

WORKING PAPER 2

Patterns and Trends in Part-Time Adult Education Participation in relation to UK nation, Class, Place of participation, Gender, Age and Disability 1998-2003

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May 2006

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Learning Lives (RES-139-25-0111) is a collaboration between the Universities of Exeter (lead-applicant), Brighton, Leeds and Stirling and is funded by a major grant from the Economic and Social Research Council as part of their Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP).
See www.tlrp.org



The Learning Lives Research Project

The Learning Lives research project began in June 2004, and runs until the end of January 2008. The project is a collaboration between the University of Exeter, the University of Brighton, the University of Leeds and the University of Stirling, all in the UK. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) as part of its Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP). The award number is RES-139-25-0111.

The focus of the research is on the interrelationships between learning, identity and agency in people's lives. There are two strands to the data collection, involving the integration of three different methodologies. The first strand is a qualitative study of around 120 people, drawn from different walks of life, living in different parts of the country, and of different ages, gender and ethnicities. Each of the university partners has its own sub-sample, with different core interests. The Exeter team (Gert Biesta and Mike Tedder) are focused on learning, identity and agency in relation to family and the local community. The Brighton team (Ivor Goodson and Norma Adair) are focused on issues of migration, including within country migration. The Leeds team (Phil Hodgkinson, Heather Hodgkinson, Geoff Ford and Ruth Hawthorn) are focused on people engaged in adult learning and/or guidance, and on older adults. The Stirling team (John Field and originally Irene Malcolm, now Heather Lynch) are focused on work and unemployment. Of course, these issues overlap. On the qualitative strand, we are combining two normally separate methodologies: life history research and longitudinal qualitative research. Though we will have a shorter engagement with some of the sample, we are following most subjects for over 3 years, involving about six sweeps of interviewing.

The second strand of our work is quantitative. A second Exeter team (Flora Macleod and Paul Lambe) is using the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) – a data set of 10,000+ adults from across the UK who have been interviewed annually since 1991 – to develop robust measures of formal and informal learning, identity and agency in their different dimensions and to test the validity of these measures against a range of outcome variables. Once these theoretically informed instruments have been developed using BHPS variables, longitudinal data analysis techniques (multilevel models of individual change and hazard/survival models of event occurrence in both discrete and continuous time) will be applied to explore the significance of learners' identities and agency for their learning, dispositions, practices and achievements and how transformations in a given individual's dispositions, practices and achievements impact upon their sense of identity and agency and their ability to exert control over their lives.

To establish an iterative relationship between the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data we are mapping the case study participants' learning trajectories onto wider trends and processes in the UK as revealed through analysis of the BHPS.

Working Papers

This paper is one of a series of working papers being produced as part of the Learning Lives research. These papers are of very different types, and their prime purpose is to help the team with its on-going analysis and synthesis of findings. Consequently, they represent work in progress. A second purpose is to share some of our preliminary findings and thinking with a wider audience. We hope that you will find this paper, and others in the series, of interest and value. If you have constructive critical comments to offer we would love to hear from you. Please send any comments to the contact author, identified on the front cover.

Patterns and Trends in Part-Time Adult Education

Participation in relation to UK nation, Class, Place of participation, Gender, Age and Disability 1998-2003

Introduction

The question of who participates in formal adult education or training is an important one, not least because adult education is seen as a 'second chance' educational opportunity and the means through which social mobility may be achieved. In this paper we examine the extent and distribution over time of participation in formal part-time education or training in relation to the four UK nations, class, gender, place of learning, age and disability. By showing variances in participation probabilities, both temporal and spatial, we highlight patterns and trends as means of providing a backdrop for critically considering lifelong learning policies and practices within the UK and, separately, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Theoretical and methodological considerations

This paper forms part of the foundational work currently being conducted on a project which is concerned to understand learning in a variety of milieu across the life course. Our paper thus represents initial work in a process that is intended to provide deeper insights into the interrelationships between learning, identity and agency in the life course. Whilst our unit of analysis is the individual adult learner grouped according to a traditional view of social structure (nationality, social class, occupational status, gender, age, disability), we conceptualise learning as a social process. We see learning as caught up in complex ways in matters of who one is or aspires to become, the company one keeps or aspires to keep and the deeper and wider social, political, historical and economic forces at work in the milieus people inhabit at a given time and place. By taking the view that individuals are embedded and embodied in their respective milieus, we place the learner within their structural and personal demographic groups and consider our findings in relation to the interconnections between the two.

Given that our specific concern in this paper is in studying how individuals within various social and demographic groups interact with part-time education or training opportunities which themselves evolve over time, we see time as a crucial variable in our analysis as change must be understood in its historical context. We see geography as adding a further complexity to patterns of participation as opportunities available to individuals and their responses to these at a given point in time are not uniform from one place to another (Gorard and Rees, 2002; Gorard and Selwyn, 2005). But we are not just interested in using the variable 'place' in its geographical sense, we are also interested in place in terms of the 'space' in which learning takes place. That is, whether it is home-based, work-based or institution-based. We consider this second 'place'

variable to be particularly relevant to our analysis at a time when a work-based instrumental training model is dominant and advancements in technology might lead one to hypothesise an upward trend in the take-up of home-based learning. We were especially interested to investigate the home-based learning hypothesis given the Labour Government's view that E-learning should be seen as a tool to 'radically improve participation' in lifelong learning (DfES, 2002, p 4) and Gorard and Selwyn's recent finding (2005) that there is little evidence yet of this expectation being realised.

'Place of learning' can also act as a proxy for who the main providers of adult education and training are and, to some extent, whether attendance is compulsory or voluntary. We considered the issue of who provides important to our inquiry because issues of provision are often caught up in funding issues, the issue of who does the teaching, and the extent and quality of resources made available to learners. We considered the voluntary/compulsory issue important because adult education is generally assumed to be the voluntary. Indeed this assumption is implicit in the common use of the term 'post-compulsory' to describe the adult education sector.

Beyond time, place and the demographic variables nationality, social class, occupational status, gender, age, disability measured using a traditional (objective) view of social structure, we were also interested to include a subjective measure of disability based on a social model (i.e. one which defines oneself as disabled) rather than just relying on a measurement using a more objective medical model (e.g. Thomas, 1999)¹. Finally, whilst, by the nature of our methodological perspective, we have to engage more explicitly with theory by tightly defining our terms and concepts in order to operationalise and measure them, this does not mean that we close down the theoretical predilections we bring to the data.

