that Tom surrendered "some of his interests as artist and as teacher for satisfactions as husband and father" (1990: 163). Tom's success in staying at the school came at a personal cost and feeling that his self had become compartmentalised was just one of the results.

Woods's analysis of Dick and Tom has highlighted how issues of identity are closely linked to particular strategies a teacher might use. Lacey's model of strategic orientation is useful as a starting point for analysing a teacher's use of strategies, but Woods suggests that when examining an individual's experiences in an institution, one needs to understand issues of identity that may be at play in order to make sense of the individual's actions and choices and use of strategies in particular situations. This insight promises to be an important one for my analysis of the teachers in my research site.

Woods suggests that the successful use of the third strategy in Lacey's model (i.e. strategic redefinition where the individual achieves change by causing those with formal power to see the situation differently) is dependent on an individual's sociological awareness. This insight could be important in relation to my research site. I would argue that in an international setting, intercultural awareness, for example understanding power relations between a manager and employee, would be part of a

teacher's sociological awareness. Teachers who are new to a country might struggle to 'read' and make sense of the work context at first; their sociological awareness may be limited. This could be an interesting insight to keep in mind when analysing the teachers' use of strategies.

2.3.3.3 Critical phase: profound impact on teachers' identities

The third research study that is discussed is by Woods and Jeffrey (2002). They examine the impact of the introduction of new educational policies on primary school teachers in the UK and the particular strategies that teachers adopt in response to the issues and problems that they experience. This study is informed by the previous studies by Sikes et al. (1985) and Woods (1990) and builds on the work they developed regarding teacher identity and teacher strategy. Although I would argue that Woods has never had an essentialist view of identity, this is the first study in which post-structuralist theories of identity are drawn on explicitly. As with the previous studies, there are a number of insights relating to teacher identity and teacher strategy that are useful for my research focus.

The introduction of a new educational policy constitutes a critical phase in the careers of the teachers who are affected by it (Sikes et al. 1985: 71). Woods and Jeffrey (2002) examine the effects of the national Office for the Standards in Education (Ofsted) inspections on teachers in the period 1994 to 1999 and argue that the consequences of the new policies on teachers' identities have been profound. They show how the new policy-assigned identity for teachers was completely at odds with what they call the teachers' 'self-identities'² formed in the period of the 1970s and 1980s, the Plowden era.³ During this time, teachers experienced a fusing, a complete 'at-one-ness' of their professional identities and their personal identities. Woods and Jeffrey observe that teachers' identities in the Plowden era were based on two major sets of values: humanism (holistic, child-centred values) and vocationalism (the notion of teaching as a vocation, a calling). Teachers felt able "to invest their personal sense of identity in their work" (Nias 1989: 225 cited in Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 90).

Woods and Jeffrey (2002) argue that the reconstruction of the education system in the UK from the mid-1990s onwards has demanded a new role for teachers based on new sets of values. The holism of the child-centred discourse has given way to a new discourse of performativity which emphasises managerial aspects of the teacher role. Good teaching in the past was seen to be based on humanist, child-centred qualities but is now seen as a matter of "teacher competencies, such as subject expertise, coordination, collaboration, management and supervision" (2002: 95). Practices that before were left to teachers' professional judgement are now controlled as there are procedures and records for all aspects of practice. Woods and Jeffrey quote one teacher who said that she felt she should "Chop off the top of my head and show someone what's in it," (2002: 95) while another teacher commented, "It's almost like

² Woods and Jeffrey define self-identities as a mixture of personal identities: "the meanings attributed to the self by the actor" (Ball 1972 cited in Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 89), and self-concept: "the overarching view of oneself as a physical, social, spiritual or moral being" and a "working compromise between idealized images and imputed social identities" (Snow and Anderson 1987: 1348 cited in Woods and Jeffrey *ibid.* 90).

³ This period is often referred to as the Plowden era because of the influential Plowden Report released in 1967.

telling us to change our personalities” (2002: 96). The new role assigned by policy “thus appears to demand a radical change of identity” (96) for many teachers whose values and careers were established in the Plowden era.

2.3.3.4 Four dilemmas faced by teachers and their resolution of them

Woods and Jeffrey (2002: 90) suggest that the situation has led to several dilemmas for teachers. They use Giddens’s (1991) description of four dilemmas that typically confront the self in late modernity: “(1) the degree to which the self is unified or becomes fragmented; (2) whether one appropriates the changes to one’s own concerns, or feels powerless before the scale and depth of the changes; (3) the question of authority versus uncertainty; and (4) personalized versus commodified experience” (2002: 90). Using Giddens’s (1991) framework they note the following dilemmas observed in the primary school teachers:

1. The previously unified self is in danger of becoming fragmented in a number of ways. There is a yearning by teachers to retain the old values, but strong pressure on them to adopt a new persona.
2. There is an assault on teacher autonomy, and an introduction of far-reaching strongly prescribed changes, sustained over a period, leaving teachers with a feeling of powerlessness. Little attention is paid to their views. They are no longer trusted. They are under almost continuous surveillance.
3. A strong note has been introduced into teachers’ minds about their work and their selves. The constant pressure and criticism breeds uncertainty in teachers about their abilities, aims, relationships and commitment to teaching. In some instances, there is a feeling of anomie ... all sense of reality and who they are being lost.
4. We have seen how commodified has come to challenge personalized experience. Consumerism has replaced care ... Competencies have replaced personal qualities as criteria of the good teacher. (Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 97)

Woods and Jeffrey’s research found that the main way in which the primary school teachers went about resolving these dilemmas was to engage in “identity work” (Snow and Anderson 1987: 1348 cited in Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 98), which Woods and Jeffrey define as activities in which individuals construct and sustain identities that are congruent with their existing identities. The identity work largely took the form of “identity talk” involving the “verbal construction and assertion of personal identities” (Snow and Anderson 1987: 1348 cited in Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 98). The identity talk conveyed a great deal of feeling, for example anger, feelings of injustice and courage, as the teachers felt disempowered and were trying to generate identities that bolstered their sense of self-worth and dignity (Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 98).

Woods and Jeffrey’s analysis shows two major patterns of response in the identity work: the mainly emotional work of ‘self-positioning’ and the mainly intellectual work of ‘identity strategies’ (2002: 99). Each of these will be discussed in turn.

In the response of self-positioning, many teachers refused to embrace the new policy-assigned identity and worked to maintain the Plowden self-identity. However, struggling with a sense of powerlessness, many teachers needed to summon all their resolve to do so. Some expressed a sense of superiority over the inspectors: “I’m better than any of them on my worst day,” (Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 100), while others engaged in formal complaint, such as writing a letter. Some teachers developed

a 'bottom line' or an exit option for themselves, for example leaving teaching "if people push too far" (2002: 100).

Teachers engaged in a variety of identity strategies, such as self-displacement, game playing and realignment. Woods and Jeffrey discuss how all of these strategies

involved some separation of the self from the new, assigned social identity. They necessitated the development of new personal identities, sufficient to meet the ostensible requirements (although not the spirit) of the new social identity, while reserving and cultivating what to them were more important aspects of the self for their private life outside the teacher role. In this sense, their erstwhile substantial self-identities have been dismembered, the 'substantial' element of aspects they hold most near and dear now being displaced to life outside teaching, while their personal identities within teaching have become more 'situational', constructed to meet different situations and purposes with which they might be presented, but in which they feel they cannot invest their full selves. (2002: 100-101)

In a strategy of self-displacement, many teachers distanced themselves from the Ofsted inspections in which they were required to display the competencies of the new assigned role, for example:

as I told you it wasn't me. It was somebody else that they looked at. They can think what they like ... They can please themselves what they do; I don't care. I will do what I have got to do. I will smile when I have to smile, I will be somebody else, when I have to be somebody else but they aren't going to get to me. (Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 101)

Another strategy was for many teachers deliberately to put on a show and 'play the game' that the inspectors wanted, as the above quotation suggests, but many felt ambivalent about it: "I told myself that I wasn't going to play the game, but I am and I know they know that I am. I don't respect myself for it" (2002: 102). Woods and Jeffrey comment that game playing "can leave teachers ambivalent about their self-identity. In the face of authority and loss of trust, uncertainty occurs and creates yet another dilemma for teachers" (2002: 102-3). In both the strategies of self-displacement and game playing, teachers outwardly seemed to meet the requirements of the new social identity, while inwardly entertaining reservations.

The strategy of realignment involves teachers recognising that their sense of self is no longer unified and whole but that some significant areas are "in tension with each other. This necessitates teachers reviewing the balance of their selves and social roles and re-prioritizing" (Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 103). A common strategy was for teachers to separate out the identities of home and school as these quotations from two teachers show:

I don't feel I have a career anymore, not at all. This is just a job, a means to earn some money until I am retired. I have no commitment whatsoever, it has gone out the window.

It's a job and I do it and I'm also *me*. But there's no place for me now". (2002: 103)

These quotations illustrate how, crucially, teachers may lose their sense of vocation in the process of realignment. Woods and Jeffrey comment that some teachers have

constructed 'new' school identities which are completely at odds with the humanistic values of the Plowden teacher and that "the more the self is dedicated to the [humanistic] values, the more difficult is the resolution of this problem" (2002: 104). In general, they conclude

teachers have been forced to become more strategic and political in defending their self-identities against the countervailing inroads of the new teacher social identity. Their priorities have been to hold on to their values and their self-esteem, while adjusting their commitment and other aspects of the holistic approach ... Education is the loser here on two counts. First, identity work consumes enormous emotional and intellectual energy that might otherwise be dedicated to teaching. Second, the teacher's personal identity in the new order is partial, fragmented and inferior to that of the old in that teachers retain a sense of the ideal self, but it is no longer in teaching. The personal identity of work has become a situational one, designed to meet the purposes of audit accountability. Teachers' real selves are held in reserve, to be realized in other situations outside school or in some different future within. (2002: 104-5)

Woods and Jeffrey suggest that their research both challenges and supports post-structuralist theories of identity. They suggest that it challenges these theories if one accepts the 'essentialist' view of the teachers' 'real' or 'true' selves. However, they also claim that their research supports post-structuralist theories in that the evidence suggests that the teachers' identities "are in flux, there is no settled state. There are signs of multiple and situational identities that were not there before in the integrated self-identity" (2002: 105). As my theoretical perspective is informed by post-structuralist theories of identity, Woods' and Jeffrey's research is useful in that it shows clearly the profound effects of a critical phase on teachers' identities. The introduction of new educational policies provoked an 'identity crisis' amongst their sample of teachers and the teacher and personal identities that many teachers previously experienced as unified and coherent were fragmented and experienced as contradictory, unsettled and shifting. My research is focusing on a sample of teachers who, similarly, are experiencing a critical phase in their teaching career and their experiences may also raise particular issues of identity for them. Woods and Jeffrey's study provides a detailed description of how their sample of teachers resolved the dilemmas confronting them by engaging in identity work. They identify various identity strategies employed by teachers such as self-displacement and realignment. While it is unlikely that my sample of teachers will engage in identical strategies, the strategies outlined here provide a useful basis for comparison during my analysis stage.

2.4 Insights from literature on international education

This section focuses on literature on international education that is pertinent to my research. The literature on international education indicates that there is a recognition of and interest in the concept of identity in an international school context. One of the current concerns is to classify the range of international schools that exist and to define the term 'international' in doing so (e.g. Sylvester 1998; Hayden and Thompson 1996). Several theorists (e.g. Allan 2002; Heyward 2002) are interested in the international school as a site of intercultural learning and focus particularly on this in relation to the international school student. Allan (2002: 80) suggests that the international student has the potential "to achieve a bi-cultural or multicultural

personality” and Heyward (2002: 9) argues that the student needs to develop intercultural literacy, which includes, *inter alia*, “the identities necessary for cross-cultural engagement”. Much of the literature on international education that focuses on the teacher does so in relation to the students’ learning and teaching experiences (Joslin 2002: 33) and, of the literature surveyed, there is no specific focus on teacher identity in an international school environment.

However, several studies highlight issues that may impact on teachers’ experiences in an international context. Three articles, in particular, by international school educationalists Mark Heyward (2002), Pamela Joslin (2002) and Rosalind Stirzaker (2004) are relevant to my research. Heyward’s (2002) article, mentioned above, while focusing particularly on the international school student, proposes a model of intercultural literacy that is equally relevant to the international schoolteacher; he argues that programmes to address intercultural literacy in schools should begin with staff. Heyward’s (2002: 28) model describes different levels of cultural awareness, from a limited stage of monocultural awareness to a stage of highly-developed intercultural awareness, and he claims that any person engaging with a new culture can be placed somewhere along the continuum. One of the dimensions of the model is ‘identities’ and Heyward argues that the culture shock that people may experience while engaging with a new culture “may force an examination of cultural identity” (2002: 17). Heyward’s model has the potential to offer useful insights in relation to the teachers in my research sample, all of whom engage with a new culture as part of their experience in teaching in Italy. Joslin’s (2002) and Stirzaker’s (2004) articles focus on teachers as the primary research subject and their specific focus is on teachers working in an international school context for the first time. While Joslin and Stirzaker do not examine the issue of teacher identity, they raise issues about teachers moving to an international school context that are pertinent for my research. Joslin identifies a range of cultural dimensions associated with a teacher relocating to an international school outside his or her home country and she argues that successful cultural adaptation should incorporate the development of the teacher’s own culture, beliefs and values. Stirzaker focuses on the issue of staff induction in international schools and she describes the benefits and features of a successful induction process. Both Joslin and Stirzaker’s articles thus provide a description of some of the issues that teachers moving to an international school setting might encounter, and some suggestions for dealing with them, which could help provide a basis for interpreting and analysing my data. Each of the three articles will be described in more detail in this section.

2.4.1 A model for the development of intercultural literacy

Heyward’s model of intercultural literacy is underpinned by a belief that international schools “might be better conceptualized as ‘intercultural’ rather than ‘international’ in the globalized world of the early 21st century” (2002: 10). He claims that international schools emerged as a category of educational institution in the 1950s, a time when the nation state was significant and national cultural identity was emphasised. However, in the globalised twenty-first century, he argues that “complex cultural, economic, political and human flows ignore national borders, and national cultural identities form just one layer in the multiple cultural identities of human beings” (2002: 23).

Heyward (2002: 23) suggests that the implications of this for international schools are profound: “The kinds of competencies, understandings, attitudes and identities that

might have worked in the 1950s are no longer adequate". Schools, he argues, need an understanding of intercultural literacy and he defines an interculturally literate person as someone who

possesses the understandings, competencies, attitudes and identities necessary for successful living and working in a cross-cultural or pluralist setting. He or she has the background required effectively to 'read' a second culture, to interpret its symbols and negotiate its meanings in a practical day-to-day context. (2002: 10)

Heyward describes how his model for the development of intercultural literacy builds on previous culture shock and cross-cultural adjustment models. Culture shock, a concept introduced by Oberg in 1958, describes some of the difficulties individuals experience as a result of cross-cultural contact (Heyward 2002: 12). Heyward synthesises the different stages of culture shock that theorists of culture shock have posited:

Stage 1: A period of incubation during which time the sojourner may feel highly elated. Characterized by the excitement and euphoria of foreign travel. Knowledge of local customs is superficial and the focus is more on cultural similarities than differences.

Stage 2: A period of crisis relating from genuine difficulties that the sojourner encounters in a different culture. Personal, social and cultural differences intrude into the individual's image of self-security. A stage of hostility.

Stage 3: A period of recovery in which the sojourner begins to understand some of the cues of the host culture. The individual begins to learn more of the local culture, makes friends with hosts and effects a gradual recovery. A stage of improved adjustment.

Stage 4: A period of near or complete recovery in which the sojourner accepts the host culture. Characterized by a more complete understanding of the host culture, and an ability to cope with stress. A stage of biculturalism.

(Heyward 2002: 12)

Heyward (2002) explains how culture shock was initially described in negative terms, often using the metaphor of an illness or trauma. However, in the 1980s, culture shock was reconceptualised in positive terms as a learning experience and several theorists reformulated the culture shock model to one of cross-cultural adjustment, although the basic stages were similar to the culture shock model.

Heyward's model (see Table 1) draws on both the culture shock and the cross-cultural adjustment models. Underpinning this model of intercultural literacy, Heyward points out, are the assumptions that culture is constructed, that learning is constructivist and that becoming interculturally literate is a "process of creating or constructing new meanings" (2002: 18). The idealised end point, he argues, is that an individual will be skilled in shifting between multiple identities, one of which might be a bicultural or transcultural identity or a 'global' identity' (2002: 18).

Heyward (2002) suggests that cross-cultural contact is not sufficient for a person to become interculturally literate. A person may remain at levels one, two or three of the model and a common response at these levels is "exaggerated affirmation of the home culture, of its symbols and values" (2002: 27). He argues that it is "the shock of cross-cultural contact, the crisis of engagement" (2002: 18) that stimulates the learning process, which is active rather than passive. In the process, the individual does not

just learn about another culture but learns about him or herself in culture: “It is through the experience of confronting oneself in another culture that the individual’s own cultural identity and intercultural attitudes are formed” (2002: 19).

Table 1: A model for the development of intercultural literacy

	Monocultural Level 1 <i>Limited awareness</i> <i>Unconsciously incompetent</i>	Monocultural Level 2 <i>Naïve awareness</i> <i>Unconsciously incompetent</i>	Monocultural Level 3 <i>Engagement-distancing</i> <i>Consciously incompetent</i>	Crosscultural level <i>Emerging intercultural literacy</i> <i>Consciously competent</i>	Intercultural level <i>Bicultural or transcultural</i> <i>Unconsciously competent</i>
Understandings	No significant intercultural understandings. Unaware of own culture or the significance of culture in human affairs.	Aware of touristic, exotic and stereotypical aspects of other culture(s). Little understanding of metaculture.	Aware of significant cultural differences. Other culture(s) perceived as irrational and unbelievable.	Increasingly sophisticated understandings of socio-political and intergroup aspects of culture and metaculture.	Aware of how culture(s) feel and operate from the standpoint of the insider. Understandings of primary and metaculture and global interdependence.
Competencies	No significant intercultural competencies.	No significant intercultural competencies.	No significant intercultural competencies.	Developing competencies include mindfulness, empathy, perspective-taking, tolerance and communication.	Advanced competencies include mindfulness, empathy, perspective-taking, tolerance and communication.
Attitudes	No significant intercultural attitudes. Assumes that all groups share similar values and traits. Value neutral.	Naïve and stereotypical attitudes which may be positive, negative or ambivalent.	Typically negative attitudes. Stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination.	Differentiated, dynamic and realistic attitudes. An overall respect for integrity of culture(s).	Differentiated, dynamic and realistic attitudes. An overall respect for integrity of culture(s) accompanied by legitimate and informed attitudes.
Participation	No significant participation or unaware of cultural dimension of contact.	Tourism, early contact, ‘honeymoon’ period or experience of culture(s) through texts, media etc. ‘Living alongside’ rather than ‘living with’.	Culture conflict. ‘Living alongside’ rather than ‘living with’.	Increasing cross-cultural engagement and development of meaningful relationships. ‘Living with’ rather than ‘living alongside’.	Well established cross-cultural/transcultural friendships and/or working relationships. ‘Living in’ the culture(s). The ‘mediating’ person.
Language proficiencies	No significant second language competencies. May be unaware of language differences.	Awareness of language differences. Possible ability to communicate at a superficial level in the second language(s) (greetings etc.)	Limited functional proficiencies in the second language(s).	Language learning. Increasingly sophisticated knowledge of and ability to communicate in second language(s).	Bilingual or multilingual understanding and proficiencies.

Identities	Unformed cultural identity.	Basic primary cultural identity characterised by stereotypic comparisons with other cultures.	Culture shock may force an examination of cultural identity.	Increasingly highly developed and secure primary cultural identity. Awareness of multiple cultural identities.	Bicultural or transcultural identity. 'Speci or 'global' ider may emerge. A to consciously between multip cultural identi
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Source: Heyward 2002: 16-17

Thus, Heyward suggests that the process of intercultural learning has definite identity implications. Individuals may become conscious, perhaps for the first time, of themselves as individuals formed in culture and the experience of culture shock "may force an examination of cultural identity" (2002: 17). In the process of becoming interculturally literate, the individual may reconstruct their cultural identity and, as Heyward suggests, adopt a more bicultural or transcultural identity.

Heyward suggests that the social context within which the cross-cultural experience takes place is a vital factor in the development of intercultural literacy. He argues that intercultural learning is facilitated in a supportive context while in an unsupportive context "distancing or identity confusion may result" (2002: 20). To create a supportive school environment, Heyward proposes various measures such as pairing a student with a cultural mediator, a friend or mentor who is sufficiently literate in the home and host cultures, to help 'translate' the new culture to the student (2002: 28).

Heyward's article contains several insights that are very helpful for my study. His model is potentially useful as a tool for understanding and analysing the experiences of the teachers in my research sample. An analysis of each teacher's location in terms of intercultural literacy could help make sense of his or her understandings, attitudes and responses to particular situations as well as the identities experienced in the international school setting. Heyward's conception of multiple identities is clearly compatible with post-structuralist theories of identity and his claim that culture shock can force an examination of cultural identity is very helpful. It is likely that most or all of the teachers in my sample will have experienced culture shock soon after their arrival; those teachers whom I interview within their first year of starting at the school might still be in a stage of recovery from culture shock. Culture shock may serve to fragment or shatter an identity that a teacher in the past experienced as coherent, stable and unified. Heyward suggests that as individuals recover from culture shock and become more interculturally aware there may be a reconstruction of their identity with a possible adoption of a bicultural, transcultural or global identity; the extent to which this is applicable to the teachers in my sample will be analysed.

Heyward argues that the social context plays an important role in an individual becoming interculturally literate and my analysis of the teachers in relation to the model of intercultural literacy will take this factor into account. Heyward's suggestion that schools can create a supportive environment, for example by pairing students with cultural mediators, could be equally valid in helping teachers become interculturally literate and will be kept in mind.

2.4.2 Cultural dimensions impacting on teacher relocation

Joslin's (2002) focus is on how to prepare teachers to make the transition from teaching in a national system of education to teaching in an international school. For teachers to make a successful transition, she argues that they need to be able to adapt culturally both to the culture of the international school and to the culture of the new country. Joslin suggests that the following six cultural dimensions impact on the teacher in the new setting: the school's organisational culture; the international school's mission; the local community culture, for example the expatriate community; the regional culture and host nation's culture or subcultures; the teacher's own cultural heritage; and the teacher's previous work culture or 'home' country professional culture. Joslin discusses the first four factors in detail and points from her discussion that are relevant to my research focus will be highlighted.

Joslin argues that the organisational culture of a school can have a significant impact on the teacher. She defines a school's organisational culture as "its 'personality' manifested in the way that work is done; in its practices, communication system, physical form and common language" (Blandford 2000: 35 cited in Joslin 2002: 35). The organisational culture influences the ethos of the school which manifests in the "norms and values held about how people should treat each other and the nature of the working relationships that should be developed" (2002: 35). In any school, factors such as the multiculturalism and multilingualism of students and staff, the nature of the curriculum and the management style of the administration may impact on the organisational culture of the school but in an international school these factors may be present to a greater extent.

The mission of the international school is another factor that Joslin argues affects the new teacher's adaptation. Like other writers on international education (e.g. Sylvester, 2002), Joslin comments that there is a very wide range of schools and institutions loosely bracketed under the term 'international school' (2002: 37). Joslin follows Sylvester's (1998) and Hayden and Thompson's (1996) classification of international schools as those with 'inclusive' school missions or those with 'encapsulated' school missions: these are two poles of the continuum of international schools.⁴ Inclusive international schools are characterised by "exposure to others of different cultures within the school; teachers as exemplars of 'international mindedness'; exposure to others of different cultures outside the institution; a balanced formal curriculum; and a management regime whose values are consistent with an institutional international philosophy" (Joslin 2002: 40).

Encapsulated schools fall short of the above attributes and, rather, are characterised by a "limited diversity of parent/student cultures; teaching limited to culture-specific pedagogy; the school managing the multicultural experience; a curriculum that is narrowly targeted; and a value system that is a product of an imported school culture" (Joslin 2002: 40-41). An example of an encapsulated school would be a British international school, which closely follows the British national curriculum, in a country outside Britain.

⁴ I would argue that it is also important to identify the category of 'for profit' schools (International Schools Review 2006) and that IES as privately owned school falls into this category.

Joslin (2002) argues that the inclusive and encapsulated international schools are very different and that one of the implications of this is that they require teachers with different kinds of skills and attributes. In the inclusive school, teachers need to display 'international mindedness' with attributes such as being able to transcend national boundaries and loyalties and being committed to encouraging intercultural and international understanding. In contrast, the encapsulated school may require teachers with culture-specific training. The difference between the inclusive and encapsulated school curriculum is a factor that has the potential to impact on new international teachers in different ways. Joslin (2002: 43) comments that teachers who have only experienced "a national system such as the rather prescriptive national curriculum of England and Wales", for example, may be daunted when faced with a freer curriculum, such as one created from first principles. On the other hand, such teachers may find the unaccustomed freedom "a reason for celebration" (2002: 43).

Joslin argues that for teachers to adapt successfully to teaching in an international school, they need to expect, understand and manage a period of culture shock, which she defines as explaining both the symptoms and the process of adapting to a different culture (2002: 49). She suggests that individuals will move through different stages of culture shock, including a stage in which they "accept that their own seemingly 'right' way of seeing the world needs to be 'unpacked' and questioned" (Joslin 2002: 49), which is similar to Heyward's (2002: 17) point that culture shock "may force an examination of cultural identity" (see 2.4.1). However, she also suggests, like Heyward (2002), that intercultural literacy is a possible outcome of the process: "once the inherent rightness of our way of seeing the world has been shattered then progress may be made along the path to cultural understanding" (2002: 58.).

Joslin (2002) suggests several ways in which teachers can be prepared effectively for the international teaching context. These include pre-departure and INSET training programmes and self-learning engaged in by the teacher. Joslin argues that although there is a place for short pre-departure orientation programmes, these are just one option rather than a "panacea" (2002: 58) partly because it is "unrealistic to expect potential international teachers to develop an awareness of the behaviour and values of people from other cultures in a matter of days or weeks through short training courses" (2002: 58). She observes that the provision of pre-departure programmes for potential international school teachers has been lacking to date although there are several INSET opportunities for teachers already working in the international context. For example, the University of Bath offers professional development courses for international teachers and the British Council offers both UK based and on-site training (2002: 55). Ultimately, however, she suggests that one of the most effective long-term solutions may be for teachers to engage in a period of self-learning which will help develop the necessary intercultural literacy to equip them to work in a multicultural environment. She says this could

encourage the development of an in-depth understanding of one's own culture, beliefs and values. This may seem a simple and obvious approach, for we can only appreciate the impact of our behaviour on others and the reasons why we act as we do verbalizing our own culture. (2002: 58)

Joslin's article provides useful information for the interpretation and analysis of my findings. Her insights about the factors that impact on a newly relocated teacher,

including the organisational culture of the school and the mission of the international school, are useful to analyse some of the issues identified by teachers in my research sample. Like Heyward (2002), Joslin identifies culture shock as an important factor in an individual's early experiences in a new culture and this reinforces the potential importance of this factor in the experiences of the teachers in my sample. Ultimately, Joslin suggests that for a teacher to adapt successfully to an international school context, s/he needs to engage in a process of self-learning in which there is individual reflection on his or her own cultural values and beliefs in relation to the new culture. It will be interesting to analyse whether this seems to be a factor for successful adaptation in the case of the teachers in my sample.

2.4.3 Staff induction in international schools

Joslin's focus is on how best to prepare a teacher relocating to an international school's context. Stirzaker (2004) argues for the importance of the school effectively preparing new teachers through a process of induction. In her article, Stirzaker argues for moving beyond a common understanding of induction as a short one-day or week long training programme for new staff and defines it, rather, as a process of planned activities that takes place over several months until the new staff member feels integrated and competent (2004: 34). She comments that many experienced but relocated teachers feel "unexpectedly 'de-skilled' in a new school because an unfamiliar set of pupils react to them differently" (2004: 32). She does not identify other factors which could cause teachers to feel deskilled but I would argue that several factors identified by Joslin, such as an unfamiliar organisational culture, could work in the same way. I would argue that there are any number of factors during a period of culture shock that could have the effect of deskilling teachers.

Stirzaker (2004) argues that well-managed induction can offer numerous benefits to both the school and new staff members. An induction programme can help create positive first impressions of the organisation and reassure teachers that they made the right move in joining the school, thus it can boost their motivation and commitment. Integration is a key aspect of induction and an orientation programme can help new teachers integrate with established staff members and achieve a clear understanding of their role within the organisation. However, a badly managed induction programme, comments Stirzaker, can create unfavourable first impressions of the school leading to a sense of disillusionment and demotivation amongst new staff members. She argues that there is a strong correlation between unsuccessful induction and early decisions to leave the organisation, which could result in a high turnover of staff. Staff who decide to stay for a period of time and then leave "may also harm the organization (both its image and internally) by having a restless and unsettling influence" (2004: 34).

Stirzaker identifies several features that support successful induction, such as the status and staffing of the programme and the length of time it is run for. She argues that the organisational culture of the school should be congruent with the induction: "the culture of the organization can either support or undermine the whole induction process" (2004: 40). Existing employees and the staffroom grapevine, for example, can wield an influence on new staff members and they may send messages that are quite different to those given officially in the induction programme, which could confuse new teachers (2004: 40). The induction may create false expectations for teachers if its key messages are not borne out in the everyday work life of the school.

Stirzaker argues that induction should involve heads of department and senior management, administrative staff. She also suggests that other staff members could become a designated 'buddy' or mentor to help new staff members understand the new work environment and the wider cultural context of the new country. A buddy could help offer "sustained emotional support offered to a new recruit" (2004: 41) and help create a sense of belonging for new staff members. She acknowledges, however, that

this sense of 'belonging' may develop most strongly among the new recruits who start together ... and the bonding that takes place in an overseas context is often very strong. They do everything new together and the friendships made within the 'peer group' tend to last. (2004: 43)

Possible disadvantages, however, are that an over-dependence on the peer group can inhibit integration within the wider staff body and that the peer group can reinforce negative impressions of the school (2004: 43). For these reasons, she suggests that the buddy system can act as a safety net.

In many schools there is a multicultural staff composition. Stirzaker suggests that the implications of this are wide ranging as it means that there will be

a body of staff with a much greater variety of educational philosophies (i.e. different staff perceptions of 'ability' and how this should be judged; a particularly wide range of teaching styles; very different ways of relating to pupils and other staff). There is no real 'shared understanding' of the teacher's role that can be taken for granted. (2004: 45-6)

Stirzaker comments that cultural factors, such as the ones listed above, can be divisive. Woods (1990: 78) argues that there can be a clash of values and that when "value systems collide and promote conflict" there may be culture clash. Stirzaker argues that it is important for the school to create cultural awareness of potentially sensitive issues, for example through in-house seminars (2004: 46), which could take place both at the induction stage and as a follow-up.

Stirzaker's focus on the induction of new teachers into international schools raises several issues of interest for my research. She argues that induction, whether well managed or badly managed, is an important factor in teachers adapting to their new school and, ultimately, has the potential to influence whether teachers stay at the school for several years or become 'early leavers'. As four of the seven teachers in my research sample began teaching in September 2003 and were interviewed in April and May 2004, the period of their induction was likely to be fresh in their minds and it would be interesting how they reflect on this period and whether they raise any particular issues in relation to it.

Stirzaker's paper highlights the importance of relationships for the new teacher in an international context. She argues for creating a buddy or mentor system for the new teacher so that they can integrate well into the existing staff but acknowledges that the new staff may form their own peer group in which strong bonds can occur. It will be interesting to examine the relationships of the new teachers of the International English School to see how integrated they are with the Italian staff and existing international staff and to see whether a peer group of new recruits is formed.

Stirzaker lists some of the cultural factors that a multicultural staff might not share a common understanding of, such as the role of the teacher. As the staff composition at the International English School includes Italian teachers and English-speaking teachers from a range of countries including the UK, the US, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand, the factors identified by Stirzaker may be applicable and are potentially important for my focus on identity. For example, if staff have differing perceptions of the teacher's role, then there is potential for discord and conflict as this role is integral to teacher identity and teachers' beliefs about being a "proper teacher" (Sikes et al. 1985: 69). If conflict results from a collision of value systems, then whose perceptions of the teacher's role are recognised and whose are misrecognised, to use Skegg's (2002b: 366) term, would be very interesting and would be likely to form part of the power relations at the school.

2.5 Concluding comments: Linking the theoretical perspectives

This section provides a summary of how the three theoretical perspectives and research from international education outlined in this chapter have informed my approach to the research.

Firstly, my approach is informed by post-structuralist theories which critique an essentialist view of identity as universal, stable or coherent and argue that it is socially constructed and open to continual change. This view of identity means that I will not assume that my research will 'uncover' each of my research participant's 'real', pre-existing or unchanging identity as a teacher. Rather, I work with an understanding that the participants will construct an identity rather than simply reporting on a "ready fashioned" identity (Sikes et al. 1985: 240) in the research process and that this identity will be partial, provisional, emergent and subject to change. The next chapter provides an outline of my research methodology and this point will be revisited there.

Secondly, critical theory has shaped my understanding of the political nature of identity and how it is always linked to power relations in particular sites of practice. I will be sensitive to how notions of teacher identity can be constructed by those in power, and the effects that these constructions may have on teachers' identities. Skeggs (2002a) emphasises that identity has a value and that it is often used as a resource. This suggests an analysis of how 'international' and 'English' in the name of the school are constructed as part of the school's institutional identity, and of the effect this may have on the teachers at the school.

Hall (1996: 13-14) argued that theoretical work on identity should develop

a theory of what the mechanisms are by which individuals as subjects identify (or do not identify) with the 'positions' to which they are summoned; as well as how they fashion, stylize, produce and 'perform' these positions, and why they never do so completely, for once and for all time, and some never do, or are in a constant, antagonistic process of struggling with, resisting, negotiating and accommodating the normative or regulative rules with which they confront and regulate themselves.

This quotation links closely with the studies by Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985), Woods (1990) and Woods and Jeffrey (2002), which I have used as the third strand in my theoretical perspective. I have pointed out that only in the Woods and Jeffrey (2002) study have the researchers explicitly drawn on post-structuralist theories of

identity construction, but I would argue that a view of identity as socially constructed has always informed their approach and that the insights they provide into the construction of teacher identity in particular sites of practice are compatible with both post-structuralist and critical theories.

The three studies provide a fine-grained analysis of how a sample of teachers identify (or do not identify) with particular teacher positions during particular phases in their career. These phases may constitute a “critical phase” (Sikes et al. 1985: 57) in their career and teachers may experience “critical incidents [which] reveal, like a flashbulb, the major choice and change times in people’s lives” (1985: 58). Using Giddens’s (1991) theory, teachers are confronted by particular dilemmas. How teachers choose to ‘perform’ the “positions to which they are summoned” (Hall 1996: 13), and so resolve the dilemmas, forms part of a process that involves some accommodation but also some resistance and some negotiation by teachers. The three studies provide a useful understanding of how teacher strategies operate in a particular site of practice, and how strategies are always linked to issues of identity. To summarise, these are the insights arising from the educational studies, and the theories they have drawn on, that will help to guide my research:

- There are critical phases in a teacher’s career within which critical incidents occur that have important consequences for the construction of teacher identity.
- The societal, institutional and personal constraints that teachers experience lead to teachers engaging in particular strategies.
- There is a relationship between a teacher’s commitment to teaching and to an institution and the teacher’s accommodation of the various constraints that he or she experiences.
- The strategies teachers engage in are never technical issues but are closely bound to issues of identity.
- Teachers may resolve the issues by engaging in identity work and the adoption of particular strategies.

Finally, my approach to the research is informed by insights from the literature on international education. Heyward’s (2002) model of intercultural literacy describes different levels of intercultural awareness from a limited stage of monocultural awareness to a stage of highly-developed intercultural awareness. The model is a useful tool for understanding the experiences of the teachers in my sample, for example the attitudes and responses to particular situations that they might have. Heyward suggests that the social context, the school environment, plays a role in the development of intercultural literacy and it will be interesting to evaluate the impact of the school environment on the teachers in my sample in relation to their developmental stage. Joslin (2002) identifies several issues that impact on a teacher relocating to an international school, including the organisational culture of the school and the mission of the school, and these issues will be useful to keep in mind when analysing some of the issues identified by the research participants.

