

WIDER BENEFITS OF LEARNING RESEARCH REPORT No.13

*Identity, learning and
engagement: a qualitative inquiry
using the NCDS*

John Preston

Centre for Research
on the Wider
Benefits of Learning



**IDENTITY, LEARNING AND
ENGAGEMENT: A QUALITATIVE
INQUIRY USING THE NCDS**

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Executive summary

1. Purpose of this report

Engagement in further learning and in civil society are seen by many policy makers and practitioners as key outcomes of lifelong learning. Whilst much is known about the drivers of both, less is known concerning the role of identity and of wider contexts in facilitating engagement.

This report provides a theoretical frame and empirical evidence on the role of identity and context in engagement in adult learning and civil society.

2. Conceptual framework

We draw on the work of Côté and Levene (2002) who see identity as being a form of capital encompassing both individual (esteem, locus of control) and collective features of identity (such as ethnicity). Usefully, Côté and Levene use the concept of ‘identity strategy’ to identify the ways in which individuals use their identities over time in order to gain advantage.

Using empirical data, we identify three key identity strategies (positionality, resilience and affiliation) which individuals use and which in turn influence their engagements in adult learning and civil society. A strategy of ‘positionality’ involves valuing the self in terms of other selves. A strategy of ‘resilience’ involves building resources to protect the individual or collective elements of the self. A strategy of ‘affiliation’ involves identification with a profession, area, religion or other background characteristic.

We argue that identity strategies are embedded within social contexts (attitudinal, geographical, class, gender and ethnicity). We refer to identity strategies within social contexts as ‘embedded identity strategies’. Although individuals might share common identity strategies, the ways in which these are used in different social contexts may lead to different outcomes. For example, a ‘positional’ identity strategy could result in non-engagement if engagements are a threat to status in favour of more exclusive engagements. For one of the working class women in this study this means lack of engagement in an adult learning class in a council estate. However, for a middle class man in the study the desire for positional advantage led him to a number of civic and adult learning engagements.

3. Empirical evidence

Using the NCDS (National Child Development Study) we identify fourteen individuals who vary according to their degree of adult learning and civic participation. We nest these individuals within various ‘contexts’ (class, gender, geography, attitude). Although fourteen individuals were interviewed in total in this research, the report focuses on the biographies of eight of those respondents. The

other biographies were used in the analysis of the data, but for brevity and lucidity we do not discuss these in this report.

We use individuals' biographies to explain how the three identity strategies identified above operate within various contexts. In this research, we suggest typologies but concede that further quantitative research would be necessary to test the evidence base for these types.

In terms of positional strategies we explain that attitudinal contexts are important in both engagement in adult learning and wider civil society. Individuals interviewed who scored very highly on the attitude scale for racism in the NCDS at age 42 adopt strategies to avoid 'diverse' engagements. As we have seen in our previous research (Preston and Feinstein, 2004) adult learning does not lead to a marked position in extremist attitudes. Those individuals who can be identified as extreme in their views on racism and authoritarianism do not markedly shift their views towards an identifiably moderate position following adult education. Evidence here may illustrate the types of strategy used in terms of avoiding classes and participations which are heterogeneous in nature. In terms of class, a desire to maintain respectability is seen to be important to the positional strategies of working class learners. For others, social status or a desire to secure professional or commercial advantage may be reasons for adopting positional strategies.

'Resilience' as a strategy may have different meanings and may also have differing implications for education and engagement. For some, 'accumulated' (educational and occupational) advantage resulted in a 'protective factor' of resilience. However, individuals do not just accumulate resources in case of adversity. Individuals can creatively use resources (for example, civic participation) to achieve 'resilience' in other ways (for example, achieving a valued public persona as an accountant).

As an example of 'affiliation' we discuss geographically-based identities. A sense of identity around localism may be part of the work involved in sustaining families and communities. What is important in terms of the relationship between adult learning and engagement is the way in which a local habitus both supports some forms of learning (the close, the familiar) whilst undermining others. This should not be seen as an irrational rejection of these alternatives but the result of an investment in identity which may be (given lack of forms of recognisable capitals) costly to change.

4. Conclusions

'Embedded identity strategies' present a new way of thinking about participation in adult learning and memberships of other bodies such as PTAs or school governorships. Ambivalence to policy initiatives to widen participation or to increase participation in civil society is often reduced either to personality characteristics (e.g. lack of esteem) or simple 'background' characteristics (e.g. social class). Examining individual strategies of the 'self' within social contexts enables us to appreciate the dynamic and purposive considerations behind involvement (or lack of it). For

example, the positional nature of working class ‘respectability’ may have implications for targeting courses at those on the margins of interventions aimed at these groups e.g. some may feel that their personal and collective identity would be harmed by participation, even if they are gaining skills.

Specific policy conclusions are as follows:

Policies to increase engagement in adult learning and/or civil society may not be undertaken by individuals due to the positional strategies which they pursue. Connotations around policies are important (e.g. what will this do to my status, not just my skill).

Resilience operates in many dimensions. Building resilience for some might not be about individualised ‘self-esteem’ but in maintaining a (resilient) public persona.

Local identity is important, not just in terms of providing local provision, but also in terms of the interests of participants (e.g. in making partnerships across an estate, in securing ‘lower middle class’ respectability in a rural village).

As might be expected, those who scored highly on the racism scale in NCDS adopted strategies to avoid social mixing (although whether this concerned race or class is not necessarily clear).

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Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Previous findings and research questions	1
1.2 Terminology	2
1.3 Structure of the report	2
2. ‘Embedded’ identity strategies: towards a conceptual framework	3
2.1 Identity capital	3
2.2 Identity strategy	4
2.3 Identity and context	4
2.4 ‘Embedded’ identity strategies	6
3. Method	8
3.1 Mixed methods	8
3.2 Sample frame	8
3.3 Use of ‘occupational status’ as a proxy for ‘class’	9
3.4 Research method and analysis	10
3.5 Ethical issues	11
4. Findings	12
4.1 Introduction	12
4.2 Positionality	12
4.3 Case M: respectability	13
4.4 Case C: social distance and rejection of diversity	15
4.5 Case I: achieving commercial advantage	17
4.6 Positionality: conclusions	19
4.7 Resilience	20
4.8 Case B: inner resilience and ‘coping’	20
4.9 Case G: maintaining a resilient public identity	22
4.10 Resilience: conclusions	23
4.11 Affiliation (locality)	23
4.12 Case D: a strong sense of neighbourhood in a social housing estate	24
4.13 Case E: village life	26
4.14 Case H: professional status, local engagements	28
4.15 Affiliation: conclusion	29

5. Conclusions	31
5.1 General conclusions	31
5.2 Policy conclusions	32
References	34
Appendix 1: Topic guide	35
Appendix 2: Selected NCDS data	40

1. Introduction

1.1 Previous findings and research questions

In earlier work we have explored relationships between adult learning (and lifelong learning more generally) and civic engagement. We have shown that participating in adult education between 33 and 42 is associated with increased civic participation (Feinstein et al, 2003). Through qualitative work, we have also commented on the mechanisms through which adult learning may have an impact on civic participation through changes in resources, networks, values or skills (Schuller et al, 2004). More recently, we have discussed the impact of adult learning on changes in values (Preston and Feinstein, 2004) which together with civic participation might form components of 'social capital'. Therefore, we have evidence that adult learning might lead to civic engagement, tolerant attitudes which might support community cohesion and some knowledge of the causal mechanisms through which education may have effects.

To date we have focused on the ways in which human capital (qualifications and skills) and social capital (networks, norms and values) may be implicated in the relationship between adult learning and civic engagement. Adult learning may build resources in people (human capital) which provides them with the knowledge and skills to engage civically. In our earlier research (Schuller et al, 2004) we referred to 'basic competences' (such as literacy), generic competences (transferable skills such as the ability to keep accounts) and 'meta-competences' (such as leadership) which may be useful in civic settings. We have also referred to how making new networks through adult learning may increase civic participation. However, we have focused less on the role of personal and collective identity in this process.

In all of our research we have been interested in the contexts in which learning occurs, referring to contexts of class, gender and ethnicity as well as attitudinal and local contexts. In this research we wish to foreground context still further. We know that there are class, gender and racial distinctions in participation (Hall, 1999). From our previous work (Preston, 2004) we know that there are strong gender and class differences in the relationship between learning and informal as opposed to non-formal participation. For example, learning to facilitate community engagement amongst working class women may lead to increased informal participation without resulting in formal political or civic engagement.