The data

The data used in this paper comes from waves 8 to 13 (1998-2003) of the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS). The BHPS started in 1991 and is an ongoing panel survey of a nationally representative sample of over 5,000 households resulting in approximately 10,000 individual interviews of adults (16+). Original Sample Members (OSM: n=10,264) of the initial 1991 sample continue to be followed, even if they leave the original household. New individuals enter the panel if they move into households containing an OSM, are born to an OSM, or an OSM moves into a household with one or more new people. New members falling into the latter two categories are known as temporary sample members (TSMs) because they remain in the sample only as long as they are a member of an OSM's household. In 1999 extension samples from Scotland and Wales were added to make these two UK territories more geographically representative². In 2001 a representative sample from Northern Ireland was added. Individuals who make up the households in these new samples are known as permanent sample members (PSMs) as are individuals born to OSMs once they become adults (16+). In this way, the sample remains broadly representative of the British population as it changes through the 1990s and into 2000s.

The survey questionnaire is administered by trained interviewers and takes about 45 minutes. Most interviews take place between September 1 and November 30 each year. New data files are released in April each year³, each contain the new set of data collected some 14 months earlier e.g. data from the 2004 sweep will be released in April 2006. Hence, at the time of writing, our

analysis can only go up to 2003. Full details of the survey methodology can be found in Buck (1990), Taylor et al (1998) and Rose (2000). In waves 8 to 13 all participants were asked: “Apart from the full time education you have already told me about⁴, have you taken part in any other training schemes or courses at all since September 1st (the previous year) or completed a course or training which led to a qualification?” Interviewers were instructed to include part time college or university courses, evening classes, training provided by an employer either on or off the job, government training schemes, Open University courses, correspondence courses and work experience schemes but exclude leisure courses (waves 1-7 had included these – hence our focus on waves 8-13 only where the same core question was asked at every wave). Interviewers were also instructed to include continuing courses started before September 1st the previous year. Those who answered ‘yes’ were asked a number of additional ‘routed’ questions. These included giving a detailed breakdown of the training schemes or courses they had attended during the year including any that were ongoing but excluding any full time courses which had been asked about earlier in the interview. They were also asked where the course or training took place and whether each course had led to a qualification, part qualification or no qualification. In this paper we use only the variable ‘place of study’ out of all the additional routed questions asked of those who answered ‘yes’ to the initial question. Our dependent variable was based on individual responses to the initial question in this sequence giving a dichotomous variable where yes = 1 and no = 0. It was this item (question) that gave us our working definition of ‘participation in adult learning’ and that led us our sample (see table 1). The independent variable *time* is treated as a category variable where each year (or data collection wave) within the timeframe covered in this paper (1998-2003) represents a value.

Table 1 Annual Samples by BHPS wave (1998-2003) in relation to (non) participation

Year	BHPS Wave	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total
1998	8 (<i>h</i>)	2,088 (19.8)	8,457 (80.2)	10,545
1999	9 (<i>i</i>)	2,882 (19.0)	12,303 (81.0)	15,185
2000	10 (<i>j</i>)	3,216 (21.3)	11,859 (78.7)	15,075
2001	11 (<i>k</i>)	3,477 (19.2)	14,588 (80.8)	18,065
2002	12 (<i>l</i>)	2,990 (19.0)	12,715 (81.0)	15,705
2003	13 (<i>m</i>)	3,047 (19.9)	12,297 (80.1)	15,344

Our sample only include those respondents who were in full time education at school, college or university if, during the same timeframe of a given wave, they had also attended part time education or training. For analyses comparing data from Scotland and Wales, as opposed to UK level analyses, we decided to use only data drawn from waves 9-13, which included the more geographically representative populations resulting from the addition of the 1999 Scottish and Welsh extension samples. Northern Ireland only entered the BHPS in 2001 for the first time. Hence comparative samples for all four home nations are only available for the three-year period 2001-3. For England, Scotland and Wales the samples for the analysis presented here are made up of the core longitudinal sample i.e. OSMs who have given full interviews at all waves since 1991, and PSMs and TSMs who answered the above question in waves 8-13. As attrition in terms of loss of membership, the effects of item non-response and accounting for population changes, for this sample is known, compensatory weights have been constructed⁵. These are made available with the BHPS data⁶. The larger base numbers in table 1 for 1999 and 2000 reflect the addition of the Scottish and Welsh extension samples. The larger still base numbers in 2001 reflect the addition of the Northern Ireland sample. The dropping off of base numbers in 2002 and 2003 is due to attrition.

The other variables included in our analysis are:

Gender. As a dichotomous variable where male = 1 and female = 0.

Age. As a category variable where the continuous variable age in years identified by year of birth was recoded as follows: 16-24 = 1, 25-34 = 2, 35-44 = 3, 45-54 = 4, 55-64 = 5, 65+ = 6.

Social class: As a category variable which involved recoding individual's responses to the 'jbsec' item⁷ to create two social class variables. One used the Registrar General's Social Classes six value labels where 1 = professional etc occupations (A), 2 = managerial and technical occupations (B), 3 = skilled occupations (non-manual) (C1), 4 = skilled occupations (manual) (C2), 5 = partly skilled occupations (D), and 6 = unskilled occupations (E). This variable allowed us to draw direct comparisons with recent national surveys. Our second variable used the new Socio-economic Classification values labels 1-5 where 1 = class 1, etc. We used this more inclusive social class variable for within BHPS comparisons (figure 5). In both cases category allocation was done using dummy variables for each category where yes = 1 and no = 0.

Disabled. (objective measure): As a dichotomous variable where in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) = 1 and not in receipt of DLA = 0.

Disabled. (subjective measure): As a dichotomous variable using the question 'does your health prohibit some types of work' where yes = 1 and no = 0.

Country of UK: As a category variable for country of residence where the item 'region' 1-16 = England⁸, Wales = 17, Scotland = 18, Northern Ireland = 19.

Place of part-time training or education. As a category variable in answer to the question "Where was the main place that this course or training took place?" where we grouped and coded the response options as follows: current workplace + former workplace + employers training centre = employer = 5; private training centre = private = 4; job centre + job club = job centre/club = 3; HFE college + adult education centre + university = education institution = 2; at or from own home + other = home/other = 1. Only individuals who answered 'yes' to our dependent variable were routed to answer this question (see table 1).

Although it was not our initial intention, we had to abandon the category variable 'ethnicity' from our analysis because relevant ethnic minority groups within the UK context represent only a very small minority of the population giving such low numbers in the BHPS data. For example, in the 1999 survey sweep (wave 9) only 11 adults of British Indian ethnicity, 2 of British Pakistani, 1 British Bangladeshi, 2 British Black Caribbean were interviewed. The problem of low representation of minority groups is common to all surveys based on random sampling methods⁹.