Both Heyward (2002) and Joslin (2002) highlight the potential importance of culture shock in the experiences of an individual engaging with a new culture. Heyward claims that culture shock may force an examination of cultural identity, which could be ultimately productive as this is a critical stage stimulating the development of intercultural literacy. However, culture shock may be experienced as a profoundly

unsettling phase and, in relation to issues of identity, may lead to teachers experiencing a fragmentation of identities that previously seemed unified or coherent. As suggested earlier, it is likely that many of the teachers in my sample will have experienced culture shock during their period of adjustment to Italy (see 2.4.1). Four of the seven research participants arrived just eight months before the research interviews took place and so it is likely that they will have experienced some degree of culture shock during these months and possibly even at the time of interview. Sikes et al. (1985) emphasise the importance of critical phases in a teacher's career; in the case of the teachers in my sample, not only are they experiencing a critical phase but may be experiencing culture shock as well.

Stirzaker's (2004) focus on induction raises several issues of interest with regard to identity. She highlights the importance of relationships for the new teacher in the international school and argues that new staff may form their own peer group rather than integrate with existing staff. The relationships that the teachers in my research sample form with other teachers at the school will be analysed and it will be interesting to examine to what extent integration with existing staff takes place and whether a peer group of new recruits is formed. These relationships may have an important effect on their identity construction at the school.

Stirzaker identifies some of the cultural factors that a multicultural staff might not share common understanding of, such as the role of the teacher. She suggests that differing perceptions may lead to conflict amongst staff. In turn, whose perceptions are deemed to have more value than others may form part of the power relations at the school and cause some teachers to feel that they are misrecognised (Skeggs 2002b).

My theoretical framework has informed my approach to the research design, as outlined in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the methodological approach undertaken in this research study. It begins with an outline of the purpose of the study and identifies the central research question. It then locates the research within a particular research paradigm: the qualitative paradigm. A description and rationale for the research methods chosen are then provided followed by a description of the research site and research participants. The issues of the reliability and validity of the research are considered and the role of the researcher in the research process is examined. The data collection process is then described followed by an account of how the data was analysed. Finally, a few points regarding the presentation of the data are made.

3.1 Approach to the research

3.1.1 Purpose and central research question

The purpose of my research is to investigate how a sample of seven English-speaking teachers at the International English School (IES) in Italy have experienced the teaching context at the school, how they have managed their roles and constraints (Sikes, Measor and Woods 1985) and in what ways their experience has led to a reconstruction of their identities as teachers and potentially shaped their careers. The central research question is:

- What has been the impact of working in an international school context on the identities of English-speaking teachers at the International English School (IES) in Italy?

The research seeks to answer the following related sub-questions:

- What issues of identity have these teachers experienced in the new institutional context?
- What identity work and strategies have the teachers engaged in?
- What kind of reconstruction of their identities as teachers has taken place?

3.1.2 Research paradigm

The two main research paradigms in the social sciences are the quantitative and qualitative paradigms. They differ not only in methodology but in the underlying philosophical positions or worldviews (Ely, Vinz, Dowling and Anzul 1997). The quantitative approach is associated with the positivist paradigm, which has been the most dominant paradigm and which is associated with the natural sciences. Neuman (2003: 75) states that in the social sciences

a positivist approach implies that a researcher begins with a general cause-effect relationship that he or she logically derives from a possible causal law in general theory. He or she logically links the abstract ideas of the relationship to precise measurements of the social world. The researcher remains detached, neutral and objective as he or she measures aspects of social life, examines evidence and replicates the research of others. These processes lead to an empirical test of and confirmation for the laws of social life as outlined in a theory.

Interpretive social science is the paradigm that has challenged the positivistic approach. It has criticised positivism for being anti-humanist, for example reducing people to numbers, and for failing to deal with the meanings of real people in real social settings (Neuman 2003: 81). Neuman (2003: 76) states that in general the interpretive approach

is the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct, detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people can create and maintain their social worlds.

Within this approach, the researcher is seen as integrally involved in the research process and interpretive researchers would critique positivist claims to objectivity and neutrality. The interpretive approach is often associated with the qualitative paradigm.

The third paradigm, critical social science, agrees with many of the criticisms of the positivist paradigm made by those working within the interpretive paradigm but believes that the interpretive approach is too subjective. It argues that social science is a critical process of enquiry and, ultimately, political: it should help people bring about change in the world (Neuman 2003: 81). Advocates of this approach argue that social research must be reflexive, that it must account for and critique itself.⁵ Qualitative research can also be associated with the critical approach: it will depend on the worldview of the researcher.

In addition to their contrasting philosophical positions, quantitative and qualitative approaches favour distinct methods. Quantitative researchers will use methods such as experiments, surveys and statistics: “they seek rigorous, exact measures and ‘objective’ research” (Neuman 2003: 71). Statistical analysis of data is often involved. Qualitative researchers use methods such as interviews, ethnography, discourse analysis and case studies. They will tend to study fewer cases or subjects than quantitative researchers, but in more depth: “qualitative data gives researchers rich information about social processes in specific settings” (Neuman 2003: 140). Data, often in the form of words, is analysed thematically.

My research falls clearly within the qualitative paradigm where the basic intent of qualitative research has been described as being to “draw out the meanings that life in a particular setting has for its participants” (Ely et al. 1997: 238). My aims are to provide a rich description of the experiences of my research participants at the school, to try to understand what sense they made of the experiences and to offer an interpretation.

It was suggested above that qualitative research is compatible with interpretive and critical approaches to social science. These approaches are closely related to my theoretical framework, which has shaped my research in fundamental ways. The post-structuralist theories of identity construction are allied to an interpretive approach (see 2.1) and the critical theory I have drawn on is allied to a critical approach (see 2.2).

⁵ It should be noted that reflexivity itself has been interrogated in recent debates on qualitative research. Adkins (2002: 332), for example, argues that although reflexivity appears to challenge “universalist and objectivist social research” there are important limitations to the form of reflexivity currently advocated in the social sciences.

3.2 Research methodology

The methods that have been chosen to gather the data are qualitative methods which are useful in “the generation of categories for understanding human phenomena and the investigation of interpretation and meaning that people give to events they experience” (Polkinghorne 1991: 112 cited in Rudestam and Newton 1992: 31).

The main research method that has been used is the case study with mapping, interviewing and field observation being used to collect the data.

3.2.1 The case study

In order to investigate the topic of the impact of the experience of teaching in an international school on the identities of teachers, I have chosen one international school as a case study with seven English-speaking teachers at the school as the research participants.

The purpose of case studies has been described as to “examine the bounded system of a program, an institution or a population” (Marshall and Rossman 1989: 44 cited in McKie 2002: 268). In the case of my research, the bounded system is the International English School. Merriam (1988 cited in Nunan 1992: 77) points out how description is a key characteristic of case-study research: “the qualitative case study can be defined as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit”. Two of my key aims are to describe the research participants’ experience at the school and to understand how they made sense of their experiences at the school.

A distinction can be made between ethnography, a key qualitative research methodology, and the case study. Watson-Gegeo (1988: 576) argues that

ethnography is the study of people’s behavior in naturally occurring, ongoing settings, with a focus on the cultural interpretation of behavior... The ethnographer’s goal is to provide a description and an interpretive-explanatory account of what people do in a setting (such as a classroom, neighbourhood, or community), the outcome of their interactions, and the way they understand what they are doing (the meaning interactions have for them).

Although this definition would seem to describe my research, I would argue that my research is more accurately described as a case study. Nunan (1992) argues that a case study has a more limited scope than an ethnographic study. He observes that, “while an ethnography is a complete account of a particular culture, case studies examine a facet or a particular aspect of the culture or subculture under investigation” (1992: 77). In my research, I am not seeking to give a complete account of the culture of the International English School (IES) but, rather, to examine a facet of it: the experiences of the English-speaking teachers at the school. In addition, case studies may have a more limited scope in terms of time whereas “one of the hallmarks of ethnographic method is intensive, detailed observation of a setting over a long period of time” (Watson-Gegeo 1988: 583). An ethnographic study, too, tends to focus on groups rather than on individuals. Watson-Gegeo (1988: 577) argues that

ethnography focuses on people’s behaviour in groups and on cultural patterns in that behavior ... most ethnographic case studies are concerned with group rather than

individual characteristics because cultural behavior is by definition shared behavior ... When ethnographic reports focus on an individual's behavior, the individual is usually treated as representative of a group.

In my research, I seek to examine the teachers in my research sample as individuals. Although they belong to the group of English-speaking teachers at the school, each teacher will not simply be treated as representative of the group. Each research participant has a unique history with prior teacher training and teaching experiences that will make his or her response unique and my analysis will seek to interpret and report on the differences.

Nunan (1992), however, points out that ethnography and the case study have several aspects in common and these are useful aspects to help define my research approach. He claims that both ethnography and the case study attempt to describe what is happening in a particular setting but also attempt to go beyond description to interpret what is happening. The evidence presented in both methods should enable the reader to make conclusions independently of the writer's point of view.

The case study as a research method has several advantages, according to Nunan (1992). It is "strong in reality" (78), which makes it attractive and useful to practitioners. The findings of the research can be used immediately for practical purposes such as staff development and policy making. Several different viewpoints, which have the potential to support alternative interpretations, can be represented in a case study. Finally, future researchers can revisit and reinterpret the data. Neuman (2003) argues that case studies enable researchers to link the micro-level actions of individual people to the macro level of social processes. In addition, he says that case study research "raises questions about the boundaries and defining characteristics of a case. Such questions help in the generation of new thinking and theory" (2003: 33).

Nunan (1992: 81) identifies the major disadvantage of the case study approach as the issue of external validity: "the extent to which a particular finding can be generalised beyond the case under investigation". Stake (1988: 256 cited in Nunan 1992: 80) argues that external validity may be irrelevant with regard to the case study:

The principal difference between case studies and other research studies is that the focus of attention is the case, not the whole population of cases. In most other studies, researchers search for an understanding that ignores the uniqueness of individual cases and generalizes beyond particular instances. They search for what is common, pervasive, and lawful. In the case study, there may or may not be an ultimate interest in the generalizable. For the time being, the search is for an understanding of the particular case, in its idiosyncrasy, in its complexity.

This statement seems pertinent to my research. My intended purpose is to give "an accurate and useful representation of the bounded system" (Stake 1988: 262 cited in Nunan 1992: 89) from the point of view of the research participants and not to generalise from this case to other international schools or teachers. It is unlikely that I could validly make generalisations about the identities of English-speaking teachers at other international schools on the basis of this case study. The findings that emerge from my study of this particular school may be of interest to other international school researchers and to other educationists interested in the concept of teacher identity, but no claims will be made regarding the universality of the findings.

Nunan (1992) argues that possible problems with validity do not eliminate the case study as an appropriate research method. In fact, he concludes that “the case study has a great deal of potential as a research method in applied linguistics” (1992: 88) and suggests that, ultimately, the purpose of a particular piece of research will determine whether a case study approach is appropriate or not. I would argue that, for my purposes, the case study approach is appropriate.

3.2.2 The research site

The International English School (IES)⁶ is a primary school in Italy which was founded in 1993. The school is owned privately by three Italians: Stefania, the Principal of the school, Caterina, the Administrative Director, and Silvia, the President of the school.⁷ IES became a provisional member of the Council of European International Schools (CEIS), “the oldest and largest association of international schools” (Joslin 2002: 85) in 2000.

The school has classes from Reception to Year 8.⁸ The school is divided into an Elementary School, which has classes from Reception to Year 5 and a Middle School, which has classes from Year 6 to Year 8. Within the Elementary School are two main stages: Key Stage 1 (Reception to Year 2) and Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 5). At the time of conducting my research, in May 2004, there were 220 learners from Reception to Year 8.

In May 2004 the school had 30 academic staff members, of whom 13 were Italian, 16 were English-speaking from the UK, the United States, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and Mauritius⁹ and one was German. In general, the English-speaking teachers were full-time while the Italian teachers were part-time, except for three teachers, including Irene, one of the three co-ordinators for the Elementary School. Irene chaired all the Elementary School staff meetings and the Italian teachers reported to her.¹⁰ The other Elementary School co-ordinators were Sally, one of the research participants, who was the curriculum co-ordinator for Key Stage 1 and Veronica, the Key Stage 2 co-ordinator.

The school principal, Stefania, is one of the original founding directors of the school and, according to her¹¹, there were three main reasons for founding the school. The first reason was for children to learn English yet not to lose their cultural roots in Italian. Secondly, the aim was for the learners to become aware of other cultures and at ease in different cultural contexts so that they could operate internationally. Finally, it was envisaged that the learners would be exposed to a holistic philosophy of

⁶ The name given here is a pseudonym of the school, although the actual name does contain the words ‘international’ and ‘English’ in the title. A pseudonym has been given in order to protect the anonymity of the school. Pseudonyms have also been used for the names of the owners of the school, for each of the research participants and for any other individuals named in the data.

⁷ The research participants referred to the three owners informally as ‘the directors’ and for the sake of simplicity I have used this term throughout the dissertation as well.

⁸ Each year in the Italian system is equivalent to ‘grade’ in the South African system. Thus Year 8 is equivalent to Grade 8.

⁹ The Mauritian teacher was bilingual in English and French and taught French at the school.

¹⁰ The research participants referred to Irene as the vice principal, although the official school documentation did not list her as such.

¹¹ Much of the information contained in the description of the school in this section was obtained via an interview with Stefania in June 2004.

learning. These reasons are expressed in similar terms to the educational philosophy from the school handbook:

While one of the school's main objectives is academic excellence, it envisions a holistic approach to education which combines skills, knowledge, international awareness and critical thinking to educate students in becoming active and responsible citizens. The school's aim is to develop the student's potential so that he/she is able to relate the classroom experience to the outside world. Through intellectual rigour the school aims to teach students how to think independently and objectively, develop respect for different cultures and ways of thinking, and keep the pleasures of learning alive. (IES Handbook 2003-2004)

The school was founded in 1993 with the help of a private, international school in a neighbouring city. In 2001 the school went through a process to become state-approved, which means it receives a state subsidy from the Italian government. In order to have state accreditation, there needs to be a state inspection every three years and the Year 8 exit exams are set by a Commission of Teachers at the school with an external president, who is state appointed. The official requirements are that only Italians or teachers with an Italian degree may teach at the school. However, the school gets round this by ensuring that it fulfils the Italian state requirements of 29 hours of teaching in Italian each week; the subjects taught in English fall into the discretionary area that each school has.

3.2.2.1 Negotiating access to the research site

I approached Stefania, as principal of the school, in order to explain the purpose of my research and to request permission to do research at the site. I explained that I was doing research into different teaching contexts for English language teaching and wished to investigate an international school environment. I emphasised that I was not doing an evaluation of the school or evaluating the teaching of its staff. I requested permission to spend four days at the school observing a range of English-speaking teachers in situ, in their classrooms and in their daily lives at the school (see 3.2.4.3). I also asked permission to interview her about the history and current status of the school so that I could give an accurate description of it. Stefania agreed to my requests. I did not request permission to interview the research participants as I wished to do this independently and off site (see 3.2.4.2).

3.2.3 The research participants

I used purposive sampling to select a sample of seven teachers to interview for my research. According to Neuman (2003: 211) purposive sampling is appropriate when a researcher "wants to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation". In this particular research site, there were 16 English-speaking teachers from different countries, of different ages and different teacher education backgrounds, who all had different prior teaching experiences. I selected a sample of seven out of the 16 different English-speaking teachers at the school using the following criteria:

Spread: There should be a spread of teachers who teach learners in different years throughout the school.

Nationality: A range of nationalities of English-speaking teachers should be represented in the sample.

Sex: Both male and female teachers should be chosen.

Age and previous teaching experience: The amount of previous teaching experience a teacher has is likely to be an important factor in helping him or her make sense of a new teaching context. The sample should include teachers with different levels of teaching experience, for example up to four years' teaching experience (early career) or more than four years' teaching experience (mid-career). Previous international school teaching experience should be highlighted.

Number of years at the English International School: The sample should include teachers who are new to the school (i.e. those who started on 1 September 2003) and others who have taught for a longer period of time at the school.

Language education training: The sample should include teachers with an applied linguistics or English additional language teaching background as well as those who have no specialist language training.

Table 2: Data on the research participants in May/June 2004

Research participant	Year/ subject taught at IES	Nationality	Sex	Age and teaching experience	Number of years at EIS	Language education training
Laura	Reception Year	New Zealander	F	42 18 years' teaching experience, including international schools in London and Italy (mid-late career)	Over three years; began 1/9/2000	None
Karen	Year 4	British	F	39 Over four years' teaching experience plus other work experience (mid-career)	Less than one year; began 1/9/03	None
Carol	Year 5	Canadian	F	27 Over three years' teaching experience (early-career)	Less than one year; began 1/9/03	Specialisation in French immersion and teaching French as a second language
Sally	Year 2	British	F	28 Seven years' teaching experience (mid-career)	Over two years; began 1/9/2001	TESOL module as part of university studies
Anita	History and ESL to Years 6 to 8. Also adult English Language Coordinator	American	F	39 10 years' work experience, including running a language teaching business and	Less than one year; began 1/9/03	MA in Applied Linguistics

				working at an international school in Italy (mid-career)		
Graham	Science, Geography and Computers to Years 6 to 8	South African	M	44 18 years' teaching experience (mid-late career)	Less than one year; began 1/9/03	None
Kirsty	Part-time support teacher for learners of all ages	American	F	27 Two years' teaching experience (early career)	Less than one year; began 1/9/2003	Cambridge English Language Teaching (CELTA) diploma

3.2.3.1 Negotiating access to the research participants

I approached each research participant and outlined the purpose of my research. I explained that the research was for my master's degree and that the focus was to investigate the experiences of teaching at IES of a range of English-speaking teachers at the school. I described in detail what the research would involve (see Appendix 1). I stressed that the research would not in any way evaluate them as teachers but, rather, would focus on how they made sense of their international teaching experience at IES. I emphasised that the findings of my research would be confidential as far as the school and other research participants were concerned and said that each of them would be given a pseudonym in the dissertation. We negotiated where the interviews (see 3.2.4.2) would take place and we agreed that it would be easier for them to have the interviews off the school premises so that they would feel freer to share their views.

An important issue is that there is only one male participant included in the sample, and he is my husband. I would argue that although this situation might be unusual, there were good reasons for including him in the sample. He was the only male English-speaking teacher at the school and, as such, may have had an important alternative perspective to the other participants: "men and women have very different kinds of teaching careers" (Sikes et al. 1985: 16). He was also the oldest of 16 English-speaking teachers at the school and, apart from one other research participant, had the most teaching experience. As the findings from each research participant are clearly identified, rather than discussed as a group, in Chapter 4, I would argue that his inclusion has not skewed my sample overall but, has, in fact, added an important perspective from the point of view of gender, age, nationality and teaching experience.

As my husband was a colleague of the other research participants, I needed to be especially sensitive about his inclusion. I undertook to be scrupulous in not discussing the findings from the data collection with him or any related issues that arose in relation to the other research participants.

3.2.4 Methods of data collection

Commenting on their research into the notion of teacher identity, Sikes et al. (1985: 66) observe that “the communication of identity is no easy matter ... values, attitudes, roles and identity are things which are very difficult for people to talk straightforwardly about.” They suggest that these are concepts people need symbols for. With this important caution in mind, I identified three research methods for data collection from my sample of English-speaking teachers: mapping, interviews and field observation.

My approach to the research was guided by the insights from post-structuralist theories of identity construction that informed my theoretical framework (see 2.1.4). A post-structuralist perspective would dispute that my research would ‘reveal’ each participant’s essential or pre-existing identity as a teacher. My approach, rather, was informed by an understanding that my research participants would be constructing an identity throughout the research process. Thus my research could be viewed as a co-construction of knowledge rather than an “excavation” (Mason 2002: 226) of what was already there.

3.2.4.1 Constructing maps

As the first stage in the data collection process, I asked each research participant to construct two ‘maps’ or charts (see Appendix 1). Firstly, each research participant was asked to construct a ‘map’ of the International English School showing him or herself at the school. The map was not intended to be an accurate geographical map drawn to scale but, rather, was the participant’s own representation of how she or he viewed the school and his or her place within it. The participant was invited to represent as many or as few of the IES staff, pupils or parents as he or she wished and could use symbols, words, drawings, pictures from magazines, or any object to construct the map.

Secondly, each participant was asked to construct a chart of their teaching career and/or prior work experiences before taking up the position at IES (see Appendix 1). They were asked to include key moments, highlights and challenges of their career as well as information about significant events in their life that may have had an impact on their career. For example, “2001: Married – left the United States and got a teaching job in Italy.” The research participants were asked to spend up to a maximum of one and a half hours constructing both maps.

My rationale for using the maps was to help the research participants represent their experience in a multimodal form that allowed for non-verbal representation as well. The maps were envisioned to be a tool to help the participants “to represent their histories, identities and cultural forms through and beyond language” (Stein and Newfield 2002: 11). It was hoped that the use of symbolic forms of representation would be useful in helping to capture the complex concept of identity.

3.2.4.2 Interviews

As the second stage in the data collection process, I planned to conduct two interviews, of approximately one and half hours each, with each research participant. The second interview could be important “serving as a check and balance for the imperfections of any one interview and allowing flexibility and change” (Gerson and Horowitz 2002: 210). It was envisaged that the period between the two interviews

would allow both myself as interviewer and the research participant important time for reflection and the development of insights which could be checked and developed further in the second interview.

My approach to planning the interviews was to have enough structure to guide participants through a reflection and discussion on their experiences at the International English School within a limited period of time and yet “leave room to discover the unexpected and uncover the unknown” (Gerson and Horowitz 2002: 204). I drew up an interview schedule with areas for discussion that I planned to cover in the first interview (see Appendix 2). I planned to collect the participant’s maps prior to the first interview so that they would help me prepare for the interview. I then planned to use them as a point of reference when necessary during the course of the interviews. My approach was to use the interview schedule flexibly so that each participant could explore their experiences at the school, highlighting issues and concerns that were important for them without continually being brought back to ‘the next question’, which could close off potentially rich lines of discussion and exploration. I deliberately decided to leave the second interview open ended so that I could respond to issues that had been discussed in the first interview. I anticipated that the interviews would yield a rich source of data with regard to identity. It has been argued earlier that language provides “raw materials for the construction of self” (Wetherell and Maybin 1995: 228-9) and that in conversations speakers are “building a world...constructing their lives” (244) and, in so doing, constructing particular kinds of identities for themselves (see 2.1.3). As Walker (1996: 40) comments: “interviews do not reveal the ‘facts’, and data collection is a process of creation”.

4.2.4.3 On-site observation

My third method of data collection involved spending a week at the school and observing the teachers as they went about their daily work. I planned to observe a lesson in each research participant’s class as well as to attend staff room teas and school lunches and, generally, observe the daily life of the school.

While the interviews with teachers formed the “foreground” or heart of the research methods used in this project, on-site observation formed an important “background” (Gerson and Horowitz 2002: 200). It was an important method against which I could reflect on and evaluate the data collected from individual teachers. The interviews and maps were designed to help me understand the individual teacher’s experiences and how they made meaning from them while observation “necessarily attends to interactions, group processes, talk and evolving situations” (Gerson and Horowitz 2002: 215) in the social system as a whole where the research participants and other participants in the system interacted daily. Other participants included other English-speaking teaching colleagues, Italian colleagues, learners, the directors of the school and other school staff and parents. As I chose to interview only a sample of English-speaking teachers and the principal of the school, it would be important for me to observe all the participants in the school as a whole.

I planned to take observation and field notes during my visit to the school, which would provide me with a third source of data.

3.2.5 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are important principles in qualitative research although, as Neuman (2003) suggests, they are often more difficult to define, compared with quantitative research, and are applied differently in practice by different qualitative researchers.

Reliability means that data is recorded consistently or dependably. The research context influences which choice of data methods and methods of measurement are used to record observations consistently (Neuman 2003: 184-5). I would argue that the three data sources used in this study help achieve reliability. The three data collection methods, constructing maps, interviews and observation, allow for a “triangulation of measures” (Neuman 2003: 138) which together aimed to develop “a richer, more complete, and more complex view” of how the experience of working at the International English School had impacted on the identities of English-speaking teachers than any of the three methods, used alone, would be able to do.

Validity means “truthful” (Neuman 2003: 185) or, as McNiff (1988: 131 cited in Walker 1996: 42) expresses it, “are the results to be believed”. Neuman (2003: 105) argues that authenticity may be a more useful term than validity in qualitative research:

Authenticity means giving a fair, honest and balanced account of social life ... that is true to the experiences of people being studied. Most qualitative researchers concentrate on ways to capture an inside view and provide a detailed account of how those being studied feel about and understand events.

Neuman (2003: 185) suggests that to be valid a researcher’s claims need to be plausible, that is capable of being understood by many other people. The data and its analysis should not be “the only possible claims nor are they exact accounts of the one truth in the world” (2003: 85). However, the claims are not arbitrary but should be convincing descriptions that show the researcher’s relationship with the data. The claims made by a researcher gain validity when supported by empirical data and numerous ‘small’ details can together provide convincing evidence. Validity can also grow as the researcher makes connections between diverse pieces of data.

In relation to the understanding of validity described here, I would argue that the validity of my account of the research participants’ experiences (see Chapter 4) would have to be evaluated by the reader. An account of the process by which I analysed the data is in a later section of this chapter and it shows that I attempted to be thorough in my analysis and interpretation (see 3.4). But I would argue that another crucial factor is my own reflexivity as researcher.

The reflexivity of the researcher has been seen as an important way in which reliability and validity are achieved (e.g. Walker 1996; Adkins 2002). Delamont (1992: 9 cited in Walker 1996: 45-6) argues that

each researcher is her own best data collection instrument, as long as she is constantly self-conscious about her role, her interactions, and her theoretical and empirical material as it accumulates. As long as qualitative researchers are reflexive, making all their processes explicit, then issues of reliability and validity are served.

The next section considers my role as researcher in the research process.

3.2.6 The role of the researcher in the research process

Identity is the main theoretical concept in my research study and is a useful lens through which to try and describe my role as researcher.

Firstly, I was in Italy largely because of my role as 'wife': I had accompanied my husband, Graham, to Italy in order for him to take up a new teaching post at IES. I had planned to do research for my master's dissertation while in Italy and the experiences of the English-speaking teachers at the school seemed like an ideal research subject. I had been interested in the concept of teacher identity in South Africa and the experiences of Graham and some of his colleagues offered an opportunity to focus on the issues of identity that they were experiencing in an international teaching context. I had met all the research participants socially: the school had become the nucleus of our social life in Italy. We socialised mainly with colleagues from the school and their partners, especially Kirsty, Laura, Anita and Karen. Using the criteria I developed to select my research sample (see 3.2.2.1), I approached the seven potential participants for permission to include them in my research, and all seven agreed. For the research participants whom I saw less often socially, Carol and Sally, I was aware that my status as Graham's wife played an important role in gaining their trust and for them agreeing to the research. I approached Stefania, as principal, for permission to do an on-site visit and to interview her and I was aware that, again, it was partly as Graham's wife that she agreed to this.

As a researcher, there were several advantages of interacting socially with the research participants. Firstly, it allowed me to gain their trust so that they would feel open to share their experiences with me in the interviews. Secondly, during the time that I interacted socially with the research participants, their experiences at the school formed part of the conversations of our social group. I both observed and participated in those conversations and these gave me additional insights into their experiences at the school. In certain ways, the interviews that I had with the research participants developed and extended the conversations that we had had socially, although there were many more insights generated within the interviews than there would have been in the conversations alone. I was aware of a change and a deepening of my relationship with some of the research participants through the interview process. Although the majority of them were very open in sharing some very personal experiences with me, I was particularly aware of this with Karen and Carol. Carol was quite emotional at times during the first interview and both she and Karen remarked on the therapeutic nature of the interviews. My identity with them had thus changed from friend/social acquaintance to researcher to confidante. As I had undertaken to be scrupulous in not communicating the findings of one research participant to another, and especially to Graham who lived with me during the whole research process, I do not believe that this 'blurring' of the boundaries compromised the ethics of my relationship as researcher with them.

During my on-site visit, my role changed again to that of school and classroom researcher. The role of classroom observer is often perceived to be more threatening than that of interviewer and I was aware that the research participants potentially felt self-conscious when I was observing their classes. They were reminded that my

previous job had been that of a university lecturer in education. Laura, who had been anxious about constructing the maps (see 3.3.1), had obviously spent time preparing an 'observation lesson' although I had stressed I simply wished to spend time in their classrooms understanding the environment in which they worked. Carol took the opportunity to ask me for feedback on her class: she seemed anxious for reassurance that it was a good lesson. These experiences made me aware of the insecurity and lack of support that the research participants were experiencing at IES and how the lack of class observation by the directors was a real issue for several research participants.¹²

The research participant, of course, with whom I had the closest relationship was Graham as my husband. We both experienced the research process as positive and it did not seem to change or threaten our relationship on any level. We were both used to working on separate projects, as professionals, in which we needed to understand issues of confidentiality and it did not become an issue that I needed to maintain a strict boundary around the data that had been collected from other research participants. With regard to the data I collected from Graham, however, I was initially disappointed, as I report in the following section (see 3.3.2). I had a sense that the conversations that we had had during the course of the year about the school, in which we had tried to make sense of people and events, meant that, to some extent, we had exhausted the topic and the first interview did not yield any major new insights. I discuss how I dealt with the situation in 3.3.2.

I write this section after the data analysis and most of the writing up of the findings has taken place. In reflecting on my own 'identity' in Italy, I am aware that I experienced several of my own issues of identity during my nine months in the country. Firstly, like the majority of the research participants, I experienced culture shock. In contrast to the initial 'honeymoon' feelings of exhilaration about experiencing a new culture and a place of outstanding beauty, I experienced some of the frustrations of relocating to a new country. The bureaucratic requirements seemed endless and, as I was not working in Italy, the paperwork proved elusive. Even after nine months, at the time of leaving, I did not have the right paperwork which would enable me to continue living legitimately in the country. Issues of identity were at the heart of this for me: I could not get the correct paperwork because I was not working in a job, for the first time since graduating from university. I was struck by how radical this change of identity was for me, when I had to fill in 'housewife' for occupation on a form.¹³ Although I did some consultancy work while I was in Italy, I did not have a regular job and I had not planned to seek one but rather to do my master's degree and enjoy some time off full-time work. However, I was struck by the loss of my work identity, which had always been of primary importance for me. Once I began to do research for my master's, and interacted with the research participants, I was aware of my identity changing again: I was taking on the role of researcher and was back on more familiar ground. I believe these issues of identity that I experienced made me more sensitive to the issues that the research participants experienced. Although I was not teaching at the school, I, too, had particular experiences related to my work identity while in Italy.

¹² This was an issue identified in their interviews (see 4.1.4).

¹³ Although I discussed putting 'student' or 'consultant' on the form, I was advised against this as I was not studying or doing consultancy work in Italy.

As a researcher, I am aware that my own understanding of Italian culture is partial and fragmentary. During my nine months in Italy, I experienced culture shock and experienced certain aspects of the culture as 'other'. In analysing and writing up the data, I am aware that I can offer no 'meta' understanding of Italian culture or final interpretation of what the research participants experienced. While post-positivist researchers find it important to stress that researchers cannot and should not attempt to offer a transcendent perspective, I was particularly aware of this in my case. The interpretations that I provide, often linked to insights from my theoretical framework, are flagged as one of many possible interpretations.

The following sections on data collection and analysis should be read in the light of this section on the role of the researcher: several of the points made here are developed in more detail.

3.3 Data collection

The implementation of the research went ahead as planned in May and June 2004.

3.3.1 Constructing the maps

The first method of data collection was constructing maps or charts and the research participants were asked to construct a map of themselves at the school and then to draw up a chart of their career prior to joining IES. They were given written instructions for constructing the maps on 27 April 2004 and had until one or two days before their interview to complete them. This means that Anita, the first interviewee, had approximately three weeks, while Graham, the final interviewee, had almost seven weeks with the other interviewees in between.

Although I had asked the research participants not to discuss the maps amongst themselves, I became aware through Graham that Laura was quite anxious about the process and had asked him and several of the other research participants what they were including in their map. I approached Laura and emphasised that there was no 'right way' of doing the map and that it was intended to help the research participants think about themselves at IES as preparation for the interview. Although she said she understood this, I had the impression that she was still quite anxious and this anxiety was carried through into the interviews and class observation as well.

3.3.2 The interviews

The interviews began on 19 May and finished on 17 June 2004. With the exception of Laura's, all the interviews were conducted either in my home or the research participant's home, whichever was more convenient. I negotiated using the tape recorder during the interviews, to ensure accuracy of the data collected, and all the research participants agreed to this. All the interviews, except for Laura's, took place at the end of the school day when the research participants were off duty and relaxed. I would argue that these were highly conducive factors for an in-depth discussion in which they felt free to explore their ideas and share their views. However, there was a difference between the social conversations about the school that I had previously had with the majority of the research participants and the interviews. The interviews took place on a one-to-one basis, the interviewees had done some preparation for them, in the form of their maps, and during the interview itself I had an interview schedule and was taping our conversation. The interview, thus, had a more formal and structured

tone and the data generated was much richer and more insightful than it would have been as a purely social conversation. Both Karen and Carol commented that the interviews were “therapeutic” and I noted in my research journal that many of the interviewees seemed quite surprised at the insights that were generated in the interviews. I noted that Carol became quite emotional at times during the interview: clearly her experiences at IES had been intensely emotional for her (see also 3.2.6). The majority reported that doing the chart had been a useful exercise in focusing their mind on their IES experiences and Karen observed, “I suppose I felt quite positive, actually, in seeing this. You deal with things on a daily basis but it’s only when you put them together that you think, ‘Wow!’”

There were two exceptions to the scenario described above: Laura’s and Graham’s interviews. It was more convenient for Laura to be interviewed at the school and so we had the interviews during the school day when she was free. The interviews were conducted not in the main school building but outside in a coffee shop on the premises which was part of a facility shared with the local municipality. This was a private venue and there was no risk of being overheard but, in relation to the other research participants, Laura was less relaxed. Laura had to go back to her school duties and I believe that this, combined with the fact that she was still on school ground, meant that she felt a little more constrained in expressing her views. In addition, the batteries on my tape recorder ran out after five minutes of the first interview and, due to time constraints, we had to proceed with the interview with my making notes. This meant that my interaction with Laura was affected as I was partly focused on accurate note taking. To ensure I had accurate notes, I wrote them up immediately after the interview and checked a few key quotations with her at the second interview by giving her a transcript of the quotations. The second interview was more relaxed and trouble free. I would argue, however, that despite the problems with Laura’s first interview, valuable data was still yielded even if I had fewer quotations from her interview than I did from the other research participants. In addition, her map proved a valuable additional source of information, as did my observation of her class.

Graham’s interviews, technically, went very smoothly. However, I was somewhat disappointed in the actual data yielded in the interviews. Although we had conversations about his experiences at the school, often on a daily basis, I had a sense at the first interview that we had almost ‘talked ourselves out’ and that very few new insights were generated in the interview. This was not something I had anticipated and, to overcome the problem, I prepared very carefully for the second interview making notes from conversations that I remembered we had had. I checked this information carefully with him in the second interview and, in this way, was able to use some of the insights that our conversations had yielded over the previous months.

3.3.3 The on-site observation

The on-site visit for four days went ahead as planned on 19 to 21 May and 24 May 2004. I had arranged to be at the school for the whole four days and scheduled class observations of each research participant into the four days. In addition, I was able to observe the daily life of the school. I attended lunch, which was an important part of the school day, had tea in the Elementary and Middle School staff rooms and observed playground duty being done.

I observed one lesson, an hour in length, in the classroom of each research participant. Sally, Karen, Graham and Anita appeared relaxed and seemed familiar with having observers and assistants in their classrooms. Laura and Carol appeared a little anxious and Carol asked me afterwards how I had enjoyed the lesson and seemed eager for feedback. Laura had prepared her Reception class for my visit and they sang me a special New Zealand song as I have family in New Zealand and Laura, herself, is a New Zealander. Kirsty, as a classroom assistant, did not teach a lesson but I observed one of the mainstream Year 2 classes in which Kirsty works as an assistant to a young learner, Arianna.