Given the need to further explore identity and contexts we therefore considered two research questions in this research report:

RQ1: What is the role of adult and other forms of learning as embedded in social and cultural contexts in developing informal and formal participation?

RQ2: How are different forms of capital (particularly identity capital) employed in developing informal and formal participation?

1.2 Terminology

This report considers ‘participation’ in a broad sense. We are interested both in participation in adult learning and memberships in formal and informal social activities. We consider both to be part of civil society and the relationship between both to be dynamic and to operate in both directions (e.g. memberships can lead to adult learning) rather than uni-directional (e.g. adult learning can lead to memberships).

In this report we are primarily interested in formal learning contexts as delivered by learning providers rather than the more informal learning arenas defined by NALS (National Adult Learning Survey). We are mainly interested in adult learning whether provided by the private sector, by training providers, Adult and Community Colleges or forms of distance learning. However, we also consider previous relevant learning activities.

We distinguish between ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ civic participation. The former type of participation involved participation in formally constituted bodies such as Parent Teacher Associations, political parties and trade unions. Informal participation includes less formally constituted arrangements such as childcare, looking after relatives or assisting neighbours.

1.3 Structure of the report

We start the report by examining the conceptual framework. We adapt the notion of ‘identity strategy’ first employed by Côté and Levene (2002) to explore the ways in which individuals aim to use their personal and collective identities in various participations. We consider that the deployment of these identity strategies might differ in different contexts. In particular (but not exclusively) the ways in which identity strategies might differ according to social class (or through class strategies) has particular implications in terms of participation. Next, we outline the use of mixed-methods in this research. Respondents in the research were sampled from the NCDS (National Child Development Study) on the basis of various characteristics in order to address the research questions outlined above. Each respondent was interviewed and information from the NCDS was then used to validate the interview data. We then use a selection of these cases to illustrate the ways in which different ‘identity strategies’ are employed in different contexts. In our conclusion, we consider that the ways in which identity and context work together present both opportunities in terms of adult education policy (in terms of understanding triggers to participation) and possible threats to future policy success (in terms of ambivalence to policy initiatives).

2. 'Embedded' identity strategies: towards a conceptual framework

2.1 Identity capital

Côté and Levene (2002) believe that the concept of identity capital is necessary given the collapse of traditional educational and labour market trajectories. Ownership of existing forms of capital such as human (qualifications and skills) or social (norms and networks) does not account for the explanation of what they refer to as 'holes' in the social fabric. In short, why some individuals with assets succeed whereas others do not. For Côté and Levene identity capital is a necessary level of explanation being:

'...the varied resources deployable on an individual basis that represent how people most effectively define themselves and have others define them in various contexts.'
(Côté and Levene, 2002: 142)

The concept of resource, hence capital, is important to understanding the utility of the concept. Identities can be exchanged pragmatically (such as in moving to a new area), emotionally (such as incorporating a different viewpoint into one's identity) and symbolically (such as adopting identity as a political gesture) in 'identity exchanges'. Like human or social capital, identity capital can also be a tangible resource (clothing, appearance, visible memberships) or an intangible one (ego strength, locus of control, self-esteem). Intangible identity capital is developmental in both a cognitive sense (in terms of adopting alternative ways of viewing one's life) and a psychodynamic one (in terms of developing various mental capacities to deal with life changes).

Education is particularly important in the formation of identity capital. Côté and Levene argue that higher levels of education (such as college or university) are particularly important not only in terms of providing tangible identity assets (degree credentials, education memberships) but also intangible ones (psycho-social capabilities). In particular, they contribute towards resilience:

'Social environments such as the university and college contribute to, rather than inhibit the growth and utilisation of such intangible resources. Moreover, we believe that these resources have an inoculation quality in they can enable people to reflexively resist and/or act back on the social forces impinging on them. In this way, individuals should be more likely to develop a sense of authorship over their own biographies, of taking responsibility for their life choices, and of creating for themselves a meaningful and satisfying life' (Côté and Levene, 2002: 142)

2.2 Identity strategy

Like other capitals, identity capital can accumulate and depreciate – resources can be invested wisely (or not) – and Côté and Levene argue that the ways in which identity is deployed in identity contexts (where identity is communicated to, and perceived by others) and traded in identity exchanges (as discussed above) makes a difference to its value. They use the term ‘identity strategy’ to discuss how identity might be used in different contexts. For example, in terms of youth transitions they distinguish between ‘passive compliance’ and ‘active adaptation’ as identity strategies (pg.148). Passive compliance is associated with depending on default options in education (leaving as early as possible) or the labour market (expecting a guaranteed job) and acceptance of a mass youth cultural identity. ‘Active adaptation’ is associated with agency and forging one’s own path through education, the labour market and youth culture. These two identity strategies are further elaborated in adulthood into five (refusers / searchers / drifters / guardians and resolvers – pg.3). As active individuation is the optimal strategy for youth, being a ‘resolver’ is the optimum identity strategy in adulthood. This involves active engagement in the process of forming an adult identity despite the complex and harsh nature of modern societies. There may be other forms of identity strategy, and in this work we consider other ways of using identity in a strategic sense.

Identity strategy is an original way of examining the relation between identity and social outcomes in adulthood. In particular, it enables one to take a developmental perspective on adult identity as a process of formation and interaction with the environment. Adult identities do not arrive ‘fully formed’ and are often in flux given changing labour market, family and educational circumstances. In addition, we can see identity as a strategic resource rather than a set of descriptors. People can ‘use’ their identities in different ways in different social contexts.

2.3 Identity and context

However, like other capitals it is helpful to recognise the potentially arbitrary and symbolic nature of capital exchanges. According to Bourdieu (1986), the concept of capital is above all a metaphor for the assets of individuals. However, aside from economic capital, capitals are purely symbolic in that they are of no inherent value in themselves. The value of capitals in a given ‘field’ of activity is both arbitrary and influenced by those who already hold power in that field.

Without mentioning identity capital, Skeggs (2004) takes this idea of the arbitrary value of different identities and applies it to theories of the ‘self’. She argues that working class identities have often been arbitrarily classed as being abject, fixed and vulgar as part of the formation of a middle class ‘self’ which is cosmopolitan and mobile. Although some elements of working class culture can be appropriated as part of a middle class identity, other elements can not be traded on, barring working class individuals from ‘active individuation’ (Skeggs, 2004 : 187). Therefore, for Skeggs

identity strategies would represent a 'zero sum game'. For some to acquire additional identity capital, others must lose it. However, Skeggs also argues that those without access to capital can adopt other forms of identity as a response to this process of de-legitimation. For example, in an earlier study (Skeggs, 1997) working class women adopted a strategy of responsibility and respectability whilst also distancing themselves from middle class values. Therefore, identity can be a reaction to the strategies of others:

'Identities are continually in the process of being re-produced as *responses* to social positions...' (Skeggs, 1997: 94, my italics).

Applying these ideas to the concept of identity strategies does not mean that we must abandon the concept altogether. However, we need to be aware that the ability to strategise and 'use' identity depends upon access to other forms of capital – particularly economic – and other contexts (class, gender, ethnicity). We must also accept that those individuals who reject a strategy of 'active individuation' are not necessarily doing so for the 'wrong' reasons. Alternative strategies or non-strategies might reflect the consequences of being positioned as having an 'abject' identity. We should therefore recognise that identity strategies might be part of a wider set of class strategies (Ball, 2003) in terms of the formation and maintenance of social class factions. Although identity strategies are theorised at the level of the individual they both depend on, and form, the existence of social class factions and other gender and ethnic groupings. For example, the decision of a Black, working class woman to attend university depends on the decisions made by others in her social circle and will (en masse) contribute to the formation of her identity and (en masse) the identity of similar women into adulthood. Additionally, other contexts such as gender, ethnicity, attitudes or locality may influence the ways in which identity strategies are used.

Taking both Côté and Levene's (2002) conception of identity strategies within social contexts gives us a nuanced theory of identity capital and strategies which is employed in this report. Rather than apply identity strategies to transitions to adulthood or the labour market we apply them to learning and civic engagement.

In summary, there are a number of key points regarding the ways in which identity strategies are used in this report:

Identities are purposive and are used strategically (identity strategies).

Identities are in formation (even in late adulthood)

The ability to trade on the 'value' of one's identity is not distributed in a meritocratic sense – some have more ability to do this than others.

Identity strategies are (partly) a result of available opportunities

Identity strategies are important in understanding the relationship between learning and civic engagement.