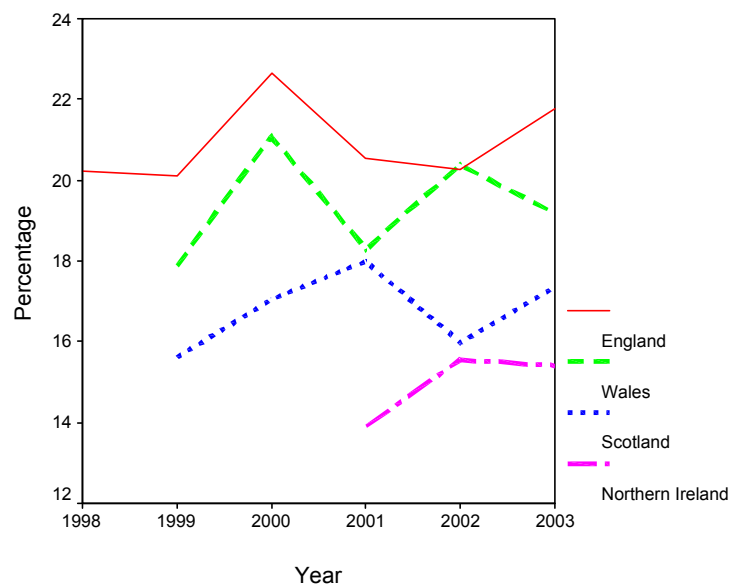
Results

Our analytic approach in this paper uses the BHPS as if it represents a series of cross-sections to allow trend analyses to be done that give insight into the occurrence and magnitude of changes in patterns of participation over time at the level of population categories.

Participation in relation to UK nation

Although the BHPS can provide UK level trends 1998-2003, direct comparisons between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can only be done using data collected at waves 11-13 as Northern Ireland provided a sample for the first time in 2001 (see above and, for more details, the BHPS User Guide). In line with other UK wide surveys (e.g. Aldridge and Tuckett, 2004), the trend lines in Figure 1 show some considerable variance in participation rates across the four home nations. Fewer Welsh adults (18-21%), and even fewer Scottish adults (15-18%), compared with English adults (20-23%), said they participated in part time education or training in the five years where comparison between these three home nations has been possible using geographically representative samples. In the three years where comparison with Northern Ireland has been possible, only one in seven Northern Irish adults (14-16%) said they participated compared to one in five English adults. Whilst within nation fluctuations are also evident these are relatively marginal varying only by a ratio of 3% over time with no country showing a consistent trend either up or down.

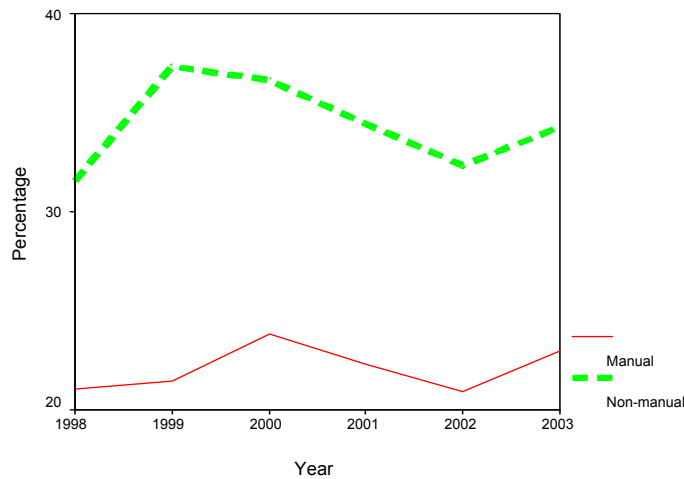
Fig. 1: Participation in relation to UK nation



Participation in relation to social class and UK nation

In common with all other survey data (e.g. Aldridge and Tuckett, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005; Beinart and Smith, 1998; DfES, 2001, 2003; Gorard and Rees, 2002; Gorard and Selwyn, 2005; La Valle and Blake, 2003), analysis using the BHPS data found social class to be a key determinant of participation. The chasm between the ratios in figure 2 starkly illustrate the manual/non-manual occupational divide in participation rates with the former hovering just above 20% and the latter between 30% and 40% over the six year period 1998-2003. These two trajectories look remarkably similar with neither showing much variance over time (3-5%) and keep consistently apart with a gap of some 12%+ over time.

Fig. 2: Participation at UK level in relation to manual and non-manual occupations



The ratios in figure 2 were arrived at by creating a new dichotomous variable using the Registrar General Social Classification (RGSC) of current job where the ABs & C1s were classified as non-manual and C2Ds & Es were classified as manual. Further analysis was done using this dichotomous variable to investigate patterns and trends across the four UK nations. The results are presented in table 2. These show that the participation ratios for individuals in non-manual occupations, compared with those in manual occupations, are, without exception, higher across all four nations and across time. The gap between manual and non-manual participation rates for each country narrow to 8% and widen to 12% with trends taking the form of within-country peaks and troughs that stay within 4% margins. There is no evidence of a consistent upward or downward trajectory for either occupational group in any one individual country making the home nations look remarkably similar in terms of the manual/non-manual divide.

Table 2 Participation in relation to manual (M) and non-manual (NM) occupations by UK nation

Country	1998		1999		2000		2001		2002		2003	
	M	NM	M	NM	M	NM	M	NM	M	NM	M	NM
England	21.55	34.96	21.19	34.67	24.65	36.92	22.33	34.39	20.92	32.16	25.56	33.96
Wales			24.18	33.62	27.12	39.68	19.83	33.34	26.57	37.23	25.11	32.24
Scotland			15.22	27.03	19.64	30.45	22.17	27.96	19.63	25.85	18.49	29.55
Northern Ireland							12.99	24.44	16.84	28.69	17.97	25.98

However, when one considers the ratios from the perspective of cross-nation participation levels, important differences can be seen. The ratios of non-manual participation are much lower in Scotland than in England and Wales, and this difference is consistent over time. Northern Ireland's non-manual participation rates are even lower than those in Scotland except in 2002 where it edges only slightly ahead. Consistent with figure 1, both the ratios for Scotland and Northern Ireland remain lower than those of England and Wales across time irrespective of occupational status and, apart from one set of figures (2002, NM), the lowest ratios of participation are consistently recorded in Northern Ireland. However, unlike figure 1 which shows England consistently at the top of the 'home international' league table over time, unpacking the ratios along manual/non-manual occupational categories, reveals Wales also as a strong contender for top place.