3.3.4 Interview with the school principal

I was not able to interview Stefania, the principal, during my four days at the school and returned to interview her on 1 June for approximately an hour. She was professional and friendly during the interview and at ease in answering my questions. My questions focused on the structure of the school, its history, the reasons for founding it and its educational philosophy. I made a conscious decision to limit my questions to these areas rather than to ask her anything that related to the research participants' experiences at the school. This was because of the confidentiality issue of my research: I had undertaken not to share the results of my findings with the school. In addition, the sensitive nature of some of the findings would have made the research participants extremely vulnerable as they had jobs at the school.

3.4 Analysis of the data

Neuman (2003: 145) describes qualitative data analysis as proceeding “by extracting themes or generalizations from evidence and organizing data to present a coherent, consistent picture”. Elaborating, he says that data analysis “means a search for patterns in data – recurrent behaviors, objects, or a body of knowledge. Once a pattern is identified, it is interpreted in terms of a social theory or the setting in which it occurred” (447).

This definition guided the analysis of the data which I undertook after data collection. I had three source of data: the maps and charts from the research participants, the data from the interviews, which I had transcribed, and my field notes from the on-site visit. I then began organising the data into categories that suggested themes. I did this in three stages: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Neuman 2003). In the open coding stage, the “first pass” (Neuman 2003: 442) in examining the data, I slowly read through the interview transcripts and my field notes and looked at the maps and charts to note significant events and patterns and to begin assigning labels or codes. Codes are defined as “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning” (Miles and Huberman 1994: 56 cited in Neuman 2003: 441). I used these codes to create analytic memos which are “the discussion of thoughts and ideas about the coding process that a researcher writes to himself or herself. Each coded theme or concept forms the basis of a separate memo” (Neuman 2003: 445). I generated a list of themes at the end of this process. I added to the analytic memos during both the axial and selective coding stages. In the axial coding stage, the second pass in examining the data, I worked with the initial codes I had created as well as with the raw data. This stage allowed me to begin making connections between concepts and categories and to refine the list of themes. During the selective coding stage, I went through the data

for a third time in order to find more evidence for the themes I had identified, and to check the themes against the data.

In order to interpret the data, I followed a number of steps. Firstly, I tried to understand the research participants' experiences from their own point of view; to try to understand the meaning that particular events and experiences had had for them. This could be referred to as first-order interpretation (Neuman 2003: 148). Secondly, as I was establishing themes, patterns and connections amongst the data, I was simultaneously trying to make meaning or interpret the experiences of the research participants. This could be referred to as second-order interpretation (Neuman 2003: 148). During these processes, I was also revisiting the provisional theoretical framework I had established and linking the theories that I had reviewed with the data. This broader level of interpretation Neuman (149) refers to as third-order interpretation "where a researcher assigns general theoretical significance".

Neuman (2003: 146) argues that in the qualitative research process the theory is "built from data or grounded in the data"; in other words, it is grounded theory. The aim is not to force an artificial 'fit' between existing theory and the data but, rather, to allow the relationship between theory and data to be flexible and to "remain open to the unexpected" (Neuman 2003: 146). In my case, several of the theories in my provisional theoretical framework provided helpful insights, particularly the post-structuralist theories, critical theory (see 2.1 and 2.2) and research on teacher strategies (see 2.3.3). However, particular issues emerged from the data which led me to reshape the theoretical framework, for example by adding insights from particular theories, such as the linguistic construction of identity. My approach was that the theoretical framework should illuminate the data rather than act as a straitjacket. I was also aware, in dealing with highly complex concepts such as identity in a cross-cultural setting that I would not be using theories to provide 'final' explanations of events but, rather, would be offering interpretations, that seemed authentic, of events and behaviour. As has been argued earlier, authenticity is an important concept in qualitative research and "means giving a fair, honest and balanced account of social life ... that is true to the experiences of people being studied" (Neuman 2003: 185) (see 3.2.5). The aim of my research was to provide a detailed description or 'snapshot' of particular teacher identities that the research participants experienced at the school at the time of my research but I was guided by post-structuralist theory in understanding that the identities would be partial, provisional and subject to change (see 2.1.4). In the same way, the interpretations I provided to help illuminate and account for the research participants' experiences at the school are offered as one set of interpretations of events among many possible ones.

3.5 Presentation of the data

There are two important notes with regard to the presentation of the data in the next chapter. Firstly, direct quotations from the research participants' interviews have been indicated by placing their name in brackets at the end of the quotation. Information from the maps or charts has been indicated by placing the research participant's name in brackets with 'Chart 1' or 'Chart 2' to indicate the first map or chart referred to. Information from my field notes has been indicated by placing 'Field notes' in brackets.

Secondly, I made a decision not to reproduce the research participants' maps as part of the presentation of the data. The first map, in which they showed themselves at the school, was completed in detail with their own names and those of other individuals in the school. To replicate the maps as they were drawn would have involved breaking my agreement with regard to confidentiality of those involved in the research, and it proved too unwieldy to reproduce the maps with blanks or pseudonyms. However, I have described aspects of the map in words, where appropriate, in the presentation of the research findings. The maps were also invaluable in providing me with additional insights with regards to the issues of identity that the research participants experienced and informed my analysis of the data in significant ways. Some of the key information from the second chart has been used to draw up Table 2 (see 3.2.3) and other important information from the chart was referred to, where appropriate, in the presentation of the research findings.

The next chapter presents and analyses the findings from the research.

Chapter 4: Presentation and analysis of findings

This chapter presents and analyses the findings from the data obtained from the research. The first section, 4.1, examines the issues of identity that the research participants experienced in the new educational context. The issues of identity are presented and analysed in terms of seven themes, beginning with culture shock. The second section, 4.2, analyses the identity work and strategies that the teachers engaged in as a response to the issues of identity they experienced. The final section examines what kind of reconstruction of their identities as teachers has taken place.

4.1 Identity-related experiences of teachers in a new educational context

4.1.1 Culture shock

Findings

Heyward's (2002) and Joslin's (2002) definitions of and insights relating to culture shock have been discussed earlier (see 2.4.1 and 2.4.2). Joslin (2002) defines culture shock succinctly as both the symptoms and the process of adapting to a different culture. She argues that there are several cultural dimensions that impact on the teacher who relocates to an international school context: the school organisational culture, the local community culture (for example, expatriate community), the regional culture and host nation's culture, the teacher's own cultural heritage and the teacher's previous work culture or 'home' country professional culture. It could be argued that these dimensions, and the interaction among them, are all factors that contribute to culture shock. The findings in this section examine the research participants' responses to their experiences in the new culture, many of which relate to these cultural dimensions.

Table 3 shows when the research participants arrived in Italy and when they began teaching at IES.

Table 3: Arrival dates of research participants in Italy and beginning of employment at IES

Research participant	Date arrived in Italy	Date started working at IES
Anita	1994	September 2003
Carol	1997: studied for a year September 2003	September 2003
Graham	September 2003	September 2003
Karen	September 2003	September 2003
Kirsty	May 2002	September 2002
Sally	September 2001	September 2001
Laura	September 1995 to June 1996 February to December 1997 June 2000	September 2000

Karen, Graham, Anita and Carol all began teaching at IES in September 2003 and it was Karen and Graham's first trip to Italy. Karen discussed how she was "knocked out by the beauty" of Italy: the architecture, the churches and frescoes; it was a "wonderful" experience (*Karen*). She commented that she had known that coming to

Italy would be “different” and that she was quite prepared for that. However, she reflected:

For me the things that completely floored me were two things. One was how much I missed my family, I didn’t expect that... I was amazed at how much I missed them on a personal level. The other thing for me was that I thought Italy was ‘Europe’ and I’ve travelled quite a bit. But I was quite knocked out by how different it is and the main level was the school level. I found that very difficult to start with, the fact that it was very disorganised, the fact that there is nobody that can make decisions... And I cannot stress the language. The amount of meetings I’ve been in that have been in Italian and I think it’s almost used as a weapon here. I think it’s a way of keeping people apart. *(Karen)*

Sally commented that for new teachers, “When you get here, the organisation and the whole Italian way, you’re really going to have a shock” *(Sally)*. Although not an official part of her job description as Key Stage 1 co-ordinator, Sally took on the responsibility of getting in touch with new teachers before they arrived at the school and then picking them up at the airport. She said that she gave “that little bit extra, so it’s not such a shock,” *(Sally)* for the teachers when they arrive.

Graham reported that his first few weeks in Italy were marked by his experience of Italian bureaucracy. Like all the other new teachers coming to IES, Graham needed to get his residence permit and other papers approved when he first arrived in Italy, and his interaction with Italian bureaucracy was protracted with his permit only being issued five months after his arrival.¹⁴ Until Graham’s papers were approved, he was not allowed to buy a car in Italy, which he found very frustrating. Graham commented that he had experienced culture shock in the first few months of being in Italy, although he hadn’t expected it: “I’ve been to Greece, I thought it would be more like Greece. It was a huge shock.” The experiences resulted, he reported, in feeling

Very fragmented. Fragmented in the sense of I’m not part of this, I’m not part of Italy. But I felt very whole as a teacher, and working at the school, as a person I felt absolutely fine, I was doing my job. But being in Italy is ... bewildering. *(Graham)*

He observed that it was only after getting a car and being able to travel independently and making good friends that he felt the culture shock wore off. Although Graham reported that he felt “whole” at the school, he found that it was

just such a different culture and way of operating. The way the parents communicate with Stefania, I have been party to that, it’s an enormous amount of Italian letting off steam at one another. That I find foreign. *(Graham)*

In contrast to Graham’s sense of feeling “whole” at IES, Karen stated that

In London I was a quite a confident teacher but when I came here I was really all over the place and it’s probably only now that I’m sort becoming more the person that I really am rather than everything being [*hand gesture to the air*]. *(Karen)*

However, at the time of her interview, she commented that she felt like she was leading two lives: one in Italy and one back in England with her family *(Field notes)*.

¹⁴ The other new teachers, including Karen and Carol, had the same experience.

Karen reported that one of the biggest shocks for her in the first few months was realising that she did not have a good relationship with the parents in her class. This was not something she had experienced before in her teaching and she had not anticipated it.

My parents this year have been parents from hell. When I first arrived, Stefania told me that the parents in my class were the most difficult in the school. Several times the parents called meetings. The first – they pulled Maria¹⁵ to pieces – and Stefania did nothing. I was pulled to pieces in another. They were speaking Italian at me. I had asked Anna¹⁶ to be there and that had been refused because Stefania was going to translate. And she didn't. In the end, one of the parents said, and they asked for this to be translated, that it wasn't personal, they were just angry in general. But it had been very personal. *(Karen)*

A major problem for Karen was that she could not speak Italian and the majority of her parents could not speak English.

I can't tell you how frustrating I find it not to understand. I had not realised how important language was. My parents when I first arrived must have thought I was a complete idiot, all I could do was smile and grin. I hadn't realised how you formulate your opinion of someone based on language, that's the way your ideas, your thoughts... I hadn't realised that. That's been something I have really learned this year. *(Karen)*

In thinking back to when she first arrived at IES, Sally, too, identified language as an issue but this time in relation to being able to communicate with her Reception class learners. She said that she had understood IES to be an international school with children from all over the world but she found that the school was

really not international, it's Italian children learning English. It's very misleading. I was expecting children of businesspeople etc. ... I just did not expect to be faced with 24 children who had no English. And I had no idea what to do. I was a Reception teacher, qualified, but I had had no real second language training. I did a module at College... And they sat on the first day there looking at me and I was thinking, 'What do I do?' *(Sally)*

Sally said that until the Christmas of her first year with the class (i.e. for four months) she struggled with the challenges of teaching in a new language and needed to reassure herself, "You're a teacher, you can do this, you've done Reception for two years" *(Sally)*.

Kirsty reported that she experienced a number of contradictions when she first began living in Italy.

There's a lot that goes with it being a Catholic country and one of the main aspects of that is contradiction. While there's the church, there's prostitution, very visual, very much in your face. Also nudity as in flaunting, treating women as objects, downright outrageous. I get livid when I watch the television.... There are these contradictions that first drove me nuts. *(Kirsty)*

¹⁵ One of the Italian teachers of the class.

¹⁶ One of the school secretaries who was bilingual in English and Italian.

With time, Kirsty reported that she had been able to make sense of the contradictions “in a larger picture,” and that the process had been “part of getting to know a culture, getting to know a place.” Given her growing understanding of Italian culture, she commented that she was not very surprised that she found

the school appalling when it comes to moral aspects, not just in the way the teachers are treated but in the way that when a child has done something that needs to be reprimanded by a higher authority, that simply doesn’t happen, or the parents justifying children’s behaviour. Appalling, absolutely appalling! If anything, it would make me not want to raise children here. (*Kirsty*)

Carol had studied in Italy for a year, in 1997, and had married an Italian in 1999, so she was not encountering Italian culture for the first time. But she commented that she found this region of Italy a new experience:

this area of Italy, this is not Italy for me... This region is not the best of Italy. The people are not the best. There are some people who are very good people but typically, you have people who are very wary of foreigners. You don’t have the trust there. (*Carol*)

She also reported that the work culture at IES was different in many ways to the previous schools she had worked at with the “biggest difference” (*Carol*) being the lack of support and mentoring at IES.

Of the seven research participants, Laura and Anita had lived in Italy for the longest time: Laura for over five and a half years and Anita for 10 years. Laura noted that teaching at IES was neither her first overseas teaching experience nor her first Italian teaching experience and the data obtained from her interviews and charts did not suggest any period of culture shock.¹⁷

Anita said that she regarded herself as “fully integrated in Italy” with her bilingualism an important factor enabling her integration. However, she acknowledged that the work culture of the region in northern Italy where IES is located, in comparison with the work culture in Milan where she had lived for eight years, was a “whole other ball game” and that it had taken her “a long time” (*Anita*) to make sense of it. In addition, the institutional culture of IES was new for her where she took on a new role as English and history teacher as well as the more familiar role of setting up adult language classes. When describing the chart of herself at the school, she pointed to one of the figures representing herself: “here’s me in the administration office, very frustrated, trying to make sense of the whole thing” (*Anita*). Thus, moving to a new region and to IES required a period of adjustment for Anita.

Analysis of findings

The findings show that the research participants encountered different cultural dimensions when they began teaching at IES. Karen, Graham, Kirsty and Sally were

¹⁷ This does not mean, however, that she did not experience culture shock when she first arrived in the country and when she first arrived at IES; rather, that the data gathered did not touch on this theme.

living in Italy for the first time and thus encountering Italian culture¹⁸ as it was lived on a daily basis for the first time as well. Carol and Anita had previously lived in Italy but were encountering the regional culture of northern Italy for the first time. Laura was the only research participant who was not new to either Italy or to the region when she began teaching at IES. I would argue that the data suggests that all the research participants, with the exception of Laura, experienced some form of culture shock during their first months at IES.

According to Heyward's (2002) four-stage analysis of culture shock (see 2.4.1), Karen would seem to have experienced Stages 1 and 2. Her description of being "knocked out by the beauty" of Italy and finding it a "wonderful" (*Karen*) experience would seem to locate her within Stage 1 where the sojourner may feel "highly elated" (Heyward 2002: 12). However, Karen's account of how she was "knocked out by how different it is and the main level was the school level" (*Karen*) suggests that she was experiencing a period of crisis characteristic of Stage 2. The difficulties she identified all related to the school: its disorganisation, the lack of anybody to make decisions and problems in communicating in Italian.

Karen commented that although she had been "quite a confident teacher" in her home country, when she began working at the school she "was really all over the place". This suggests that her identity as a teacher had been affected by her experience of culture shock; her former identity as "quite a confident teacher" had been shattered so that she felt "all over the place" (*Karen*). Her remark that she was leading two lives, one in Italy and one in England back with her family, also suggests a fractured sense of identity. However, she did say in her interview¹⁹ that "I'm sort of becoming more the person that I really am" (*Karen*): this suggests that she was entering the period of recovery of Stage 3 of Heyward's four-stage model. Karen's comment about becoming "the person I really am" also shows an essentialist understanding of identity as unified and coherent or, at the least, a desire for unity and coherence. The final section of this chapter will examine in depth the reconstruction of the research participants' identities and this point will be revisited there (see 4.3.3).

Graham, in contrast to Karen, reported that he felt "very whole" as a teacher at the school although he commented that he found the school "such a different culture and way of operating" with particular aspects that he described as "foreign". The "huge shock" he described was more in relation to his experiences of Italian culture and Italian bureaucracy which resulted in his feeling "very fragmented" and an outsider: "I'm not part of this, I'm not part of Italy ... being in Italy is ... bewildering" (*Graham*). Graham suggested that culture shock began to wear off for him once he was able to be more independent in Italy and had made friends. Like Karen, it seems as though Graham had experienced Stage 2, the crisis stage of Heyward's culture shock analysis, and was possibly moving on to a stage of recovery, Stage 3. His comments suggest that his sense of identity, like Karen's, had been fragmented and shattered by culture shock. It is interesting, however, that whereas Karen felt "all over the place" as a teacher, Graham reported feeling "very whole". This suggests that he experienced his teacher identity as intact, in contrast to other aspects of his identity.

¹⁸ This research is underpinned by an understanding that culture is constructed, fluid and changing. However, for the purposes of my analysis, terms such as 'Italian culture' are used. They are not intended to imply that Italian culture, for example, is an objective, fixed or static reality.

¹⁹ It was June 2004 when this interview took place: nine months after Karen had started at the school.

The question of why Graham might have experienced his teacher identity as “whole” in contrast with Karen and some of the other research participants is considered in a later section of this chapter (see 4.1.3).

Although Sally had been at IES for over two and a half years when she was interviewed for this research, she indicated that she thought it likely that new teachers would experience culture shock on arriving in Italy and at the school: “When you get here, the organisation and the whole Italian way, you’re really going to have a shock” (*Sally*). Her account suggests a clear memory of the culture shock she experienced at IES, with a sense of panic in not being able to communicate in English with her class at first. It does not seem that her identity as a teacher, like Karen’s, fragmented with her feelings of panic but she needed to affirm her teacher identity to herself: “You’re a teacher, you can do this, you’ve done Reception for two years” (*Sally*). This is an important strategy that she used to cope with culture shock and will be considered again (see 4.2.1.3).

Although Anita had lived in other parts of Italy for 10 years and reported feeling “very integrated” (*Anita*) within Italian society, she acknowledged several differences in work culture between the region where she had previously lived and worked and the region where IES was located. Although the data obtained from her interviews does not suggest that she experienced a ‘crisis’ that can be associated with culture shock (Heyward 2002) (see 2.4.1), in the way that Karen and Graham had done, it does suggest that she experienced a period of adjustment to the new region and the new institutional culture which, at times, she found very frustrating: “here’s me in the administration office, very frustrated, trying to make sense of the whole thing.” Anita’s experience would seem to support Heyward’s (2002) reconceptualisation of culture shock as a learning experience leading to the development of intercultural literacy (see 2.4.1).

Like Anita, Carol experienced some differences between the region where IES is located and other regions in Italy; she expressed the opinion that “this region is not the best of Italy. The people are not the best.” She also indicated that the work culture at IES was different to that of the schools where she had previously worked and this aspect is examined more fully in a later section, which shows that Carol experienced culture shock particularly in relation to school work culture (see 4.1.2.2).

The findings from Kirsty suggest she had experienced considerable frustration with all the “contradictions” (*Kirsty*) in Italian culture when she first started living in Italy. This suggests Stage 2 of the Heyward’s model of culture shock where the sojourner finds personal, social and cultural differences in the new culture and may experience hostility. Kirsty’s expression of “finding the school appalling when it comes to moral aspects”, suggests a feeling of hostility. However, over time she said that as she was able to “get to know a culture, get to know a place” (*Kirsty*) she had been able to make sense of the contradictions, which suggests she had reached the third stage of recovery from culture shock in which the individual begins to learn more about the local culture.

Thus, the data shows that all the research participants, with the exception of Laura, experienced some form of culture shock when they first began teaching at IES. The effect of culture shock was to fragment and fracture the identities that the research

participants may have previously experienced as intact and coherent. Karen, for example, experienced her identity as “quite a confident teacher” (*Karen*) being shattered so that she felt a sense of “being all over the place” (*Karen*). Graham, however, experienced his sense of teacher identity as “very whole” in contrast to his feeling “very fragmented” (*Graham*) in Italy. The data suggests that the research participants began to recover from their sense of culture shock as they became accustomed to life in Italy and teaching at IES. Karen’s comment “I’m sort of becoming more the person that I really am,” suggests that some kind of reconstruction of her identity was taking place and will be examined more fully (see 4.3.3).

Joslin’s (2002) definition of culture shock as describing both the symptoms and the process of adapting to a new culture is useful in that it suggests that culture shock is a process. It is difficult to neatly dispose of it as one category of my findings. Culture shock is a thread that runs throughout the data from the research participants and thus will be evident in other sub-sections of this chapter. For example, the participants’ experience of management and the school work culture is examined in more detail and Carol’s findings show that she experienced culture shock particularly in relation to these aspects (see 4.1.2.2).

4.1.2 ‘The Italian way’

The previous section focused on the culture shock that the research participants experienced and it identified several aspects of the participants’ experience that contributed to their sense of culture shock. Sally’s comment, “When you get here, the organisation and the whole Italian way, you’re really going to have a shock,” suggests that what she and the other teachers perceived as ‘the Italian way’ contributed to their experience of culture shock. The findings from the research participants in relation to this theme are examined in two main categories: the teaching cultures at the school and management and school work culture.

4.1.2.1 Teaching cultures

Findings

The research participants identified several key differences between their teaching approach, which they referred to as “English” (e.g. Karen) or “Anglo-Saxon” (e.g. Anita), and that of the Italian-speaking teachers at IES. The differences they identified include training and qualifications; overall philosophy of teaching and educational values; approaches to classroom management and organisation; and approaches to learners with special needs. Each of these will be discussed in more detail.

The requirements for teachers in terms of training and qualifications are different in Italy and the ‘home’ countries of the research participants. Teachers trained in the UK, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand have a degree plus an educational qualification such as a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) while the Italian teachers who work in an independent school have a degree but no specialist qualification or training in education. Sally commented, “[they] won’t have a degree in teaching” (*Sally*). Many, like Karen, expressed the opinion that their training in education, plus their teaching experience, made them better teachers: “We think we are better teachers – I say ‘we’! – we’ve had better training, we’ve had larger classes, we’ve been there and bought the T shirt.” (*Karen*)

In relation to teaching philosophy, several participants, such as Karen, referred to Italian teachers as having a “very different teaching style: talk and chalk” (*Karen, Chart 1*). Sally commented that when her learners did writing in Italian, they simply copied what the teacher had written on the board. She told the story of one of her learners who was “bright and creative” but also “disorganised, with messy handwriting” (*Sally*). Sally saw him as one of her top achievers but noted that he got bad grades in Italian, which she thought was largely influenced by his handwriting and presentation of work: “How the handwriting looks is very important. It’s very Italian – if it looks nice, it’s good!” Sally commented that these values were completely different to the ones that she, as an English teacher from the UK, subscribed to, for example valuing and rewarding children “for being special and unique” (*Sally*). Sally suggested that Stefania probably saw her, and the work her class produced, in terms of the Italian value system. “I think it goes unnoticed what you’re actually doing. I think when Stefania comes down and looks in the books, she looks in the Italian books and thinks, ‘beautiful writing,’ and then she looks at my class’s writing!” (*Sally*).

Classroom organisation and management is another key area where there are differences between Italian and English-speaking teachers. Graham said: “I’ve heard them teaching and I worry about their discipline ... I don’t think it’s ideal but it seems to be the Italian way,” (*Graham*). The size of Karen’s class with 27 learners was identified as a cause of concern by parents as they thought it was “too big to control” (*Karen*). The teacher who took Karen’s class for Italian, similarly, thought the class was too big and she split it in two. Karen described how Maria, the class’s Italian maths teacher, requested her to sit in on the maths class as she

can’t control them on her own. She also asks kids to translate things like, ‘Tell Karen to tell the class to be quiet because they’re not well behaved’. In England this would be a huge big thing... If you can’t control the class, you can’t teach. But here, it’s perfectly acceptable for teachers to admit this kind of thing. The English teachers believe that we’re better trained than our Italian teachers counterparts but it also works the other way round as well, which I hadn’t realised at all. I think Stefania does as the principal of the school. In my experience, every single time Stefania has sided with the Italian teachers. (*Karen*)

Karen gave an example of an incident which happened a week before the interview. Maria, who was taking the class for maths, left suddenly without an explanation to Karen and returned with Stefania who “laid into” (*Karen*) the class in Italian.

She spoke to them for ten minutes and then she left... I cannot believe that Stefania walks into my classroom, speaks Italian to the kids and doesn’t say anything to me. So I went to Stefania and asked what that was about... she said, oh well, Maria felt that she couldn’t control the class, they were too noisy and that I hadn’t done anything to keep them quiet. But she hadn’t asked me and the noise wasn’t that bad! ... And Stefania was on Maria’s side. And I just thought not only is this teacher admitting she can’t control 27 children, but I’m actually getting into trouble and you’re not listening to what I’m saying in my defence! ... I felt she wasn’t respecting anything I said. (*Karen*)

The fourth difference between Anglo-Saxon and Italian teaching cultures that participants discussed is support for learners with special needs. Karen described the

situation of a new child in her class whose English was not strong and whom she felt had possible autistic tendencies. She called a meeting with his parents to discuss this.

The parents completely closed down. This is so different to how it is in England. A teacher who speaks to parents about the special needs of a child is actually doing a good job... Here it was like they really just didn't want to know, and wouldn't accept it. I've heard that before – differences here are just not tolerated. The whole thing is to conform or to be better. Certainly not to be different. And there's no support structure for teachers. And the principal doesn't accept it or see the value of it. The only way it would seem to work is if the child can have extra help for language because that's the only way the parents will accept it. There's no remedial system whatsoever. (*Karen*)

Kirsty's experiences in her role as language support teacher concur with Karen's findings. Kirsty was asked to help Arianna, a child in Year 1 who had suffered a bad blow to the head when she was about two years old and who had never fully recovered. Kirsty reported that Arianna was behind her Year 2 classmates "socially as well as academically." Kirsty worked closely with Arianna's English class teacher, Susan, to provide support in her English classes. Although Kirsty has a CELTA diploma, which equips her to provide language support to learners of a second or additional language, she has no specialist remedial training.

The bulk of Kirsty's work was as a language support teacher but Kirsty expressed a belief that this work was not valued by the teachers, whether English or Italian, at IES or within the wider Italian culture.

For many kids when they come to me, it's for support. I wouldn't say we're in a culture where it's reinforced that it's OK. I'm not sure if they see my presence as a negative, as something they're lacking. I don't think that it's reinforced at home ... or even acknowledged and the teachers whether they be English or Italian, certainly don't. (*Kirsty*)

Karen suggested that the skills of being able to manage large classes and diagnose and work with learners with special needs were seen as characteristics of a good teacher in England. Conversely, teachers who lack these skills and qualities were in danger of being identified as poor teachers: "In England this would be a huge big thing. It's not on for teachers to ... admit they can't control the class. If you can't control the class, you can't teach" (*Karen*).

In this context, Karen's comment that the English teachers believe they are better teachers is perhaps not surprising: given the values of Anglo-Saxon teaching culture, the Italian teachers would seem to fall short in many respects. All the other research participants, with the exception of Anita, made similar comments about English versus Italian teaching approaches. Anita observed that the international staff

look down on the Italian staff which is a typical Anglo-Saxon thing. They just disregard the Italians... the Italians are stuffy and it's about copying, it's about spitting back exactly what I say to you and then they get a good grade. But... that's the way they've always done it, and they have had very successful people in the world... You have to find good points in the Italian style of teaching, it's not all so bad, even in language teaching it is useful to do repetition, formulaic expressions, sometimes it's useful. (*Anita*)

Although Karen believed that the English-speaking teachers were better teachers, she expressed surprise in realising that for the Italian teachers, “it also works the other way round as well, which I hadn’t realised at all”. As Carol commented, “Somebody said to me that we think our way of teaching is superior but I think they think that they’re in the right, the way they teach ... I think there’s a superiority thing going on” (*Carol*).

While many of the research participants acknowledged that there is a “superiority thing” (*Carol*) going on, only a few participants suggested some of the possible implications of this. In terms of what is valued by Stefania, Sally’s description of the handwriting incident is interesting in that she suggested that Stefania valued the “beautiful writing” (*Sally*) that the children produced in their Italian lessons and possibly evaluated the handwriting produced in Sally’s class in relation to this. However, she felt that much of what she did in her teaching may not have been recognised: “I think it goes unnoticed what you’re actually doing” (*Sally*). In terms of classroom management, Karen suggested that Stefania believed that the Italian teachers were right in their way of teaching. She reported that in the situations of conflict between Karen and the Italian teachers, Stefania sided with the Italian teachers and “did not respect anything I said” (*Karen*). In terms of support and special needs teaching, Karen and Kirsty expressed the feeling that their work with learners in these areas was not valued in the culture of the school or in the culture of the Italian educational system. This meant that the work could be compromised in terms of quality, for example Kirsty had no specialist training, such as occupational therapy or remedial work, yet was providing ongoing support to a child who had these needs. Kirsty also felt that her language support work was not valued to the point that she speculated that her learners may “see my presence as a negative” (*Kirsty*).

Analysis of findings

The findings show that the research participants identified a number of key differences between themselves and the Italian teachers at IES. The differences they identified can be summed up in the Table 4.²⁰

Table 4: Comparison of teaching cultures of research participants with Italian teaching culture

Teaching cultures of the research participants	Italian teaching culture
Specialised qualification and training in education	No specialised qualification or training in education
Valuing original thought and creativity; evidence of original thought more important than presentation of work	‘Chalk and talk’: learners to reproduce what teacher teaches them; presentation of work important
Valuing individuality: seeing each child as “special and unique”	Valuing conformity
Ability to organise and manage large classes	Not skilled in organising and managing large classes
Supporting learners with special needs; teachers have ability to diagnose problems	The system does not seem to acknowledge this aspect of education as part of the teacher’s or school’s role

²⁰ It is important to emphasise that the table identifies the perceptions of the research participants. It is not intended to imply that the points in it are verified statements about the different teaching cultures.

An important implication of the differences between the teaching cultures of the research participants and Italian teaching culture relates to what is valued and by whom. Skeggs (2002a) emphasises that it is the values that are attached to particular identities that are more important than the identities themselves and that recognition is an important process in identity construction (see 2.2). In terms of teaching approaches, it would seem that there are some key differences between the teaching approaches of the seven research participants and what they understood as the Italian teaching approach. The values that many of the research participants associated with Italian teaching are values that they did not subscribe to and, in many cases, looked down on. However, the skills and values that Sally, Karen and Kirsty, in the instances described above, believed made them ‘good’ teachers did not seem to be recognised or valued by the Italian teachers, parents or Stefania. There was a clash of educational value systems in operation and this had consequences in terms of who was recognised as a good teacher, and who was not, whose concerns were recognised as legitimate, and whose were not, at IES. The identity strategies that many of the research participants engaged in were partly a response to this situation (see 4.2.2.1). The theme of the ‘good teacher’ or the ‘ideal IES’ teacher is examined further (see 4.1.3).

Anita expressed the belief that the English-speaking teachers as a “typical Anglo-Saxon thing” (*Anita*) looked down on the Italians because of their different approach to teaching. She further commented that “it is ignorant of people who judge at face value and I think a lot of that goes on” (*Anita*). Anita’s comment raises the issue of the English-speaking teachers constructing English teaching as ‘good’ teaching and Italian teaching as ‘bad’ teaching, thus engaging in positioning and stereotyping. The theme of ‘us and them’, which looks at the opposition between the English-speaking and Italian teachers, with teaching approaches being an important difference between them, will be examined in more detail (see 4.1.5). The second part of this chapter focuses on the identity work that the research participants engaged in and the issue of constructing the two styles of teaching as oppositional with one ‘good’ and one ‘bad’ is examined as an important identity strategy (see 4.2.1.1).

4.1.2.2 Management and school work culture

Findings

Management and the work culture at IES were identified as major factors in the research participants’ experience at the school and formed an important theme that they discussed in their interviews. Karen’s response typifies that of several research participants: “I was quite knocked out by how different it [Italy] is and the main level was the school level” (*Karen*). This quotation suggests that one of the biggest initial shocks for the research participants was the work culture of the school. Joslin (2002) defines a school organisational culture as “its ‘personality’ manifested in the way that work is done, in its practices, communication system, physical form and common language” (Blandford 2000: 35 cited in Joslin 2002: 35) (see 2.4.2). In this section, different aspects of the school’s work or organisational culture will be examined. These include management style, salaries and contracts (as key functions of management), the functions of the school principal and communication. The implications of these aspects for my focus on identity will then be considered.

The management style of the directors was one of the first aspects of the school to strike the research participants and the majority of research participants commented on its chaotic nature.

The perfect case in point was getting all my documents translated into Italian. [I took a lot of trouble getting that done] but they're so disorganised, they never asked me for them. Can you imagine that they don't even have my documents? They don't even know that I'm a qualified teacher. I mean this is something ... This is part of being in Italy, isn't it? (*Carol*)

Sally commented on how 'Italian' the organisation of the school was and contrasted this with English schools, where she previously taught.

It's all up in the air and very *Italian*. English schools are very organised, very down the line, you've got this one figurehead, the head teacher, who's had her career in education and worked her way up, who has management skills as well as teaching skills. At IES, basically, they had a fantastic idea, they had a dream for their children, they've all got business experience, but [they] just don't see it from the same view and really important things get passed by because they're not teachers and they don't really seem to understand where you're coming from. (*Sally*)

Sally's comment suggests that one of the greatest differences between IES and English schools is because the principal of IES and the other directors are not trained educators. Kirsty's comments concur with this.

A fundamental problem at the school, I think, is that we have directors who are not educators and they have never been trained to be an educator, even to be a teacher, let alone to be an administrative educator, so they really don't know their tail from their heads. Part of it is cultural because to me it isn't inconsistent that things run on an emergency basis. You only deal with things that need to be dealt with, you deal with it in whatever way you can and once it's over you move on. You never go back to say, 'Let's make sure this doesn't happen again,' and question why it happened in the first place. It's crisis management. I find that to be ... cultural... That to me is the fundamental problem in the school because organisation, order, starts from the top down. (*Kirsty*)

Graham concurred. He commented that the school was an example of how Italian organisations are run in the region: "Crisis management, big time. Very Italian, you know, look at the way people drive, fast and furious and slam on brakes when you face a crisis, deal with it and get out of there" (*Graham*).

Throughout their interviews, the research participants gave several examples of the last-minute crisis management that they experienced. Karen discussed how parents were informed at the last minute about teachers leaving at the end of the school year.

The letters that go out to the children are all in Italian and I have no idea what they are saying. Last week a letter went out and Sue²¹ saw it and translated for me that it said which English teachers were leaving – including me. Now I hadn't told my children that, so I sat them down and explained it to them. Luckily Sue was there. (*Karen*)

²¹ Karen's classroom assistant.

Sally spoke of her frustration, as Key Stage 1 co-ordinator, in dealing with a crisis management style: "It's very much run, and again I think it's a very Italian thing, by what's happening now and what we need to do now but it really just stops the thing out there and doesn't create more order". (*Sally*).

A key management function is in relation to the salaries and contracts of staff. Although the new teachers, including Carol, Graham and Karen, were offered a particular salary before they arrived at the school, they soon realised that the cost of living in Italy and the earning power of their salaries was "completely different" (*Graham*) to what they had been led to expect by the school. Carol and Karen, who were both Key Stage 2 teachers, discussed a collective approach with Linda, another new Key Stage 2 teacher. They decided to write a letter and call a meeting with Stefania and Caterina. Karen described the meeting in which Carol, as the fluent Italian speaker, became the spokesperson for the three of them.

The meeting was in Caterina's office. Stefania translated everything into Italian for Caterina, then they would talk in Italian between them and then Caterina directed everything in Italian to Carol and she was horrible. Stefania played the stooge: at one point Carol said they were very upset that they were earning less money and Stefania said, 'I'm really hurt that you could think that.' It was quite strange – double act work. (*Karen*)

The issue was not resolved at the meeting and, after some discussion, Karen, Linda and Carol decided not to take it any further. "Basically, I thought the only way we get anything was if we stood together. And Carol wasn't in a situation where she was able to do that because her husband wasn't working, so basically we backed down" (*Karen*).