2.4 'Embedded' identity strategies

We conceptualise that there are various identity strategies which individuals might follow and that these operate within various social contexts. We refer to the operation of identity strategies within social contexts as 'embedded identity strategies'. In this report, we identify three potential identity strategies and explore how they operate with contextual variables. These 'embedded identity strategies' have implications for the ways in which individuals use (or do not use) adult education and civic participation.

In table 1 (below) we consider three potential broad identity strategies that might involve the 'self' in relation to social contexts. The first, positionality, refers to individuals whose primary sense of self is achieved through a process of self-valuation in respect to the position of others. However, the ways in which this identity strategy is realised will differ according to social context. For example, in this report we identify respectability as one manifestation of identity strategy in context. As will be seen in section 4.3, M a working class woman in the North West was concerned with her social position as compared with other individuals and this in turn influenced her memberships and participation in adult learning. The embedded identity strategies provided in the table were derived from the cases discussed in this report.

Table 1: ‘Embedded’ identity strategy

Identity strategy	Interactions with contexts (class / gender / ethnicity / locality / attitudes)
Positionality – valuing the ‘self’ in terms of advancing social position relative to others	Embedded identity strategies e.g. Respectability, rejection of diversity, desire to maintain comparative advantage
Resilience – building self-esteem and personal resources	Embedded identity strategies e.g. Resourcefulness, protection of sense of ‘self’
Affiliation – aligning the self with collective identifiers such as occupation, religion, politics etc	Embedded identity strategies e.g. Identification with locality, with religious group, with profession

Individuals might use different identity strategies at different points in the life-course and may simultaneously employ more than one identity strategy. For example, individuals may affiliate with a particular collective identifier (such as an occupation) in order both to advance their social position (positionality) and to build self-esteem. However, the individuals in this study are typified by one broad identity strategy.

As there are multiple contexts, there are potentially an infinite number of ‘embedded identity strategies’. In this report, we focus on class, gender, attitude and locality as the key interactions between identity strategy and context.

3. Method

3.1 Mixed methods

We consider that the use of mixed methods is important in this research. We have already established from separate quantitative and qualitative analysis that there is a relationship between adult education and various forms of engagement. We have also triangulated qualitative data, where possible, with data from the cohort study (Schuller et al, 2004). However, there were limitations of this design in terms of establishing the validity of both the qualitative and quantitative data. In terms of the qualitative (interview) data we could not be certain that the characteristics of the cohort member (or typology derived from the cohort) reflected the characteristics of the individual interviewed. In terms of the quantitative data we could not be sure that the types of explanation derived from the qualitative data would fully represent the experiences of those in the cohort – particularly given the specificity of the cohort members in terms of age.

Our design was therefore guided by the need for both sampling and analysis to be mixed method. To this end, the birth cohort studies are a rich source for longitudinal analysis already being used by the Centre to investigate relationships between learning and benefits. Each individual observation in the birth cohort studies represents a biography in that there is a wealth of time data concerning individual attitudes, behaviours and outcomes. Because of good data on adult learning and civic participation, we decided to use the NCDS in our research.

3.2 Sample frame

Given that we have such detailed biographies of individuals in each cohort study they comprised a unique sampling framework for qualitative research. In particular, we identify individuals who are “off diagonal” with respect to expected interventions (learning) and outcomes (civic participation). These “outliers” are rarely examined in quantitative (or qualitative) research but are valuable in examining why biographies may not follow expected trajectories. We sampled six outlying individuals. Three of these had no adult learning and some civic participation whereas the other three had no civic participation and some adult learning. We were also interested in individuals where causality between learning and participation was as expected. Two of these were where formal participation and learning were seemingly absent from the cohort data between ages 33 and 42 whereas six were where this relationship was direct. This enabled us to investigate various participations in various social contexts. In order to gain an understanding of some of the contexts in which adult learning and civic participation were related we additionally decided to sample on the basis of grouped regional, class and gender characteristics choosing to interview professional men of social classes 1 and 2 in the North West of England and working class women of social classes 3 and 4 in the South East. A sub-sample of two racially intolerant individuals was also chosen due to our prior research interest on the impact of

learning for those with racist attitudes (Preston and Feinstein, 2004). Selected background characteristics of all of the individuals in the sample are provided in appendix 2. The overall sample obtained is provided in table 2 (below). Each individual in the sample is identified by a letter (A...M) and these are used in the report e.g. B is a working class women in the South East of England who has participated in both adult learning and formal civic engagement.

Table 2: Sample from NCDS

	No formal civic engagement 33-42	Formal civic engagement 33-42
No adult learning 33-42	L ♀ ✘ M ♀ ✘☀	A ♀ ✘ D ♀ ✘ J ♀ ✘
Adult learning 33-42	C ♂ ☞☀ F ♂ ☞ K ♀ ✘	B ♀ ✘ E ♀ ✘ G ♂ ☞ H ♂ ☞ I ♂ ☞ N ♀ ✘

Key: ♂ Male
 ♀ Female
 ✘ Working class (SES 4 or 5)
 ☞ Middle class (SES 1 or 2)
 ☀ Racially intolerant at 42

3.3 Use of ‘occupational status’ as a proxy for ‘class’

We use an occupational definition of class in this research as it is highly correlated with resource, asset ownership and use of cultural resources which might be used in more elaborated ways of describing class position. As discussed above, we describe social classes 4 and 5 as working class and classes 1 and 2 as middle class. We do not consider more (arguably) ambiguous class positions such as 3 and 3n. In discussing class we are aware that current social class may not reflect past social class, that occupational class may be a less suitable indicator of class for women rather than men and that individuals may occupy different positions on different measures of class (although perhaps not as commonly as might be supposed). In discussing the cases in section 5 we make reference to these points where necessary.

3.4 Research method and analysis

By identifying suitable individuals in the cohort, it was a simple matter to derive the NCDS identifiers and, through co-operation with the cohort studies team, send out letters requesting interview. We used a similar letter to that employed by the NRDC in their previous qualitative research. Individuals who agreed to take part were then contacted by telephone to arrange dates for interview. 30 individuals were contacted in order to obtain the 14 interviews.

Our approach to obtaining qualitative data continued to use the biographical method which meant that individuals were encouraged through the use of a topic guide to recount their life-story with particular reference to the role of recent learning and civic participation. Our approach was somewhere between unstructured biographical approaches and more structured interview approaches. We chose this approach due to strengths in terms of the high degree of respondent autonomy in providing the account, possible scope for the biographies to include both agentic (individual) and structural (proximal and distal) factors and familiarity of respondents with the approach from popular culture and oral family histories. The interview guide which was used with the respondents is provided in appendix 1. Between sampling and scoping we piloted the interviews with three adults of ages close to those in the final sample. These pilots revealed the need to consider the nature of informal engagements and the diversity of types of engagement which might arise in interview. The actual interviews with cohort members were ‘double blind’ in that aside from basic descriptors (class, gender) the interviewer did not know the details of the individuals’ engagement or whether they were tolerant or not. This meant that the interviewer had an incentive to gain as much from the conduct of the interview as possible, searching out for engagements.

All of the interviewees were happy to take part in the interviews. They appreciated their involvement in NCDS and were welcoming – all had a ‘table’ prepared where they obviously had conducted previous interviews with NCDS fieldworkers. The format of the interview surprised some of the respondents who were used to CAPI (Computer Aided Personal Interview) forms of entry but all were willing to co-operate. Some respondents asked questions about the cohort itself – purposes, findings and the medical information which had been acquired. It sometimes seemed as though belonging to the cohort was an engagement in itself. However, the diversity of responses suggested that the respondents were not over-researched and trying to please the researcher. Following the interview, each tape was transcribed and anonymised. In this report, personal details have been replaced with a term in brackets to indicate replacement e.g. ‘London’ would be replaced with (large city).

In the analysis of data, three approaches were used. Firstly, field notes from the interview were consulted to review initial impressions and assumptions which may have escaped further analysis. This also acted as a method of refreshing memory as to each case. Secondly, coding of the transcript was undertaken using the computer package N5 with codes around themes of learning, engagement and identity. This was

used for retrieval as well as analytical purposes. Finally, an interview summary was prepared for each case. Following this within-case analysis, between-case analysis was conducted and a number of typologies were formed. Complementary to the analysis of data was a review of the literature and a good conceptual ‘fit’ was identified between the emerging typologies and notions of identity strategy – the conceptual framework which has been outlined in section 2 (above). An additional part of the analysis process was triangulating the qualitative data with the quantitative data from the NCDS.