Table 3 Participation in relation to social class by UK nation

UK country	Professional occupations	Managerial technical	Skilled non-manual	Skilled manual	Partly skilled	Unskilled
ENGLAND						
1998	44	38.61	28.12	24.53	19.6	15.14
1999	38.64	37.86	29.49	23.11	19.96	17.01
2000	43.92	40.71	30.17	26.95	23.56	17.66
2001	39.82	39.56	26.48	23.17	23.67	13.38
2002	36.53	35.47	26.36	22.25	21.23	13.08
2003	38.86	37.45	27.97	23.48	25.75	15.31
WALES						
1999	39.32	36.44	28.79	26.52	21.26	23.72
2000	47.63	42.03	34.75	27.36	25.9	30.93
2001	44.1	37.01	25.96	19.21	21.11	17.14
2002	52.59	39.92	29.44	23.18	33.81	11.53
2003	39.42	35.21	27.29	25.46	27.18	14.7
SCOTLAND						
1999	22.99	28.06	26.65	16.94	14.42	10.57
2000	27.78	34.85	25.88	22.93	16.84	13.69
2001	34.27	30.94	22.59	23.88	25.3	5.83
2002	21.95	29.75	21.43	21.28	19.39	12.52
2003	26.1	34.12	24.24	18.91	20.32	10.03
N.IRELAND						
2001	26.11	25.9	22.04	15.11	12.41	7.42
2002	25.62	33.33	23.31	17.17	18.38	10.44
2003	22.2	32.83	18.21	19.93	17.48	9.39

We then turned our focus back onto the RGSC's six occupational hierarchies which allowed us to look behind the manual/non-manual dichotomy and consider how the home nations compared across all six categories (table 3). The ratios in table 3 reinforce our earlier finding that, across the occupational spectrum, England and Wales alternate for top place whilst Scotland and Northern Ireland take turns of being awarded 'the wooden spoon'. For instance, there is a difference of more than 30% in 2002 between Wales and Scotland in terms of the participation ratios for professional occupations. Aldridge and Tuckett (2005) reported a similar finding though the gap was considerably narrower. They found that among the nations of the UK, adults in Wales (41%) were most likely to see themselves as future learners whilst those in Scotland (37%) were least likely.

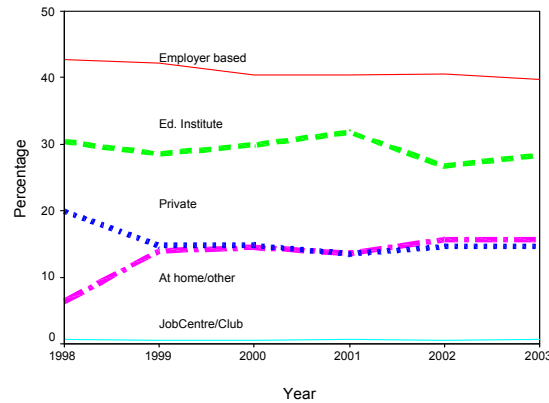
Looking at the same figures from a within-nation perspective, one can see that for England there is a consistent trend over time with the ratios following the RGSC's occupational hierarchies exactly. A similar trend is found in Wales, although there are some deviations from this pattern among the manual occupational groups. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, this rank ordering across the occupational hierarchies is less clear-cut, with the managerial/technical category, in most years, in top place overtaking the professional occupations.

Place of learning

'Where was the main place that [the learning] took place?' was, by definition, a question only be asked of those who answered 'yes' to the initial question (see table 1). Five value labels were used to categorize the various responses to this question: employer-based, institution-based,

home-based, private-centre based and job-centre/club-based. Using these labels participants' responses to the above question are presented in figure 3.

Figure 3: Participation at UK level in relation to place of learning



As the employer-based trend line over time in figure 3 shows, at the UK aggregate level of analysis for the sample who answered 'yes' to our main question, a clear majority of part-time education or training was provided by employers (40%+ over time), and, by implication, most probably only available by private arrangement to those in a given job at a given point in time. According to this finding, it might be, in line with a study in the Netherlands (Houpkoot, 2001), that most part-time learning takes place in working hours and is provided and paid for by employers. There is also some emerging evidence to suggest that employers pick the best employees on the basis of unobserved characteristics as well as observed characteristics and offer them training opportunities thus including some and excluding others (Vignoles, et al, 2004). This potentially has the dual effect of discriminating against those with low levels of human capital (e.g. older workers, disabled workers, women in low status low paid jobs, and part time and/or temporary employees – a predicament women find themselves in all too often as they struggle to juggle work and family commitments) and, simultaneously, de-motivating these same individuals. Riddell *et al* (2005), for example, found that disabled people are likely to suffer particular forms of marginalisation that are independent of class and gender in a context where work-related investments in training are paramount. Also disabled people are more likely to be excluded from the workforce taking them away from learning opportunities.

In contrast to the high employment-based ratios, job centres/clubs, which are mainly geared towards helping the unemployed find jobs, barely register on the graph at all, having a trend line that remains below the 1% mark across the whole timeframe covered by our analysis. The line on the graph for education institutions more or less stays around the 30% mark, making it the second most popular venue for part-time education or training. Following approximately the same line over time and hovering below it at around the 15% mark, are both private-based learning and home-based learning.

Table 4: Participation in relation to place of learning by UK nation

ENGLAND	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Employer	42.61	41.75	39.19	40.55	40.78	39.32
Private	20.04	14.76	15.53	14	14.8	15.13
Job centre	0.7	0.6	0.57	0.66	0.43	0.59
Ed.Institution	30.4	29.05	30.49	31.6	28.17	28.24
At home	6.26	13.83	14.22	13.19	15.83	16.73
WALES						
Employer		38.13	39.63	38.58	39.77	39.79
Private		9.81	9.9	8.68	8.96	12.68
Job centre		1.3	0.55	0.67	0.48	0.33
Ed.Institution		37.79	36.27	37.14	33.01	27.87
At home		12.98	13.66	14.93	17.78	19.33
SCOTLAND						
Employer		34.26	41.23	42.19	43.23	44.6
Private		12.12	14.86	12.01	14.72	10.37
Job centre		0.15	0.53	0.66	0.15	0.6
Ed.Institution		38.7	30.52	29.46	29.63	27.95
At home		14.77	12.86	15.68	12.27	16.48
N.IRELAND						
Employer				30.79	34.73	33.17
Private				11.76	10.77	12.03
Job centre				0.92	0.54	1.31
Ed.Institution				41.73	36.56	41.8
At home				14.8	17.4	11.69

The patterns and trends in figure 3 conceal some variance in relation ‘place of learning’ across the four home nations (table 4). Table 4 shows that whilst around 40% of those who answered ‘yes’ to the initial question in England, Scotland and Wales participated via their employer, whereas in Northern Ireland only 30% did. And, compared with the other three home nations, Northern Ireland has the highest ratio of participation via education institutions. Of note also is the lack of variance across the four countries in respect of participation in job centres/clubs, with all remaining below or just above the 1% mark.

Apart from Northern Ireland, the ratios for home-based participation are at their highest for the most recent wave (2003) which might indicate the beginning of an upward trend. Wales has the lowest ratios for privately based learning but the most recently available data (2003) might hint at an upward trend in this category.