Carol felt that her relationship with both Stefania and Caterina never recovered from the incident. At the meeting she was told by Stefania, "We want teachers who care about the children, not the money," (*Carol*) and it seemed to her that Stefania associated her with money from then on.

Like Carol, Karen and Linda, Graham raised the issue of his salary with the directors. He wrote a letter in which he stated that he was "very anxious" (*Graham*) about the salary issue. At a meeting with Stefania, she said she did not want him to be anxious and promised to try to find a solution. On that same day, she offered Graham an extra sum every month to look after the school's computers as she had gathered that he had skills and expertise in that area. Graham commented that the sum was only a small amount "but they'd made the effort and we were committed" (*Graham*).

Graham was not the only staff member given different treatment to Carol, Karen and Linda. Laura, for example, negotiated a contract that included school fee benefits for her child who was attending IES. Stefania and Caterina saw each staff member individually and the contracts were negotiated on an individual basis with the result being disparity in the terms of the contracts as well a lack of openness about the different contracts. The official message from management was that "all the contracts were the same. It was only with us talking to each other that we discovered that there were differences in the contracts" (*Graham*). Talking to one another did not promote a sense of solidarity, however. Sue, Karen's classroom assistant, reported that the issue

of the contracts “divided the staff” (*Field notes*). There was not only suspicion of management but suspicion that colleagues had scored a better deal. Karen pointed out that the Key Stage 1 teachers were “militant and angry” over what they perceived as a pay difference between Key Stage 1 and 2 teachers although Karen felt that these differences were negligible: “it all balances out” (*Karen*).

It was not only in relation to contracts that management’s method of dealing with staff on an individual basis rather than on the basis of a general policy was apparent. In December 2003 Carol took one day off school to have an operation but “they wanted to dock my pay for that. They knew the reason, but they didn’t care” (*Carol*).

Graham, however, in February 2004 was allowed two and a half days off school to attend an interview in the UK with no salary repercussions. In May, Carol requested permission to leave a school meeting on a Friday ten minutes early so that she could catch a train to attend a job interview on Saturday. She was told that this was, “not possible.” Commenting on management’s treatment of staff, Karen said: “I’ve grown up in a culture, and it’s a personal characteristic of me, that things should be fair and straight. You treat people in a fair way and you do things right. And here it’s not like that at all” (*Karen*).

A key aspect of the research participants’ findings in relation to management and the school work culture concerned the role of the school principal, Stefania. All the research participants commented that Stefania did not perform many of the functions they expected of a school principal. Karen was confronted by Stefania’s inability to make decisions soon after her arrival. She described a situation involving her classroom assistant Sue that happened the week before classes were to begin for the new school year.

There was a whole thing going on. Sue hadn’t known all summer if she would have a job. And then basically my class was the largest in the school and a lot of parents weren’t happy with that. When I arrived there was a huge meeting, in Italian, and I was called in and Sue was there. And they [the school management] were basically talking about whether to split the class or to leave it as it was. And they asked me what I thought. And I just said, ‘I’m very sorry, I don’t think I can comment because this is not my decision. In England, this would be a head teacher’s decision, not mine.’ Then they asked if I could guarantee the standard of teaching for 27 or for 15. And I said I was used to teaching a class of 30, it wasn’t a problem, but that obviously the teaching would be different. And I felt that I was put on the spot. Sue was crying ... she got up to walk out at one point, and Stefania got up to put her arm around her. I’d been there for only a few days!! I also felt, to be honest, that I couldn’t refuse or Sue would have lost her job... But they were more worried about the parents complaining than anything. I was also aware that the decision I made would impact on how the other teachers saw me; everyone liked Sue. (*Karen*)

Although Karen stated that she felt this was a head teacher’s decision, she was placed in the position of, *de facto*, having to make the decision. She felt the situation was compromised in that she was asked to make the decision in front of Sue; she knew that the outcome would have serious consequences for Sue keeping her job, and that her decision would influence how the other teachers at the school thought of her.²²

²² At the meeting, Karen ended up by making the decision to teach the class of 27 and Sue was able to keep her position as classroom assistant.

Several research participants reported that Stefania did not perform other functions of the school principal. Karen commented:

For example, when we had our classroom assembly, [Stefania] wouldn't present it, whereas in my last school, the head teacher did, and she would thank everyone at the end. There was none of that – Stefania came in for the actual assembly and then left... So again, she opts out of it. Graham said she doesn't interview people. And Carol and I went to her for a reference, she got us to write it and then she signed it. ... How pathetic is that? (*Karen*)

Despite Karen and several other participants' view that Stefania opted out of important functions that they felt a school principal should fulfil, most research participants agreed that the directors did have the power in the school. "They can tell you, 'Yes,' they can tell you, 'No,' even if you don't think it's the right thing" (*Carol*). This was particularly apparent, in relation to issues such as salaries and contracts, as discussed earlier.

The majority of research participants agreed that Caterina had the financial power in the administration. However, many agreed that Stefania seemed reluctant to acknowledge the power of her own position. Anita suggested that this had created a situation where "nobody has power, no one wants power" and that "it spins out of control" (*Anita*) from one crisis to another. Stefania's 'opting out' of difficult situations and decisions may also have led to a power vacuum. The research participants spoke of a power struggle going on between Sally and Veronica, the Key Stage 2 co-ordinator, in the Elementary School. Karen commented: "Veronica [has] a very strong personality, and she has very much inserted herself into that managerial role, to the detriment of Sally" (*Karen*).

The work culture of an organisation does not exist in isolation but is influenced by national and regional work cultures. A key characteristic of Italian work culture, according to Anita, is that a definite management/employee hierarchy exists, which she was reminded of in a particular incident with Stefania.

The hierarchy is set up. There is the hierarchy and you are lower on the bar. In terms of language, we have the 'lei'²³; in English you say 'you' even to your boss... In Italian, in the language and culture there are formal barriers... For example I saw parents, American parents, and I just came up and just joined in the conversation, and I knew them. Well, it was 'whhooo, ha!' and I got a very nasty look from Stefania. And because she speaks English and things, sometimes I forget that there are these barriers. I forget that she's Italian. (*Anita*)

Anita reported that in the particular region of north Italy where IES is situated, it took her "a long time to figure out" the work culture which is "a whole other ball game" (*Anita*). She described what she understood as key characteristics of the regional work culture.

The work ethic is completely different. You do as little as possible, and you don't get emotionally involved; work is outside of your family circle and therefore outside of any emotional connection... Anything outside of your family, your house and your

²³ 'Lei' is the third person and is the most polite and formal way to address someone in Italian in contrast to the more familiar second form of address, which is usually reserved for family and friends.

self doesn't matter... Italians are basically sheep, they're not fighters, they don't ask those questions, why, they're told to do something and they do it. [Italian employees are] paid very little and they don't want to lose their jobs because they are a hundred thousand like 'em out there... There are lots of teachers – all women are teachers or secretaries – women are not managers – and so their choices are very limited – frankly nobody is making it till the end of the month, and nobody's getting rich and so nobody can afford to lose their job. They don't ask those questions – culturally they *really* don't ask those questions – they're not like us who say, 'Well, you know what we don't like it here – we'll get another job.' There aren't any other jobs in Italy and there aren't many other choices. (*Anita*)

Laura echoed Anita's analysis of the lack of alternative teaching jobs available in northern Italy:

Our hands are tied. There are not that many opportunities here. We can't do a lot about it. [In England, or New Zealand] we'd be able to say, 'To hell with this!' and go to another school – there are so many schools there! But here, this is one of the few schools. (*Laura*)

Karen indicated that the work culture at IES had been an ongoing issue for discussion and analysis amongst her and her English-speaking colleagues during her time at the school.

I don't honestly feel that I've been treated that differently to other people, and, in some ways, I think I've been treated better. ... A lot of people have said it's partly the Italian culture, or the business or work culture [of this region]. Everyone you speak to in this region has had a bad experience with an employer, either they've been treated badly or they haven't got paid. At least we've been paid! (*Karen*)

Thus, the IES work culture was seen as part of the broader northern Italian work culture.

Communication is a key aspect of any organisation's work culture and communication at IES was a theme in the research participants' discussions of their experiences. The findings show that one of the main ways in which communication happened at IES was through meetings. There were two main kinds of meetings that the research participants reported on: staff meetings for the Elementary School and the Middle School, which happened separately, and meetings held to discuss particular issues. Ad hoc meetings could be called by parents, by Stefania or by the teachers themselves. At the Elementary School staff meetings Irene, one of the co-ordinators would chair, and Stefania would chair the Middle School staff meetings and most of the other meetings, depending on the issue. Italian was the language used in staff meetings and most of the other meetings. At the Elementary School staff meetings, which took place weekly, translation into English for staff members who could not follow the Italian happened usually via a nominated staff member although, as Sally pointed out, the process had some problems.

When you're new and you don't know any Italian, you just sit there. It is translated for you but you don't feel part of the conversation. ... And then you say something and it's not translated back, it's very frustrating to make decisions. [The previous

Elementary School co-ordinator²⁴] was fluent in Italian and could easily translate. Veronica now translates – but not everything. New people therefore tend not to say as much. It's very hard, it's just a communication problem really. It's quite upsetting – you feel that you're a professional and you want to join in and share your opinion, but I think a lot of people feel, well, tough luck and you switch off. (*Sally*)

Graham reported that the Middle School staff meetings take place twice or three times a term and that no official translator had been nominated for him.

I sat next to Colleen²⁵ in the first term and then Anita and she's been great. She won't just translate, she'll wait for relevant stuff and then turn to me and say, 'I must tell you about this.' The staff meetings are two and a half hours long, I put down fifteen minutes of that as being relevant to me. (*Graham*)

In addition to the lack of adequate translation, the meetings were not minuted and so the teachers who did not fully understand what was discussed at the meeting had no opportunity of clarifying their understanding via a written set of minutes.

The issue of translation was a contentious one for Karen, whose meeting with the parents of her learners was described earlier (see 4.1.1). She described how in the meeting, she was "pulled to pieces" by the parents who "were speaking Italian at me" (*Karen*). Karen said that she was not able to follow accurately what they were saying as Stefania did not act as translator, despite having said that she would. Karen concluded that she thought Italian was "almost used as a weapon here. I think it's a way of keeping people apart (*Karen*).

As with most schools, sending letters home to the parents was a key method of communication. However, the example, described earlier in this section, of a letter being sent to parents about which teachers were leaving the school, without informing the teachers that the letter was being sent out, shows that the system lacked some co-ordination and could have been distressing both for the teachers and the learners.

Analysis of findings

The findings show that the majority of research participants experienced key differences related to management and school work culture between their 'home' countries and IES. Some of the key differences that emerged from the findings are shown in the table below.

Table 5: Research participants' experiences of management and school work culture

Experiences of management and school work culture in research participants' 'home' countries	Experiences of management and school work culture at IES
Management style	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally organised: will depend on individual school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disorganised

²⁴ When she left, her position was divided into Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 co-ordinators, and Sally and Veronica at the time of my research held these positions.

²⁵ The Canadian English and history teacher who went on maternity leave. Her position was filled by Anita.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School principals and other managers have 'come through the ranks', therefore understand the teachers' perspective better • Planning is generally a characteristic but will depend on individual school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors do not have an educational background therefore tend not to understand the perspective of the teachers • Crisis management: last-minute responses to crises and issues
Salaries and contracts: key functions of management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually, in state sector, salaries pegged at national scales. In independent schools, schools may have individual salary scales but these are usually applied consistently across staff members. In state sector, especially if teachers unionised, openness about the process of salary negotiation and the contents of the contracts. • General policy to deal with issues such as requests for time off work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No written policy on contracts for staff members: salaries negotiated on an individual basis. Has led to perceived disparity between individuals' contracts. Lack of openness about the process and the contents of the contracts. • Requests for time off work dealt with on an individual ad hoc basis.
School principal	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for certain key decisions, e.g. class sizes. There may be national norms and standards which principal follows as policy. • Acts as front person at certain school functions, e.g. parent assemblies. • Responsible for traditional tasks such as writing staff references. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak decision maker. Perceived by some to 'opt out' of important decisions, which means that the teacher may need to make the decision. • Does not act as 'front person' at certain school functions. • Does not carry out traditional tasks of the principal, e.g. writing staff references.
Characteristics of work culture	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The management/employee hierarchy exists but day-to-day work relationships often democratic. Manager sometimes seen as a 'team leader'. • Questioning of authority and critical thinking often accepted in Anglo-Saxon work culture. • Recognition that there may be a mismatch between the teacher and the school's work culture. This may prompt some teachers to seek new jobs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong management/employee hierarchy, as reflected in the Italian language and work culture. • Conformity, obedience and lack of questioning of authority characteristic of Italian employee, in the region of north Italy where IES is located. • Realisation that there are few alternative jobs in northern Italy means that employees cannot afford to lose their jobs.
Communication	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff meetings in English, which research participant speaks as mother tongue. • No need for translation. • Information letters sent to parents. Communication between management and teachers about these letters will depend on individual school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff meetings in Italian, which some research participants (e.g. Graham and Karen) cannot follow. • Translation provided but quality depends on translator. • Lack of communication between management and teachers about information letters sent to parents.

Each of the aspects listed in the table will be discussed in more detail.

The management style of Stefania and the other directors was described by several research participants as 'crisis management' and the examples they gave were convincing in justifying this description. The style of crisis management impacted on the daily work life of the research participants in several ways: it meant they could be

taken by surprise by particular incidents at school, for example Karen discovered a letter informing parents that she was leaving the school before she had told her class about it. It also meant that decisions were often made under pressure and for expedient reasons, for example Karen had to make the decision about whether to split her class of 27 or not. The style of crisis management probably contributed to feelings of stress and to the sense of culture shock that the majority of participants were experiencing.

Salaries and contracts are key functions of management and, as Sue commented, the issue of the contracts “divided the staff” (*Field notes*). Carol spoke of a barrier, which she referred to as “the Berlin wall” (*Carol, Chart 1*), which separated Key Stage 1 and 2 staff and suggested that it had come about because of the issue of the contracts. She said that it was only at the time of the interview in June 2004, that is nine months after the contracts issue had exploded, that the “wall” was being broken down. The data from the research participants suggests that the way the contracts were dealt with had led to a lack of trust of management and suspicion of fellow members of staff.

The third main issue in relation to management and the school work culture that participants discussed concerned the role of the school principal, Stefania. The findings show that she did not fulfil key functions in her role as principal as the research participants expected. Karen’s description of the meeting about the size of her class suggests that Stefania played the role of the ‘nice guy’, comforting Sue, and that she opted out of a difficult decision. She seemed to play a similar role in the meeting about contracts that Karen described in which she reported that Stefania said that she was “hurt” (*Karen*) that Carol and the others could think that they were being paid less money than other staff members. These incidents and other ones identified in findings, such as Stefania not playing a front of house role in assemblies, suggest that Karen and other research participants had lost respect for Stefania. Stefania’s reluctance to use her power meant that a power vacuum was created with a struggle between Sally and Veronica as the two Elementary School co-ordinators.

In any school, however, someone needs to make important decisions and in the situation that Karen described, she unwillingly ended up making the decision, aware that it would impact on a colleague’s job and her popularity with the staff. She felt positioned into making a decision which would, in the short term, please her colleague Sue, who would keep her job, and ease her relations with her fellow staff members, who all liked Sue. However, the decision would prove to be a negative factor in her relations with the parents of her learners, who could not understand how a teacher could effectively teach such a large class. The issue of the functions of principal not being properly carried out is discussed further in this chapter (see 4.1.3).

Stirzaker (2004) identifies school induction as an important factor contributing to the successful integration of teachers relocating to an international school (see 2.4.3). In addition to no induction programme being offered at IES, in her first week at the school, Karen was called in to a very stressful meeting in which she was asked to make a difficult decision that she felt was not her responsibility. The incident is likely to have contributed to her sense of culture shock.

The fourth main theme to emerge from the findings concerns characteristics of the work culture at IES. Although Stefania may have seemed reluctant to show and use

her power as school principal at times, she was definitely on the upper rungs of the management/employee hierarchy, as Anita was reminded in an encounter with American parents and Stefania. The incident reminded Anita of her place on the hierarchy: that she was just an employee at the school. Anita's description of the incident suggests that she knew the 'rules' about how the Italian work hierarchy works, at least in the abstract, but forgot the rules in practice: that there are barriers between management and employees and that she was not Stefania's equal. The incident suggests that, ultimately, Stefania was aware of her position and her power. The research participants may have had little respect for her as school principal but they had no power to formally challenge her and, when she was operating with Caterina, who was in charge of the school's finances, there seemed little room to negotiate. As Carol said, the directors "can tell you, 'Yes,' they can tell you, 'No,' even if you don't think it's the right thing". The research participants were unhappy with how their salaries and contracts were dealt with but, in the short term, had no power to change the situation.

Anita's description of her incident with Stefania can be illuminated in terms of the linguistic construction of identity. Wetherell and Maybin (1995) discuss how the grammar of the languages in which speakers communicate has important implications for identity construction (see 2.1.3). Anita pointed out how in Italian the 'lei' or the third person form of address is used for people other than family and close friends where the familiar or second form is appropriate. Using the third person reinforces the "formal barriers" (*Anita*) between people whereas English has only the second form ('you') of address which you can use "even to your boss" (*Anita*). Thus, although Anita may have spoken in English to Stefania and "[forgot] that there are these barriers" (*Anita*), Stefania herself was still aware of them, and expected them to remain in operation, even if they were not reinforced in the English language.

It should be noted, however, that Anita herself engaged in particular linguistic construction of identity. She was sympathetic to the fact that Italian female teachers are working in a compromised situation: "there aren't any other jobs in Italy and there aren't many other choices" (*Anita*). However, she constructed Italians in a particular way in contrast with north American and Anglo-Saxon culture:

Italians are basically sheep, they're not fighters, they don't ask those questions, why, they're told to do something and they do it ... they don't ask those questions – culturally they *really* don't ask those questions – they're not like us who say, 'Well, you know what we don't like it here – we'll get another job.'

Anita's lexical choices are interesting and set up Italians in a particular subject position: that of the unthinking, unquestioning, conformist employee. By contrast, the American/Anglo-Saxon employee is presented as a thinker, a questioner, a fighter, someone who will not accept a mediocre position and who will stand up for his or her rights. Despite her comment that she understands "both sides of the fence ... I am fully integrated in Italy" (*Anita*), Anita, in this example, is constructing the Italians as 'other'.²⁶

²⁶ It is interesting that later in her interview, Anita said that, "in the States you can do anything. There's opportunity. If you're willing to work, you can make money, you can get what you want." This contrasts with her statement about Italy that "there aren't any other jobs in Italy and there aren't many other choices". While it might be argued that these statements are valid in as much as they apply to

Fluency in Italian, or the lack of fluency, was an important factor in the construction of identity at IES. The findings show that in school meetings, many research participants could not participate fully because of they did not speak fluent Italian, the language used in most meetings, and thus felt themselves at a disadvantage. The research participants who were particularly affected were Karen and Graham who had almost no Italian when they first arrived in Italy. Although the research participants commented that translation was meant to be provided at the different meetings, in practice the findings showed that this was a somewhat 'patchy' service and depended on who was translating. The result, as Sally commented, was that "new people tend not to say as much" and that "a lot of people feel, well, tough luck and you switch off". Given that Stefania is a trained interpreter, it seems surprising that the issue of translation in meetings was not taken more seriously. There were several bilingual people in the school who could have acted as skilled interpreters and minute takers. The ad hoc nature of the translation and the lack of minutes seems to show both a lack of respect for and sensitivity to the situation of those teachers and reinforces their lack of power in the school.

The findings from Karen suggest that she felt that her identity as a professional class teacher was undermined by not being able to communicate fluently with the parents of her learners. Her experiences with the parents of her class and Stefania led her to conclude that language was "almost used as a weapon here" (*Karen*). She described a meeting with the parents and Stefania in which Stefania had said she would interpret for her, but did not. Karen reported that the parents spoke Italian "at" (*Karen*) her and that, as she could not understand, she could not defend herself; she also received no support from Stefania either during or after the meeting. As Stefania is a trained interpreter, this seems an extraordinary omission and is perhaps indicative of the stress she herself felt during the meeting. However, it is also perhaps indicative of the way she constructed both Karen as a teacher and the parents. Her lack of support for Karen shows a disrespect for and insensitivity towards Karen's position; perhaps by her silence Stefania wished to distance herself publicly from Karen who was seen to displease the parents. However, her response also shows a lack of respect for the parents as not translating their comments and eliciting a response from Karen meant that all the meeting would achieve ultimately would be an opportunity for the parents to air their views and "[let] off steam" (*Graham*); any real resolution of the issues they raised was impossible under those circumstances. In speaking Italian "at" Karen, the parents were constructing her identity through their manner and gesture which seemed hostile to Karen. Speaking an unknown language to a person who clearly cannot understand shows a lack of respect and constructs a particular subject position for that person which is entirely defined by the speaker. The lack of support from Stefania reinforced the unequal power relations that were evident in this incident and the incident, again, served to fragment Karen's identity as a teacher: she felt "pulled to pieces" (*Karen*).

Although Carol was fluent in Italian, this, ironically, did not improve her relationship with management. As the spokesperson representing herself, Karen and Linda at the meeting about contracts, she came in for the most flak from management. Her fluency in Italian may have functioned as a kind of threat for them as she was the only

Anita's own experiences, they could be severely critiqued. The statement about the United States reinforces the idea of the 'American dream' that has been critiqued by many cultural theorists.

research participant, apart from Anita, who could take them on in their own language. Her fluent Italian did, however, facilitate good relationships with the parents of her class. Thus, in the context of the school, Carol's fluency in Italian was both an advantage and a disadvantage.

Joslin (2002) argues that the organisational or work culture of the school will impact on the newly relocated teacher (see 2.4.2). She says that it has a significant effect on the ethos of the school which manifests in the "norms and values held about how people should treat each other and the nature of the working relationships that should be developed" (Joslin 2000: 35.). This is similar to Sikes et al's point about how institutional constraints can have a profound impact on the experiences and identities of teachers (see 2.3.2). They (1985: 232) argue that, "Teacher careers are made and experienced within schools. The organization of the school, the personality, views and values of the head, and how the teacher relates to them, are profoundly important factors in a teacher's life". At IES, according to the research participants, the work culture was characterised by a style of crisis management and by a weak school principal who did not carry out important functions such as decision making. Despite the perceived weaknesses of the principal, however, all the research participants were aware that a strong management/employee hierarchy existed, as Anita was reminded in the incident she recounted. The majority of the research participants lacked respect for Stefania but had no formal power to challenge her or the other directors. Some of the research participants could not participate fully in the various school meetings because of language issues and felt at a disadvantage. The work culture at IES was not supportive of the new teachers, for example with regard to the issue of communication in meetings and provision being made for those teachers who required translation. Not being able to participate in meetings served to undermine some of the research participants' sense of themselves as professional class teachers. All of these factors contributed to the majority of research participants experiencing the IES work culture as "different" (*Graham*) and not "fair" (*Karen*).

The findings in this section have shown that there were different value systems at play in terms of the work culture at IES compared with what the majority of research participants had experienced in their 'home' countries. Woods (1990) argues that when value systems collide and promote conflict, there may be culture clash (see 2.4.3). The research participants' description of particular incidents, such as their conflict with management over the issue of salaries and contracts, would support Woods's observation of value systems colliding and culture clash resulting.

Several of the research participants referred to points of difference and aspects of their experience that they found confusing as 'the Italian way'. Sally, for example commented that the organisation of the school was "all up in the air and very *Italian*" while Carol commented that the disorganisation of the school was "part of being in Italy". However, by labelling aspects of their experience 'the Italian way', it became both a convenient shorthand for things the research participants did not understand and a kind of answer: the issue/problem/confusing aspect must be 'the Italian way'. It led to a 'cul de sac', which closed off the need for further reflection and questioning and further learning about culture, whether Italian culture or the research participants' own cultures. It also perhaps helped reify the differences between Anglo-Saxon culture and Italian culture so that, for example, organisation was seen as an Anglo-Saxon work characteristic and disorganisation seemed Italian. Such a reification

overlooks the fact that each individual organisation has its own work culture and that there are plenty of disorganised management teams in English-speaking countries. Karen indicated that the work culture at IES had been an ongoing issue for discussion and analysis amongst her and her English-speaking colleagues during her time at the school. The next part of the chapter, 4.2, examines the identity work and strategies the research participants engaged in and the issue of the participants constructing their experiences at IES as a drama will be discussed (see 4.2.2.2).

4.1.3 The ‘good teacher’

Findings

The theme of the ‘good teacher’ at IES, the qualities that were seen to define a ‘good teacher’ and who was recognised as a good teacher, is an important one running throughout the data gained from the teachers. The research participants usually discussed the ‘good teacher’ in terms of what they thought the directors understood and valued as a good teacher. The theme is examined in this section, firstly, at an institutional level: in terms of different pedagogic value systems that the research participants felt were in operation at IES. Secondly, it is examined in terms of recognition of teaching work, thirdly, in terms of the parents and, finally, in terms of the ‘good employee’.

The findings from the research participants suggest that different pedagogic value systems were at play at IES which affected how the ‘good teacher’ is constructed. Differences between the Anglo-Saxon and Italian teaching cultures have been discussed (see 4.1.2.1). It was shown how the majority of the research participants suggested that values and skills such as valuing individuality and managing large classes characterised the Anglo-Saxon approach. The findings show that participants did not feel that these skills and values were recognised or valued by the directors of IES: they did not seem to ‘count’ as criteria for the good teacher at IES. Sally, for example, suggested that Stefania probably saw her, and the work her class produced, in terms of the Italian value system (see 4.1.2.1).

Other research participants commented on the directors’ emphasis on what was visible in the school, for example children’s art displays around the school and special assemblies for the parents. Carol, when discussing the class assembly that she had organised for parents, remarked that Stefania’s comment “the parents expect a certain kind of assembly”, made the teachers feel pressurised to create something “spectacular” (*Carol*).

Recognition of teaching work is the second aspect of the theme of the good teacher that emerged from the findings. Anita discovered that the directors did not want to know about the busy, behind-the-scenes work of the teachers. Referring to a small figure on her chart, she said

Here I put myself correcting homework. I guess a little sarcastically I put myself in the corner up where no one’s supposed to talk about it, because when they hired me, I said teaching history and English is a lot of work and they said there wouldn’t be that much to correct. I put myself there but no one is supposed to talk about it ... they *don’t* want to know that you do all this extra work! (*Anita*)

Many of the research participants commented that the directors did not notice the quality of their teaching as they did not have much to do with the actual classes that were taught. Carol commented: "The problem is the directors ... never set foot in the classroom... They don't come and observe you twice a term like ... normally principals would. So they're not very thorough or knowledgeable about their teachers"(Carol). Sally commented that Stefania was out of touch with classroom life: "I hear Stefania talking to the parents sometimes... you know she doesn't really know what goes on in her school and she doesn't know the brilliant things that go on (Sally).

Graham was the only participant interviewed whose class was observed by Stefania, and this was by accident.

I happened to have Stefania sitting in on a lesson where I was covering for another teacher; it was a class I'd never taught before. It was one of those 'off the cuff' lessons where everything went well, the kids responded fantastically and Stefania was clearly impressed. She said to me that she'd really enjoyed it and that she didn't want to leave. That means a lot. (Graham)

Sally, however, saw the directors' lack of recognition of the work done by the teachers as more than simply being out of touch with the life of the classroom.

There's just no respect there for what you have trained and had a passion for ... It's an ignorance because they don't really appreciate what you do. It's an ignorance in their education – of education. Stefania has no training in education. She's got degrees and she's well qualified ... but she doesn't really understand really good education and how to do it. She doesn't go into the classroom. One of the things related to that is money – you are a professional, you have trained for this, you have a degree. And there's Silvia²⁷, she has a degree in architecture but that's not going to make you a primary school teacher. And that reflects in the wage. That's it, they don't see it as a profession. (Sally)

The parents are an important aspect on the construction of 'the good teacher' identity. Many research participants raised the issue of the power of the parents in the school. Sally, for example, commented that Stefania "won't stand up to them". Laura suggested that the parents' view of the teachers counted for a great deal with the directors.

The parents have the power to complain. Any criticism I know I take too personally. If I knew Stefania thought I was a good teacher, it would help me, for example, if she were an ex-teacher herself. I think about how much of what the parents tell her does she take on board? How much does she think something about me because of what the parents told her? (Laura)

Karen explained how she had been constantly on the receiving end of the parents "power to complain" (Laura).

The parents in my class have complained about issues ranging from the bags are too heavy. I have been called up to Stefania's office about this. It's astonishing. I had to go back to my class, ask them to empty their bags out and they were Italian books!

²⁷ Silvia was the third director of IES; she was the president of the school.

Because the English books are kept at school. I've been in called in there – oh, I can't remember, for such trivial things that Stefania should have dealt with. I can't even remember the amount of times. (*Karen*)

The 'good employee' is the final aspect of the 'good teacher' identity that emerged from the findings. This aspect was often invisible to the research participants, as the example of Carol shows. Carol did not feel valued by the directors and expressed puzzlement about why this might be the case.

To be honest I can't understand their perspective because I look at myself, a very competent teacher, who is trilingual,²⁸ who has a wonderful relationship with the parents, with the children, but I don't feel that they value me as a person. I think it all comes down to money. (*Carol*)

Carol's reference to money relates to the situation of salaries and contracts discussed earlier (see 4.1.2.2). Carol felt that her relationship with both Stefania and Caterina never recovered from the difficult meeting which she, Karen and Linda had with them and in which she acted as spokesperson. At the meeting she was told by Stefania, "We want teachers who care about the children, not the money," (*Carol*) and it seemed to her that Stefania associated her with money from then on.

I think Stefania hasn't appreciated me because I from the word go, I said to her I'm not happy with what you're paying me. And for whatever reason, she doesn't see what value I can bring to the school. I don't understand it personally because I know that I bring value to the school, I know I do a good job, I know my Italian is a plus... Yesterday, she asked me how the interview²⁹ went, and said, 'Oh, you'll be working for a private company? Well, they'll be able to pay you more.' It's not about the money but you've got to be able to *live*. (*Carol*)

Other research participants felt the implications of Carol's conflict with the directors. Laura suggested that not raising any difficult money issues was a crucial factor that could affect a teacher's tenure at the school.

It doesn't matter if the directors see you as a good teacher or not. They would rather we [the more experienced teachers] left – we cost too much money. The whole time they think money, money, money. They don't realise how lucky they are. And you can see what happens if someone stands up to them, like Carol. They will happily get rid of someone like that. (*Laura*)

Graham's comment concurs with Laura: "They are treating the staff without much real care. The suspicion is: Do they really want us to stay or do they quite like a high turnover because of lower salaries?" (*Graham*).

Graham commented that in comparison with Carol and some of the other English-speaking teachers at IES he felt "extremely lucky" in his dealings with Stefania and Caterina. "It soon became apparent that Stefania thought I was the bee's knees... Quite early on Stefania said to me, 'We are very happy to have you because of your management experience as well as your computer science experience.'" (*Graham*).

²⁸ Carol was trilingual in English, Italian and French.

²⁹ At this stage, Carol had resigned from the school and was job hunting. She had a job interview the week before my research interview with her took place on 1 June 2004.

From the end of the first quarter, Stefania asked Graham's advice more and more about different situations and at the end of the third quarter, when Graham had given notice to leave at the end of the school year, she asked him to help advertise his position and find a replacement. She also asked him to help interview the main applicant when he visited the school and, after the interview, suggested that she would go with Graham's judgement of the applicant. In reflecting on why he had been "lucky" (*Graham*) in his interaction with the directors, Graham commented:

I don't put it down to just being a male because she [Caterina] can walk over [anyone]. I hear her talking to inspectors and she doesn't ... But, ja, I think it's just my nature ... I am a good communicator, I'm not aggressive, I don't lose it quickly [although] I will argue my case clearly ... I have been lucky but maybe I'm oversimplifying it. (*Graham*)

However, he wrote on his chart that he was "respected by hierarchy because of past position and being a man" (*Graham, Chart 1*). When asked if Graham's positive experiences with the directors were because he was a male, Carol stated, "I think males have had a totally different experience in this school," (*Carol*). Kirsty indicated that possibly being male had helped Graham but said, "Yes, but Graham is just Graham" (*Kirsty*). For her, Graham's personality was an important explanatory factor as well.

The data suggests that Carol had the most difficult relationship with management. In addition to the major issue of her salary and contract negotiations, Carol identified several other altercations she had with the directors. She was asked to teach French to Middle School children in addition to her class teaching as she was told this would still fit into her 35 contract hours per week. After an altercation, she refused. She described a major incident towards the end of the year over the issue of the marks of one of her learners. The learner had done very well in his Italian subjects but less well in his English subjects. As the directors "wanted him to get out with the highest marks" (*Carol*), they asked her to boost his marks, which she refused. After a lengthy discussion with Carol refusing to change the marks of his academic subjects, she finally agreed that they could change his marks in Phys Ed, Art and Music, although she was not happy about it. "But what do you do, when she's sitting at the computer – Stefania? She signs the reports, not me" (*Carol*).

In conclusion, this section examined the 'good teacher' in terms of four dimensions: pedagogic value systems operating at IES, recognition of teaching work, the role of the parents in constructing the 'good teacher' identity and the 'good employee'. The findings show that different pedagogic value systems were in operation at IES and that the directors operated from within the value system of Italian culture. They may not have noticed or valued the qualities of the teachers operating from within the largely Anglo-Saxon value system. The data also suggests that teaching was not valued as a profession by the directors and that, in addition, the directors were removed from the daily classroom life of the IES teachers. Thus, they were unable to recognise the quality of the teaching work of their teachers. Only Graham had his class observed by Stefania and this was by accident. The findings suggest that the parents had a great deal of power in the school and that Stefania often capitulated to them. Because of their power, the data suggests that the parents were a factor in how the teachers were constructed at the school. The 'good employee' is the final aspect

relating to the 'good teacher' identity and the findings show that this was a crucial aspect in the directors' evaluation of someone as a 'good teacher'.

Analysis of findings

The theme of the good teacher at IES is closely linked to power relations: the directors had the power to define what a good teacher was at IES and even if the teachers disagreed with their definition, they were still profoundly affected by it in different ways.

The findings suggest that the skills and values of Anglo-Saxon teaching cultures did not count as criteria for the good teacher at IES. Sally said she thought that Stefania evaluated the learners, and, by implication the teachers, in terms of the values of the Italian teaching culture, for example with emphasis on good handwriting and presentation. What the directors noticed, suggested Sally, were outward visible aspects such as beautiful handwriting rather than the quality of ideas that the learner was expressing. Skills such as being able to manage large classes were not affirmed or, in some cases, even recognised. Anita's comment that the directors did not want to know about the marking, the preparation and all the behind-the-scenes work done by teachers adds to a sense that only what was visible (perhaps to the parents) was deemed important. The findings from Karen and Kirsty, which were presented earlier suggested that the skill of being able to work with learners with special needs was not recognised as a key skill in Italian teaching culture and that teachers who wished to discuss their learners' special needs were in some way breaking a cultural taboo (see 4.1.2.1).

Carol suggested that the quality of the teachers' teaching was not recognised, mainly because the directors never observed them. It is interesting that of the seven research participants, Graham felt the most valued by the directors and he was the only one of the seven whose class was observed by Stefania.

The findings show that the parents were a key factor in the construction of the identity of the good teacher, especially in the absence of Stefania being able to, or willing to, evaluate the teachers herself. This factor could lead to anxiety as Laura indicated: "How much does [Stefania] think something about me because of what the parents told her?" Karen had a class with difficult parents and was continually questioned by Stefania on a range of issues that the parents had raised with her. It has already been discussed how Karen's difficult meeting with the parents of her learners, and Stefania's lack of support, made her feel "pulled to pieces" (*Karen*). This suggests that her sense of a coherent identity as a teacher was threatened and possibly contributed to her feeling "all over the place" (*Karen*).

