

Being a Professional Mathematician

Role models in mathematics – worksheet

Exercise	Tutor's comments
<p>1) Did you have a role model in mathematics when you were young? Do you now?</p> <p>Do your friends have role models in mathematics?</p> <p>Did or do you have role models for other important aspects of your life, for example in sport or music?</p> <p>Do people you know who are not mathematicians have role models in their fields?</p> <p>Can you give examples of people who might be role models for young footballers, athletes, musicians, celebrities?</p> <p>Can you suggest people who might be suitable role models for young mathematicians?</p>	<p>This worksheet can be used independently but could follow on from the "Equal opportunities in mathematics?" worksheet</p>

- 2) Listen to the case study interviews at www.BeingAMathematician.org where mathematicians Danny Brown, Nira Chamberlain, Rosemary Dyson, Sue Merchant, Mason Porter and Gwyneth Stallard talk about role models. Note that their personal experiences have been very different.

Do their comments suggest that role models are less important for white men than for others?

What do you conclude about the circumstances in which people benefit from role models?

Is the lack of female or black role models in mathematics a factor in the continuing imbalance in the profession?

If role models make a difference to members of minorities, why?

Role models give confidence, show that “someone like me” can succeed: they are an “existence proof” that it is possible that you can have a career in your chosen profession. White males have plenty of examples (at least if they are middle-class!) But if you don’t see people like yourself in a profession, you may feel you don’t belong! Rosemary Dyson’s interview at www.BeingAMathematician.org is particularly instructive on this, as are the comments of Danny Brown and Mason Porter.

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