Participation in relation to Gender

Figure 4a shows that at a UK level of analysis, since 2000 more females than males answered yes to the initial question (table 1). In other words, in each of the four data collection waves, 2000-3, more females than males said they were participating in part-time education or training, though it is important to note that this difference never reached above a 2% margin and, at its narrowest in 2001, was negligible. This is a finding that concurs with other national surveys which have found that ‘since 1996, women’s participation in learning has increased by 5%, while among men it has

fallen by 3%' (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2005, p 5). The reasons for these two trends could be identified as being due to more women studying in their own time and more likely when employed, than men, to have training opportunities at work (Office of National Statistics, 2005).

What is striking about the ratios shown in table 5, arrived at by unpacking the figure 4a ratios, is the within country similarities in gender participation rates across all four home nations with the differences in each case never larger than 2%. Though there is evidence of an upward trend in female participation rates in the most recently released data concurring with the discussion in the previous paragraph, the crossover point is different in our study to the trend change previously observed (i.e. 1996) and is different in England compared to the other three home territories. Females overtake males in rates of participation in 2000 in England compared to 2001 in the other three nations. As this was the year Northern Ireland entered the BHPS for the first time, all the Northern Ireland waves to date show higher female participation ratios. The main conclusion that can be drawn from table 5 is that, as far as gender is concerned, the patterns for each home nation more or less replicates that of the UK taken as a whole with all four countries showing only marginal evidence (2%) of a trend change in male/female rates of participation over time.

Figures 4a-d: Participation over time at UK level in relation to gender and place of learning

Fig. 4a Private Centre-based ratios by gender

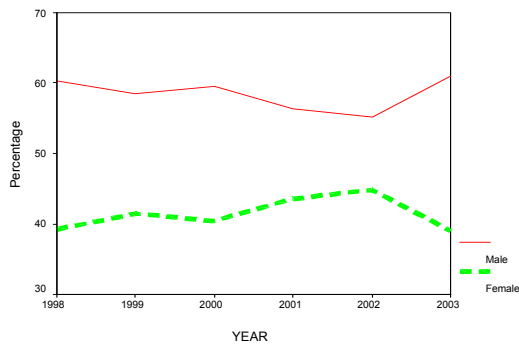


Fig. 4b Employment-based ratios by gender

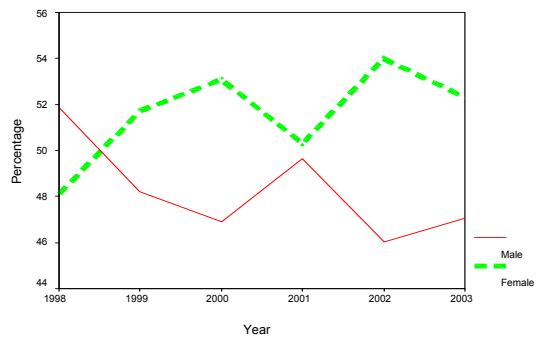


Fig. 4c Ed. Institution-based ratios by gender

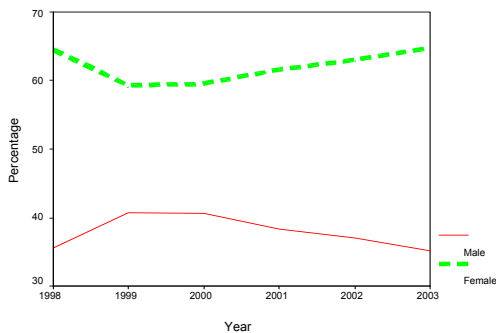
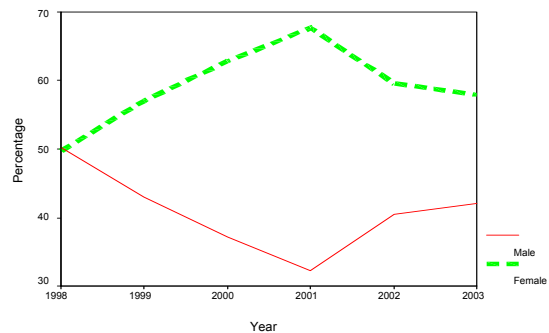


Figure 4d Home-based ratios by gender



We then considered gender in relation to place of learning. The results of this investigation are shown in figures 4b-d. These three figures show the percentage of males and females who

answered yes to our main question (table 1 and figure 4a) and then indicated that the place where that learning took place was one of the following: employer-based (fig.4b); education institution-based (fig. 4c); or home-based (fig. 4d). Figure 4b shows that, since 1999, a higher proportion of females than males indicated that the part-time learning they had participated in was at, or arranged by, their place of work or former place of work i.e. employment-based. Yet in the wave prior to that (1998) a higher proportion of males (52%) compared to females (48%) said their part time learning had been employment-based. All in all, figure 4b strongly suggests that, taking the UK as a whole, there is an upward trend in female employment-based learning which began in the late 1990s and continues into the 2000s. This finding concurs with records from the Office of National Statistics (2005). This apparent trend change needs to be considered in the social context of gendered power relationships in the work place and the sexual division of labour.

Figure 4c shows a marked difference in the proportions of females attending education or training at education institutions, with a trend line that stays within the 60-70% margin over time. Males, on the other hand, show a trend line that stays within the 30-40% margin over time. This is a finding that agrees with other national surveys (e.g. LSC, 2005) which have found that women are more likely than men to be learning in public institutions in their own time. Taken at face value, this would suggest that attending an education institution is far less attractive if you are male. However, lurking behind these ratios the available evidence would suggest there is an issue of class. Raey (1997) found that the bulk of women attending educational institutions were middle class seeking acknowledgement and confirmation of their identity from the middle class habitus of the educational institution as much as improvements to their human capital. In a similar vein, Jackson (2003) reported that the women in her study in low status, low paid part time work, struggling with balancing the demands of work and family life, were too busy to find time to learn in the formal sense of the word. It would therefore be useful to further breakdown the ratios in figure 4c by social class.

Figure 4d shows that a higher proportion of females than males indicated that their part time learning was home-based, with nearly 40% of a difference between the gender groups in 2001. This stands out even more when one considers that in 1998 the gender ratios were 50:50. Taken together, the emerging evidence from this line of enquiry seems to indicate a trend change, albeit marginal, in favour of women, especially women who are part of the work force.

Table 5 Participation in relation to Gender by UK nation

Country	1998		1999		2000		2001		2002		2003	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
England	21.29	19.28	20.53	19.07	21.74	23.45	19.8	21.2	19.52	20.97	20.83	22.59
Wales			19.85	16.17	22.36	20.01	19.07	17.62	18.97	21.49	18.49	19.74
Scotland			16.13	15.18	17.68	16.51	18.85	17.25	15.36	16.49	17.59	17.11
Northern Ireland							12.83	14.82	13.89	17.02	14.53	16.17

We then broke down some of the above ratios still further by considering employment based learning in relation to women and social class using the newer more inclusive socio-economic classification (SEC) now commonly accepted and used by researchers in diverse fields and countries (Rose and O'Reilly, 1998; Rose *et al*, 2005). The results presented in figure 5 reveal how unevenly spread employment-based learning opportunities are for women across the five new social class categories.