The findings suggest that the identity of 'the good employee' is an important aspect of the 'good teacher' identity. Anita's discussion of Italian work culture was included earlier (see 4.1.2.2). The points made in the discussion suggest that the 'good employee' respects the manager/employee hierarchy, conforms, is obedient and does not question authority. In terms of this, confrontations, challenges and complaints are not part of the work culture and may be seen as threatening. The findings from the research participants seem to suggest that the directors of IES worked within the framework of Italian culture when dealing with the teachers at the school. Carol's relationship with the directors can be illuminated by this understanding:

She was new and acted as an eloquent spokesperson [over the salary issue] because of her Italian. I think that got her into trouble. Stefania said to me recently that Carol is an extremely rude person. I know her and I just don't see that. That's when I said I think Carol is an outstanding teacher. (*Graham*)

As discussed earlier, apart from Anita, Carol was the only one of the research participants who could take on the directors in their own language and, in the context of the school, this may have been perceived as threatening by the directors.

Woods (1990) suggests that a teacher's sociological awareness is a necessary factor in helping him or her to achieve change by causing those in power to see a situation differently (see 2.3.3.2). I argued earlier that in an intercultural setting, intercultural awareness would need to form part of the sociological awareness, for example understanding power relations between a manager and employee (see 2.3.3.2). In Carol's case, I would argue that her sociological awareness of the new work culture was limited. The data suggests that she struggled to 'read' and understand the work culture at IES: "To be honest, I can't understand their perspective" (*Carol*). Even Anita, who prided herself on being "fully integrated" (*Anita*) in Italy, forgot the strict 'rules' about the management/employee hierarchy that existed in the workplace (see 4.1.2.2). Thus, I would argue that Carol's limited sociological awareness was also a factor that helps account for her unsuccessful relationships with the directors.

Laura recognised that the directors would "happily get rid of someone like Carol" because she stood up to them on particular issues, notably the issue of salaries. Laura recognised that 'the good employee' accepted, rather than questioned, the salary that the directors set. She suggested that accepting a low salary was more important to the directors than being a good teacher: "It doesn't matter if the directors see you as a good teacher or not. They would rather we [the more experienced teachers] left – we cost too much money. The whole time they think money, money, money," (*Laura*).

It is ironic that Carol was constructed by Stefania as being overly money-minded: "We want teachers who care about the children, not the money," (*Carol*). With her statement, Stefania neatly positioned Carol into the category of a non-caring teacher motivated by money. Although Carol acted as spokesperson for Karen and Linda, the data suggests that it was only Carol who was constructed in this way by the directors. It seems as though it was the combination of Carol questioning the salaries, being able to communicate with the directors in Italian and being perceived as confrontational in how she interacted with them was fatal. Stefania's comment to Graham that Carol was "an extremely rude person" (*Graham*) is suggestive: in terms of the strict management/employee hierarchy that Anita identified, Carol broke several of the 'rules'. For Stefania, this meant that she overlooked Carol's qualities as a good teacher; far from recognising her as an "outstanding teacher" (*Graham*), she was possibly "mis-recognised" (Skeggs 2002b) as a poor or problem teacher. Carol's response to this misrecognition and how she resisted the situation will be discussed further (see 4.2.1.4).

In contrast to Carol, Graham felt valued and respected by the directors; the data suggests that of the seven research participants he had the most positive relationship with Stefania. Graham commented that he was "extremely lucky" and suggested that he was able to offer the directors what the school seemed to need: computer science

skills and management skills. Clearly, Stefania was not threatened by his management experience but, rather, valued it and drew on his experience to advise her on particular issues. Carol and Kirsty both commented on Graham's positive experiences at the school. Carol identified his being male as an important factor: "I think males have had a totally different experience in this school," (*Carol*), while Kirsty suggested that Graham's personality was an important explanatory factor as well.

Graham himself said he could not explain his positive experiences at the school through "just being a male" (*Graham*) but he did state that he was respected by the directors partly because of "being a man" (*Graham, Chart 1*). It is important to identify gender as a factor that has the potential to help explain the difference between Graham's experiences at the school and those of some of the female participants, particularly Carol. Social gender constructions often work at an invisible level, and the ideological nature of gendered discourse is often 'hidden'. However, whether they are apparent or not, there can be no doubt that gendered constructions will play a role in the day-to-day experiences of men and women in different social and institutional settings. It has been argued that there are several factors which help account for Graham's positive experiences at the school and clearly gender is one of the important factors. However, further research about gender in schools in Italy is needed in order to examine this factor in more detail.

The findings discussed in this section lead to the conclusion that, again, there is a clash of value systems at play. The directors seemed to operate from within the values of Italian culture where the 'good teacher' was seen, partly, in terms of what was visible: beautiful handwriting, art displays and assemblies for the parents. It also had much to do with being a 'good employee' who does not question authority or engage in confrontation. From the point of view of the research participants, the 'good teacher' at IES has little to do with good pedagogy as they understood it.

This analysis of the findings relating to the theme of the 'good teacher' has suggested that there was a clear understanding amongst the research participants that most of them did not make the grade as a 'good teacher', according to the directors' understanding of it. However, this is too straightforward. Rather, I believe, many of the research participants operated in a situation where they felt uncertain about what was expected of them and insecure in terms of what they felt the directors thought of them. Laura's comment, for example, betrays her insecurity: "How much does [Stefania] think something about me because of what the parents told her?" Such insecurity does not promote a sense of feeling valued. Of the seven research participants, Carol felt least valued by the directors and this contributed to her decision to leave at the end of a year:

I think in an international school, that if your teachers are valued, they're not going to leave every year. I know I wouldn't have left if I had felt valued, even if I wasn't getting paid more. I would have stuck it out for another year, definitely. (*Carol*)

Carol, however, was the most recently qualified teacher, apart from Kirsty, amongst the research participants and, as such, may have needed more reassurance than them. The data does suggest that the more secure teachers, such as Sally, may have recognised and accepted that their good teaching was not recognised but they could deal with it more easily than Carol. The data suggests that, of the seven research

participants, Graham was the most valued by the directors; this possibly contributed to his feeling “whole” as a teacher. His sense of identity as a teacher remained intact during his IES experiences while, for example, Karen and Carol’s teacher identities were threatened by theirs.

4.1.4 Freedom and autonomy but little support

Findings

Many of the research participants spoke of how much more freedom and autonomy they had in their teaching at IES compared to teaching in their home countries. Sally spoke of how stressed she felt in the UK with the “constant pressure” (*Sally*) of endless paperwork and preparation.

You just got to the point where you were so bogged down with it, after spending all day Sunday working at school... The demands are just more and more and more and you – *never* – can do it perfectly. What annoyed me in England was that ... I couldn’t you know, physically, do it all and then be this bright teacher in the classroom – because she’s too tired. (*Sally*)

She contrasted this with her teaching at IES:

Here, you can take [the children] your way and you’re free to just do your thing. And I felt like I took all the best things out from England and ... left behind the paperwork and the bad side and some of things that I didn’t agree with but had to do... The philosophy of the English curriculum is fantastic. So to have that here, where you’re not stressed. I get all the work done at school, I don’t take anything home. I go home and I’m me, I’ve got my life, it’s not ‘I’ve got to do this for tomorrow.’ ... I couldn’t have gone on like that. I would have had to either not be the teacher I wanted to be, which I don’t think I could do, and sacrifice and not do it properly and not care, which then, why do it? (*Sally*)

Sally commented that the IES experience “helps you find out who you are as a teacher and what you believe in”.

Like Sally, Karen discussed how there was less pressure in her teaching: “If I’m doing multiplication, for example, the timetable in England’s so tight – you’ve got one hour and if you need an extra 15 minutes, you haven’t got it. Here you have” (*Karen*). However, she pointed out possible negative implications of the greater autonomy.

There are no controls. I actually realised, and I’ve said it to others as a bit of a joke, that I could sit in my classroom and read nursery rhymes to them and there would be no problem with that – as long as the parents didn’t complain ... What you do comes down to the individual teacher and their own professional pride, concern about the children... There’s less pressure on you but the negative side is that if you’re not careful you can become lazier... To be honest I wouldn’t say that I’m working at my full potential here. (*Karen*)

Similarly, Graham observed, “You can be a bit casual here if you want to.”

Laura commented that the situation at IES was similar to her experiences of teaching at another international school in Italy and in the UK: “International schools often give no help, no direction, no syllabus guidelines. No one really cared what you were doing.” Laura spent nine years in her first teaching post at an international school in

London but observed, “I don’t think I grew there as a teacher... there was no one to guide me, there was no curriculum.” However, in her teaching at IES, she commented:

I have grown a lot here – surprisingly! The two and a half years in New Zealand³⁰ helped – for example learning about teaching reading, learning difficulties. I’ve been able to make use of the experiences here. I’m now really happy with what I’m doing here as a teacher ... I feel a more experienced teacher. (*Laura*)

For Carol, the experience of greater freedom and autonomy were at the expense of support. She found the lack of day-to-day interaction with someone in a management role “the biggest difference” (*Carol*) between teaching at IES and her previous schools.

I still consider myself a new teacher. This is only my fourth year of teaching, and I still have a lot to learn... In my past two years [in Canada], I had a wonderful mentor who stood by me, who I could go to and I could say what the problem was... It was an ongoing learning process as a teacher. You’re forever doing INSET and here you get none of that. (*Carol*)

Carol believed that the lack of support has had negative implications both for her students and herself:

As a new teacher there wasn’t enough direction for me to make my job smooth. My Year 5s are writing an exam that I only found out about six weeks ago that I had to start preparing them for... ...The students felt that I was pressuring them, I could tell, because last week they actually asked me one time if I was angry with them but really it was just me trying to give them a push, to get them on track, and I said, ‘No, really, I’m just stressed.’ And that’s not the kind of teacher that I will ever be, I’ve always been a very relaxed teacher. (*Carol*)

Carol’s line manager was Veronica, the Key Stage 2 co-ordinator and Carol described their relationship in negative terms.

Well, my opinion of my co-ordinator is not very high. She dishes off on you without guiding you. The ideas for the workshops at the end of the year, that everyone collaborated on, she presented as her own ideas. ... She puts a lot of pressure on you; she’s not a very good leader. (*Carol*)

On certain occasions, when she reported incidents of conflict with Veronica to Stefania, Stefania told her to sort out the situation herself. Carol said that her relationship with Veronica and with management were contributory factors to her deciding to not to renew her contract at IES for a second year.

I’ve had the experience where [Veronica] swears, I mean, it’s really, that’s why I have this negative view of her. Even though, I’m not usually like this, this is how I find myself. This is *not me* [*pointing to chart*] as a teacher. I feel it brings the worst out in me, this school. That’s why when I considered staying another year, even though Giovanni³¹ hadn’t found a job, things happened with her and with the administration that really made up my mind, look I’d rather be unemployed, even

³⁰ Laura taught in New Zealand prior to relocating to Italy and joining the staff of IES.

³¹ Carol’s husband.

unemployed, and go somewhere else, because I feel this is making me very negative.
(Carol)

Graham discussed his belief that the high turnover of staff was related to lack of support:

The two hugely important issues which I zeroed in on at the start when I first got there. It's support, knowing that the management, whoever they are, care and support you in what you do in your daily life and that the packages are fair and equal... I put down [the high turnover] to two things: the contracts and the money we've been paid and the teacher support. Because there's too much turnover, people come in and cope and deal with it as best they can and then they're out of there... (Graham)

Anita spoke of how she had worked independently in setting up the adult language classes at IES, but that the results of her work had been questioned by Caterina.

She had made a flip comment that I didn't know how to do business because I didn't have enough clients in the first couple of months because I was incapable of doing it – because she wanted to lower my salary. I said, 'Listen, nobody asks me anything, you didn't sit me down and ask what my strategies were, what were you doing every day, and then you coming up with a flip comment like that?' 'Well, we like everybody to take responsibility and just do their work.' Well, *that* is anti-management. (Anita)

Analysis of findings

There are differences amongst the research participants with regard to freedom and autonomy. For Sally, the greater freedom and autonomy she experienced at IES enabled her to realise her preferred teacher identity. The experience helped her to “find out who you are as a teacher and what you believe in” (Sally) and gave her the freedom to take the “fantastic philosophy” (Sally) of the English curriculum, and do it her way. She felt that in Italy she was no longer the stressed teacher that she had become in the UK to the point that she said she couldn't have continued like that. In Italy she was able to enjoy a life and identity outside teaching: “I'm me, I've got my life” (Sally).

Like Sally, Karen agreed that there was less pressure at IES but discussed how the lack of structure and supervision meant that she was not working at her full potential. She noted that how a teacher worked, ultimately, was down to his or her professional pride. Although she realised she could get by reading nursery rhymes to the class, her identity as a professional teacher, and her concern for the children, would not allow her to do so.

Carol's experience, however, suggests that the greater autonomy in her teaching was at the expense of the support that she needed as a new teacher. She related to the identity of a 'new teacher' and her positive experiences in Canada of being mentored and supervised contrasted with her experiences at IES. The findings suggest that for Carol to move beyond the 'new teacher' identity, she needed support in the form of INSET or a mentor and in the form of affirmation for what she was doing as a teacher, for example through class observations. She received none of this at IES. Carol's experience links with Laura's belief that she did not grow as a teacher during her nine years at an international school in London as “there was no one to guide me, there

was no curriculum” (*Laura*). New teachers seem to be the most affected by the lack of support.

Laura, however, had become used to the lack of support from international schools and was able to draw on her recent teaching experience in New Zealand to put new ideas into practice. This led to her sense that she had “grown a lot” as a teacher and was “really happy” (*Laura*) with her teaching.

The apparent autonomy that the teachers experienced, however, was not absolute as Carol discovered. She described how she had not been given vital information about the exams her learners had to write and this meant that she had to prepare the class for the exam under a certain amount of pressure. This led to her becoming stressed, which was felt by her learners. She had become the kind of teacher that she did not ever want to be. Earlier, the conflict that Carol experienced with Stefania over changing the marks of a learner in her class was described (see 4.1.3). Carol suggested that, ultimately, Stefania had the power to do as she wished: “But what do you do? When she’s sitting at the computer, Stefania. She signs the reports, not me” (*Carol*). Thus, it might be more accurate to conclude that the research participants experienced greater autonomy in their everyday teaching at IES than in their home countries, but that, ultimately, the directors could influence, in major ways, important pedagogical decisions, for example about assessment.

Like Carol, Anita realised that the greater autonomy she seemed to experience as a teacher and adult language co-ordinator was not absolute: it could be used against you when it suited management. In an altercation with Caterina, Caterina commented that Anita did not know how to do business as she had no clients. Anita was very angry as she said that Caterina had not monitored her work on a daily basis, which suggested she was out of touch with Anita’s situation. Thus, she felt, Caterina was inappropriate in her criticism of her performance.

The differences between the different research participants’ experiences can be considered in relation to several factors. Firstly, the findings suggest that the more experienced teachers coped better with the greater autonomy and lack of support than less experienced teachers. Of the four teachers discussed in this section, Carol had taught for the least amount of time before arriving at IES (three years) while Laura had taught for 15 years, Sally for five and Karen for four years prior to IES. In addition, Carol was teaching both a different grade and using a different medium of instruction in Italy.

Secondly, previous teaching experiences may have affected how the teachers feel about their experiences at IES. Sally had experienced considerable stress in the UK and the IES experience was a welcome contrast. Carol had valued her teaching experience in Canada and noted that highlights were the “excellent leadership and support” (*Carol, Chart 2*) given to her. While Laura valued what she had learnt in New Zealand, she found the demands on her as a teacher were considerable and said that in New Zealand she would not have been able to combine her teaching with family life as easily as in Italy.

Thirdly, the length of time the teachers had taught at IES was likely to affect their perceptions of their experiences. Carol and Karen were both new teachers at IES

while Sally had been at the school for two and a half years and Laura for three and a half years. Newer teachers are more likely to be going through a period of adjustment to the new school and need more support than teachers who have settled into the new school.

Finally, the differences between the teachers may also be affected by the different teaching requirements of the grades they teach. Sally was teaching Year 2 where the learners do not write exams, while Carol's learners in Year 5 had exams, thus Carol could not be as autonomous as Sally and Laura, for example.

The lack of support from management is an important factor in understanding the experiences of the research participants at IES. Graham explained how he attributed the high staff turnover to two main factors: firstly, the issue of contracts and money in and secondly, lack of support from management. Stirzaker's (2004) article, discussed earlier, provides support for this (see 2.4.3). She argues that there is a strong correlation between unsuccessful induction and early decisions to leave the organisation, which could result in a high turnover of staff. In the case of IES, there was no formal period of induction but the experiences that the research participants had during their first few months at the school were likely to exert a strong influence over the duration at the school and, possibly, could influence their decisions about staying at the school. Graham commented: "I think I had already decided that I was not going to stay for two years, so that was before you³² had even got here." (*Graham*).

The issue of lack of support from management is linked to the theme of the good teacher (see 4.1.3). Carol suggested that the directors were "not very thorough or knowledgeable about their teachers because they "don't come and observe you twice a term like ... normally principals would" (*Carol*). Interest and support in the form of class observations might have helped show the directors that the research participants were good teachers. It has been mentioned that Graham was the only one of the seven research participants whose class was observed by Stefania and that, of the seven research participants, he was the one who felt most valued by the directors (see 4.1.3). It would be oversimplistic to attribute Graham's sense of feeling valued solely to this class observation. Several factors relating to Graham's sense of feeling valued were discussed in 4.1.3, including gender and the experience and skills he was able to offer the directors, but I would argue that the class observation was a contributory factor. Graham may have argued to Stefania that Carol was an "outstanding teacher" (*Graham*) but Stefania was not able to see this as she had not observed Carol's teaching and had only experienced Carol in relation to administrative issues, which, she felt, showed Carol as "an extremely rude person" (*Graham*).

In conclusion, the findings and discussion in relation to the theme of freedom and autonomy but little support have shown different experiences and responses among the research participants. An experience of greater freedom and autonomy for Sally, for example, helped her to realise her preferred teacher identity. However, the greater day-to-day freedom, for Carol, came at the expense of support and this meant that her growth beyond the 'new teacher' identity was limited. Karen's experience suggested

³² Graham is referring to me here. I arrived at the end of September 2003, three weeks after Graham had begun at the school.

that she felt the need to remind herself of two defining characteristics of her identity as a teacher, professionalism and concern for the children, in order to cope with the greater autonomy and lack of support.

4.1.5 'Us and them'

Findings

In his interview, Graham commented about IES: "That's the big issue, it's 'us and them'". Graham's map captures 'us and them' operating on several levels. Firstly, there is management in opposition to the teachers. Secondly, there is the Middle School in opposition to the Elementary School. Thirdly, within both the Middle and Elementary schools, there are the English-speaking teachers (labelled 'us' by Graham) versus the Italian teachers.

The theme of 'us and them', although not as explicitly identified as in Graham's data, occurs in the data of several other research participants as well. In addition to the levels of 'us and them' identified in Graham's chart, data from the other research participants reveals that the 'us and them' theme applies to the English-speaking teachers themselves as a group: rather than being a unified homogenous group, there were issues which caused separation and difference. In this section, the findings relating to this theme are discussed in the following order: management versus teachers, the Middle School versus the Elementary School, English-speaking teachers versus Italian teachers and differences within the English-speaking group.

Management versus teachers is an important level at which the 'us and them' theme operates. While commenting on her chart, Kirsty described management, which she calls 'administration',³³

And here's the administration in blue (*laughs*) because blue's quite a cold colour and I do not feel anything for the administration ... when I looked at it, I found it quite interesting because as much as they're just up here, I drew them quite large and they're quite dominating on the page ... It really represents the feeling that I think the administration has over the staff. (*Kirsty*)

It has been noted that the management style of the directors was one of the first aspects of the school to strike the research participants (see 4.1.2.2) and, as Kirsty's quotation suggests, management played a key role in the experience of the research participants at IES. The findings in this chapter so far have shown that the majority of research participants perceived their relationship with management to be a difficult one with many points of difference between them. It has been shown that many of the research participants believed that the directors' lack of educational background meant that they tended not to understand the perspective of teachers (see 4.1.2.2). A key issue in the teachers' relationship with management was the way in which salaries and contracts were negotiated. The lack of openness about the process, and the perceived disparity in the final contracts, led to a lack of trust of management. In her role as school principal, Stefania was seen by the majority of research participants to be a weak decision maker who let the parents dictate to her on many issues. In addition, her lack of support for the English-speaking teachers led the majority of research participants to feel a lack of respect for her.

³³ Kirsty, Anita and Carol follow the north American usage of referring to the management of the school as the administration.

None of the research participants described their relationship with management in positive terms. The following statements from Karen typify the responses:

Stefania: Appears very agreeable but is a hard business woman, e.g. negotiations our contract. No support to me as class teacher and not strong enough to deal with parents. Speaks English but will not translate – uses as weapon.

Caterina: Language a barrier – pretends does not speak and understand when suits her. Lacking in social skills – a bully. Does not care what people think of her. (*Karen, Chart 1*)

The third director, Silvia, had little to do with any of the teachers as Sally noted: “Silvia’s just put money in but she’s not a visible presence” (*Sally*).

Laura and Carol both used money symbols on their charts to show the importance of money in their relationships with management and, in their interviews, Laura and Graham spoke of how money was a key issue for management (see 4.1.3). Sally described a situation with Stefania and Caterina, which made her prefer dealing with Caterina from a financial point of view.

I realised [Stefania] tells a lot of lies, not lies, she tells you what you want to hear, but then it turns out wrong ... [When] I was going home to supply teach, and she asked me to do summer school and she said, “Oh we won’t tax you.” Then I got my wage from Caterina, and it was taxed, and it was a lot of money down on what I thought. Then I said, ‘Stefania said ...’ but then she lied and said we’d never had that conversation and that was when I lost respect for Stefania. (*Sally*)

The findings show that overall all the research participants had negative experiences in their dealings with management. Stefania and Caterina were the two directors that the research participants interacted with the most. All the research participants expressed little respect for Stefania and many, such as Sally, expressed little trust of her. Some research participants, such as Sally, believed that Caterina was more straightforward to deal with but, ultimately, expressed the belief that IES, for the directors, was “a business, first and foremost” (*Sally*).

The Elementary School versus the Middle School is another level at which the ‘us and them’ theme operates. The interviews with the research participants and my field visit to IES show that, on a daily basis, there was much separation between the Elementary School and the Middle School. Each section of the school had different staff meetings and there were different lines of accountability. In the Elementary School, each teacher reported to their co-ordinator: Sally for Key Stage 1 and Veronica for Key Stage 2. If there were problems, the English-speaking teachers would go, firstly, to their co-ordinator and then to Stefania if the problem could not be resolved. In the Middle School, however, Graham and Anita’s line manager was Stefania and they had a lot of daily interaction with her.

Interaction between the teachers from the two parts of the school was on a personal basis only, as they were structurally separated. For example, Karen commented: “Little contact with [the Middle School] except in computer suite (Graham) and at lunch (Anita)” (*Karen, Chart 1*). Graham was the only research participant to interact

with people across the two sections of the school through his work in the computer room.

English-speaking versus Italian teachers is the third level at which ‘us and them’ operates. The discussion on findings in relation to teaching cultures emphasised differences in teaching approach, which resulted in some research participants defining themselves as English teachers with an educational philosophy and values in contrast to, and implicitly better than, the Italian teachers (see 4.1.2.1). Certain differences, such as those relating to classroom management, resulted in a conflict situation between an English-speaking and Italian-speaking teacher at times, as Karen reported (see 4.1.2.1). However, the experiences of the research participants were varied and were influenced by individual relationships with the Italian teachers for their class. Karen had difficult relationships with her class’s two Italian teachers and expressed the opinion, “I think there is a lack of goodwill between the two groups of teachers” (*Karen*). Sally, however, reported on much more positive relationship: “I get on very well with my Italian teacher” (*Sally*). Carol, too, reported on a positive working relationship with her class’s but indicated that she had different feelings about the Italian teachers as a group.

Between me personally and the administration, I find a lot of confusion. I think between the Italian teachers and the administration, there’s a lot of help given. But this is my perspective, I don’t know if other people feel this because I don’t have a rapport with the Italian teachers. (*Carol*)

Carol’s comment is perhaps indicative of the separation between the English-speaking and Italian-speaking teachers, which other research participants commented on as well. The research participants discussed several factors at the school which led to the English-speaking and Italian-speaking teachers having different experiences to one another at IES, which may have influenced the relationship between the two groups of teachers. Graham observed that in the Elementary School “there’s major separation” between the Italian and the English-speaking teachers. The Italian teachers were mostly part time while the English teachers were full time and the English teachers had particular duties and responsibilities such as lunch-time duty, which the Italian teachers didn’t have. “There’s much more ‘us and them’, if you like,” (*Graham*). Similarly, in the Middle School, the Italian teachers, except for one full-time staff member, “come and do their hours and then they go, and some teach in other schools” (*Graham*).

Because of their different duties and responsibilities, the research participants suggested that the English-speaking and Italian-speaking staff had very different experiences at IES. Carol indicated that some of the Italian teachers seemed unaware of the issues that were contentious for the English-speaking teachers: “Speaking with my Italian colleague ... they have no clue about some of the things to us that are very important – the cafeteria duty, the mensa duty,³⁴ things that have come up and have been a sore point for us, they’re oblivious to them,” (*Carol*).

The difficult relationship that the majority of the research participants had with Stefania did not seem to be an issue for the Italian teachers according to some of the research participants. Graham, for example, commented that the Italian staff in the

³⁴ This refers to duty in the dining room at lunch time.

Middle School seemed to have a good relationship with Stefania: “The staff meetings have never been heated or unpleasant. There’s a very good vibe between the Middle School teachers and Stefania” (*Graham*).

Because his experiences at IES seemed so different to those of the Italian teachers, Graham described Anita and himself in the Middle School as being in a separate “camp” (*Graham*) to the Italian Middle School teachers although he commented that “I’ve got enormous respect for all of them and I’ve really grown to like them” (*Graham*).

Language is another factor which separated the English-speaking and Italian-speaking teachers. Sally, Carol, Anita and Laura all spoke enough Italian to communicate fluently with their class’s Italian teachers. However, most of the Italian teachers spoke very little English and Karen and Graham spoke very little Italian.

In the short term, this hasn’t mattered. It hasn’t stopped me getting on well with all the Italian teachers ... [whom] I see more often. But the friendships haven’t happened ... I mean Alessandra is a classic, she made the initial step, and we leapfrogged in our relationship with her, but it stayed there. ... There’s goodwill but there’s nowhere to go because of the language. It just couldn’t go any further. (*Graham*)

Differences within the group of English-speaking teachers is the fourth level at which the theme of ‘us and them’ was discussed by the research participants. It has already been mentioned that there was structural separation between the teachers of the Middle School and the Elementary School but the findings show that separation occurred in other ways as well. As with many groups, there were several personality issues that affected the English-speaking staff. Karen pointed out the unique flavour of the ex-pat community in an international school context: “For myself, Susan, Linda, all of those people, we work together, we live together, we socialise together. That’s a very, very potent mix... I usually get on with everyone, but here there’s a real element of hothouse gossip,” (*Karen*). Graham commented, “I think generally [the international staff] are unified but there are one or two spikes which can spark off different personalities. Veronica is a spike ... she’s got very little support from within” (*Graham*).

The power vacuum created by Stefania opting out of several functions in her role as school principal has been described and it was suggested that one of the consequences was a power struggle between Sally and Veronica (see 4.1.2.2). All of the research participants who discussed this issue supported Sally. Veronica and the power struggle was a key item for some of the “hothouse gossip” mentioned by Karen.

The issue of contracts has been identified as a major issue for the research participants (see 4.1.2.2). In relation to the theme of ‘us and them’, the issue can be seen to have divided the English-speaking teachers, as well as having contributed to the management versus teachers opposition. As Sue, Karen’s classroom assistant, said, the issue of the contracts “changed everything, divided the staff” (*Field notes*). In her map, Carol depicted a “Berlin wall” between Key Stage 1 and 2 that “related particularly to the different contracts, different hours that people were working” (*Carol*).

Analysis of findings

The findings relating to the theme of ‘us and them’ touch on many of the interpersonal dynamics present at IES. There was a lot of positioning of people into particular groupings or camps and, in turn, being positioned by others. Some of the groupings include management versus the English-speaking teachers, English-speaking versus Italian teachers and groupings within the English-speaking camp, for example Key Stage 1 versus Key Stage 2 teachers.

Woodward (1997) points out that identity depends on difference (see 2.1.3) and Woods (1990: 139) argues that in “shaping and honing [our] identities we need not only supportive feedback from others, but also contrastive” (see 2.3.3.2). In terms of the groups discussed, the English-speaking teachers constructed themselves as “better teachers” (*Karen*) than their Italian-speaking counterparts with better training and better skills, such as classroom management skills and supporting learners with special needs, and better values. However, it was suggested earlier that this may have worked the other way round as well with the Italian teachers thinking “that they’re in the right, the way they teach” (*Carol*) (see 4.1.2.1). Although data from Karen and Sally concurred with this, and Anita interrogated why the Anglo-Saxon way of teaching should be seen as superior to the Italian way of teaching, the majority of research participants seemed to accept that their teaching was ‘better’. I would argue that feeling superior about their teaching was an important strategy for the English-speaking teachers in helping to preserve their identity as teachers that had been threatened on so many other levels. This strategy will be discussed more later in this chapter (see 4.2.1.1).

Money was a key issue in the relations between management and the research participants and the majority of research participants constructed management as being in it for the money. Carol said that “the biggest thing” she would like to tell management is that having a school “cannot be all about the money, the bottom line. Teaching is not a business,” (*Carol*). However, Stefania’s statement, “We want teachers who care about the children, not the money,” (*Carol*) neatly positions Carol as a money grabber who falls outside the group of ‘caring teachers’ apparently valued by the directors. In doing this, she sidestepped Carol’s concerns, and those of other teachers, that she and the other directors are only in it for the money.

Positioning and being positioning by others into particular groups had several consequences. It served to create a sense of solidarity. When Graham spoke of ‘us versus them’, he located himself within particular camps: that of the English-speaking teachers versus management and that of the English-speaking teachers versus the Italian-speaking teachers. In the Middle School, Graham and Anita formed a camp with two other teachers, Padma and Madalena, who taught second language French and German. “I see them as part of us,” (*Graham*). The issue regarding the contracts that the majority of research participants had with management might have helped to create a sense of solidarity but Stefania and Caterina’s strategy of negotiating contracts with the teachers individually worked to divide the English-speaking teachers. They began competing for what seemed to be scarce resources from management. If they had chosen to work collectively, the outcome might have been quite different.

Another consequence of the positioning into separate groups was that it led to particular perceptions about the other group's resources. For example, the Key Stage 1 teachers believed that the Key Stage 2 teachers had better contracts than them and some of the English-speaking teachers believed that the Italian teachers had a better deal than them. Carol, for example, stated that she thought that the Italian staff were given a lot of help by management in contrast to her own relationship with management. She and other research participants also felt that the Italian teachers had fewer duties than them. However, Carol said that she was surprised to find out that her class's Italian teacher was earning less than her; she suggested that this is not what she had expected. These examples suggest that separation between the different groups and the lack of communication between them could make one group perceive themselves as victims or as worse off than another group without understanding the complete picture.

The divided staff helped create a situation in which "hothouse gossip" (*Karen*) and identity politics flourished. How the teachers made sense of their experiences at the school is examined more fully in the second part of the chapter that considers the strategies that the research participants engaged in (see 4.2.2.2).

4.1.6 Institutional identity

Findings

Most of the research participants expressed the opinion that the words 'international' and 'English' in the name of the school were misleading, both for new teachers and for parents. Sally said that before she came to the school, "I thought it would be children from all over the world and it's really not international, it's Italian children learning English. It's very misleading" (*Sally*). The name of the school had created a certain impression in Sally's mind and her interview did nothing to dispel this impression. "They said that some children in the school will be international because there are some in the school but I was thinking an international school, children from America, children from ... I wasn't told percentages or numbers" (*Sally*).

Graham's recruitment happened via telephone and e-mail and his impression of the school was influenced partly by his understanding of an international school as a progressive academic institution and partly by a linguistic feature that he was unaware of: "[Stefania] signed her e-mails 'Dott.' which I thought meant she had a Ph.D, possibly in education. When I applied for the position I thought this was a hugely academic institution with a massively academic leader. I was wrong,"³⁵ (*Graham*).

Kirsty understood 'international' in a way that was not borne out by the reality of the school.

I actually think the name is a farce. The school is not international. I think it was chosen because it sounds good rather than the fact it's international... The administration has no idea of what it is to be international... it's not one of understanding an international picture or of being culturally sensitive to others, so I could almost laugh at the name... The international part is to be taken advantage of [by the administration], not fully utilised. (*Kirsty*)

³⁵ In Italy, it is a convention for graduates with a first degree to sign themselves 'Dott.' in abbreviated form, which stands for 'Dottore' for men and 'Dottorressa' for women.

Participants had different views about whether the ‘English’ in the name of the school referred to the English language or to England, the country. Laura understood English to refer to the language but discussed how she felt this aspect had become downplayed in the school as it became accredited to the Italian state system.

It refers to the language – English as an international language. It was a fantastic idea... [but now] it’s lost its international status – the emphasis is on the Italian. Ten years ago it was quite different, it’s now an Italian school but with a more than average amount of English thrown in... The vision has been lost. (*Laura*)

Sally’s understood ‘English’ as referring to England but she suggests that in reality this can be misleading as “English has been pushed back” (*Sally*).

It’s kind of a show off thing... It gives the wrong impression to an English person, to an English teacher... it’s changed so much, the school, because when I arrived in Reception, it was very much like, take what we do in England, bring it over here and deliver it here ... But now it’s changed dramatically: it’s more like an Italian school but with a lot of English. (*Sally*)

Anita’s understanding was that the directors were trying to associate the ‘English’ language with England which, she felt, was seen as having a higher currency in Italy than other forms of English.

The fact oftentimes in Italy is that English sells - in any kind of situation... They thought it would be very, very easy to create an *English* curriculum because, as far as they’re concerned, (and I haven’t actually verified) British English is better than American English or Australian English or whatever English. The word English does not refer to the language but to the English curriculum. They could not hold on to that concept because they could not get enough English teachers and so they started opening it up... Now you are not supposed to refer to it as a bilingual school but in essence it is a bilingual school... The school is bilingual but the name doesn’t suggest that and they don’t say that to parents actually when they come. And so what happens is that they have a lot of people leaving ... and a lot of very disgruntled parents because it is not ‘English’ ‘international’ school. (*Anita*)

Laura, too, suggested that some parents had withdrawn their children from the school because it was no longer an international school.

For Karen, the name of the school was simply a “marketing ploy” with the school being “a money-making business”. Kirsty suggested that the English-speaking teachers were essential resources for the school’s image: “You take away the English teachers and you take away the English part of the whole title. Without us, they’re just another private school. It sets them apart” (*Kirsty*).

In my interview with Stefania, she readily admitted that the school could be described as a bilingual school and commented that this would be a more accurate description than an international school as the learners are mainly Italian. She commented that ‘international’ also applied to the learners being able to experience the diversity of the international staff as well. She said that one of the main reasons for founding the school was for the children to learn English but commented that the ‘English’ in the name of the school originally did refer to ‘British’ although, as more English-speaking teachers from other countries were recruited, this had broadened.

Kirsty described a situation in which Stefania gave a completely different impression of the school to that suggested by the name. She described a meeting she attended about one of her learners with severe learning problems, Arianna, in which Arianna's doctor, who was present at the meeting, showed a clear understanding of the school as being "mainly an Italian school with a few hours of English on the side. This is what the doctor said – and the mother and Stefania didn't clarify it" (*Kirsty*). Kirsty described this as "outrageous" but said she thought Stefania and Arianna's mother did this to help keep the child out of the Italian system as they felt she would have better opportunities at IES.

Analysis of findings

The findings suggest that the research participants believed that the school's name gave it a marketing edge in relation to other private schools in the region. In the educational marketplace in Italy, 'English' and 'international' have a currency and the school was positioning itself to best advantage.

The English-speaking teachers are vital for the school to claim with any legitimacy that it offers an 'English' (whether this refers to the English language or to the country) or an 'international' education. However, the teachers did not feel they derived any major benefits from this and they did not feel any more powerful as a result of being able to offer these valuable resources. The views of the research participants that the school welcomed a high turnover of staff as it meant less of an outlay in salaries have already been mentioned (see 4.1.3). The teachers seemed to have a sense that they were seen as an expendable commodity by the directors who could tap into a ready supply of English-speaking teachers who would love to travel to Italy. Although the English language and English teaching may have a powerful global currency (Pennycook 1994, 1998), the experiences of the English-speaking teachers at IES seem to suggest that 'English' and 'international' need to be mediated by Italian locals in order for these resources to be sanctioned in the marketplace. Anita stated that she thought it would be impossible for her and other English-speaking teachers to set up their own school: "In Italy, if you have money, you can make money... It's all about money and having connections... You're not getting a whole bunch of non-Italians coming in from outside and setting up private language schools" (*Anita*).