3.5 Ethical issues

As with all qualitative fieldwork, ethical considerations were paramount and we subscribed to a common framework of qualitative ethics (as provided by BERA <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/doctoralschool/BERA.rtf>). Additionally, the integrity and reliability of the cohort studies as a current and future source of data could not be compromised and care was taken in following the guidelines provided by the cohort studies team. As there were issues concerning the information which we knew about the cohort members prior to interview there was an ethical justification for the “double blind” approach to interviewing which we followed. We anonymised all materials and any supporting information which could reveal the identity of the cohort member prior to analysis and publication.

Although attrition can not be ruled out, it seemed that individuals who were willing to be interviewed enjoyed the experience or at least found it to be part of their ‘duty’ as a cohort member. Bias also can not be ruled out in that the experience of being interviewed may result in individuals altering their responses in future years. Although there is no way in which this can be avoided, we suggested that this might be tracked by including a binary variable in the cohort data to indicate that the individual had been interviewed between sweeps.

By way of follow up, a letter was given to each cohort studies member thanking them for their participation. We are also sending cohort members who participated a short piece concerning general findings from the research.

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

As discussed above (section 2) we conceptualise that engagement in adult learning and the civic sphere is influenced by not only the identity strategies which individuals use, but also how those strategies operate within social contexts. In this section, we discuss each identity strategy in turn illustrating these through cases from our research. For each identity strategy, we discuss two or three cases in detail and report on eight of the fourteen cases overall. At the end of each section, we then summarise what we can say concerning how identity strategies operate in various social contexts and the implications of these for adult learning and civic engagement. In table 3 (below) we reproduce table 1 and show which cases from the fieldwork (table 2) illustrate each embedded identity strategy.

Table 3: Embedded identity strategies and cases

Identity strategy	Interactions with contexts (class / gender / ethnicity / locality / attitudes)	Illustrated by case
Positionality – valuing the ‘self’ in terms of advancing social position relative to others	Embedded identity strategies e.g. Respectability, rejection of diversity, desire to maintain comparative advantage.	M C I
Resilience – building self-esteem and personal resources	Embedded identity strategies e.g. Resourcefulness, protection of sense of ‘self’	B G
Identification – aligning the self with collective identifiers such as occupation, religion, politics etc	Embedded identity strategies e.g. Identification with locality, with religious group, with profession.	D E H

4.2 Positionality

A number of respondents in the fieldwork use the social position of others in order to justify their participation, or non-participation in adult learning and other forms of civil society. We describe this strategy as ‘positional’ in that the social position of others is used by respondents as something to be avoided, or competed against. Within different contexts this has implications for their involvement in civil society. We use three cases of M, C and I to illustrate how ‘positionality’ operates in different contexts.

4.3 Case M: respectability

M has an intense working life, in terms of both paid work and informal care. She plays down the importance of formal qualifications and has poor qualifications herself (according to the NCDS, academic level 1 is her highest qualification). However, embedded within her interview are a number of informal engagements. According to the NCDS data she did not engage in either adult learning or civic participation between the ages 33 and 42 – this was supported by the interview data. As well as looking after her own children, she looks after her granddaughter of eight years old on a full time basis. Sadly, her husband died recently of a heart attack. M works in the morning as a cleaner, but also looks after her granddaughter:

M: Monday morning, get her (her granddaughter) off to school, I pay bills on a Monday usually so I'm up the shops doing them, then cleaning up, five to four she comes home from school after having an extra half an hour's English lesson and I have to get her home in half an hour, give her, feed her and dress her and do her hair which is almost impossible because she's very slow very, and then up to ballet for quarter to five, they've got a show on this weekend their first show actually which I'm quite looking forward to seeing but um it it sounds like...nothing really's fitted into a lot of hours but I honestly find there's never enough hours I really do

In M's account, there are a number of activities around 'looking after other people' including taking her daughter to ballet and her grandchildren to (informally) use a neighbour's computer (Yes it's not actually a computer club, it's the same sort of thing but it's a more private thing). NCDS confirms that she goes out with her family at least once a week In terms of M's own adult learning she has thought about taking up painting:

M: I'm longing to get the chance to take up watercolours and again I've got a phone number of a man that does a class that you know it's at a church hall a couple of miles down the road and he says he's waiting to hear me last time I saw him last time I saw him... (but)...always something crops up always every single time.

Her interest in art and drawing has, so far, been pursued through copying pictures from books and M's sister is an artist. However, time and finances (according to the NCDS her job paid £4:34 / hour when she was 42) mean that she could not pursue a similar route. In terms of personal efficacy, M agrees that she 'never seems to get what she wants' in the NCDS. She recognises the costs and risks involved in being an artist:

M: ...but do I give up everything else I do and forget about housework, that's my dilemma, I could be like my sister, her house is, there's clutter everywhere, she's got a drawing board in the living room, one of the great big draughtsman's, this wide, drawing board and a big chest up here from the papers and materials and her house is just complete clutter, and she never does housework or cooking, but I've never been

able to afford to go up the takeaway, never, let alone once or twice a week, so I've always had to do things the only way I could get by and it's not left time for me (laughs).

This interest in art was not encouraged by M's parents ('I was told I was stupid...they just generally made me feel like there was no way they were going to let me anyway'). There is something of a contradiction in the NCDS data on this point as her parents were (mostly) averagely interested in M's education up to the age of 16, at which point both parents had no interest in her education, but she does go to art exhibitions. However, she rejected attending a formal art class even though an opportunity arose through an informal contact. The reasons for lack of participation are various, as summed up by this selection of interview quotes:

...it's another Council estate that they're on and that would be what would put me off going, because it's a big Council estate and it's a horrible one, it's full of what my husband used to call 'oiks' but I think that's a good name for them without being rude

you've gotta get there and it's on the middle of a big estate which to me I see, just to put it simply, as a giant boxing ring really, it's a, every other neighbour is out to get what they can from the one before, they'll burgle from their next door neighbours, they'll steal from their own next door neighbours, a majority of them

it's an estate that I'd rather not be associated with, so I don't have anything to do with it

...all the single Mums were the ones they put on it (the estate) anyway a lot of them, and benefit claimers and that makes me sound awful as well, but you know that that type, that don't really want to put any effort into life, but they want everything out of it, and I think the Council's idea was well if we've got this, if we put the Community Centre up there and we set up a computer class and a Mother and Toddler group and we can show these Mums, we can set up a 'how to cook the din, baby's lunch group' and I've worded it differently but that's basically what they mean, literally, breakfast club and it's to teach the Mums that shell out babies one after the other at sixteen, seventeen with no partner, no job, no intentions of getting one nobody decent or sensible wants to go anywhere near, a bit like me with the Art Club, it's wrong to put it in the middle of a Council estate, it really is.

As these extracts show, M makes a number of judgements concerning the location of the art class – the estate (interestingly in a Sure Start area, which M refers to later in the interview) in which it is based is 'like a giant boxing ring' with 'single mums' who '...shell out babies one after the other at sixteen, seventeen with no partner, no job' and 'benefit claimers'. M also makes a distinction between her own respectability and that of her neighbours ('they are ex-gypsies they talk in the most incredible, they don't talk they grunt, they grunt basically, and they language is absolutely

disgusting'). It is telling that M refers to her neighbours as 'ex-gypsies' given her high racism score on the NCDS.

M does engage informally with both learning and with the community – with a priority in terms of the sustaining of family and respectability – a 'moral familialism'. The notion of a 'respectable' working class identity is important to M. It is apparent that in some cases learning and engagement might undermine that identity. In the case of M, the location of learning (which paradoxically is aimed at social inclusion in terms of its location on a council estate) may actually exclude her from participation given her desire to maintain respectability. In the case of M we see a broad 'identity strategy' of positionality in terms of a desire to maintain respectability. This has implications for her (lack) of engagement with adult education and other forms of civic engagement.

4.4 Case C: social distance and rejection of diversity

The case of C demonstrates well how an identity strategy is premised on positional aspects of adult learning. C works as a surveyor. He has two children aged two and a half and four. He possesses reasonable educational qualifications compared to the population as a whole – level 3 at age 33. Although he has had little engagement with adult learning C did start to take a wine course and NCDS confirms that he did take one leisure course between the age of 33 and 42.

C did not continue with the wine course but not for dissatisfaction with the content:

C: Actually I did do a wine course five years ago and I've thought about things like language courses and that's about it really.

Int: And the wine course you did, was that a local ...?

C: It was in (location), it was quite local, it was at a College.

Int: Can you tell me a bit more about it, how long it took and ...?

C: It was, I don't think I lasted actually, but it was, I stuck it out for a year I think. It was in term time but it was an evening thing probably for a couple of hours a night I suppose, once a week. I don't know, it wasn't run by the College, but it was, they used the college for ...