Figure 5: Female participation over time in employment-based learning by social class

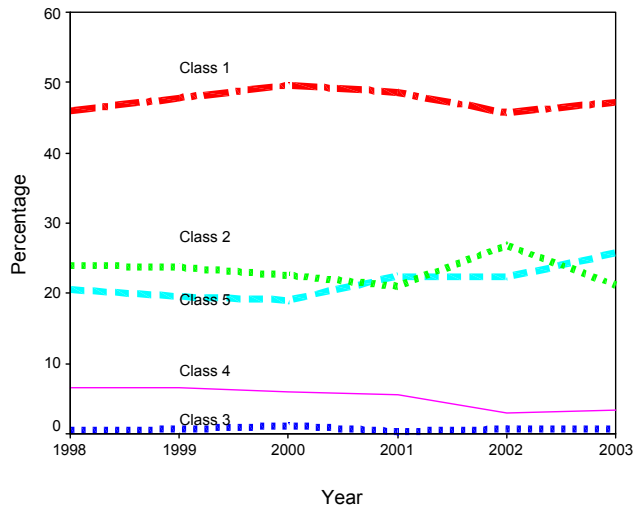


Figure 5 evidences that, out of this (sub) sample of women who reported participating in work-based learning opportunities, 45-47% were from social class 1 which comprise women in the professional and managerial occupations, 21-25% were class 2 which comprise women in intermediate occupations (clerical, administrative, sales, technical, service, etc.), similar levels, 22-24% were from Class 5 which comprise women in routine service industries (education, medicine, care, hospitality, etc.), 3-7% Class 4 which comprise women in the lower occupations (technical, clerical, etc.) and, barely registering at the bottom 0.5-2% is class 3 which comprise women who are small scale employers. And, once again, the relatively straight lines on the graph indicate little variation in these ratios over time.

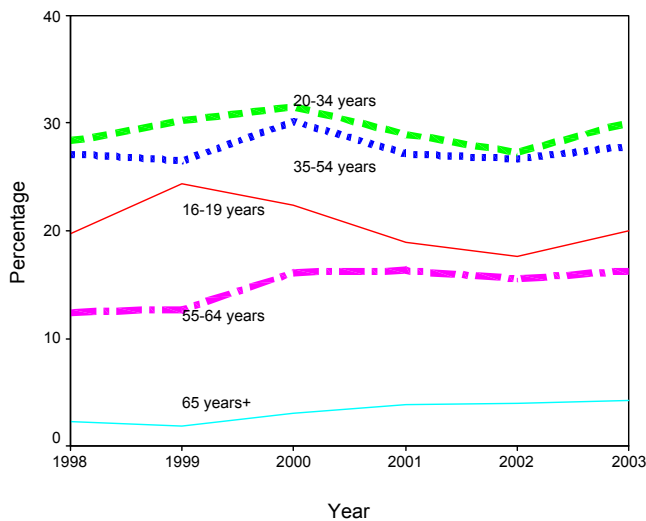
Thus, almost half of women's participation in employment-based provision is among the professional and managerial occupations, compared to only about one in five of women in classes 2 and 5. Participation by women in class 3 barely registers and is minimal among those in the lower technical and clerical occupations. The main conclusion that needs to be drawn from figure 5 is the stability over time in the trend lines which evidences the endurance of the confounding effects of class and gender on employment based learning opportunities.

Participation in relation to age

Age is an important independent variable as it provides information about the point in the life history where formal learning activities are at their most and least prolific. A common finding in national surveys is that participation in learning varies with age with older people considerably less likely than younger people to participate in learning opportunities (e.g. Aldridge and Tuckett, 2001, 2004 and 2005). We were therefore interested to investigate age related patterns of participation and trends over time. This was achieved by taking those who answered yes to our main question (table 1) and subdividing them into our five age variable categories which were the same as those used in the NIACE surveys (e.g. Aldridge and Tuckett, 2005) to allow us to

compare our findings. The ratios in the age categories over time shown in figure 6 are in tune with the other national surveys we have referred to at various points in this paper. The 20-34 year olds make up most of those who said yes to our main question (hovering just below 30% over time), followed at only a slightly lower level but a following a similar line over time (27-30%) are the 35-54 year olds. Together these two age categories make up 60%+ of participants. The 16-19 year olds show the greatest variation over time by hovering just above and then just below 20% proportion of the sample.

Figure 6: Participation at UK level over time in employment-based learning by age



However, our samples only included those respondents who were in full time education at school, college or university if, during the same timeframe of a particular wave, they had also attended part time education or training. This sampling device is likely to have had most influence on the 16-19 age category's patterns of part-time participation. This is based on the assumption that the majority of this age group are still in full time education of one sort or another and those who are not have left at the earliest opportunity and thus are likely to be among the least likely to be attracted to post-initial part-time learning opportunities. And even if this latter group turn out to be 'delayed learners' (Gorard and Rees, 2002, p 45) they would not yet have returned to learning. Gorard and Rees evidenced that this group tended to have a gap of at least five years after leaving school before returning to learning at around 21.

The 55-64 year olds take up only 11-15% of the sample of those who said yes to participation over time, and the 65+ only 3-5%. These latter two findings are not surprising given, as evidenced above and elsewhere (e.g. Aldridge and Tuckett, 2005), participation in learning largely means participation for work. But given that most of us are now working a smaller proportion of our lives, the mid fifties drop-off must be an issue of concern. Once again, the relatively straight lines on the graph indicate little change in participation trends by age over time.

Participation in relation to disability

Interesting this is not a variable for which there is much comparative data. We used two measures of disability, one more objective based on a medical model and the other more subjective based on a social model¹⁰. Both were measured using dichotomous category variables where in receipt of DLA/not in receipt of DLA (disability living allowance) was the objective measure and yes/no to the question ‘does your health prohibit some types of work’ was the subjective measure. Whilst not an ideal subjective measure of disability it was the item we judged to be the most useful proxy in the BHPS core questionnaire for eliciting whether people felt themselves to be disabled irrespective of whether they satisfied the eligibility criteria for being awarded either the care and/or the mobility components of the disability living allowance.

Figure 7a shows the patterns of participation and trends over time that each of these two measures of disability separately elicited. Figure 7b shows the patterns of participation and trends over time using the objective measure of disability, broken down by gender. In both cases comparison is made with those who are not officially classified as disabled i.e. in receipt of DLA.