Skeggs (2002a) argues that identity can become a resource for some and a fixed position for others (see 2.2) and, in relation to the identities of 'English' and 'international', it would seem that these identities are resources for the owners of the school who are able to use them flexibly when it suits their interests. The meeting that Kirsty described is an example of how Stefania treats the name and identity of the school with a certain amount of fluidity: it is by no means a fixed position for her. She readily agreed in her interview that it is more accurate to describe the school as bilingual rather than international, yet the name of the school has remained unchanged.

A major way in which the English-speaking teachers were affected by the name of the school was at the time of their recruitment. Sally commented that she expected children from all over the world whose first language would be English and she experienced a feeling of panic on being "faced with 24 children who had no English". This initial experience probably contributed to the culture shock that she experienced.

Graham expected an academic institution with an academic leader and was surprised to find out later that Stefania had no formal training in education.

Kirsty's comment that the "administration has no idea of what it is to be international... it's not one of understanding an international picture or of being culturally sensitive to others" suggests that she had an understanding of the kind of school with an 'inclusive' school mission (see 2.4.2), which she felt IES did not match up to. The data suggests that Kirsty and the other research participants were right. Joslin (2002: 40) lists characteristics of the inclusive international school which include "exposure to others of different cultures within the school" and teachers as "exemplars of 'international-mindedness' (see 2.4.2). IES did not seem to have a clearly defined international philosophy which was implemented in different aspects of school life. However, IES did not seem to be an 'encapsulated' international school, either, with a "value system that is a product of an imported school culture" (Joslin 2002:41), for example an American international school in any country outside the United States. The International Schools Review (2006) lists another kind of international school: the 'for profit' international school. The research participants understood the school in these terms: "it's a business, first and foremost" (*Sally*).

The English-speaking teachers may have thought the name of the school is "a farce" (*Kirsty*) yet were reluctant, publicly, to contradict what the name implies and the impression they thought the directors wished to create of the school: "you are not supposed to refer to it as a bilingual school" (*Anita*). Although Kirsty thought it was "outrageous" that Stefania and Arianna's mother had given a false impression to a doctor about the nature of the school, neither she nor Arianna's class teacher, nor the Italian teaching assistant who were also present at the meeting, said anything to contradict the impression that had been created. Kirsty's comment suggests that she and Arianna's other teachers were aware of the limited options facing Arianna and may have felt that Arianna remaining at IES might have been the best solution for her. My interviews and observation at the school also suggest that the teachers were in a relatively powerless position in meetings in contrast to Stefania and it would have been unusual for them to have contradicted her publicly. Within the school, the control of the resources of 'English' and 'international' was firmly in the hands of the school's directors.

There are several possible implications of the institutional identity on the identities of the research participants. The 'English' and 'international' aspects of their identity as teachers were controlled and mediated by the school; they were necessary for the school but the school was able to use them to their best advantage and conferred very little in return: "the international part is to be taken advantage of, not fully utilised" (*Kirsty*). It was not a two-way process. For those teachers who might have experienced a fragile sense of identity as teachers in the school, this may have made them even more so. In an area where they were necessary, they were also expendable; the resources that they brought did not make them powerful. The more powerful identity was that of the school and that identity was firmly controlled by the owners of the school.

4.1.7 'It's your life!'

Findings

Teaching at an international school, out of their home country, meant that the research participants were teaching in a new context with less support structures in place:

"When I first came here it actually reminded me of going back to university, away from home with none of that support or structure in place" (*Karen*). Related to this, Carol suggested that the teachers' experiences at the school tended to dominate other aspects of their life in Italy: "I think ... in an international school in Italy [the Italian teachers] have an outside life. School is just a job for them whereas for us, this is *life*" (*Carol*). This statement suggests that the IES experience 'counted for' a great deal in the teachers' overall experiences in Italy; in terms of identity, it suggests that the teacher identity was highlighted in relation to other identities. However, the findings show that there were differences amongst the research participants about the extent to which their work at IES was a significant aspect of their experiences in Italy. The differences relate to their personal circumstances, particularly whether they had moved to Italy because of their job at IES and whether they saw their job at IES as a long-term career move. Each research participant will be considered in turn and the discussion will include an examination of other identities, as well as their teacher identity, that the research participants experienced in Italy.

Although Carol was married to an Italian national, she and her husband had moved to Italy because of her job at IES and, for several months, she was the sole breadwinner while her husband looked for work. The findings show that her experiences at IES dominated other aspects of her life in Italy: "It's definitely impacted on my marriage, not made things easy because I think I actually went through a period of depression this year. In England, which was my toughest year professionally, I never thought like I thought this year" (*Carol*). Carol listed the identities she experienced in Italy and included Canadian and teacher ("you know those are very strong for me,") and also wife of an Italian national, a daughter and a friend.

Sally did not move to Italy because she got a job at IES: "I came over to be with someone and luckily I found work" (*Sally*). Sally experienced the identities of an "English" (*Sally*) person, fiancée of an Italian citizen and teacher at IES. The findings relating to Sally suggest that her life at school did not dominate other aspects of her life, "I see myself as having another life here" (*Sally*) which contrasted with her life in the UK where she was tired and stressed by "just working" (*Sally*) all the time.

Karen "applied for this job [at IES] in Italy because of my interest in Italy" (*Karen*). Karen's mother is Italian and she was interested in exploring her Italian heritage. The data shows that her teacher identity had great importance for her: she commented that "the best thing that people could say" (*Karen*) was that she was a 'good teacher'. However, she refused to make the school community the sole focus of her life in Italy:

Quite early on I realised for me it wasn't healthy for me to live, work and socialise with the same people. That made me go out and meet other people, Italians ... The whole point of me coming to Italy was to experience Italy, otherwise I might as well have stayed behind. (*Karen*)

Karen strongly experienced the identity of tourist and enjoyed exploring her family heritage. Karen's identity as family member was highlighted partly because of this

and partly because she missed her family considerably (see 4.1.1). She also experienced the identities of friend, British citizen and Londoner as well as teacher at IES.

Graham moved to Italy for the “adventure” (*Graham*) of living and working in a new culture. He said that he had considered teaching in any Mediterranean country and the IES job was attractive because of its location. During his time in Italy, he experienced the identities of tourist, husband, South African, teacher and male teacher in a largely female staff. He commented that he felt he had been a “brother ... to a lot of the younger teachers” (*Graham*). The data suggests that the IES experience was a major component in Graham’s experience of Italy, but he was able to enjoy other aspects of life in Italy, particularly travel, as well. He commented that his teaching load was very light compared with all the schools where he had previously taught and he said, “it’s been a good year off” (*Graham*).

Kirsty moved to Italy because of her Italian husband and his family. She explained that she was not at IES “by choice ... I didn’t move to Italy out of conviction for the school” and that “in many ways, the school has been passing time” (*Kirsty*). The data suggests that the identities that Kirsty experienced most strongly during her time in Italy were that of an American citizen and that of the newly married wife of an Italian national. The school experiences were part of her day-to-day life but were subordinate to the other identities. She worked as a support teacher at the school and commented that the support teacher identity was not her preferred teacher identity. She spoke of how the negative experiences at the school and in Italy had helped her to develop a vision of herself as an educator that she wished to achieve in the future, probably in the United States: “I have absolutely seen what I don’t want ... It’s an autistic society” (*Kirsty*). Kirsty described how she wished to be involved in Montessori teaching which emphasises “moral education as well as academic education” (*Kirsty*) and which would help her contribute to society in the United States.

Anita had moved to this region of Italy after ten years in Milan as Milan is “not a place to raise a child” (*Anita*). She had moved to another international school in the area but, when it went bankrupt in 2003, she was offered work at IES. While teaching at IES, Anita experienced the identities of an American citizen, the wife of an Italian national, a mother, a businessperson and, for the first time, a subject teacher in a “temporary teaching position” (*Anita*). However, she commented, “I don’t really see myself as a teacher.” The identities she felt closer to were those of a businessperson and language school manager, which she had experienced in her work for ten years prior to joining IES. The data suggests that her work identity was an important aspect of her life but that her identity as a mother and family person was an important aspect of or motivation for this identity. Her husband’s family business had become bankrupt and, although he found a new job, Anita’s income was essential for the family and her position at the school meant reduced school fees for her daughter, who attended the school.

Laura joined IES when she returned to Italy with her husband, an Italian, two years after they married. When asked how she saw herself at the school, Laura replied, “as a person who loves fashion (Prada!) and here I am in Italy, at an international school, as an artistic, creative person.” In her description of herself at the school, she did not use the word ‘teacher’ at all. The data shows that she saw herself as a mother, a family

person, the wife of an Italian national and a New Zealand citizen and that her work identity was subordinate to her identity as a mother and wife: "For me my career is not my life, my family is more important" (*Laura*). She noted that teaching at IES enabled her to be a family person in contrast to her previous job in New Zealand which had been much more demanding: "teachers worked really hard there. They used to come in over the weekends to prepare and you were made to feel that's what you should be doing" (*Laura*). In addition to the benefit of extra time with her family, teaching at IES meant that Laura's daughter, like Anita's, qualified for reduced school fees. Like Anita, Laura's income was vital for the family.

Analysis of findings

The findings relating to the theme of 'It's your life!' show that the research participants experienced a range of identities during the period they taught at IES. The relation of their teacher identity to these other identities differed amongst the different research participants. The data suggests that Carol experienced the teacher identity most strongly of all the research participants: she commented that for the international teachers the school was their "life". Carol and her husband had moved to Italy because she had accepted a job at IES and she was the sole breadwinner as her husband was unemployed. There was a lot at stake in her job which helps explain why she invested so much in her teacher identity. It is also important to bear in mind that she related strongly to the 'new teacher' identity; it is understandable that at the beginning of their career, teachers are likely to invest more in their teacher identity and to focus on it to the exclusion of other identities.

Graham and Karen were the other teachers who had moved to Italy because of their job at IES. Graham was the most experienced teacher of all the research participants and the data suggests that he received the most affirmation as a teacher by the IES directors. He seemed to experience no anxiety in his identity as a teacher in the new educational context and, with lighter teaching commitments than in his previous schools, he was able to invest in other identities, particularly that of tourist and traveller. Karen, too, invested in her identity as a tourist in Italy and, of all the research participants, she commented most on her positive experiences of Italian culture. Although she had only been teaching for four years, Karen had received very positive affirmation of her teaching in her previous posts and, while her identity as a teacher had been threatened and fragmented during her first nine months at IES, she did not focus on this to the exclusion of her other identities. Exploring her family heritage was an important part of her Italian experience and this, combined with her sense of how much she missed her family while in Italy, served to highlight her identity as a family member.

The research participants who moved to Italy because of their partners invested more in their relationship with their partner and their family life in Italy than in their work at IES. The data suggests that Kirsty, particularly, as a newly married person invested much of her energy in her relationship with her husband and his family in a new country. As she commented, "in many ways, the school has been passing time" (*Kirsty*). However, she also invested energy in developing a vision of herself as an educator which her experience of the school and Italian society contributed to by showing her what she did not want. Thus, although she was not investing emotionally in her teacher identity at IES, she was developing this identity for herself as a future ideal. The findings suggest that Sally found her experiences of teaching in Italy very

positive (“I see myself as having another life here,”) after teaching in the UK where, because of work pressure, her teacher identity had been the dominant one in her life. She was able to invest energy in other aspects of her life and identity. Laura, too, found that teaching at IES enabled her to be a family person which would have been more difficult in New Zealand, where she taught previously. Like Anita, the only other mother amongst the research participants, an important perk of the IES job was the reduction of her daughter’s school fees. The findings from Laura also suggest that she was able to invest her identity “as an artistic, creative person” (*Laura*) in her teaching work.

The findings relating to Anita, also married to an Italian national, suggest that the teacher identity had been highlighted for her at IES while she took on the temporary teaching position although this was not her preferred identity: “I don’t really see myself as a teacher” (*Anita*). The main part of her role consisted of setting up the adult language classes at the school, which allowed her preferred identity as a businessperson and language school manager to be expressed but, as shown earlier, she had experienced considerable frustration in this role (see 4.1.2.2 and 4.1.4). Anita’s work identity was influenced in important ways by her family commitments: she had left her established business in Milan so that she could bring up her daughter in a better environment and, although frustrated by IES, she was staying at the school partly because of her daughter’s reduced school fees: “if you have kids at the school, you can’t leave.”

The analysis of findings shows that the research participants did not experience their teacher identity in isolation: their other identities intersected with their teacher identities in significant ways. Anita and Laura, for example, were both mothers and this identity was an important motivation for them to continue working at IES, despite their frustrations with the school. Anita’s identity as a mother and family person meant that she compromised her identity as a businessperson, for example she left Milan to bring up her daughter in a less urban environment.

For Graham, Sally, Karen and Laura, who had established their teaching careers prior to moving to IES, their experiences of teaching at the school, with a lighter workload, meant that they were able to invest more time and energy into other identities, for example that of tourist, partner and family person. For Carol, who was still establishing her career and who saw herself as a “new teacher” (*Carol*), the teacher identity was experienced more strongly than with the other research participants but this was partly because she had to take on the role of sole breadwinner as well.

Conclusion

The focus of Section 4.1 has been on the issues of identity that the research participants experienced at IES. The data were presented and analysed according to seven themes. Firstly, the majority of the teachers experienced culture shock which led to a fragmentation of their teacher identity and personal identity (see 4.1.1). They experienced a clash of educational value systems at IES (see 4.1.2.1). The ‘good teacher’, as far as the research participants were concerned, had little to do with good pedagogy: the good teacher was seen in terms of what is visible, for example beautiful learner handwriting and assemblies for the parents, and in terms of the ‘good employee’ in Italian work culture (see 4.1.3). This led to the research participants experiencing insecurity and anxiety. They also experienced different value systems at

play in terms of management and work culture compared with their ‘home’ countries (see 4.1.2.2). At times the value systems collided and culture clash resulted, for example the salary incident. The research participants experienced greater day-to-day freedom at IES but little support for their teaching from management (see 4.1.4). While some teachers, for example Sally, found this liberating, others, like Carol, found it unsettling. The teachers experienced several levels of separation and difference within IES, for example the English-speaking versus Italian teachers (see 4.1.5). A common strategy was to position people into different groups and, in turn, to be positioned by others. A situation of “hothouse gossip” (*Karen*) was created in which identity politics flourished. Teachers were clearly seen as important in enabling the school to be ‘international’ and ‘English’ but providing these resources did not seem to give the teachers greater power in the school (see 4.1.6). The school firmly mediated and controlled the ‘English’ and ‘international’ identities. The school experience at IES was very intense for some of the teachers, for example Carol who said, “It’s your life!” (*Carol*) although others felt able to experience several other identities in addition to their teacher identity (see 4.1.7). Overall, the teachers experienced an erosion or devaluing of their teacher identity at the school: their identity had been unsettled by their experiences. The teachers’ response to this situation is examined in the next part of the chapter.

4.2 Identity work and strategies

This section of the chapter analyses the identity work and strategies that the research participants engaged in as a response to the issues of identity they experienced at IES.

4.2.1 Identity work

In order to respond to and manage the situation where their identities as teachers had been profoundly unsettled by culture shock and their experiences at IES, the research participants engaged in “identity work” (Snow and Anderson 1987: 1348 cited in Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 98) which allowed them to reinforce or, in some cases, reconstruct their identities as teachers (see 2.3.3.4). Similarly to the teachers in Woods and Jeffrey’s (2002) research sample, the identity work was mainly in the form of “identity talk” (Snow and Anderson 1987: 1348 cited in Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 98) in which the teachers verbally constructed and reinforced particular identities for themselves (see 2.3.3.4). This links with Wetherell and Maybin’s (1995: 228-9) assertion that language and talk provide “raw materials for the construction of self” (see 2.1.3). The data show that the research participants constructed their identities in relation to the Italian teachers, in relation to Stefania and management and in relation to previous teacher identities they had experienced. An important challenge for some of the research participants was dealing with the lack of recognition, or even misrecognition, of themselves as teachers and the data suggest how the teachers responded to this challenge. Each of these aspects of identity work will be discussed in turn.

4.2.1.1 Constructing identity in relation to Italian teachers

Presentation and analysis of findings³⁶

Section 4.1.2 presented data which show how the English-speaking teachers constructed their identity in relation to the Italian teachers. This comment by Karen illustrates this: “We think we are better teachers – I say ‘we’! – we’ve had better training, we’ve had larger classes, we’ve been there and bought the T shirt” (*Karen*).

Woodward (1997) points out that identity depends on difference (see 2.1.4). The English-speaking teachers constructed themselves as better teachers than their Italian-speaking counterparts with better training and better skills, such as classroom management skills, and better values such as valuing individuality and difference. It was argued earlier that feeling superior about their teaching was an important strategy for the English-speaking teachers and helped to preserve their identity as teachers that had been threatened on so many levels (see 4.1.2.1). However, although this strategy may have preserved their sense of identity, constructing Italian teaching as ‘bad’ and English teaching as ‘good’ was, of course, engaging in positioning and stereotyping.

Another important implication is that the majority of research participants may have been complacent or uncritical about their ‘superior’ pedagogy as their energy was invested in the identity work. When asked to identify the main issues and challenges during their time at IES, all the research participants identified issues regarding management. Although the research participants were teaching in a foreign language context for the first time, only Sally identified language issues as a major challenge when she discussed her first few months at the school. Other participants such as Karen and Carol mentioned needing to adapt their teaching for second language learners but they did not highlight this as a major issue; for Karen a far more important issue was that she could not communicate with the parents of her learners. The finding that management issues rather than pedagogical issues was the main focus of the research participants is reinforced by the fact that there were no curriculum development workshops at the school; the staff meetings only discussed administrative matters. Thus, no emphasis was placed on planned curriculum development at the school: it all came down to the individual teacher. However, as this section has argued, the English-speaking teachers were likely to be absorbed by non-pedagogical issues. Thus, the potential losers here were the school and the teachers themselves. The school suffered by having teachers whose main attention was given to non-pedagogical issues and the teachers themselves, despite teaching in a new language context, were not focused on developing their teaching skills: they were focused on survival.

4.2.1.2 Constructing identity in relation to Stefania and management

Presentation and analysis of findings

Money was a key issue in the relations between management and the research participants and the majority of research participants constructed management as being ‘in it’ for the money (see 4.1.5). It was in Carol’s interaction with management that the identity issues were most apparent. Carol argued that the IES management were overly concerned with money and said that the “biggest thing” she would tell them was that a school “cannot be all about the money, the bottom line”. However,

³⁶ In section 4.1 the presentation and analysis of findings were discussed separately. In 4.2 they have been combined to avoid repetition as many of the relevant findings were presented in 4.1.

Carol was construed as the least ideal teacher by Stefania (see 4.1.3) and she constructed Carol as a teacher who was money-minded to the detriment of caring about her pupils: “We want teachers who care about the children, not the money” (*Carol*). Woods (1990: 139) argues that in “shaping and honing [our] identities we need not only supportive feedback from others, but also contrastive” (see 2.3.3.2). Carol and Stefania both constructed one another as being primarily motivated by money and this helped to affirm their own identity as being motivated by other ideals. Woods’s (1990: 142) description of Dick and the headmaster is pertinent to Carol and Stefania: “in their outright condemnation of each other, each was reinforcing his own identity” (see 2.3.3.2). Stefania’s perception of her was a major factor contributing to Carol not feeling valued and I would argue that this, ultimately, led to Carol’s decision to leave the school (see 4.1.3 and 4.3.2).

In addition to constructing management as being overly motivated by money, the research participants constructed Stefania and other members of management in particular ways that had implications for their own identity construction. Karen commented that on

a professional level, I think [Stefania’s] inefficient, I don’t think she’s very good at her job and I think that’s difficult for her. I think she actually feels inferior to the trained English teachers who come out but, because she’s Italian, she won’t acknowledge it or do anything about it.

This contradicted other statements of Karen’s (see 4.1.2.1) where she suggested that Stefania believed the Italian teachers were right in their way of teaching in contrast to the English-speaking teachers, whom Stefania never supported. The evidence presented on the ‘good teacher’ (see 4.1.3) does not support Karen’s suggestion that Stefania felt inferior to the English teachers. This suggestion, however, may have served to build up Karen’s own sense of identity as a ‘good teacher’ prepared to overcome difficulties in contrast to the Italian teachers and managers “who won’t acknowledge or do anything about” the problems they may experience.

Kirsty and Sally, similarly to Karen, argued that Stefania and Caterina were “out of their league” (*Kirsty*). Sally described the school as

getting too big for [management] to handle. Stefania’s not the woman that I met three years ago. She’s not a nasty person, she had a lovely idea and her heart was in it but it’s got so big ... it’s got out of control for them ... When I look at it objectively, she’s out of her depth. I could do a better job.

Kirsty and Sally, thus, are constructing Stefania and Caterina as “out of their league” (*Kirsty*). Sally’s comment that she could do a better job may be true but is also important for the construction of her own identity as ‘better’ than the Italians.

Anita commented that Stefania is a “very fragile person” who has a “good veneer, but when you break that, that’s when she falls apart”. Anita described her interaction with Stefania and management as one of her most important challenges in her year at IES:

It’s always a challenge to try to get what you want, to be firm but not be too aggressive, to still be friends at the end of the conversation, even if you don’t like them. That was a huge challenge for me this year, because I had a very bad

experience last year and I was really very fragile and it was very, very difficult for me to confront certain situations. But, little by little, with Stefania and Caterina and everything, I've learned how to stand up for myself ... and doing it in such a way that I have respect for myself ... Stefania is very conniving, she's done it to me a couple of times, she's never succeeded with me but I can see how it works on teachers. She uses the phrase, 'Don't be so defensive.' So when you say, 'I'm not very happy with this,' – 'Don't be so defensive.' Like you're just feeling insecure about your position and you're just being aggressive for no reason whatsoever. That's how she intends it. So a person thinks, 'Am I being defensive?' 'No, no,' I said, 'I'm not being defensive; I am *pissed off*.' Stefania: 'I just don't like you to lose your focus.' 'What does that mean?' 'Maybe I meant objective,' and she backed down.

Anita's description is interesting in terms of identity construction. She described Stefania as "fragile" but also "conniving" in her attempts to manipulate teachers. However, in the description, Anita, was also reconstructing her own identity, which she described as "really very fragile" the previous year, as strong as she learned to stand up to and confront Stefania. Anita not only constructed herself in relation to Stefania but in relation to other teachers as well: Stefania's tactics may have worked with them but not on her.

In this section, the notion that "contrastive feedback" (Woods 1990: 139) can be an important factor in identity construction has been borne out by the way in which several of the research participants constructed their identities in relation to Stefania. In her construction of Stefania as overly money-minded, Carol reinforced her own teacher identity as being motivated by other ideals; ironically, Stefania constructed Carol in the same way and for the same reason. Kirsty and Sally constructed Stefania and Caterina as "out of their league" (*Kirsty*) and Karen suggested that Stefania felt "inferior to the trained English teachers"; it was argued that these constructions may have served partly to develop their own identity as 'better' than the Italians. Anita described Stefania as "fragile" but also "conniving"; in her description, she reconstructed her own identity as "strong" as she learned to stand up to and confront Stefania.

Identity construction is related to the strategies of self-positioning and positioning others. It has been argued that one of the consequences of positioning and being positioned by others into particular groups included creating a sense of solidarity (see 4.1.5). Thus, it could be argued that an important implication of the research participants constructing their identity in relation to the Italian teachers and to Stefania and management is that it helped foster a sense of solidarity amongst the English-speaking teachers.

In this section and the previous one, 4.2.1.1, the main focus has been on the research participants constructing their identities in relation to the Italian teachers and to Stefania and management. A related strategy, referred to earlier, was the research participants referring to points of difference between their own cultures and Italian culture as 'the Italian way' (see 4.1.2). Labelling aspects of their experience in this way was a coping strategy for the research participants and fulfilled a short-term need: that of trying to find an explanation for what they did not understand. However, suggesting that something must be 'the Italian way' served to close off the need for further reflection and learning about Italian culture and their own cultures. Joslin (2002: 49) suggests that intercultural literacy is a possible outcome of cross-cultural

engagement but that a necessary stage is for individuals to “accept that their own seemingly ‘right’ way of seeing the world needs to be ‘unpacked’ and questioned” (see 2.4.2). The data does not suggest that this was a stage the research participants were experiencing.

4.2.1.3 Constructing identity in relation to previous teacher identities

Presentation and analysis of findings

Some of the research participants constructed their identity as teachers in relation to previous teacher identities they had subscribed to. For Graham, Sally and Karen, holding onto their identity as teachers was an important survival strategy.

For Graham, in the face of culture shock and feeling “very fragmented” (*Graham*) in Italy, a sense of his teacher identity remaining intact was something he could hold onto: “I felt very whole as a teacher, and working at the school, as a person I felt absolutely fine, I was doing my job. But being in Italy is ...bewildering” (*Graham*).

For Sally, affirming her identity as a teacher to herself in the early months at IES when she experienced culture shock was an important coping strategy. She described how she talked herself through the situation:

‘You’re a teacher, you can do this, you’ve done Reception for two years. What difference is there – they’re children, they’ve still got to learn their lessons in the same order, they’ve still got to learn the sounds. You know what you’ve got to do here, it’s not going to be a magical thing, they’re children.’ (*Sally*)

For Karen, maintaining her identity as a professional teacher was an important strategy to prevent her from becoming “lazier” (*Karen*) as teacher in a situation where, she joked, she could “sit in her classroom and read nursery rhymes to the children” as there was no supervision of her teaching. Karen commented that “what you do comes down to the individual teacher and their own professional pride, concern about the children”.

Skeggs (2002a) argues that identity offers a coherence where none exists (see 2.1.4). For the research participants, holding onto their previous teacher identity in the face of culture shock and other threats to their teacher identity was an important survival strategy.

4.2.1.4 Responding to misrecognition

Presentation and analysis of findings

Skeggs (2002b) suggests that misrecognition is a powerful weapon in identity politics and that recognition or misrecognition of an individual’s value is closely related to power relations (see 2.2). The findings have shown that there was a clash of educational value systems in operation at IES and it was argued that this had consequences in terms of who was recognised as a good teacher, and who was not, whose concerns were recognised as legitimate, and whose were not (see 4.1.2.1). For example, Karen’s experiences showed that Stefania tended to take the part of the Italian teachers in situations of conflict and that she provided Karen with no support at all during her difficult interactions with her learners’ parents. The data suggest that, of the seven research participants, Carol was constructed as the least ideal teacher by management. She was constructed by Stefania as a teacher who was motivated by

money rather than concern for her pupils; in other words, it could be argued that Carol was actually misrecognised as a poor or problem teacher by management (see 4.1.3). This section examines how Carol and some of the other teachers coped with the situation of misrecognition and the lack of recognition by management.

Skeggs (2002b) suggests that an individual's capacity to resist being positioned or misrecognised has to do with the individual's position in a particular social context and his or her perceived capacity to 'belong'; this will relate to the resources available to him or her (see 2.2). Because the research participants were teaching in a country that was not their 'home' country, they may have had fewer resources and support structures at their disposal compared with their home country. In Carol's case, she brought several resources to the school that she clearly had expected would be valued: "I can't understand their perspective because I look at myself, a very competent teacher, who is trilingual, who has a wonderful relationship with the parents, with the children, but I don't feel that they value me as a person" (*Carol*). However, these resources were, to a large extent, taken for granted by the directors. The 'good teacher' at IES had little to do with good pedagogy and had much to do with the values of the 'good employee' in Italian work culture (see 4.1.3). According to these values, Carol was perceived as confrontational and constructed as a problem employee. Carol, ultimately, decided to leave the school. She suggested that not being valued was the major reason that she decided to leave: "I know I wouldn't have left if I had felt valued, even if I wasn't getting paid more" (*Carol*).

Following Skeggs (2002b), I would argue that the lack of resources available to Carol was an important factor influencing her capacity to resist being misrecognised. Although she spoke fluent Italian and was married to an Italian, both Carol and her husband were new to the region in which the school was located and Carol commented that "being here also in this area of Italy, this is not Italy for me. I have been to Italy many times before and lived in many different places but this region is not the best of Italy. The people are not the best." Clearly, Carol did not feel a sense of 'belonging' to the region. Carol's situation was vulnerable in that she was the main breadwinner while her husband was looking for work; she was not operating from a stable economic position. In terms of her career, she clearly identified with the 'new teacher' identity and would have liked more support and guidance from management (see 4.1.4). Although her teaching experiences to date had been successful, she did not have several, solid teaching years behind her which would have been an important symbolic resource for her. An important resource that Carol drew on was her support system who consisted of her family in Canada and Karen. However, her family was overseas and she and Karen were both in the same situation which meant that they could "pull each other down, which is a problem". Carol thus only had limited resources available to her to help her resist the situation of misrecognition by the IES management. She commented of IES that "this is *life*" which suggests how key her experiences at the school were and how few her resources outside the school were. In the situation where she was misrecognised and constructed as a problem teacher, and had few resources to help her resist the misrecognition, she had little alternative but to leave the school. Thus, in terms of a power struggle between Carol and management, it would seem that management had 'won': one of the teachers they construed as a problem teacher resigned. However, her leaving was a loss to the school: my class observation found that she was a very competent teacher while Graham, based on his interaction with her, called her an "outstanding teacher".

The situation of Sally is an interesting contrast to Carol's. Sally was not misrecognised or constructed as a poor or problem teacher like Carol; in fact, she was one of the Key Stage 1 co-ordinators, which was a position on the lower rungs of the management hierarchy. Despite this, Sally commented on how hard she had to fight for the directors to respond to the issues she raised and the lack of recognition that she received for her teaching work: "it goes unnoticed what you're actually doing" (*Sally*). However, Sally had a number of resources to draw on to help her cope with the lack of recognition. She had a strong conviction that she was doing good teaching work: "I know I'm doing the right thing in my heart" (*Sally*). This may have been related to her seven years' teaching experience in the UK in which she received recognition by being given co-ordination responsibilities; these were important symbolic career resources. Sally had also developed a good support system at school, for example she worked closely with Susan, the other Year 2 teacher. Sally was also conscious of the resources that she had outside the school, in Italy, in contrast to some of the other teachers: "they don't feel appreciated; they're going to go back. Whereas for me, I think I can take a bit more. I just think, oh well, this isn't my main thing here, I've got so many other things" (*Sally*). Sally's life with her fiancé was important in helping her to feel a sense of belonging to Italy that was independent of the school and, unlike any of the other research participants, she had formulated alternative career plans in Italy. These resources all helped Sally to keep her sense of teacher identity intact and to cope with a certain amount of lack of recognition at IES. Like Sally, Laura had a partner who was Italian and a life outside the school. However, the data suggests that Laura tended to isolate herself into a "bubble" (*Laura*) both at the school and in Italy. Unlike Sally who had moved beyond the classroom and onto a management rung at IES and who was consciously planning her future career in Italy, Laura did not want to think of the future ("I don't want to think about it") and, when she did, she perceived her options as very limited: "There are not that many opportunities here" (*Laura*). As she wished to stay in Italy and at IES, Laura was anxious about how she was perceived by management: "Any criticism I know I take too personally. If I knew Stefania thought I was a good teacher, it would help me, for example, if she were an ex-teacher herself" (*Laura*). An important survival strategy for her was to avoid any confrontation so that she would not be misrecognised as a problem teacher. In terms of power relations, management clearly had the upper hand.

In conclusion, this section has looked at how the teachers responded to the situation of lack of recognition or even misrecognition. Of all the research participants, Carol was most affected by this situation and it could be argued that her decision to leave the school, the ultimate exit strategy, was partly because she was misrecognised as a poor or problem teacher. It was argued that she had few resources at her disposal to help her resist this situation. Sally, in contrast, had many resources at her disposal, including a conviction that she was teaching well and appropriately, and she had received affirmation by the school in being given co-ordination responsibilities. In addition, it was argued that her resources in Italy helped her to feel a sense of 'belonging' and her support system within the school also acted as important resources. Laura's situation is an interesting counterpoint to Sally's: although she had taught for longer than Sally and also had a partner who was an Italian national, she perceived herself as having few resources and adopted the strategy of non-confrontation to avoid the risk of being misrecognised by management. Recognition and lack of recognition are, according to Skeggs (2002b), important weapons in

identity politics and, in relation to the three examples given, management seemed to have the upper hand in defining both Carol and Laura's experiences: Carol needed to leave in order to avoid the continued misrecognition and Laura felt she needed to tread carefully with management. Sally, however, had the resources to resist management controlling her experiences and this helped her to retain a strong sense of teacher identity in contrast to a more fragile sense of identity that both Carol and Laura experienced.

4.2.2 Coping strategies

In their discussion of teacher strategies, Sikes et al. (1985) distinguish between public and private strategies (see 2.3.3). They define public strategies as teachers acting together to achieve their aims and private strategies as those used by "individual teachers to gain their aims" (Sikes et al. 1985: 97). The data from my research participants relates to private strategies used by them. In the previous section, 4.2.1, the focus was on identity work and, in the course of the discussion, particular strategies that the research participants adopted were described. These include constructing themselves as better teachers than the Italian teachers; it was argued that feeling superior about their teaching was an important strategy that helped preserve their identity as teachers that had been threatened on so many levels. They constructed their identity in relation to Stefania and management and this was a strategy that had implications for their own identity construction, for example Anita constructed herself as "strong" in contrast to Stefania's "fragile" veneer (*Anita*). Several research participants also asserted or reaffirmed previous teacher identities they had subscribed to: holding onto their identity as teachers was an important survival strategy. The majority of research participants labelled particular incidents and phenomena 'the Italian way': this was a strategy that served to explain behaviour or incidents they found confusing or did not understand. In order to cope with the lack of recognition by management, which was closely related to not feeling valued, there were several responses. Carol adopted the ultimate exit strategy of leaving in response to the situation while Laura adopted the strategy of non-confrontation. Sally, however, had more resources at her disposal to deal with the situation, for example she had a support system within the school and resources outside the school that created a sense of 'belonging' to Italy that was not dependent on her work at the school. Consciously recognising these resources was an important coping strategy for Sally.

This section will describe and analyse other coping strategies used by the research participants. The strategies are initially discussed within the framework of the relationship between commitment and accommodation. It is argued that the teacher's level of commitment to a school is related to the degree to which he or she might accommodate the problems encountered at the school and that teachers accommodate the problems by engaging in particular strategies. There were several coping strategies used by the teachers and these will be discussed.

4.2.2.1 The impact of the relationship between commitment and accommodation Presentation and analysis of findings

The relationship between commitment and accommodation has already been examined (see 2.3.3.1). Woods (1990) explains that teachers accommodate the problems they experience in schools by engaging in particular strategies and he argues that "the less the commitment to the school, the less the accommodation problem," (1990: 96) and "the firmer the commitment, the greater the accommodation" (117).

The commitment of the research participants to IES will be examined briefly in this section as a useful framework for analysing the coping strategies adopted by each of them.

In the case of Karen, Graham and Carol, they had resigned at the time of my interviews with them in June 2004 and were not committed to the school beyond July 2004. The findings from Carol show that she had begun to distance herself more from incidents in the school that she found frustrating and could not control. She described her frustration with the staff meetings, chaired by Irene, one of the Elementary School co-ordinators whom Carol said could never make a real decision. Carol said, "you're going around in a circle and it's almost better not to say anything. Just to get out of there quickly and safely and forget about it" (*Carol*). This quotation suggests Carol was deliberately not engaging with issues that she found frustrating. She felt less of a stake in the school than she had at the beginning of the school year, and had less trouble accommodating the problems.

However, the data also indicates that Karen, Carol and Graham were committed to leaving their posts with a sense of a job well done. Graham referred to his professionalism and said, "I've got to set a standard, there was someone coming in where I left off and you don't leave a sinking ship". He also described, when he was asked by Stefania to help with the recruitment of new applicants, how he had asked Carol to work with him on developing a document which would accompany the contract to give applicants realistic information about the costs of living in Italy and the package they would be offered. For both Graham and Carol, trying to make the situation at the school easier for new teachers was an important legacy. Thus, the commitment that they showed in this instance was as much to their future teaching colleagues as to the school.