Int: And you did get a qualification or accredited?

C: No it wasn't, it was a Wine Guild course.

Int: And what made you ...?

C: I didn't particularly want the qualification; I just wanted to get better knowledge.

As C states it is the knowledge, not the qualification which he is interested in. However, rather than a fear of the accreditation process, C uses his lack of instrumentality to put some social distance between himself and the others on the course. C attempts to maintain some distance from the other people who took the course in terms of both their level of education and the reason why they took the course:

C: There were about 12 or 15, a very mixed bag I think. I think probably the sort of people on it weren't looking at it in the same way, or weren't, didn't have the same interest in it that I had, or wanted, so

Int: In what way?

C: They were a bit more uneducated, I suppose, about it, I suppose it was a bit more basic really. I don't know, their general background and knowledge or what I picked up on it. I think they were after the qualification more than the knowledge.

As C points out, the diversity of individuals on the course, their lack of prior education and their desire to gain a qualification were negative features for him. The diversity of individuals on the course was a (psychic) cost of participation:

C: I think it was a very diverse group of people, which, I don't think helped and didn't gel, I didn't get involved in it as I might have, I don't know.

It must be noted that C scored very highly on racism in the NCDS. He also scored high on authoritarianism and would find himself in the 'racist-authoritarian' category in our previous work. Unfortunately, in the interview we do not know whether his lack of participation in the wine course was due to the 'diversity' of the other individuals in terms of race. The use terms such as 'mixed bag' or 'uneducated' could indicate subtle racism if the other individuals on the course were non-white. This must remain an alternative hypothesis: there was no indication of overt racism in the interview. However, in other sections of the transcript it is clear that engaging with individuals of similar social status, rather than race, is important to C (although in the circles in which C usually operates this may amount to the same thing).

We note that C also uses civic participation in order to form business contacts. He is a member of sports teams and this helped him meet both people of a professional background and those who might help with business interests:

Int: And of all those groups that you have talked about, the golf, the gym, the Vale? Rugby Club, you mentioned you do them for fitness and things, what kind of skills do you think if anything you have picked from being a member of those groups or going along to the social events, or ...?

C: I suppose as they are all sort of sport related, I am interested in that, I suppose it helped with social skills, you know, interacting with other people. I seem to benefit or enjoy the team, rather than the individual ... perhaps that's why I've not quite got into golf yet [I: laughs]. Having contacts, when you have contacts ...

Int: Work contacts or social contacts?

C: Well social, but who assist or work in certain fields, or companies that I may come across. I think they've all been particularly social sports that I'm involved with, you meet more people and they all disperse, not necessarily in the one area, so I've met people to a degree. It is surprising how you come across them from time to time.

Int: And again, obviously most of the people would be, within these people they are interested in all things, would you say they are people who are like you.

C: Yes, I think probably, I think they have the right interest in sport, in the type of sport, their social interest, I think it's also helped in, because their team relationships with people, they definitely have a more professional background, so it helps you to interact with people. But I guess that similar sorts of types of people are drawn towards those activities anyway to a degree.

For C engagement in sporting activities helps in terms of gaining work contacts. The sports club provides an arena for bringing together professional individuals from a wide geographical area. As demonstrated above with the example of the wine club, C finds it easier to interact with people from a more professional background and this might be seen as part of a positional identity strategy working through class and occupation.

4.5 Case I: achieving commercial advantage

The nature of I's participation is qualitatively different from the other individuals surveyed. He inherited the family leisure business. As the owner of a number of leisure parks, I's engagements were orientated around his business interests, as well as his family. Perhaps reflecting his business interests, the NCDS shows that he is a Conservative voter with support for market (as opposed to collectivist) values. In terms of family, I is married with two children and lives in a gated village community in the North West. Relations with other neighbours in the community were good, although there was a high turnover of neighbours as a lot of the people who bought the homes 'are executives'. He is active in his children's sporting activities in terms of taking his eldest daughter (age 10) swimming: 'Monday evening, swimming, Wednesday evening, swimming, Friday evening, swimming' and in watching his son play football. His interest in helping his daughter swimming has extended towards a professional coaching qualification. This involvement in family was supported by the NCDS which showed that the family ate together on a daily basis and went out together once a week. As the owner of his own business, I states that he has more control over his own time than if he were employed.

In terms of business interests, there are both local and national participations which were supportive. For example, I's membership of the parish council (membership of a 'resident's association' is cited in NCDS at age 42) is in the area of one of the leisure parks where there were a number of permanent in-site residents. As a parish councillor, I fought various campaigns on behalf of his residents / customers. He does 'not really' think that his earlier education helped him in being a parish councillor although he describes himself as having a 'good general education' which involved attending a well known regional grammar school and has degrees in Spanish and Portuguese (level 4 academic qualifications, as reported in the NCDS) which have helped with business contacts. This education also helped him in terms of adopting a 'cosmopolitan' view of the world (with a high level of racial tolerance). In this extract, he discusses what he gained from education:

I: general skills, I suppose- I don't know if you'd classify it as a general skill really, from a social point of view, (college) was a fantastic college to study at, because with being a London university, the London universities do tend to attract a wider spectrum of nationalities than possibly any other university in the country, and so I've got friends from all over the world, and from every colour, creed, you name it, so it actually makes you more broadminded

His economic capital offers him the freedom to pursue diverse interests. For example, in his gap year he learnt how to fly and gained a private pilot's licence. In terms of current adult education, he sees the need for business training in establishing exclusivity:

I: but life's a constant sort of learning curve, you know, recently I've been to Florida, this is actually to improve our own business, we've been to the (Multinational Leisure Company) Institute.

Int: okay

I: spent two weeks there and we were learning about the (Multinational Leisure Company) approach to quality service and people management

Int: right

I: which is a fascinating thing, fascinating course, and it's surprising how the things you learn, you know, not only will it create improvements in our own business, but in everything that you do you look at things in a different way

Int: okay

I: 'cos whether you love or hate (multinational leisure company) they are excellent at what they do

Int: okay, so was that a course you had to pay for-

I: yes

Int: or was that paid for by

I: no

Int: and would you say it was good value for money in terms of what

I: it was extremely expensive, which fortunately put a lot of people off

Int: right

I: because to stay ahead of the game, you know, you need to invest, and I think a lot of people didn't think that we would get the benefit out of the course that we have done

As can be seen in the above quotation, I paid for the training which he and members of his company had received. In the NCDS his learning between 33 and 42 is described as 'leisure courses' although this could include 'other' types of bespoke training such as this. The quotation shows both exclusivity ('it was extremely expensive, which fortunately put a lot of people off') and positionality (to stay 'ahead of the game'). Here, the aim is not to gain social position through gaining distinction, but to advance his business interests. This is also true of another of I's memberships in terms of a trade association, the aim of which is to 'lobby for our industry':

Int: okay, and in terms of skills that you've learnt while you've been involved with the trade association, again is that learning on the job or was it-

I: both really, again it's a matter of staying ahead of the game really, being involved with the trade association you actually hear of things happening, or about to happen, virtually before anybody else, and you're dealing with- well, in the sort of the executive committees that I'm a member of, you're actually with the best of the best within our business, so if you've got any problems we get ideas from each other

Int: okay

I: so you're constantly getting the best of advice all the time

As can be seen in the case of I positionality and exclusivity is important, but not necessarily in terms of advancing social distinction as in the case of C (except incidentally). Instead, advancing business interests depends upon positionality and exclusivity – being the 'best of the best'. Although this advancement of business interests does not seem to accord with the development of identity in a traditional sense, there is the suggestion that I has attained a cosmopolitan (multi-national) identity through his learning and engagement.

4.6 Positionality: conclusions

The cases of M, C and I illustrate the ways in which an identity strategy of 'positionality' (valuing the self in relation to the position of others) works in various social contexts, and how this influences approaches to engagement. In the case of M a desire to maintain respectability – whether in terms of class, or racial distinctions or to secure a 'respectable femininity' as compared to other women – means that she excludes herself from the opportunity to undertake adult education (and perhaps to formalise her participation in the arts). However, she maintains a number of informal participations. Similarly, C excludes himself from adult education due to 'diversity' although we are not sure whether this indicates diversity of class or race (or of other types). However, C does state that others desiring 'qualification' rather than 'knowledge' is the reason for not taking the course. Therefore, it may be that social status is a reason for C's positionality – he is certainly eager to mix with other professionals in the sports clubs. The case of I is a little different due to his self employed and high-earning status. He wishes to maintain commercial advantage, but is able to combine this with more cosmopolitan attitudes partly due to his previous educational experiences and interests. In all cases we can see how context shapes different strategies of positionality.