Figure 7a: Comparison of subjective and objective measures of disability

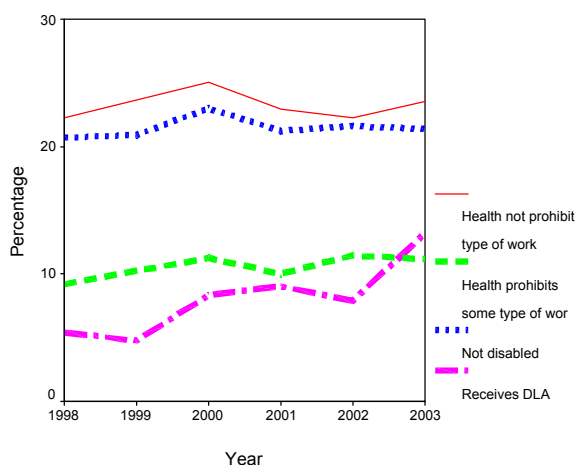


Figure 7b Participation in relation to disability (objective measure) by gender

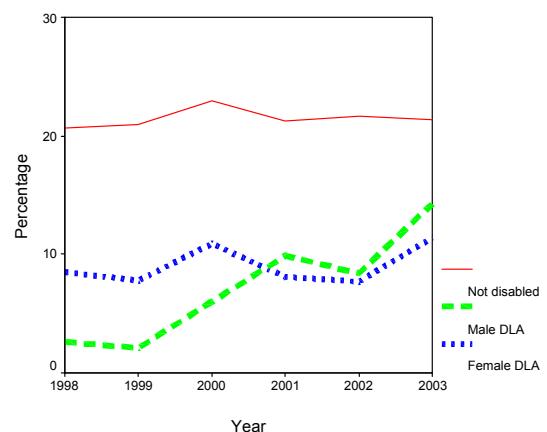


Figure 7a evidences that those officially classified as disabled and those who classify themselves as disabled using the measures we identified in the BHPS questionnaire are considerably less likely to participate in part time learning than their able bodied counterparts with around 10% of a difference consistent over time between those whose health prohibits them from doing some types of work compared with the non-disabled and a 8-10% difference between those officially classified as disabled and those who are not. Apart from the 2003 ratios the officially classified disabled participate less than those whose health prohibits them doing some types of work, with a suggestion of an upward trend over time among those in receipt of DLA, which figure 7b evidences only applies to men in receipt of DLA not women. This gender difference in the trend line over time would appear to support Schur's (2004) study of disabled people in America where she found that women were suffering from the ‘double handicap’ of gender and disability.

The trend lines in both figures suggest very little change over time for the rates of participation among the non-disabled, those who classify themselves as non-able bodied, and females in receipt of DLA. It could be that Labour's widening access policy has had the effect of distorting the figures that show an upward trend among men in receipt of disability living allowance (figure 7b). That is, this trend may be a reflection of an audit culture that requires providers to achieve minimum target numbers for certain categories of students that are deemed to be 'hard to reach' (Power, 1997).

Discussion

To our knowledge this is the first time the BHPS has been used to study patterns and trends in part-time adult participation in education or training. We believe it is also the first time part time participation in education and training has been studied as a discrete category independent of leisure time pursuits and full time study using national random sampling strategies for the UK as a whole and, separately, of each of the four home nations over a continuous timeframe. That is, using samples that are representative of the population (sub) groups they purport to represent. The NIACE (e.g. Aldridge and Tuckett, 2005) and NALS (e.g. La Valle and Blake, 2003) surveys both use broader definitions of adult learning than we have in our analysis. And, whilst the Labour Force Survey (LFS) has used a similar definition to ours by including only adults enrolled in educational institutions or on some kind of correspondence course or following a vocational course, they focus on shorter and broken time spans by asking only about training in the four weeks prior to each survey sweep (Hillage et al, 2000, p. 46). The BHPS interview elicits information on activities from September 1 to August 30 each year, thus collecting unbroken evidence on participation in part-time formal learning activities over time.

The timeframe covered by our analysis (1998-2003) more or less coincides with the first two Labour governments where a key policy agenda has been concerned with the promotion of lifelong learning (DfEE, 1998; Taylor, 2005). It was an agenda which was first and foremost about upskilling the workforce (e.g. Coffield, 1999). This paper thus potentially provides a useful backdrop of facts and figures on part time participation against which one can assess the impact of this aspect of the legislative and policy framework since Labour came to power in 1997. It is also a period that has seen considerable change in the structure and organization of government at regional level with devolution of power to Scotland and Wales and government returned to Northern Ireland. Thus, in many respects, the timeframe covered by our analysis takes in a critical period in terms of political change and concomitant national identity issues, marking the beginning of a trend towards divergence among the home nations.

Gorard and Rees (2002) claimed that temporal and spatial issues are not adequately recognized in conventional studies of educational participation looking for patterns for different demographic groups as they neglect to break down patterns in such a way as to be able to relate them to local variations. Whilst our figures have not been unpacked in this paper beyond the UK constituent country level, given the above-mentioned contemporaneous events, we consider our home-international comparisons timely.

Differences were observed. England and Wales had high rates of participation relative to Scotland and Northern Ireland. These differences are not easy to explain, however, it is our contention that

explanations will only be found through a systematic unraveling the links between the personal, the social and the historical. As Goodson (2005) succinctly put it ‘one has to understand the personal and biographical if one is to understand the social and political’¹¹. Field (1999 and 2005) uses the concept social capital to unravel the complexities of adult interactions with formal learning opportunities in Northern Ireland. He observed that labour recruitment in Northern Ireland is limited to personal ties and strong expectations of reciprocity fostering the exchange of skills, information and all types of education and learning. Drawing on evidence that emerged from an extensive empirical base, Field (2005) argues that in such strong communities people know whom to go to and where to go for advice. The net effect of this, according to Field, is that Northern Irish adults are less motivated to top-up their front-loaded education levels via formal learning opportunities. In this way Field reveals the darker side of social capital in a context where closed communities include and exclude according to kith and kin.

It is possible that this explanation may also apply to some extent to Scotland as, according to Field, both Scotland and Northern Ireland favour a bottom-up approach to community development through a strong tradition of learning being achieved informally through family, workmates and friends. Field draws our attention to an interesting paradox in both these countries. Despite the low rates of participation in formal adult learning opportunities, both Scotland and Northern Ireland place a high premium on front-loaded education. According to McClenaghan (2000), it could be this in itself that may go some way to explain why those who fail at the initial stage of education are reluctant to pursue the second chance route into learning. As McClenaghan put it “it may not be a lack of motivation to engage in formal learning or the availability of alternative sources of capital which limit adult education participation [in Northern Ireland], but low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence *learned and embodied* as a consequence of early life experience and reinforced by social ties in adulthood.” (McClenaghan *op cit*, p.576-7, author’s emphasis).