Kirsty and Anita were both considering moving back to the United States at the time of the interviews and, although they were not planning to give up their jobs at IES unless they left, it seemed likely that they would be both leaving within 18 months. Thus, their commitment to the school was only for the short term and for utilitarian reasons. Kirsty described how she coped with the challenges at the school: "my strategy has been mainly knowing that it's not for ever and I think that's how a lot of people have coped". She indicated that she did not feel enough commitment to the school to try to address the problems that she and the other teachers encountered: "I'm not here by choice except that we needed to come back to Italy ... really I didn't move to Italy out of conviction for the school" (*Kirsty*). She also questioned whether the teachers could effect real change at the school. "I think it's more of a sense of how much real change can we make? And you don't feel that change is welcome" (*Kirsty*). The example of Kirsty again helps illustrate Woods's (1990) point that the less the commitment, the less the accommodation problem.

Laura was not planning to leave either IES or Italy. Although she was somewhat reluctant to think and talk about the future, she acknowledged that she might still be at the school in ten years' time: "I don't want to think about it but I might be" (*Laura*). She agreed that she felt exploited by the school: "Yes, I do, yes a little bit. Definitely" (*Laura*) but described how she had few alternatives to IES:

Our hands are tied. There are not that many opportunities here. We can't do a lot about it. In England, or New Zealand, we'd be able to say, to hell with this and go to another school – there are so many schools there! But here, this is one of the few schools. (*Laura*)

As Laura's family needed her salary and the reduced school fees that were a perk of her position, Laura needed to accommodate the problems that she experienced at the school. As described earlier an important coping strategy for her was to avoid confrontation (see 4.2.1.4): "I'm not a confrontational person. At the end of the day, I realise that [the director's would] let me go, no matter how good we are as teachers. They won't change" (*Laura*). Laura's understanding of the context at school showed that standing up to the directors was not an effective strategy if you wanted to stay at the school: "you can see what happens if someone stands up to them, like Carol. They will happily get rid of someone like that" (see 4.1.3).

Laura indicated an overall coping strategy: "I'm a person who adapts, I don't have time to think about my life. I pretend it's not happening" (*Laura*). She described how she coped with the problems at school by "being in a bubble, a bit like being in Italy... What I've learnt is that nothing in Italy is easy, nothing is straightforward". Her phrases "I don't want to think about it" and "I don't have time to think about my life, I pretend it's not happening" show a person in denial. Isolating herself into a "bubble" both at school and in Italy suggests a person living and working in highly compromised circumstances: she was not able to engage or confront, she was only able to retreat. Laura provides support for Woods's (1990) argument that the greater the commitment for a teacher at a school, the greater the need for accommodation. Laura found herself committed to the school for lack of alternatives, and needed to accommodate the problems she encountered in order to keep her job.

Sally was committed to staying in Italy and working in education, but was only planning to stay at the school for "a couple more years". Sally indicated that she felt she could accommodate the problems at the school more than some of the other teachers:

Compared to the other teachers, I feel lucky. It's not right, and they don't feel respected, and they don't feel appreciated: they're going to go back. Whereas for me, I think I can take a bit more. I just think, oh well, this isn't my main thing here, I've got so many other things. (*Sally*)

The reason Sally cited in this quotation for being able to better accommodate the problems is that she had "so many other things" (*Sally*) in Italy, which included her life with her fiancé and her future career plans. These were important resources which she was able to draw on to help her "take a bit more" from the school. The data indicates that Sally needed to accommodate the problems in order to stay at the school: it would have been inconvenient to have had to leave the school financially and from the point of view of her career, before she was ready to leave. As Laura observed, IES was "one of the few schools" (*Laura*) in the area where Sally was able to teach.

All of the research participants commented on what a pleasure the Italian children were to teach and how that helped them deal with the difficulties at IES. Carol commented that "these children are wonderful children – I have not had a better group

of kids,” and Kirsty said, “The kids themselves are so great. They probably don’t realise how much it means to me when they come up to me and say, ‘Hi, Kirsty!’ It’s ‘ooohhhh’”. All the research participants indicated their commitment to teaching their learners well.

This section has discussed the relationship between a teacher’s commitment and accommodation as a framework for examining the strategies adopted by the research participants. It has shown how Karen, Carol and Graham had little commitment to the school at the time of the research in June 2004 as they had resigned and would be leaving within a month. For Carol, this meant that she distanced herself more from issues that she might have engaged with previously: she had less trouble accommodating the problems she encountered. However, Carol, Karen and Graham showed commitment to their own professionalism in leaving their posts with things in order. Kirsty and Anita had a short-term commitment to the school for mainly financial reasons. The data indicate that Kirsty was not committed enough to the school to try and address the problems she encountered. An important coping strategy for her was knowing that she would not be at the school for ever. Laura was committed to keeping her job at the school and needed to accommodate the various problems that she encountered. She was conscious in using the strategy of non-confrontation and, at a more unconscious level, coped by with her situation by being in denial about it: “I don’t have time to think about my life. I pretend it’s not happening” (*Laura*). Laura tended to retreat into the “bubble” (*Laura*) of her classroom and engaged little in school affairs beyond it. Sally was committed to the school for a couple more years and, like Laura, she needed to accommodate the problems. However, unlike Laura, developing future career plans in Italy was an important resource that enabled her to cope with the problems at the school: for her future teacher-training plans, the school was a useful stepping stone. Finally, all the research participants described how they enjoyed teaching the children at IES and how that helped compensate for the difficulties they faced overall in the school.

4.2.2.2 Discussing experiences

Presentation and analysis of findings

Making sense of their experiences at IES was an important coping strategy for the research participants. Karen’s comment to a question in her interview indicated that she had analysed the different events and issues in some detail: “I have a huge theory on that one!” The interviews were an opportunity for the research participants to engage in “building a world, ... constituting their social reality, manufacturing and constructing their lives” (Wetherell and Maybin 1995: 244). Wetherell and Maybin argue that “people are embedded in conversations and we constantly make sense of the world through narratives and stories” (229) (see 2.1.3). The data indicate that conversations were an important strategy for the research participants to discuss, make sense of and express their emotions about daily events at IES. Carol commented how she talked over her problems at IES with her family and Karen:

I feel lucky, though, that there are people who pulled me up. And some of them being my family at home... but also I’ve had people with whom I can discuss these things here who will maybe listen and not take my side but make me feel like at least I have a way of getting rid of anger, just getting it out. So I don’t feel like I’m talking about people, but I’m just sort of getting rid of it, and I know it stays with that one person. Karen’s that person for me. (*Carol*)

Graham commented that he and Anita as the only English-speaking teachers in the Middle School provided “huge support for one another” and that it was “great to blow off steam with someone you can trust in your own sector” (*Graham*). In my daily interaction with Graham, an important source of conversation was the day’s events at the school and trying to make sense of them. Kirsty indicated that her conversations with her husband had a similar purpose and that, as an Italian, he was an important “cultural informant” (*Kirsty*) for her and often gave her a new perspective on an issue.

In interacting with the research participants socially, I was aware of the school and its events as an important source of conversation or, to use Karen’s term, “hothouse gossip”. Graham commented that in every school there are office politics but that this was very evident at IES given the relative isolation of the English-speaking staff in an international context. The following comments come from Graham’s interview:

I think the staff are very careful about who they speak to. (*Graham*)

I remember people said to you, ‘Oh, are you friends with Anita?’ People were a bit suspicious of that.³⁷ The other night you were teased by Carol and Karen because we were going to dinner with Stefania – never mind that it hasn’t materialised.³⁸ (*Romy*)

The issue of the contracts was a key issue that the teachers discussed in conversations at the beginning of the school year and, towards the end of the year frequent topics were the number of people who were leaving the school and Veronica. Throughout the year’s conversations³⁹, as well as in the research participants’ interviews, Stefania and, to a lesser extent, the other directors, Caterina and Silvia, were key characters. In her interview, Karen spoke of how Stefania was an important part of her early impressions at the school:

The first time I saw her, it was at a staff meeting, we were all sitting at a big table, and she was at the head of it and she looked a stunning Italian lady – I use ‘lady’ deliberately. She looked like an old nobility lady. She had jewellery on, lovely clothes, and she was very charming. And I remember her saying, ‘If anybody has any problems, just come and see me.’ She came across very, very classy, I think is the word. I’ve had a number of conversations with her on a semi-personal level, which have been very nice. (*Karen*)

Karen went on to speak of how disappointed she became with Stefania on a professional level but Stefania continued to hold a certain amount of fascination for her: “I think Stefania is very stressed. When Makiko⁴⁰ was staying with her, she heard Stefania on the phone to parents. She’s very stressed and apparently she’s lost a lot of weight. She said to me she’d like to give up the school and do translating” (*Karen*). Sally, too, referred to Stefania’s weight loss and the stress that she was under:

³⁷ Anita, as a new Middle School teacher, was not in close contact with the Elementary School teachers and she was treated with some suspicion by some of them, particularly as she had taught with Veronica, the Key Stage 2 co-ordinator, in her previous school. Veronica was disliked by all of the English-speaking teachers in the Elementary School in my research sample.

³⁸ We were invited to dinner by Stefania in our last week in Italy but were not able to go as we were not available on the date she had invited us.

³⁹ These were conversations that I both observed and participated in.

⁴⁰ A Japanese exchange student who did some work as a classroom assistant with Karen’s class.

“Stefania, you can see, she’s had a breakdown before. She’s a shadow of the woman I met three years ago – she’s aged dramatically.”

In contrast to the “classy” (*Karen*) Stefania, the majority of research participants described Caterina as “brash” (*Anita*) and “lacking in social skills – a bully” (*Karen*). Usually they were seen as working in tandem, as a team: “Caterina will be dragged in when the shit hits the fan, if [Stefania] needs to have reinforcement” (*Graham*). Sally described an incident in which both Stefania and Caterina featured.

I was scared of Caterina for a good year. Then I realised what she says you can believe in. She won’t back down. But at least what she said is what you’re going to get. She’s honest. Whereas Stefania, when I met her, I thought she was an elegant, beautiful woman, I thought she was a head teacher. Then I realised she tells a lot of lies, not lies, she tells you what you want to hear, but then it turns out wrong ... [When] I was going home to supply teach, she asked me to do summer school and she said, ‘Oh, we won’t tax you.’ Then I got my wage from Caterina, and it was taxed, and it was a lot of money down on what I thought. Then I said, ‘Stefania said ...’ but then she lied and said we’d never had that conversation and that was when I lost respect for Stefania. I still got paid quite well, and I did it again the year after, but I went to Caterina and had it written down. I don’t deal with Stefania and money now, I deal with Caterina ... at the end of the day it’s a business, first and foremost, and Caterina’s a businesswoman. (*Sally*)

Sally’s description of the incident is interesting in that it shows how her early favourable impressions of Stefania gave way to disillusion as she lost respect for her; this was a theme touched on by several other research participants as well, including Karen and Graham. However, in the description, Caterina is recast from someone she was “scared of” (*Sally*) to someone who was honest and trustworthy in contrast to Stefania.

Graham’s commented that Silvia, the third member of the “triumvirate” (*Graham*) was “like the queen, floats in, greets everyone, waving happily and smiling at everyone, doesn’t have a real handle on what goes on but she poured in a lot of bucks”.

Using Wetherell and Maybin’s (1995) argument that people “make sense of the world through narratives and stories” (229) and that “talk is not merely about actions, events and situations” (244) but helps constitute those, it could be argued that the descriptions of the directors included here by Graham, Karen and Sally can be read in the light of constructing the directors as participants in a serial drama. The three directors, the “triumvirate” (*Graham*), are key cast members in an ongoing drama about the events at IES. The drama is interesting for the speakers partly because of the personalities involved: the triumvirate consists of the beautiful and elegant but treacherous Stefania, who has suffered a nervous breakdown, the brash but ultimately more trustworthy Caterina and the regal but out-of-touch Silvia. It is also interesting partly because the research participants themselves are characters in the drama. In the data presented in this section, the research participants seem to be slightly innocent foreigners who were initially taken in by the charm of Stefania, the “stunning Italian lady” (*Karen*). However, the participants soon found out that the charm hid a more treacherous façade and that Stefania “told lies” (*Sally*). However, they were able to

learn from these incidents: “I don’t deal with Stefania and money now, I deal with Caterina” (*Sally*).

In many of the conversations that I observed socially, as well as in their interviews, the research participants also constructed others in particular ways that had meaning for the IES drama. Veronica, for example, was a definite ‘baddie’ and there was suspicion of Anita, an unknown who had taught with Veronica previously. There were definite ‘sides’ in the drama depending on who was speaking to whom and actions could be questioned and construed in particular ways. Stefania was a definite ‘baddie’ and for Graham and I to have dinner with her was seen by Carol and Karen as something to comment on, albeit good-naturedly.

Talking about their experiences at IES in conversation served an important function for the research participants. It allowed them to express emotions such as anger and to “blow off steam” (*Graham*); it also allowed them to try to talk through the various issues they were encountering and to make sense of them. The construction of their experiences at IES as a drama with the directors as key characters might have served several functions. Firstly, reframing painful real-life events as a drama has the effect of diminishing pain and makes the events more manageable: it is a coping strategy. However, it might work in the same way as describing an incident as ‘the Italian way’ (see 4.1.2): it might serve to close off in-depth analysis and reflection. Cultural incidents and interactions between people of different cultures become a matter of personality rather than intercultural dynamics. I would also argue that constructing IES as a drama served to reinforce the positioning of people into different groupings: English-speaking teachers versus management, English-speaking teachers versus the Italian teachers and groupings within the English-speaking teachers themselves (see 4.1.5). Stirzaker (2004) makes the point that a peer group may develop amongst the new recruits which could be very powerful; a disadvantage of this is that it could inhibit integration within the wider staff body (see 2.4.3). In this case, the drama was one of the devices which served to help create a peer group amongst the English-speaking staff and, as can be seen, it tended to reinforce differences between people.

Conclusion

Section 4.2 focused on the identity work and strategies that the research participants engaged in as a response to the issues of identity they had experienced. They engaged in identity work, mainly in the form of identity talk in which they constructed particular identities. There were three main ways in which they constructed their identity. Firstly, they constructed themselves as ‘better’ teachers in relation to the Italian teachers: this was an important strategy to help preserve their identity as teachers. Secondly, they constructed their identity in relation to Stefania and management, for example management was constructed as being motivated largely by money and profits. They also constructed management in ways that built up their own sense of identity, for example Anita constructed Stefania as “fragile” in contrast to her own “strong” (*Anita*) identity. Thirdly, some of the teachers constructed their identity as teachers in relation to previous identities they had subscribed to. For example, Sally affirmed her identity as a teacher in the face of culture shock. Responding to the lack of recognition or misrecognition was an important aspect of identity work for several research participants. Carol was most affected by this situation and it was argued that management’s misrecognition of her as a poor or problem teacher was a major influence on her decision to leave the school.

In addition to the identity work, there were several coping strategies used by the teachers and it was argued that these related to the teachers' level of commitment to the school. The more the teacher needed to be committed to the school, for example for financial reasons, the more s/he needed to accommodate the problems encountered. For example, Kirsty's commitment to the school was only for the short term and it was mainly for financial reasons and a way of "passing time" (*Kirsty*). A key coping strategy for her was knowing that it was not for ever. Laura, however, was committed to staying at the school and consciously used the strategy of non-confrontation. An important coping strategy used by the research participants was discussing their experiences, which allowed them to try to make sense of the experiences and to express emotions. It was argued that some of the teachers constructed their experiences at IES as a serial drama, with the directors as key characters. This allowed them to make their experiences more manageable but might have had several implications, including closing off reflection and positioning people into different groupings.

4.3 Reconstruction of teacher identities

The first two sections of this chapter focused on the identity-related experiences of the teachers at IES and the strategies and identity work that the teachers engaged in as a response to their experiences. This final section will evaluate what the research participants' experiences meant for their identity as teachers and what kind of reconstruction of their identities has taken place. Each research participant will be discussed in turn, followed by a discussion which sums up to what extent the research participants felt able to invest their sense of teacher identity and careers in the school; it is argued that this factor influenced their decision whether to stay at the school or not. This is followed by a discussion of how the 'international' and 'intercultural' factors affect the reconstruction of teacher identity, particularly whether the experience of working in an international school influenced the research participants to define themselves as international school teachers. This part of the discussion revisits Heyward's (2002) theory of the development of intercultural literacy which suggests that as an individual recovers from culture shock and becomes more interculturally aware, there may be a reconstruction of their identity with the adoption of a bicultural, transcultural or global identity (see 2.4.1).

4.3.1 Sally

Presentation and analysis of findings

The data suggests that although Sally experienced culture shock in her first few months at the school, she recovered over time (see 4.1.1) and seemed to experience her teacher identity as stable and intact rather than as fragmented or fragile. Although she experienced a certain lack of recognition for her work at IES at times, she had several resources to draw on to help her cope with this, including a support system at the school and her outside life with her fiancé (see 4.2.1.4).

The findings suggest that, of all the research participants, Sally felt most able to realise her preferred teacher identity at IES. It has been shown how Sally was able to construct her teacher identity at IES in contrast to her previous UK experiences where she was under "constant pressure" (*Sally*) (see 4.1.4). She explained that being a "bright teacher in the classroom" (*Sally*) was at the expense of her health: "By half term I would be sick. I would get constant throat infections and the doctor said, 'It's

your job'. I'm the kind of person that's not very good at stress" (*Sally*). Sally said she probably "wouldn't stay teaching in England" because of this. At IES, however, she was able to keep her work and home life in balance "I go home and I'm me, I've got my life". She acknowledged that the organisation of the school "and the whole Italian way [was] a shock" but said that once you "shut the door on your class" (*Sally*) you were free to teach in the way that you preferred. Sally commented that the IES experience "helps you find out who you are as a teacher and what you believe in" (*Sally*).

However, although Sally said she would be staying in Italy for the "foreseeable future", she was not planning to stay at the school for more than "a couple more years" (*Sally*).

I don't think I'm going to be a teacher all the time here... But I still feel I want to do something and make a difference. I want to try and get into lecturing, retraining ... because that's the only way you're going to change anything, to train the new people, and it will take years. But it's definitely something that needs doing because the Italian system is archaic. (*Sally*)

Thus, the evidence suggests that although Sally was able to realise her preferred identity at the school, this happened in her classroom rather than in the wider school. Her identity as a teacher was invested in her classroom teaching rather than in the school more broadly and the findings suggest that she was not going to invest her career in the school in the long-term. However, clearly her experiences there had helped shape her future career decisions: because of what she had observed at IES and in Italy, she wanted to be involved in changing the system through teacher training.

4.3.2 Carol

Presentation and analysis of findings

The findings suggest that Carol's identity as a teacher was threatened by her experiences at the school and that, ultimately, she needed to leave in order to reconstruct her identity. Carol was the research participant who was least able to realise her preferred teacher identity at the school. She commented:

Even though I'm not usually like this, this is how I find myself. This is *not me* [*pointing to chart*] as a teacher. I feel it brings the worst out in me, this school. That's why when I considered staying another year, even though Giovanni hadn't found a job, things happened with her [Veronica] and with the administration that really made up my mind, look I'd rather be unemployed, even unemployed, and go somewhere else, because I feel this is making me very negative. (*Carol*)

Carol realised that she had become a stressed teacher at the school "and that's not the kind of teacher that I will ever be, I've always been a very relaxed teacher" (*Carol*). These comments suggest that her experiences at the school were creating a particular teacher identity to which she did not wish to subscribe and with which she was uncomfortable.

Woods (1990) argues that in shaping our identities we need supportive feedback from others (see 2.3.3.2). It has been shown that Carol received no affirmative feedback from Stefania at all; in fact, she received only negative feedback (see 4.1.3). Skeggs (2002a) argues that identity is related to valuing and that in identity politics

recognition and misrecognition of a person's value is important (see 2.2). The main reason that Carol cited for leaving the school related to not feeling valued: "I know I wouldn't have left if I had felt valued. I would have stuck it out for another year" (*Carol*). Thus, leaving the school for Carol was an act of self-preservation: she needed to leave the school in order to reconstruct the teacher identity that she had experienced in her previous teaching situations, particularly in Canada. This is similar to Woods's (1990) analysis of why Dick left his school (see 2.3.3.2). Woods (1990: 141) argues that Dick "could only preserve his sense of who he was by leaving". Thus, the findings suggest that Carol could not only not invest her sense of teacher identity at IES but that she needed to leave the school in order to preserve her teacher identity which was under profound threat at the school.

When speaking of her identity, Carol was at pains to explain what her Italian identity meant to her.

I know I have been referred to as a 'half-breed', half Italian, half English in my heritage... When people try to assume this Italian identity to me because my father was born in Italy, I refute that. And when people try to say, 'Well, you can have an Italian passport,' I say, 'No because that's not me.' 'But you have an English passport.' Yes, that is part of me, I feel very strongly towards my English heritage because of my mother. I think you get that through your mother, and through culture. I know I get that through the Italian side, but it's not as strong because I discovered it later in life. I discovered it as a teenager. I have this passion for Italy but it doesn't feel like it's *me*. It feels like it's something attached to me but it's not *deep down me*.

Identity construction is a highly complex issue and it is extremely difficult to do justice to this data from Carol without further in-depth analysis and theorising; the main focus of my research is teacher identity and this data goes beyond that focus. For my purposes, it may be sufficient to comment that it is interesting that Carol chose to reject an Italian identity as a significant factor in her own identity construction.

4.3.3 Karen

Presentation and analysis of findings

The findings suggest that Karen experienced considerable culture shock in her time in Italy, which had the effect of fragmenting her identity as a teacher. However, as the culture shock wore off, she experienced a partial reconstruction of her identity, although she felt that her experiences in Italy had made her become "a different person" (*Karen*).

Earlier it was argued that Karen's identity both as a person and as a teacher had been fragmented by her experience of culture shock: she missed her family enormously and was "knocked out" (*Karen*) by the differences she experienced at IES (see 4.1.1). As a consequence, she felt "all over the place" as a teacher (*Karen*). In addition, difficult incidents with her learners' parents and the lack of support she received from Stefania further fragmented her identity: she felt undermined and "pulled to pieces" (*Karen*) (see 4.1.2.2). She indicated at the time of the interviews that she was recovering from culture shock. Her comment "I'm sort of becoming more the person that I really am" indicates a reconstruction of her identity. However, it was argued that Karen's comment shows an essentialist understanding of identity as unified and coherent or, at the least, a desire for unity and coherence (see 4.1.1). She remarked, at the same time as the interviews, that she felt she was leading two lives: one in England with her

family and one in Italy (*Field notes*). This remark suggests that perhaps any reconstruction of her identity was only partial and provisional. Skeggs's (2002a) insight that identity construction smoothes over the contradictions that people may experience is apt (see 2.1.4). She argues (2002a: 7) that "Fractal selves ... never quite add up to an identity. Identity forces a coherence on that which is not".

There is no doubt that Karen felt that her experiences in Italy had influenced her teacher identity. She commented that she could not go back to her old job in the UK because she had become "a different person" (*Field notes*). The data suggests that Karen's experiences in Italy were not confined to the school and that she strongly experienced the identity of tourist and family member (see 4.1.7). Her mother is Italian and her experiences in Italy enabled her to experience her mother's cultural heritage to some extent. Being away from her family and realising what they meant to her, highlighted her identity as a family member. Thus, it could be argued that the reconstruction of Karen's identity that resulted in her feeling "a different person" had much to do with aspects of identity other than teaching that she experienced in Italy.

When Karen was asked if she, like Sally, felt that she could be more the teacher she wanted to be in Italy compared to the UK, she replied, "Not really". Karen acknowledged that there was less pressure on you as a teacher but said that "the negative side is that if you're not careful you can become lazier. I'm quite aware of that. To be honest I wouldn't say that I'm working at my full potential here" (*Karen*). Earlier Karen's need to maintain her identity as a professional teacher was identified as an important strategy to prevent her from becoming "lazier" (*Karen*) (see 4.2.1.3). She spoke of how important her teacher identity was to her: "the best thing people could say" (*Karen*) was that she was a good teacher (see 4.1.7). As she clearly did not receive recognition as a good teacher at IES and believed she was not working at her full potential, it is likely that these factors influenced her decision not to stay for a second year at the school although the main reasons she cited for her decision were the salary issue, her frustrations with management and missing her family.

Thus, Karen's identity as a teacher had been fragmented by the culture shock she experienced. Over time, as she recovered, she experienced a reconstruction of her identity although, as argued above, this was perhaps only partial and provisional rather than unified and coherent.

4.3.4 Graham

Presentation and analysis of findings

The data suggests that although Graham experienced a fragmentation of his identity in Italy through the experience of culture shock (see 4.1.1), he never experienced a fragmentation of his teacher identity in the way that Karen and other research participants had: "I felt very whole as a teacher" (*Graham*). He observed that his experiences at the school had been

an affirmation as a teacher. It's given me more confidence to go back to the management side of things. I think I've always had confidence as a teacher. It did make me think I could be headmaster in the right kind of school. But not this one. (*Graham*)

Graham cited the salary issue and the way the staff were treated by management as reasons for deciding that IES was not a long-term career option for him although Stefania had offered him a higher salary and a management position in February 2004, when he told her he was applying for jobs in the UK.⁴¹

Graham summed up how his experiences at IES would contribute to his next career move⁴²: “it’s been a fantastic experience... this has been so different, and with so many other hugely different challenges and surprises that I know I take the next step very much richer.”

Thus, Graham chose not to invest his career in the school although the findings indicate that his experiences at the school had affirmed his teacher identity and potential for management and that he felt “richer” (*Graham*) for the experiences.

4.3.5 Kirsty

Presentation and analysis of findings

Kirsty’s experiences at the school, although she experienced them as negative, helped to shape her identity as a teacher and to develop a vision for the kind of teacher she wished to become. Kirsty indicated that she did not relate to her identity as a support teacher: “I’m just not part of anything. I’m everywhere and I’m nowhere” (*Kirsty*). She also felt alienated from the values of the school and said that she found the school “appalling when it comes to moral aspects”, which she felt was indicative of the wider Italian culture.

As an outsider looking in on Italian culture to me it seems that the parents make sure that everything looks right, but where’s their concern for the feelings of the children? ... I have absolutely seen what I don’t want ... It’s an autistic society. There is a separation of emotion and interaction with their children. It’s formal and mechanical. (*Kirsty*)

However, seeing what she did not want with helped Kirsty to develop her vision of teaching which she had begun formulating in the United States. She described how she wished to be involved in Montessori teaching which emphasises “moral education as well as academic education” (*Kirsty*) in the United States:

In the States there are so many conflicting messages for kids as they grow up... I want to be part of something that will help build, that is a positive part of society. If a child is in an unstable situation, then I will be part of something bigger in their lives, even in a small way. That’s the vision that I have. (*Kirsty*)

She acknowledged that she did not feel she had a commitment to staying in Italy: “it’s not the same as *your people*”. At the time of my research, Kirsty and her husband were engaged in serious discussion about whether to stay in Italy or move to the United States and Kirsty saw her job at the school “as passing time” (*Kirsty*).

Kirsty, however, described how she felt she had grown through her Italian experience: “I won’t be the same person [when I leave], I know I won’t ... I see myself here as

⁴¹ Another important factor was that staying in Italy did not seem like a good career move for me.

⁴² Graham was offered a post as Head of the Mathematics Department at an independent preparatory school in the UK.

American but with an Italian richness". This is in contrast to seeing herself before coming to Italy simply as "an American" (*Kirsty*). She also felt she had grown in her skills and experience as a teacher at IES.

I think I will go back with a different teaching identity. If anything, I would say the English language teacher identity has been developed. Because I feel I'm always growing and learning – how does English work? How can I get this idea across to a particular student? ... How can I open an experience of the English language up to them? (*Kirsty*)

Thus, Kirsty's experiences in Italy, similarly to Karen's, had the effect that she felt she was no longer the same person. Her experiences at the school were important in helping shape her teacher identity: they developed her English language teacher identity and helped her to formulate her vision of the teacher she wished to become in the future. However, she did not believe that she could realise her envisioned teacher identity either at IES or in Italy. Thus, Kirsty's teaching identity was in process, rather than fixed; as a new teacher she was constructing and shaping her identity drawing on her experiences to do so.

4.3.6 Anita

Presentation and analysis of findings

Anita saw her experiences at IES as an extension and development of the experiences she had previously had in running her language business and in working for schools. She described how she felt that she had exhausted what she could learn from the Italian schools and organisations she had worked with in her ten years in Italy:

I've come to a crossroads in my own life because I can't learn any more. I've done the most learning I can do and I can tell you I haven't learned anything from [them] because it's been internal with me studying things and doing my own business. I haven't really learned anything in a company and that's what I want to do ... I would just say that my goal in life is to learn and to become better; I am always in competition with myself ... I'm proud of myself for the master's and I'm proud of the work that I do because I've come a long way ... It's just that I don't grow here, I don't know where to go at the moment. And that's it. It's been a long hard road.

The quotation suggests that an important identity for Anita was that of the learner and the feeling that she could no longer learn anything she valued in Italy was precipitating a crucial decision point for her. The following comment was noted in the field notes after my interviews with Anita and observation at the school: "This year at IES was like the scales falling off Anita's eyes. A sense that things won't get better and that this is *it* in Italy. A wake-up" (*Field notes*).

Anita described how selling her language skills and courses to organisations was very demanding. Kirsty said that Anita had told her that when selling courses, you needed to do whatever the client wanted: "if the client wants you to quack like a duck, you quack like a duck" (*Kirsty*). Anita commented that the situation was "very stagnant because here I'm reinventing myself but it's always reinventing myself in the same role ... it's exhausting, it really is" (*Anita*). This quotation suggests that Anita felt her work identity had exhausted itself or become bankrupt in Italy. Anita received confirmation that she had passed her master's degree in Applied Linguistics just after

she joined IES but she became increasingly disillusioned with her future work prospects in Italy.

I do this [language teaching] job and try to do it the best that I can but I wanted to learn, I was very curious and so that's why I started doing the master's, you know, so that at least I could be the – best. I want to be the best. Now I believe I am the best. I have a lot to offer, but nobody wants my skills here, which is why I'm thinking of going. This is the sad part of it all. *Here I am. (Anita)*

In this quotation, Anita suggests that she did not believe she could realise her preferred identity either at the school or in Italy: “nobody wants my skills here”. She said that “in the past I was content to be a ‘vagabond’ but now I want to focus and aim for the big jobs, the management jobs, what I’ve been trained for” (*Anita*) and indicated that she did not believe Italy was able to offer her those kinds of jobs. Although she spoke of continuing to try to set up the adult language business at the school in the new school year beginning September 2004, her experiences of this to date at the school did not look promising.

Thus, Anita's experiences at IES were a confirmation of the “long hard road” (*Anita*) she had travelled in Italy, at the end of which she felt that her work identity had reached a state of bankruptcy. Anita's work identity was key for her and although she would stay at the school in the short term, especially as she wished her daughter to continue attending IES, she did not believe she could realise her preferred work identity either at IES or in Italy.

4.3.7 Laura

Presentation and analysis of findings

The findings from Laura suggest that she was able to express her teacher identity to a limited extent at IES, mainly within the confines of her classroom. However, overall, she experienced her teacher identity as fragile at the school: she was vulnerable to how management perceived and defined her.

The findings show that Laura was able to develop her identity as a teacher at the school to a certain extent despite the lack of support she received from management.

I have grown a lot here – surprisingly! The two and half years in New Zealand⁴³ helped, for example learning about teaching reading, learning difficulties. I've been able to make use of the experiences here. I'm now really happy with what I'm doing here as a teacher. The Year 2 class I taught [in 2003] was very difficult – there were 24 of them, mainly boys, very bright, outspoken but it was a wonderful year. This year I've been happy with my teaching, I've done a good job. This time has been one of consolidation: I feel a more experienced teacher. (*Laura*)

In this statement, Laura uses the word “surprisingly” which suggests that she developed as a teacher at IES despite the lack of support and guidance from management. Earlier in the interview Laura referred to her experiences at another international school in the region and said that “international schools often give no help, no direction, no syllabus guidelines” (see 4.1.4), a statement which could apply equally to IES. The fact that she had moved to IES after a period of teaching in New

⁴³ Laura taught in New Zealand prior to relocating to Italy and joining the staff of IES.

Zealand, where she had developed her teaching knowledge considerably, enabled her to consolidate her teaching skills at IES. The data suggests that she felt “a more experienced teacher”, possibly for the first time in her career.

However, the data suggests that Laura did not feel able to use her considerable teaching experience⁴⁴, including experience of teaching at other international schools in Italy, in any area of the school other than in her classroom. Other research participants, such as Sally, commented that Laura was usually silent at staff meetings and never made a contribution. Elsewhere in her interviews, Laura said that she coped with life at the school by “being in a bubble”, which suggests that she worked in relative isolation. Like Sally, once she shut the door on her classroom, it became her world. Laura’s skills and energy were reserved for her classroom and she did not feel able to make a contribution outside that.

The data suggest that one of the possible reasons that accounts for Laura’s isolation in her classroom was her perceived insecurity at the school. She believed that her position at the school depended entirely on the directors: “It doesn’t matter if the directors see you as a good teacher or not. They would rather we [the more experienced teachers] left – we cost too much money” (*Laura*). She also experienced anxiety wondering if Stefania did think she was a good teacher, which she knew would be influenced by what the parents thought of her: “How much does she think something about me because of what the parents told her?” (*Laura*). This quotation shows not only Laura’s insecurity in relation to her teacher identity but also suggests that she expended a certain amount of her emotional energy worrying about it.

Believing that her position was vulnerable and that “there are not that many opportunities here” (*Laura*), Laura carefully adopted a strategy of non-confrontation (see 4.2.2.1). Her perceived job insecurity would also not allow her to think of being at the school on a long-term basis. She said, “I don’t want to think about it” although she conceded that she “might be” at the school in ten years’ time. Laura’s coping strategy was to be in denial about her situation but this was at the expense of thinking about and planning her long-term career. (It can be noted that her response to the situation is in contrast to Sally’s (see 4.3.1).) The school, too, was the loser in this situation: Laura did not feel able to invest her skills in school life beyond the classroom or to think consciously about a long-term career at the school, although the reality is that she might spend up to a decade or more at the school.

Thus, the data in relation to Laura suggest her sense of teacher identity at the school was fragile, insecure and entirely vulnerable to how the directors perceived her. Although her classroom experiences enabled her to feel a “more experienced teacher” (*Laura*), her insecurity meant that she adopted particular strategies that limited any risk taking or drawing any attention to herself. Thus, she reconstructed her identity to fit management’s needs and expectations of teachers at the school.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that the research participants only felt able to invest their sense of teacher identity to a limited extent in IES (see 4.3.1 to 4.3.7). Sally was most able to realise her preferred teacher identity at IES but this was once she had “shut the door

⁴⁴ She had taught for 18 years at the time of my research.

on [her] class" (*Sally*), symbolically separating herself from all the frustrations of the school. Laura, like Sally, was able to invest her identity as a teacher in the classroom but not in other aspects of school life, for example she was usually silent in staff meetings. Carol was least able to realise her preferred teacher identity at the school and, in fact, felt that "it brings out the worst in me" (*Carol*). She needed to leave the school in order to reconstruct her teacher identity which had been profoundly threatened at the school. Kirsty was not able to invest her sense of teacher identity at IES: she did not relate well to her identity as a support teacher and she evaluated the school negatively from a moral point of view. However, her experiences at the school helped her to formulate her vision of what she wanted as an educator but this was a vision that she planned to achieve in the United States rather than in Italy. Anita felt that she had reached a crossroads in her life after ten years in Italy. Italy had become stagnant because "it's always reinventing myself in the same role" (*Anita*). Despite believing that she had "a lot to offer" (*Anita*), she had come to the realisation that "nobody wants my skills here"; she was not valued. Anita did not see herself investing her work identity in the school. Graham, similarly, had decided not to invest his teacher identity in the school in the long term although he noted that he had been given "affirmation as a teacher" (*Graham*) at the school. Karen commented that "I wouldn't say that I'm working at my full potential here" which implies less investment in her teaching identity than at her previous schools.