It is perhaps no coincidence that M and C both scored very highly on the attitude scale for racism in the NCDS at age 42. As we have seen in our previous research (Preston and Feinstein, 2004) adult learning does not lead to a marked position in extremist attitudes. M and C may illustrate the types of strategy used in terms of avoiding classes and participations which are heterogeneous in nature.

4.7 Resilience

Some respondents interviewed were interested in the maintenance of the ‘self’ in terms of building personal or collective resilience. Rather than seeing resilience as purely a process of building psychological capacities, we wish to stress the ways in which resilience operates within contexts. In particular, the ways in which ‘resilience’ can be formed in terms of securing a public or professional identity. We use two cases, B and G, in different contexts to illustrate ‘inner’ and ‘public’ resilience as related identity strategies.

4.8 Case B: inner resilience and ‘coping’

B has one child P, who is 16 and has been diagnosed with severe learning difficulties and autism. She has been married since the age of 23. She does her husband’s business accounts (a self employed landscape gardener) from home. Her family live locally and she sees her family frequently –her Father once a week and her sister at least once or twice each month. B and her husband are members of the (location) Autistic Society and Mencap. B has participated in meetings of the (location) Autistic Society, although she relies on social services for more concrete forms of support. She has been a governor of P.’s school in the past. She uses the internet to access information for her father – her key support person according to the NCDS, but she is not a member of any online communities. Her only other form of participation was as a (home business) dealer, but this was over ten years ago. She mentions in the NCDS that she attends weekly religious meetings, but this was not apparent in the interview, perhaps due to the focus on her current situation. Most of B’s time is spent looking after her son.

B’s class position at age 42 is working class, although in the past she worked as a manager in the civil service. This shows the danger of generalising from current class position, particularly for women as described in section 3.4 (above).

B performed well at school, gaining seven O levels and making a number of friends. She abandoned her A level studies and the desire to enter teacher training. Rather, she entered the civil service where she gained an ONC qualification. She describes her family as being ‘good working class’. The NCDS supports her levels of academic (level 2) and vocational (level 3 qualifications).

B gains little support from local organisations other than (some) respite care and information. Hence earlier educational and work experience has been particularly important in building up resilience. B states that she gained skills (and advanced level ONC qualifications) through her working life. In particular, she gained a ‘bolshiness’ from her previous managerial role in the civil service:

B: to collect the tax from people, and that’s what I ended up doing, and then I became pregnant with P., and then my boss stopped me going out with the bailiff because I

was pregnant, andand was in charge- was in a managerial role when I left, so I had a section of 6 people, and I think that was the first (stage) in my life- 'cos I can remember when I first started at the (civil service) when I was younger, when I was 17, I stayed on at school till I was 17, when I first went there I can remember in one of my reports my (higher grade) said that I could be- not bolshie, that wasn't the word, but those sort of terms.

Int: right.

B: but not aggressive or anything like that, but I can't get the word now that he used, but I can remember that to this day, but I felt as time went on through my work experience that I've gained managerial skills.

She became 'hardened' through her working experience although she refers to previous school experience as being important:

B: you know, or going out with the bailiff with somebody physically trying to abuse you, so I think in a lot of ways that's made me- that hardened me a bit maybe, never really looked at it before but I expect that that has, to try and make me hold my emotions a bit as opposed to, you know, more to we just accept it, and I've been like that with P.

Int: right.

B: when P was first born we didn't know obviously there was a problem, but throughout the yeas and the milestones that..... we were then gathering there was something not quite right, and you go through guilt of why- why us, what have we done, my husband then making me feel guilty that something that I'd done, so you go through all mixed emotions but I wouldn't ever say, yes, you have depression I suppose to the extent that you get very upset about things and did a lot of crying and what have you, but I've never let it completely get me down, I accept it quite quickly, well, P's got a problem and that's it and that's your life and, you know, you've got to get on with it, whereas my husband hasn't, or it's taken him a lot longer to accept the problem, so yeah, but I suppose everything does stem from work I suppose, or was it my education, I had a good education, I enjoyed school.

What can be seen in the case of B is the importance of both school and work training in building resilience. These help her to accumulate intangible forms of identity capital – resilience and active individuation. This helps B to maintain her self, her relationship and (of course) P. Engagement and the building of support networks is not a 'choice' for B, but necessary for the preservation of the self. This case shows how identity capital can be accumulated over the life-course and then 'played out' in an identity strategy of resilience if necessary. However, this process also operates in gendered contexts. It is B, rather than her husband, who has assumed the role of carer for P.

4.9 Case G: maintaining a resilient public identity

G is a professional accountant, married who lives in an affluent suburb of a North Western city whose identity was more city-based than others in the sample. Although he had been engaged in some activities since childhood (the local drama club) he used his (monetary) resources as an accountant to enhance his engagements beyond the local (a gliding club and a social club / dating agency – where he had met his wife). There was also a strong element in which his professional identity as an accountant (even though he had not achieved all of his examinations and the NCDS supports that he is taking work-related courses between 33 and 42) is important to him in non-monetary terms. It was the maintenance of a professional sense of identity through various forms of participation which is of interest here. A ‘resilient’ public identity as an accountant is built through participation in civil society.

G has not achieved full accreditation as an accountant but he is pleased with other aspects of the job:

G: well that’s it, you see the other thing is I’ve struggled with my exams and I’m still- I’ve just got some exam results from last week, at my age one would expect to have done all the exams but I’ve never managed to get the finals on the Accountancy, and I’ve spend the last three years trying to get those and I just keep failing within like five or six marks of passing.

Int: oh right.

G: so again I’m trying to get through more from the point of view of self satisfaction now because it’s not really gonna help me in my job, I’m getting to the age where it’s not gonna really benefit me, it will be an investment if I pass but I’m quite happy in the job I’m doing, I get quite well paid for what I do, I’ve got a good pension scheme so it wouldn’t be within my interest to move anywhere really.

Although full professional accreditation has not been achieved, G uses his participation in various groups to validate his status as an accountant and professional. This is not ‘passing’ as an accountant, but a way of building a resilient public persona. For example, he keeps the books for a drama group and this provides G with increased personal status:

G: there are people that have got book-keeping skills, ‘cos each club has a treasurer who does the day to day stuff throughout the year, which I wouldn’t have the time to do...so at the end of the year I spend three or four nights a week, when you’ve gone tonight I’ll spend probably an hour doing the accounts then may need to spend all night on it so it’s probably about four nights in terms of consistently working on them to get a set of books together to show the end result for that year.

4.10 Resilience: conclusions

In the cases of B and G we see how ‘resilience’ may have different meanings and may also have differing implications for education and engagement. In the case of B, resilience is (indirectly) built through school and work and she operates informally in caring for her son. This might be seen as a gendered form of participation and this works in complex ways with class: B has occupied a number of class positions through her life. However, we see that B attributes ability to keep going to a ‘hardening’ through her experiences of management at work although now her class position is less clear (at least by occupational status). In the case of G we see a more ‘surface’ type of resilience. Esteem is important but this depends upon the maintenance of a professional identity through participation in civil society. The ways in which these identity strategies impact on engagement is complex. For B it is the accumulation of ‘hardness’ and resilience enable her to deal better with her son’s care (informal civic participation) whereas in the case of G it is formal civic participation which results in a more ‘resilient’ and secure identity as an accountant.

Protection is an important unifying theme in these cases. For B, an expected trajectory of ‘accumulated’ (educational and occupational) advantage results in a ‘protective factor’ of resilience. This case is closest to Côté and Levene’s (2002) ‘inoculation’ quality of education (as discussed in section 2.3, above). However, individuals do not just accumulate resources in case of adversity. As the case of G shows, individuals can creatively use resources (in this case civic participation) to achieve ‘resilience’ in other ways (in this case a valued public persona as an accountant).

4.11 Affiliation (locality)

An identity strategy common to all respondents is to frame their identity in terms of a number of affiliations. These could be professional or occupational identity, religious identity or even in terms of their status as a participant in a society or group (although this was only found in one case). One salient identity strategy was to express an affiliation to a locality and in this report we focus upon locality as a type of affiliation through three case studies.

A number of respondents are formally engaged in activities to sustain their families and communities which are centred on local, established forms of participation. In these cases, the local area and its history act as a basis for identity formation and related engagements. This does not mean that other respondents in the sample are not similarly rooted in their local areas – however, for some of the professional men in the sample locality was a matter of convenience rather than identity – but for some a sense of ‘localism’ forms a pivot for other activities.