Based on the evidence we have presented above, it is not just in Northern Ireland and Scotland, that leaving school early with few qualifications appears to restrict access to subsequent formal learning. Whilst we did not pursue the variable ‘previous education experience’ directly in this paper, our evidence would appear to indicate that in England, Wales and the UK as a whole, as well as in Scotland and Northern Ireland, individuals who reach high levels of initial education are more likely to get the high status jobs and are more likely to be in the sort of employment that offers top-ups. Our findings thus support Gibson (2002) who argued that existing measures of participation tend to concentrate mainly on high achieving learners i.e. those who already have a strong track record of responding positively to formal learning opportunities.

Distinct UK patterns of participation and trends over time were evident from our analysis which looked at the relationships between the independent variables ‘occupational status’ and ‘gender’ and our dependent variable ‘participation in part time learning’. These similarities can be explained to some extent by a common culture and common features in the organization of educational systems and social institutions which Raffé *et al*, (1999) referred to as ‘variations upon common themes’ (p. 18). This, of course, includes a common culture of social patterning along gender and class lines, which was precisely what we observed using high quality, nationally representative data.

Looked at in terms of the impact of Labour Government policy, almost certainly the finding of most concern is the ‘little or no change over time’ pattern that repeatedly emerged from our analysis, evidenced by the relatively straight trend (horizontal) lines on the graphs. This is not, of course, an unexpected finding and is in keeping with other survey research. Even though operational definitions of participation have varied considerably and, by implication, how participation was measured (e.g. Aldridge and Tuckett, 2005, Gorard and Selwyn, 2005), it would seem that all the available evidence converges on one theme, namely, that people’s decisions to participate or not to participate in formal learning opportunities are determined to a large extent by their structural positioning. Barriers continue to position some as disadvantaged and others as advantaged, giving affordances to some whilst constraining others. Or to put it another way, an individual’s capacity to take up the opportunities presented to them is constrained or enhanced by virtue of who they are and where they come from (i.e. their life history).

The only exception to the ‘little or no change over time’ finding was the steep upturn in the take-up of home-based learning evidenced amongst women particularly in the period 1998-2001 and the equivalent downturn amongst men within the same timeframe (figure 4d). Whilst there has been a slight downward turn for women and upward for men since then, the popularity of home-based part-time learning among women is still some 20% greater than among men. The home is of course a place that positions women in the domestic arena and where others have evidenced their struggles as they seek to juggle their care responsibilities and their economic responsibilities to their families (e.g. Jackson, 2003).

Where next?

We are currently looking at the dynamics of adult participation in part-time learning and the determinants of transitions in and out of learning for the six year period (1998-2003). This further extends the analysis presented above which treated the BHPS as if it represented a series of cross-sections. It is accepted that the cross-sectional approach used by most national surveys of adult participation in learning, however learning is measured, typically shows little change in the characteristics of those who participate. This can give the impression that the same people are participating from one year to the next or from one survey wave to the next. Whilst some studies of adult learning tracking randomly selected individuals over time have been conducted on relatively small samples (e.g. Snape, *et al*, 2003) the potential of panel data remains a virtually unexplored area in the study of adult learning in the UK.

The BHPS will allow us to look at the dynamics of participation by conducting analysis that will show the extent of three typologies: transitory participants (those who dip into formal learning opportunities for short periods but do not persist by following courses over time), persistent participators (those who persist in following the same or a series of different courses over time), and resisters (those who never participate in formal adult learning opportunities). Using data from the 6 waves 9-13 (1998-2003) we are defining transitory participants as those who answered ‘yes’ to our dependent variable question above (table 1) 1 out of 6, 2 out of 6, 3 out of 6, 4 out of 6 and 5 out of 6 times (thus giving us different degrees or levels of transitory participation which can be broken down and studied as separate categories); persistent participators as those who answered 6 out of 6 times; and resisters and those who answered ‘no’ 6 out of 6 times.

This longitudinal approach to analysis is intended to give new insights into the ratios of (sub) groups of the adult population that persistently fail to participate in adult education or training opportunities and the patterns of behaviour vis-à-vis formal learning of others who do participate in relation to the (sub) groups to which they belong. For example, of the older age group (post 54), we can study how many of these have just stopped participating at this point in their lives. We can also study how these different patterns of interaction with formal learning in adult hood are related our measures of identity and agency. Deeper analysis using measures of identity and agency and longitudinal data analysis techniques will allow us to look at the clusters of variables (predictors) that are associated with a given state and transitions from one state to another e.g. from being a participant to becoming a non-participant and the flows in and out of participation that produce the net changes for different categories of the population found in repeated cross-sections. We will be able to show whether more people in different population sub groups are becoming non-participants and whether more people in other population sub groups are becoming persistent participants. Both these trends can only be revealed through using panel data and will allow us to identify the likelihood of a given individual being in one state or another or moving from one state to another and the routes and antecedents of particular outcomes. Are there particular characteristics associated with each state? What about the outliers (those that do not fit the expected trajectory)? What makes these cases different?

Once we have unraveled determinants and consequences of different patterns of behaviour vis-à-vis formal learning for different individuals over time, we can investigate these individuals further using our indicators of informal learning. We can, for example, investigate how their patterns of interaction with formal learning compare with their patterns of interaction with informal learning and whether either or both is connected to other events in their lives e.g. changes in family life, employment status etc.

¹ See Hughes and Patterson (1997) for a critique of the social model of disability.

² As the original BHPS sampling strategy involved geographical clustering it was felt that some areas of the UK were not represented in the data e.g. no OSM lived north of the Caledonian Canal at the time of the initial survey in 1991.

³ BHPS data files and related documentation are available via the UK Data Archive based at Essex University: <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk>

⁴ Earlier questions in the BHPS interview referred to full time course attendance – also see note 7 below.

⁵ Base samples i.e. sample sizes before weights have been applied to adjust for any departure from a random population sample caused by unequal selection probabilities and bias in response rates. All BHPS documentation and full details of survey methodology and weightings are available at: <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/bhps>

⁶ Base numbers and weighted base numbers for all figures and tables in this paper are available from the authors on request.

⁷ All BHPS codebooks, questionnaires and showcards used as props during interviews can found at: <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/bhps>

⁸ Although this paper has not broken down the figures into ‘within country regions’ we believe such a breakdown would lead to further insights.

⁹ See Lambert, 2004, for discussion of ethnicity and analysis of survey data.

¹⁰ For a critique of the social model of disability see Hughes and Paterson (1997).

¹¹ Goodson (2005) accessed via website www.ivorgoodson.com Nov 27, 2005.

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