None of the research participants were prepared to invest their long-term career in the school. At the time of my research in May and June 2004, Karen, Graham and Carol had already resigned and would finish at the end of the school year in July 2004. Both Kirsty and Anita were considering leaving Italy and relocating to the United States. Thus, for them, the school was a job, a source of income, but they did not see it as a long-term career option. Sally and Laura were committed to staying in Italy but, in Sally's case, she had career plans beyond the school. Laura felt she had few alternatives but to stay at the school although, as argued above (see 4.3.7), her insecurity about her job at the school meant that she did not contribute to school life beyond her classroom. The data does not suggest that Laura saw herself building or developing her career at the school beyond being a classroom teacher.

Thus, this section has shown that the majority of research participants did not feel able to invest their sense of teacher identity and careers in the school; it has argued that this factor influenced their decision whether to stay at the school or not.

4.3.8 Reconstruction in relation to 'international' and 'intercultural' factors **Presentation and analysis of findings**

IES is an international school in an intercultural setting and these factors have the potential to influence the identity construction of the teachers in several ways. Firstly, it has been argued that the identity of the school as an international institution is a factor in the identity construction of its teachers (see 2.2). Secondly, Heyward (2002) argues that culture shock may force an examination of cultural identity, which could ultimately lead to intercultural awareness with a particular bicultural, transcultural or global identity being adopted (see 2.4.1). Each of these aspects will be considered in this section.

Firstly, in relation to the international factor, the findings have shown that many of the research participants believed that the 'international' part of the school's name was

“misleading” (*Sally*) and “a farce” (*Kirsty*) (see 4.1.6). Kirsty’s comment shows her scepticism:

the school is not international... The administration has no idea of what it means to be international ... it’s not one of understanding an international picture or of being culturally sensitive to others... The international part is to be taken advantage of [by the administration], not fully utilised. (*Kirsty*)

This scepticism about the term ‘international’, shared by the majority of research participants, was a possible factor influencing the research participants’ construction of their teacher identity. Not one of the research participants said that they would consider defining themselves as an international school teacher or would consider moving onto an international school career path. Carol, for example, stated that she would not define herself as an “international school [teacher] because I really don’t know what that means. I think that this one experience is not necessarily, it doesn’t really describe what an international school is”. Sally said that prior to coming to IES she had thought that “as an international teacher, I’m going to travel the world” but soon realised that IES was “really not international”.

Thus, the data suggest that IES provided the research participants with only a limited experience of what international school education could be about; as has been shown, it was far removed from what Joslin (2002) defined as an international school with an ‘inclusive’ mission (see 4.1.6). This limited experience of international education at IES, which was perceived by most of the research participants in negative terms, meant that the reconstruction of their teacher identities ignored the ‘international’ factor. It led to the situation where the majority of the research participants, even Laura and Sally who were staying in Italy in the medium to long term, did not consider defining themselves as international school teachers or consider themselves as following an international school career.

Secondly, the intercultural factor is examined. Heyward’s (2002) theory of the development of intercultural literacy argues that as an individual recovers from culture shock and becomes more interculturally aware, there may be a reconstruction of their identity with the adoption of a bicultural, transcultural or global identity (see 2.4.1). However, he argues that this process is not automatic and that cross-cultural contact is not sufficient for a person to become interculturally literate: a necessary condition for intercultural literacy is the role of the social context within which cross-cultural experience takes place. He argues that intercultural learning is facilitated in a supportive environment and that “distancing or identity confusion may result” (2002: 20) from an unsupportive environment (see 2.4.1).

In considering IES as an environment in which cross-cultural exchange took place, the data in Chapter 4 showed that the research participants found the IES environment to be completely unsupportive. Management was identified as the key factor accounting for the environment, for example Stefania did not support her teachers in difficult meeting and was insensitive to the need of the new teachers for the provision of translation (see 4.1.2.2). There was no formal induction programme, no language or intercultural workshops, which might have benefited the new teachers in particular, and no system of support, for example pairing new teachers with a mentor (see 2.4.1). It could be argued that identity confusion and distancing resulted from the

unsupportive environment. For example, the data suggest that there was a certain amount of identity confusion amongst the research participants about the 'good teacher' at IES: many participants were uncertain about what was expected of them as teachers and insecure about what the directors thought of them (see 4.1.3). It was suggested that towards the end of the school year Carol adopted the strategy of distancing (see 4.2.2.1) and that Laura tended to distance herself from life in the school beyond her classroom (see 4.2.2.1 and 4.3.7).

The data suggest that a certain amount of intercultural learning that did take place for many of the research participants. For example, Kirsty spoke of making sense of the cultural contradictions "that first drove me nuts" (*Kirsty*) and Karen spoke of consciously getting out, meeting Italians and learning about her cultural heritage in Italy (see 4.1.7). However, I would argue that few of the research participants displayed the understandings, competencies and identities that are characteristics of the interculturally literate person as shown in Level 5 of Heyward's (2002) model of intercultural literacy (see Table 1). Level 5 is described as including some awareness of "how the culture(s) feel and operate from the standpoint of the insider" (16), "advanced competencies [including] mindfulness, empathy, perspective-taking, tolerance and communication" (16) and the "bicultural or transcultural identity" (17). Even Anita who would seem to have an in-depth understanding of Italian culture, did not always demonstrate the advanced competencies of tolerance and empathy associated with this level (see 4.1.2.2), possibly because of her difficult work experiences. Other research participants, at times, by labelling behaviour and incidents they did not understand 'the Italian way', tended to close off further reflection and analysis of Italian culture (see 4.1.2.2). Thus, for them, culture shock did not "force an examination of cultural identity" (Heyward 2002: 17) and so they displayed some of the characteristics of Level 3 of Heyward's model of intercultural literacy in which the other culture was "perceived as irrational and unbelievable" (17).

The above analysis has been broad and impressionistic; it has not revisited the data in minute detail. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to argue that the majority of research participants did not become significantly more interculturally literate through their experiences at IES: any learning that did take place was instigated by the research participants themselves. As Anita commented, "I haven't learned anything from [the Italian schools and organisations] because it's been internal with me studying things and doing my own business". Joslin (2002) suggests that one of the most effective ways in which teachers can be prepared effectively for the international teaching context is to engage in a long-term developmental programme of self-learning about culture (see 2.4.2). However, she does not imply that an individual engages in a period of self-learning in isolation: it must surely be 'grounded' within a particular site, with input and direction given to the new teachers. In the case of IES, the complete lack of any formal cross-cultural orientation or training made it extremely difficult for any new teacher to engage in a period of productive self-learning to the point where they might have become interculturally literate. Although Anita's case would seem to be an argument for self-learning about culture, she had lived in Italy for 10 years, had married an Italian, become bilingual and had gradually learnt more about Italian culture to the point that she felt she was "fully integrated" (*Anita*) in Italy. It would be unrealistic to expect new teachers to follow her example.

It can be argued that because the school largely ignored the potential role it could play in helping develop the intercultural learning of its staff, there were several consequences. Firstly, the teachers did not develop intercultural literacy to a significant degree through their experiences at the school. A certain amount of intercultural learning would take place simply because interaction was occurring in a cross-cultural setting but only a limited amount. Thus, a potentially valuable opportunity for intercultural learning was lost. This may have contributed to the situations of misunderstanding arising from different cultural value systems, for example the attributes of the 'good teacher' were understood differently by management and the research participants (see 4.1.3). Secondly, because of the unsupportive environment, a certain amount of distancing and identity confusion resulted. Thirdly, in terms of the reconstruction of their identities, Kirsty was the only research participant who could be said to describe her reconstructed identity in bicultural terms: "I won't be the same person [when I leave], I know I won't ...I see myself here as American but with an Italian richness". Carol, in contrast, interestingly resisted a Canadian/Italian bicultural identity (see 4.3.2).

Conclusion

This section has considered the 'international' and 'intercultural' factors as potential factors in the reconstruction of the research participants' identities. It was shown that the research participants only had a limited experience of what international education could be about at IES and that the reconstruction of their identities ignored the international factor. It has been argued that the unsupportive environment at IES did not facilitate intercultural learning: any significant learning that did take place was at the instigation of the teachers themselves. The main consequences were that an opportunity for potential intercultural learning was lost (which was a factor that may have contributed to situations of cultural misunderstanding), a certain amount of distancing and identity confusion resulted from the unsupportive environment and, finally, the research participants, with the possible exception of Kirsty, did not reconstruct their identities with the intercultural factor as a significant factor.

The next chapter provides a summary of the key findings from the research presented in this chapter and considers their implications.

Chapter 5: Implications and recommendations for future research

This final chapter provides a summary of the key findings from the research and considers their implications. It begins with an overview of the issues of identity that the research participants experienced while teaching at IES. It then focuses on the identity work and strategies that the research participants engaged in as a response to these issues of identity. This is followed by an analysis of the reconstruction of their teacher identities that has taken place. Finally, it makes recommendations for future research.

5.1 Implications of research

5.1.1 Identity-related experiences of teachers at IES

There are several issues of identity that the research participants experienced at IES. Firstly, the majority of them experienced culture shock when they first arrived at the school which led to a fragmentation of their teacher identity and sense of self (see 4.1.1).

Secondly, they experienced a clash of educational value systems at IES (see 4.1.3). The ‘good teacher’ at IES, as far as the research participants were concerned, had little to do with good pedagogy but was evaluated in terms of what was visible, for example the learners’ handwriting and assemblies attended by the parents, and in terms of the ‘good employee’ in Italian work culture. This situation created insecurity and anxiety for the research participants as the notions of teacher identity that they had previously experienced were unsettled by the different values systems.

They also experienced different value systems at play in terms of management and work culture compared with their ‘home’ countries (see 4.1.2.2). At times the value systems seemed to collide, which resulted in culture clash. Carol and Karen’s clash with management over salary issues is an example of this and one of the main outcomes of the clash, noted by the majority of the research participants, was their realisation that management evaluated them in terms of their cost to the school rather than in terms of their teaching quality. This realisation led to further erosion of a stable sense of teacher identity.

Fourthly, the research participants experienced greater day-to-day freedom at the school but had little support from management (see 4.1.4). The different teachers experienced this situation differently according to their level of experience and previous school experiences. For example, the greater freedom allowed Sally to realise her preferred teacher identity at the school while Carol, one of the most recently qualified teachers amongst the research participants, needed guidance and support from management for her teaching. Not receiving this led to further anxiety and did not enable her to develop beyond her ‘new teacher’ identity.

The research participants experienced several levels of separation and difference within IES: management versus teachers, English-speaking versus Italian teachers, the Middle School versus the Elementary School and differences within the English-speaking group (see 4.1.5). A common strategy was to position people into these

various groups which, in turn, led to being positioned by others. This identity strategy created solidarity for the members of a particular group but also led to suspicion of and competition with the other groups and feelings of superiority. A situation of “hothouse gossip” (*Karen*) was created in which identity politics flourished (see 4.1.5 and 4.2.2.2).

The teachers believed that they played a vital role in enabling the school to justify calling itself ‘international’ and ‘English’ but providing these resources did not give the teachers greater power as they were seen as replaceable with a ready supply of other English-speaking teachers (see 4.1.6). Thus the school firmly mediated and controlled the ‘English’ and ‘international’ identities and this led to a further devaluing of the research participants’ identities at the school.

Finally, the research participants did not experience their teacher identities in isolation: their other identities intersected with their teacher identities in significant ways (see 4.1.7). For example, both Anita’s and Laura’s identities as mothers were strong motivations for them to continue working at the school despite their frustrations. Carol, as one of the most recently qualified teachers, seemed to experience her teacher identity the most strongly at the school.

An important ‘thread’ underlying the issues described above is that many of the issues are cross-cultural in origin. There were different educational value systems and different work cultures in operation which led to uncertainty, insecurity and stress for the teachers and resulted, at times, in culture clash. The literature on international education (e.g. Joslin 2002) recognises the importance of cross-cultural factors for teachers relocating to an international context (see 2.4.2). Joslin gives an overview of the different options that are available to help teachers adapt to a new culture and mentions that the European Council of International Schools (ECIS), “the oldest and largest association of international schools” (2002: 85), offers accreditation for schools as well as workshops and conferences and professional development for teachers. At the time of writing her article, Joslin (2002: 55) said that the ECIS Cross-Cultural Committee were planning a handbook to help schools develop induction for their new staff.

As IES is a provisional member of the ECIS, it is clear that there are several resources available that would benefit the school and its teachers and address some of the problems that have arisen. However, the directors of the school need to recognise the importance of cross-cultural issues and training. The findings from my research suggest that the directors did not have any particular intercultural awareness themselves and needed to understand, for example, the language issues that affect teachers. The data shows that the research participants experienced considerable stress from not being able to understand and participate in staff and parent meetings and that provision of translation from Italian into English is essential (see 4.1.2.2). A longer-term strategy would be to provide language workshops for the teachers at the school so that all the teachers could have the opportunity to learn Italian or English. It is to be hoped that if IES seeks further accreditation from ECIS that the body might insist on certain minimum standards in the school, for example the provision of cross-cultural training and professional development for its staff, and in this way educate the directors of IES about these issues.

5.1.2 Identity work and strategies

In order to respond to and manage the situation where their identities as teachers had been profoundly unsettled by their experiences at IES, the research participants engaged in identity work in the form of identity talk, which served to reinforce, or even reconstruct, their identities as teachers (see 4.2.1). Firstly, the teachers constructed their identities in relation to the Italian teachers: they constructed themselves as better teachers in terms of training, skills and values (see 4.2.1.1). Feeling superior about their teaching was an important strategy for the research participants and helped preserve their identity as teachers that had been threatened on many other levels. Secondly, the teachers constructed their identities in relation to Stefania and management in ways that reinforced their own particular identity construction (see 4.2.1.2). For example, Carol constructed Stefania as overly money-minded and thus reinforced her own teacher identity as being motivated by other ideals. Thirdly, several research participants also asserted or reaffirmed previous teacher identities they had subscribed to: holding onto their identity as teachers was an important survival strategy (see 4.2.1.3). In order to cope with the lack of recognition by management, which was closely related to not feeling valued, there were several responses (see 4.2.1.4). Carol adopted the ultimate exit strategy of leaving in response to the situation while Laura adopted the strategy of non-confrontation. Sally, however, had more resources at her disposal to deal with the situation, for example a support system within the school and resources outside the school which created a sense of 'belonging' to Italy for her that was not dependent on her work at the school. Consciously recognising these resources was an important coping strategy for Sally.

There are several implications of this identity work. Constructing themselves as better teachers than the Italian teachers meant that the research participants were engaged in positioning the Italian teachers into the category of 'inferior' teacher and stereotyping all Italian teachers in this way (see 4.2.1.1). Related to this, the majority of research participants labelled particular incidents and phenomena 'the Italian way'. This strategy served to explain behaviour or incidents they found confusing or did not understand but also closed off the need for further reflection or learning about Italian culture (see 4.2.1.2). Another important implication of constructing themselves as better teachers than the Italian teachers is that the majority of research participants may have become complacent about their 'superior' pedagogy as a great deal of their energy was invested in the identity work rather than in their teaching (see 4.2.1.1). Woods and Jeffrey (2002: 105) comment that "identity work consumes enormous emotional and intellectual energy that might otherwise be dedicated to teaching" and this is one of the most important implications of the findings. An important implication of the research participants constructing their identity in relation to the Italian teachers and to Stefania and management is that it helped foster a sense of solidarity amongst the English-speaking teachers (see 4.2.1.2). This sense of solidarity possibly served to build up their self-esteem as teachers that had been bruised at the school but also served to emphasise differences between the English-speaking teachers and other groups at the school, and, inevitably, to build barriers between them.

There were several other coping strategies adopted by the research participants and these were related to the degree of commitment that the research participants felt for the school and the degree to which they needed to accommodate the problems (see

4.2.2.1). For example, once Carol had resigned from the school, she had less trouble accommodating the problems she encountered and she began to distance herself from various issues at the school. Making sense of their experiences at the school was an important coping strategy for the research participants (see 4.2.2.2). They engaged in conversations with others which helped them to make sense of and express their emotions about daily events at IES. It was also an important identity strategy: in locating themselves in particular actions, events and situations that they discussed, the speakers constructed particular kinds of identities for themselves. Several research participants constructed their experiences at IES as a drama with the directors as key characters. While this strategy allowed them to reframe painful events and make them more manageable, it might also have served to close off in-depth analysis and reflection as cultural interactions become reduced to personality issues. Constructing the school as a drama also reinforced the positioning of people into various groups within the school, for example English-speaking teachers versus management, and reinforced the creation of peer groups amongst the English-speaking staff.

5.1.3 Reconstruction of teacher identities

Although the majority of the research participants experienced a fragmentation of their teacher identities through culture shock and their experiences at IES, over time there was some kind of reconstruction of their identities as teachers (see 4.3). This section, firstly, sums up the findings relating to the reconstruction of the teacher identities of each research participant and then considers the ‘international’ and ‘intercultural’ factors in their reconstruction.

Sally experienced culture shock in her first few months at the school but recovered after several months and she seemed to experience her teacher identity as stable and intact rather than fragmented and fragile (see 4.3.1). She was able to realise her preferred teacher identity at the school, in contrast with her previous high-pressure teaching post in the UK. However, her identity was invested in her classroom teaching rather than in the school more broadly and the findings suggest she was not going to invest her career in the school in the long term.

Unlike Sally, Carol was not able to realise her preferred identity at the school. Her identity as a teacher was under profound threat from her experiences at the school where she was not valued and was constructed as a problem teacher by management (see 4.3.2). Ultimately, she needed to leave the school as an act of self-preservation in order to reconstruct her teacher identity that she had experienced in previous teaching situations.

Karen experienced considerable culture shock in Italy which, combined with her experiences at the school, had the effect of fragmenting her identity as a teacher (see 4.3.3). However, as the culture shock wore off, she experienced a partial reconstruction of her identity although she felt she had become “a different person” (*Field notes*), possibly, it was argued, through her experiences in Italy having highlighted her identity as a family member and tourist. However, her new identity was experienced as partial and provisional rather than unified and coherent.

Although Graham experienced culture shock in Italy, he did not experience a fragmentation of his teacher identity in the way that Karen and other research

participants did (see 4.3.4). His experiences at the school affirmed his identity and career as a teacher. However, he chose not to invest his career in the school. Kirsty perceived her experiences at the school as negative: she did not relate to her identity as support teacher and she felt alienated from the values of the school and Italian culture (see 4.3.5). However, her experiences helped her to formulate a vision of the teacher she wished to become in the future. As a new teacher, her identity was more fluid than some of the other research participants and she drew on her experiences to construct and shape it.

Although Anita did not seem to experience her identity as fragmented, her experiences at IES confirmed that she felt her work identity had reached a state of bankruptcy in Italy (see 4.3.6). She did not believe she could realise her preferred work identity either at IES or in Italy.

Laura was able to express her teacher identity to a limited extent at IES, mainly within the confines of her classroom (see 4.3.7). However, overall she was insecure in relation to her teacher identity at the school: she was vulnerable to how management perceived and defined her and expended emotional energy worrying about the situation. Her perceived job insecurity meant that she adopted a strategy of non-confrontation with management and she distanced herself from life in the school beyond the classroom. Laura was also in a state of denial about her future and avoided thinking about or planning her future career.

To sum up, the research participants' experiences at the school and in Italy affected their identities as teachers in profound ways. After experiencing a fragmentation of identity, there was a reconstruction of teacher identity that differed for each of them. Sally was able to realise her preferred teacher identity at the school; Kirsty was able to develop a vision of the kind of teacher she wished to become, although she was not able to realise this at the school; Graham received affirmation of his identity as a teacher and as a potential manager; Laura achieved certain satisfaction as an experienced classroom teacher but experienced overall insecurity and vulnerability in her identity as a teacher at the school; Karen experienced reconstruction of her identity to the point that she felt she had become a "different person"; Anita, far from experiencing a reconstruction of her identity, experienced confirmation at IES that her work identity had become exhausted or bankrupt and that there were few viable career options for her in Italy; Carol's teacher identity was under threat at the school and she needed to leave in order to reconstruct her identity.

There were important implications of these findings for the research participants (see 4.3.8). The majority of the research participants held on to their vision of education and teacher identity that they wished to subscribe to⁴⁵ but, for all of them except Laura, these would be realised outside the school. None of them was prepared to invest their long-term commitment or their careers in the school. In the short term, Graham, Karen and Carol had resigned; it was likely that Kirsty and Anita would leave in the next year or two, and Sally shortly thereafter. Only Laura was not planning to leave the school but she was not consciously planning to stay and build her career there either; Laura was staying because of lack of other options and this

⁴⁵ In the case of Anita, this, rather, was her vision of her career and work identity that she wished to realise.

was at the expense of long-term career security and self-esteem. A key implication of this was that the school was experiencing a high staff turnover. Usually new staff stayed for at least two years but Graham, despite the affirmation he had received, Karen, Carol and another new teacher, Linda, were all leaving after only one year, and it seemed likely that Kirsty and Anita would be leaving as well.⁴⁶ My research suggests if the directors of IES continue to ignore that its English-speaking teachers have “feelings, values, beliefs, thoughts, cherished ideals; in short, identities” (Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 105), there is the danger that the high staff turnover and lack of staff commitment will continue. The school can only be the ultimate loser in this case.

The international factor is a potential factor in the identity construction of the research participants: they were teaching at an international institution (see 4.3.9). However the teachers received only limited experience of international education at IES, which they perceived in mainly negative terms. This meant that the reconstruction of their teacher identities that took place ignored the international factor. The majority of the research participants, even Laura and Sally who were staying in Italy for the medium to long term, did not consider defining themselves as international school teachers or consider themselves as following an international school career. Thus, again, there was potential loss for the teachers, who, if they had had a more positive experience of international education, might have chosen an international schools career path. This was also a potential loss for the field of international education itself: the majority of the research participants, all well qualified and committed teachers, found their experience of international education to be a negative one.

This finding suggests that there needs to be more awareness amongst teachers about international education and the different types of international schools that exist, ranging from the inclusive to the encapsulated schools (see 2.4.2) and the “‘for profit’ international schools” (International Schools Review 2006). Joslin (2002: 51) argues that “If the teacher wishes to make an informed decision about their potential career change, then an understanding of the field of international schools and international education would seem to be the first step to enlightenment”. She suggests that pre-departure programmes could be useful as part of a teacher education programme but argues that more research needs to be done regarding their content and design as pre-departure provision for potential international teachers has been lacking. She mentions that the University of Bath is a course provider for teachers wishing to develop professional knowledge about international education. A web search reveals that there are organisations such as the International Schools Review (2006) which are designed to inform potential international school teachers about teaching in an international school. The International Schools Review has a web site which includes reviews of actual schools, reviewed by international school teachers within those schools. Thus, it seems that there are both information and courses on international education available for teachers. An important point, however, is that the teachers have to realise that they need this information; teachers may only begin to search for information if they have a disappointing or difficult experience.

The lack of power of the teachers at IES has emerged as an important finding: the directors had the upper hand in determining salaries and contracts, daily work conditions and in providing recognition, or not, for the teachers at the school (see

⁴⁶ They both did, in fact, move from Italy back to the United States in 2005.

4.1.2.2 and 4.1.3). The teachers, of course, had the power to leave the school but, as argued in the case of Carol, this was the ultimate exit strategy which was stressful and not what she had originally planned (see 4.2.1.4). It is to be hoped, again, that if IES wishes to receive more accreditation from the CEIS that issues such as high staff turnover, and the reasons for it, can begin to be addressed. A possible area for further research would be to investigate what resources the CEIS can offer teachers at international schools who feel they have been badly treated by the schools in which they are teaching.

The intercultural factor is another potential factor in identity construction and it has been argued (Heyward, 2002) that as an individual recovers from culture shock and becomes more interculturally aware, there may be a reconstruction of their identity with the adoption of a bicultural or global identity (see 2.4.1). Heyward (2002: 10) defined an interculturally literate person as someone who

possesses the understandings, competencies, attitudes and identities necessary for successful living and working in a cross-cultural or pluralist setting. He or she has the background required effectively to 'read' a second culture, to interpret its symbols and negotiate its meanings in a practical day-to-day context.

The findings show that most of the teachers did not achieve intercultural literacy in Heyward's terms and many still constructed Italian culture as 'other' in many ways. Of the research participants, only Kirsty could be said to have reconstructed her identity as bicultural. Heyward (2002) argues that intercultural learning is facilitated in a supportive environment (see 2.4.1) and the findings suggest that the unsupportive environment at IES did not facilitate intercultural learning (see 4.3.8). Any learning that did take place was at the instigation of the teachers themselves. The main implication of the unsupportive environment was that a potential opportunity for intercultural learning was lost: as argued earlier, many of the problems that the research participants experienced were affected by cross-cultural issues (see 5.1.1). There are several ways in which schools could help new teachers become more interculturally aware, for example through cross-cultural workshops. Stirzaker (2004) suggests that a 'buddy' or mentor system could help new staff members achieve intercultural understanding (see 4.2.3). If IES had provided some form of cross-cultural training, the teachers, management and, ultimately, the school would have benefitted and possibly some of the problems could have been avoided or better dealt with by all the parties concerned.

5.2 Recommendations for further research

This research has been in the form of a case study which has examined the "bounded system" (Marshall and Rossman 1989 cited in McKie 2002: 268) of the International English School (IES) in Italy. The purpose of my research has been to understand how seven individual teachers at the school have made sense of their experiences at the school: "the search is for an understanding of the particular case, in its idiosyncrasy, in its complexity" (Stake 1988 cited in Nunan 1992: 80). As has been argued earlier, I could not make generalisations from this one case to other international schools or teachers (see 3.2.1). However, the findings that have emerged suggest possible directions for future research.

IES is an international school in Italy, situated within the wider context of Italian culture, notably northern Italian culture, and the Italian educational system. In order to explain and account more fully for the issues that were identified by the research participants in this case study, more research could be undertaken. For example, gender was identified as one of the factors which could help account for the positive experiences that Graham had at IES in contrast with the female research participants (see 4.1.3). Further research about gender in schools in Italy is needed in order to examine and account for this factor in more detail.

This study has only researched the views of a sample of English-speaking teachers at IES as the focus has been on the identities of the English-speaking teachers (see 3.1.1). However, it would be interesting to consider the identities of the Italian teachers at the school as well and to examine how their identities are constructed at an 'international' 'English' school in Italy. Interaction with management, particularly Stefania, emerged as one of the most significant aspects of the research participants' experiences and, in a future research study that focuses on identity in a similar international school, it would be interesting to include an in-depth examination of the directors' identities as well. In this way, the case study would be much broader but, ultimately, may be richer and better able to inform the teacher education and professional development work of bodies such as the European Council of International Schools (ECIS) (see below).

Thompson (2002) indicates international education as a 'field of study' is in the process of being established and that evidence from practice is needed in order to inform theoretical understanding. He (2002: 6) argues that a wide range of schools and other institutions claim to develop traits associated with international education "such as the characteristics of 'international-mindedness', tolerance and cultural sensitivity" but that "what is not so explicit ... is any detailed evidence that such claims can be justified in practice" (see 1.3). Joslin (2002: 33) indicates that "most of the literature on 'international schools' and 'international education' focuses on the students, and on the teacher in relation to the students' learning and experience" (see 1.3), thus there is a need for more research that focuses on the teacher in the international schools context. I would argue, based on the findings of my research, that fine-grained qualitative studies of international schools as sites of practice, in which teachers are the subjects of the research, would help to interrogate claims that schools make about being 'international-minded'. My research study has indicated that IES's claims about being an international school can be seriously questioned, based on the findings from the teachers in my research sample and it is unlikely that the experiences of my research participants are unique in international schools.⁴⁷ Such fine-grained research studies could help inform the work of international teacher educators, recruiters and professional development consultants and, ultimately, could try to equip teachers to cope with the challenges that face them in particular sites of practice.

A possible research project might be to undertake research into a range of schools which are all members of the European Council of International Schools (ECIS). The

⁴⁷ Anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers in other international schools that are parent owned and have the aim of making profits have experienced similar issues to the teachers at IES. For example, a personal communication in October 2006 from a teacher in an international school in Tenerife indicated that there were similar issues at that school to those described in my research study.

findings could inform the body about the range of practices and issues that exist in its member schools which, in turn, could inform its professional development work with teachers and schools.

One of the key findings that has emerged from my study is that cross-cultural factors are of crucial importance for the teacher relocating to an international schools context, (see 5.1.1) and that intercultural literacy is not achieved through cross-cultural contact alone (see 2.4.1). Joslin (2002) argues that there is a need for research into the interculturally competent teacher and the conditions that foster or hamper the acquisition of this competence. My research has supported Heyward's (2002) claim that an unsupportive context can hamper the development of intercultural learning (see 2.4.1). It has suggested that the lack of support from management for the English-speaking teachers is the key feature of the unsupportive context at IES with contributory factors such as the lack of a formal induction programme. Further research could identify the significance of other factors.

Conclusion

This chapter began with an overview of the issues of identity that the research participants experienced at IES. It was shown that many of the issues were cross-cultural in origin, which supports the recognition accorded to cross-cultural factors from some of the literature on international education (e.g. Joslin 2002). It was argued that their experiences at the school affected the teachers' identities in profound ways and that, overall, they experienced a fragmentation of their teacher identities. Secondly, in order to manage and respond to the issues of identity they had experienced, it was shown how the research participants engaged in identity work, in the form of identity talk, which allowed them to reinforce or reconstruct their identity as teachers. One of the main forms of the identity work was to construct themselves as superior to the Italian teachers and to management. The main implications of this were that a great deal of their energy was invested in their identity work, rather than teaching, and that the identity work, ultimately, served to emphasise differences between the English-speaking teachers and the other groups. Thirdly, an analysis of the reconstruction of the teachers' identities was provided and it was argued that this differed for each of the research participants. Overall, however, the findings showed that the majority of the research participants held on to their vision of education and teacher identity that they wished to subscribe to but these would be realised outside the school. None of them was prepared to invest their long-term commitment or careers in the school. A key implication of this was that it led to a high staff turnover at the school, a trend which looked likely to continue, unless the directors changed their approach. The reconstruction of their identities that took place ignored the international factor: the majority of teachers found their experience of international education at IES to be a negative one and none of them defined themselves as international school teachers with an international school career path. The intercultural factor was also potentially an important factor in the reconstruction of their identities but the findings showed that most of the teachers did not achieve intercultural literacy (Heyward 2002) and many still constructed Italian culture as 'other' in many ways. It was argued that the unsupportive environment at IES was a key factor accounting for the lack of intercultural learning.

Several recommendations for further research were outlined. Firstly, gender in schools in Italy was identified as a factor for further research to help account for the

differences between the male and female research participants at IES. Secondly, it was argued that if a similar case study on identity were to be carried out in an international setting that it would be interesting to focus on the identities of the Italian teachers (or teachers of the country in which the international school is located) and those of the directors of the school in order to describe and account fully for all the issues of identity in the school. Thirdly, it was argued that fine-grained qualitative studies of international schools as sites of practice would be appropriate if teachers are the research subjects and if the aim of the research is to interrogate the claims that schools make about being 'international minded'. Fourthly, my findings support Joslin's (2002) argument that there is a need for further research into the interculturally competent teacher and the conditions that foster or hamper the acquisition of this competence.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Letter outlining research to the research participants

27 April 2004

Dear *Research participant*

RESEARCH INTO EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL TEACHERS

I have discussed briefly with you the research I would like to do for my master's paper on English-speaking teachers' experiences of working in an international school environment. The research would involve my interviewing you and 6 other English-speaking teachers at the International English School (IES) individually about your experiences of teaching at an international school in Italy.

I have approached Stefania, as principal of the school, to request permission to spend four days' observation at the school. I have emphasised that I am not evaluating you as teachers or doing an evaluation of the school – but, rather, that I am doing a sociological study of different teaching contexts and would like to investigate an international school environment. **The research is entirely for my master's and will be private and confidential: the findings will not be made known to the school, or to other research participants or teachers at the school.**

What will the research involve for you?

1. Interview with Romy

I would like two interviews with you individually on your experiences of working at IES. Each interview could take up to an hour and half but will be no longer than that.

I'll discuss with you what would be the best time and venue for the interviews, e.g. your apartment or ours. I hope to start the interviews from the beginning of May onwards.

2. Preparation for interview: Making two charts/maps

To help prepare for the interviews, I would like to ask you to draw 2 charts as described below.

Chart 1: Yourself at IES

- Please draw a 'map' or chart of the International English School showing where you are located within the school and how you see yourself at the school.
- The 'map' is not intended to be an accurate geographical map drawn to scale but, rather, is your own representation showing how you see the school and your place within it.
- You may draw or represent as many or few of the IES staff, pupils or parents as you wish.
- You could use symbols, words, drawings, pictures from magazines, or any object you wish to use to construct the chart to best show you at IES.

- Please feel free to make the map or chart **your** one, in whatever way you like! There is no right or wrong way to do this – it’s up to you.

Chart 2: Your teaching/work experiences before IES

- Please draw up a chart of your teaching career and/or other work experiences before taking up the position at IES.
- You should include key moments, highlights and challenges of your career to date.
- Feel free to add in information about significant events in your life that may have had an impact on your career. For example, “2001: Married – left the United States and got a teaching job in Italy.”

Time: Please spend up to an hour and a half constructing the charts/maps (but no longer than that unless you really want to!). I have given you two A3 pieces of paper on which to draw the maps.

Confidentiality: In terms of confidentiality, please could you not discuss or show your charts to other IES staff members, particularly the other research participants, as this may affect the outcome of the different charts. In my turn, the charts you draw will remain private and will not be shown to anyone except my research supervisor and assessor.

3. On-site observation by Romy at IES

To give me a better understanding of IES, I would like to spend four days at the school. Of the four days, I would like to spend part of a day with you at the school – sitting in on lessons, going to lunch, etc. The purpose is not in any way to evaluate your teaching but, rather, to get a sense of the teaching environment at IES and how it may impact on you as a teacher. My observation will simply allow me to get a better background understanding of some of the points you may make in the interview.

I have planned to spend Wednesday 19 to Friday 21 May at the school and the following Monday 24 May. I hope that I can arrange to spend some time during these 4 days with you at the school and will discuss what is most convenient for you.

Thank you for your involvement

I am very grateful that you will consider being part of this research. I am looking forward to working with you and I hope that you will enjoy it, too!

With many thanks and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries at any stage.

Warm wishes

Romy

Appendix 2: Interview schedule

The interview will begin by discussing the first map the research participant has drawn up for this research. Later, where appropriate during the course of the first or second interviews, the second chart will be discussed.

Beginning questions

- How did you find your experience of drawing the two maps?
- Did anything particularly surprising or interesting emerge for you from doing the maps? Can you comment?

Questions relating to Map 1: The research participant at EIS

- Could you talk about yourself at IES using the map to help you?
- Does anything surprise you in seeing yourself as a teacher in this map?
- How would you describe your current teaching position to others? To people in your home country? To people in Italy?
- How similar would this map be of previous schools you have been at? In what way(s) are your experiences similar or different?

Checklist of questions to cover

- What prompted you to apply for the post at the International English School (IES)?
- The school is called the 'International English School'. What does it mean to be an 'international' teacher at IES? What does it mean to be an 'English' teacher at IES?
- Is there an ideal international teacher at the school? And an ideal English teacher? Whose ideas about these 'ideals' have the most weight, in your opinion?
- There is a large group of English-speaking teachers at the school and a large group of Italian teachers. How do the two groups relate to one another?
- What does it mean, do you think, to be an Italian teacher at this school?
- Your map shows your point of view of where and who you are in the school but this could be viewed differently by others. How do you think the following people (the three owners of the school (including the principal), the learners, the parents, your Italian teaching colleagues, other international teaching colleagues) view the role of the international teacher in the school?
- Do you think they view it differently to the role of the Italian teacher? In what ways?
- Is the role of the teacher, as you have experienced it, as an international teacher at IES, similar or different to the teacher's role in your previous schools? In what ways?
- What have been some of the challenges for you in your work at IES? How have you coped with the challenges?
- What impact have your experiences of being in a new country, in Italy, had on your experiences at the school?

Questions relating to Map 2: Teaching experiences prior to IES

- Could you talk about your teaching experiences before coming to IES using the map?
- Do you think your sense of yourself as a teacher has changed at all because of your experiences here? In what way(s)?
- Do you think you will do anything differently as a teacher if you go back to the UK/US/SA [*i.e. the research participant's home country*]? Can you give examples?
- Do you think your sense of yourself on a personal level has changed because of your experiences here? In what way(s)? What will take away from here with you?
- How do you see your future teaching career? Do you think you'll teach at an international school again? Why or why not?
- What advice would you like to give new international teachers who apply for a position at IES?