In order to illustrate how an embedded, local identity was used we discuss three cases ranging across a variety of local settings. D and E – both working class women – where D lives in a social housing estate in Kent and E in a small village in Hampshire,

and H, a professional man who lives in an affluent suburb of a Lancashire city. These cases illustrate how ‘localism’ is used in a variety of ways in order to reinforce a number of learning and civic activities.

4.12 Case D: a strong sense of neighbourhood in a social housing estate

D has only lived in the local area for the last nine years, having moved from the Midlands. D lives with her partner and her daughter and attends football once a week with her family (as confirmed by the NCDS). She works from 4:30 am to 2:30pm in the bakery of a supermarket earning £3:13 / hour at age 42 according to the NCDS. Most of her activities are based in the immediate area. The family are members of a local ‘community centre’ which provides a number of activities. She has been a member of the community centre since 1984 (and NCDS confirms that, as she says, she sees her friends there at least one a week), and the membership was also validated by NCDS which records that she was a member of a tenants / residents association at 42. As well as having a licensed bar, the community centre provides a number of children’s activities and acts as an arena for finding people who might provide mutual aid:

D: I’ve made quite a lot of friends out of it. You get to know people in the community from all different areas, different lifestyles. The children get to know more friends that they wouldn’t have come across at school.

Int: Oh right, OK, good and when you say people with different lifestyles, what do you mean by that?

D: Job-wise. You go down there and there will be a plumber, there will be a doctor, there’ll be an electrician, so if you said ‘oh, I need so and so doing’, ‘I know so and so’ or ‘so and so will be in later’.

Int: Right, OK, that sounds very good and you actually use that to find people?

D: Yes.

Int: Can you give me an example of when you’ve done that?

D: Yes. I had my ceiling burst just before Christmas and there is a decorator that uses down there who is coming to decorate the lounge next week.

D is very much involved in both the local community and other civic activities – she is a member of the resident’s committee, her daughter’s PTA (not confirmed by the NCDS, perhaps as this is a more recent membership) and fundraising activities. She attributes the reasons for this engagement to her family background. In a number of activities, D also cites the local council as being instrumental in supporting community activities and cohesion. The resident’s committee was started by the council: ‘It was just a leaflet that came around from the District Council. It involved a meeting once every month, every two months and it was just mainly for your road’. The council are also good at dealing with vandalism on the estate. However, activities which involve self-monitoring by the community such as Neighbourhood Watch are

not taken up by D: ‘...people are frightened of being involved...you don’t want to be seen as the grass of the road’.

Unlike M, D does not feel that learning in the local community or surrounding areas would be a barrier. There are a number of learning activities in the local area. However, it is time (NCDS does confirm that for D work is a barrier to learning) rather than location which is a factor in lack of engagement:

Int: OK and have you been involved in any adult education classes? Have they been running in your local area or anything?
D: There are a lot running in the local area. The school that my daughter is at, they’ve got Learn Direct and they also do a lot of evening courses for parents. One I was thinking about going on was Computers for the Idiots, because I don’t even know as far as turning it on and I have thought about that. But the time restrictions for work of going to those ...
Int: OK it’s so it’s in the right location but it’s just the time?
D: That’s right, yes.
Int: So what sort of times would be better in terms of ... for those sort of classes ...?
D: Well I think the times are right for most people, but it’s me going to bed at 9.00, 9.30 to be up, there’s not many people who are worried about being up for 4.00 in the morning.

In the case of D we see an engaged, networked person whose activities are situated in the local area – at street level. She does not state that her community activities have involved any formal learning or training. However, there is evidence of a pro-active approach:

D: I don’t know, I just wanted to know, you know, what you could change within the area for the better. As I say, when we were having the fencing, it was nice to be able to say ‘yes, we can do this’. The other things are vandalism on trees and things like that where, as I say, you wouldn’t have the chance or the opportunity to see a representative of the council. And you’d speak to the neighbours and say to them ‘look, we’ve got a meeting next week, is there anything you want us to bring up, is there are any issues you want sorting out?’ As I say it was an opportunity for us to sort any problems or anything out.

However, this informal learning does not necessarily arise from D’s formal education. Teacher reports from NCDS show that, at best, her parents were averagely interested in her education at ages 7, 11 and 16. Mainly they were disinterested and D’s highest qualification level was only academic level 1. She thinks that things have improved after leaving school.

In summary, D shows how local identity, a sense of local community (even at the street level) can foster various kinds of engagement. D’s lack of involvement in learning is work related, rather than arising from a desire to spend more time with

ones family (although according to NCDS, D actually spends more time on family activities than others in the sample) or because of hostility to the site where the course was located (as in the case of M) although we do not know if D would have refused the computer course if it had occurred in an alternative site but at a better time. It is also interesting that D mentions the council as instrumental in supporting a number of civic activities such as setting up the community and resident's associations and dealing with vandalism on the estate. This highlights the role of the state for D in underpinning networks of mutual aid and support.

4.13 Case E: village life

Whereas D lives on the outskirts of London, E lives in a small and affluent commuter village. She is married with 2 children aged 9 and 11 and works as a part time teaching assistant. E is involved in what might be described as traditional, lower middle-class activities in the village such as running a Brownies group, involvement in the PTA and as a school governor. The membership of the PTA is confirmed by the NCDS at age 42, being a school governor is not although this was a more recent membership. Unlike D, where the council were very much involved in promoting engagement, the villagers mainly organise their own affairs.

E is very involved in her daughter's education, even to the extent of belonging to a pressure group concerning secondary transfer (a very middle class form of social capital: see Ball, 2003):

Int:the pressure group, is that informally organised...

E: no, it's formally organised, it's a formally organised group about secondary transfer

Int: right, okay, and does that group meet at all formally

E: they do meet formally, and they have put pressure on the LEA to change the rules which has borne fruit, but they meet- it will- it sort of goes into abeyance, 'cos obviously it's quite active when the transfers come through and people haven't got the school of their choice

Int: right

E: and helping people with appeals when they need to appeal to the LEA, and it has been quite active in getting the LEA to change the rules to try and make them fairer, but at the moment obviously nothing's happening 'cos we're all awaiting our – the letters saying when you're transfer is – where you're going don't come out till March.....

Int: really, you've got to wait on that, okay.

E: yeah

Int: and you took part in that because of your children, was there any.....

E: yeah, I think we would have taken part in it anyway because it's detrimental to the whole village, obviously it does affect us and we have written letters over and over, you know, obviously we wrote letters last year because my son will be going to

secondary school this year, but we have written letters before that because it does have an effect on the village, I mean it also has a terrible effect on the children

Int: sure, yes

E: so it does have an effect on the village that there's this continual doubt, and the fact that they scatter all the village children all over the place

Int: right, okay, so basically they lose their friendship

E: well, they do, and basically the way the rules are written is that the village children will always be sent to the failing school

Int: right, okay

E: always

Int: not very positive

E: no, it's not, although they have this year

Int: right, okay, and in terms of your involvement, what do you think- obviously you don't know yet if anything's been changed about

E: well, they have, they did change things this year...they have tried to address the problem

Int: okay, so it has had some positive effect, and do you think you've gained any skills or confidence with your involvement in that

E: no, it's just writing letters

As can be seen by this quote, there is a desire by E that village children stay together not just because of being sent to the 'failing school'. There is also a desire to protect some form of community cohesion: 'it's detrimental to the whole village', they 'scatter the village children all over the place'. Engagement in the pressure group is not just designed to protect E's own children but is also motivated by a sense of localism. This runs through all of her engagements in terms of protecting or supporting the local community. However, in terms of impacts on social outcomes she sometimes plays down the impact – she refers to the Brownies, for example, as '...just a fun thing to do'. In terms of inclusivity of these groups, there is an ambivalence in the interview concerning whether the groups attract a diversity of individuals or not, or whether the makeup of groups reflects the composition of the village.

However, like M, E does not participate in adult education classes due to locality. NCDS confirms that she has not engaged in adult learning between 33 and 42. E's formal qualifications are good with academic level 3 and vocational level 4 qualifications. Here it is the fact that classes are outside the village which is important, although E does refer to classes being in '...odd sorts of places':

Int: ...and in terms of participation in adult education classes, have you ever participated in those in the last 10 years

E: no, that's.....

Int: right

E: 'cos I don't like (travelling) (laughs)

Int: right, is there no provision in the local area

E: no, not for daytime, there's been a few daytime classes, but obviously I work so...

Int: right, so you haven't taken any in the last 10 years or so

E: there's nothing in

Int: okay, and do you feel that that's been a disadvantage or is that something that you wouldn't really want to.....

E: it is something I would want to do, and also you see classes that don't appeal, or they're in the next town.

Int: right

E: you know, in terms of leisure classes I wouldn't wish to do a qualification

Int: right

E: and in terms of leisure classes they are few and far between and they do tend to be in odd sort of places, and they're expensive and you think unless I'm going to make the commitment

Int: yes

E: I won't do it

The account of E reflects a different type of local community (village life) involved in identity. As is seen, this local identity impinges upon the sort of engagements which take place – including engagement in her daughter's education – and engagement in adult education. This 'localism' does not necessarily promote exclusivity – although diversity of membership differs across groups – although we know from NCDS data that E was a tolerant person. However, E's activities are very much embedded within the life of her village and as such reflect the social (middle class) and ethnic (white) mix of that location. The possibilities for adult education to facilitate social mixing for individuals such as E might be necessarily limited.

4.14: Case H: professional status, local engagements

H, a senior manager in the public sector also defines his identity in terms of local affiliations – in terms of the local church, music events, local friends and sports (in terms of supporting the local rugby league team, playing five-a-side at a local community centre). Time for participation in associations or in adult education is limited. According to the NCDS he does eat with his family on a daily basis. He does participate regularly in the local church. This did appear in the NCDS, but he stated that he 'never' attended a church meeting and as this appears to be a long standing interest this appears to be a contradiction between the interview account and the cohort data. The church also runs local community activities such as a youth club.

H was very much embedded in the life of the local community from an early age (particularly the church) and found the new freedom of attending University both liberating and transformative in terms of his educational trajectory:

H: I was in education till I was, let me see, 19, because I went to university in London, and I went a year early, and I was very immature I think, maybe a combination of going to university early, going to London, having been brought up

the way that I had been which I suppose you could say was slightly cosseted, I'm not sure how you would put it really, but it was a combination of things there, so when I got there I sort of went off my head

Int: right ((laughing))

H: you know, a kid in a toy shop if you like, and didn't do as much work as I should have done, and did a lot of other things which I probably shouldn't have done, and therefore I dropped out after two- and not after the first year, which wouldn't have been too bad 'cos you can always- you can put things right if you do that, but I dropped out after two years which is sort of, you know, you've had it really, I think in those days you could get four years' grant

Since HE, H has conducted some training at work (which is supported by the NCDS which states that he has taken two work related courses in the last ten years), and this helps him in terms of his church activities although this is part of a more general 'accumulation' of knowledge:

H: difficult to say, I would say that my business life has assisted me to help the church, yeah, it has done, but I don't know whether you'd put it down specifically to training or whether it's just the accumulation of knowledge over a long period of time

However, there has been a transfer of 'strategic' knowledge from public sector management to the church:

H: I've been a member of the Elders which is the group of people within the church who- they don't actually run the fabric of the church, they look after the- I can only draw a business parallel, it's more to do withstrategy.....pastoral care of people in there and deciding strategy and policy, that all sounds rather cold

A sense of locality is very important to H. This is expressed in a number of ways which reflect masculinity (playing football, supporting a local rugby league team) and his own faith (being a church elder). This sense of locality and tradition has both supported and restricted his educational trajectory and engagement. In terms of attending HE in London the sudden 'freedom' which this gave H away from his family and friends was negative in terms of completing the course – although this could have occurred had H taken HE closer to home. Being locally based, and in a professional job, has given H a local identity which supports traditional forms of engagement.

4.15 Affiliation: conclusion

As can be seen in these extracts, a sense of identity around localism may be part of the work involved in sustaining families and communities. We see three 'levels' of identity around the local which partly reflect levels of economic and cultural capital. D with a part-time job in a supermarket and in social housing bases her identity around the geographical resources available. In terms of learning and civic

engagement this means that a similar street level emphasis is adopted. If opportunities were provided locally then D might be expected to take them. With greater economic resources, E avails herself of various 'village' types of engagement. Again, these form a lower-middle class habitus (set of habits and dispositions: Bourdieu, 2003) which inculcates her toward local engagements – she would not participate in learning in a nearby town. H's sense of local identity was based around church, family and local sporting affiliations. In this case, participation in HE in London did not offer him the security of locality. What is important in terms of the relationship between adult learning and engagement is the way in which a local habitus both supports some forms of learning (the close, the familiar) whilst undermining others. This should not be seen as an irrational rejection' of these alternatives but the result of an investment in identity which is (given lack of forms of recognisable capitals) costly to change.

5. Conclusions

5.1 General conclusions

In this report, we have shown how different identity strategies may be of use in supporting various forms of engagement in learning and civic life that give us the ‘benefits of learning’. There is some evidence to support the contention of identity strategies and capital utilised by Côté and Levene (2002). For example, earlier learning and even work-based learning might have a role in building resilience. In the case of B school and later learning at work enable her to develop the sorts of intangible identity capital which she needs to deal with her son’s behaviour. These protective benefits are close to the ‘inoculation’ benefits described by Côté and Levene (2002).

We have also seen that identity is in formation – even in adulthood. Identity is not fixed (although access to resources means that some have more ability to use identity strategies than others). As the case of G shows, there can be ambivalences around conceptions of professional identity, although even a partially qualified identity can be of use. There are issues here for work-based learning and opportunity structures which relate professional identities to various engagements.

However, in some cases, identity strategies might form a ‘barrier’ to engagement in formal adult learning or civic participation. For example, in the case of M, a desire to remain respectable may be a barrier to learning or engagement, but not of the informal type. Interestingly, interventions aimed at the poorest may alienate marginal individuals who aim to achieve respectability. For example, M is dismissive of using a community centre in a less respectable estate for learning. However, we should also appreciate that M ‘makes’ her identity in conditions of inequality – these are not ‘passive’ strategies – this too has implications for policy.

The importance of ‘positionality’ for some individuals in the formation of their identities (such as C and M) means that there are problems concerning the use of adult learning or civic participation as ‘sites’ of social mixing. Some individuals will aim to exclude themselves from such sites of ‘diversity’ and buy their way out of public provision. This has always been an issue for adult education, and the private sector of provision is growing. The degree to which ‘positional’ identities and the desire for exclusivity will split the sector into public / private providers might be an important one for social and community cohesion.

Time and space are important in accessing engagement. The nature of people’s working lives – in particular shift workers such as D, but also for nearly all of the respondents – means that there must be flexibility in learning and engagement opportunities. Public provision through councils (in the case of D) can be helpful in facilitating engagement. Communities can not always co-ordinate these services themselves.

Identity strategies are not a consumer ‘choice’. There are class-, gender- and resource-constraints on the formation of such strategies. Although identities are often in formation, changing identities as an instrument of policy without changing substantive inequalities also requires addressing material inequalities. However, at the margins providers can seek to ‘work with’ the identities which their learners have and should aim to recognise these.

The use of the NCDS in this research acts to strengthen the validity of these findings. In most cases, the statements made by respondents were congruent with those from the NCDS.

Obviously, further contexts could be explored in future research. For example, minority ethnic groups and other combinations of class / gender / attitude could be sampled. In addition, to continue the ‘mixed methods’ theme of the research, hypothesis arising from the qualitative research on ‘embedded identity strategies’ could be tested using quantitative data.

5.2 Policy conclusions

‘Embedded identity strategies’ present a new way of thinking about participation in adult learning and memberships of other bodies such as PTAs or school governorships. Ambivalence to policy initiatives to widen participation or to increase participation in civil society is often reduced either to personality characteristics (e.g. lack of esteem) or simple ‘background’ characteristics (e.g. social class). Examining both individual strategies of the ‘self’ within social contexts enables us to appreciate the dynamic and purposive considerations behind involvement (or lack of it). For example, the positional nature of working class ‘respectability’ may have implications for targeting courses at those on the margins of interventions aimed at these groups e.g. some may feel that their personal and collective identity would be harmed by participation, even if they are gaining skills.

Specific policy conclusions are as follows:

Policies to increase engagement in adult learning and/or civil society may not be undertaken by individuals due to the positional strategies which they pursue. Connotations around policies are important (e.g. what will this do to my status, not just my skill).

Resilience operates in many dimensions. Building resilience for some might not be about individualised ‘self-esteem’ but in maintaining a (resilient) public persona.

Local identity is important, not just in terms of providing local provision, but also in terms of the interests of participants (e.g. in making partnerships across the estate, in securing ‘lower middle class’ respectability).

As might be expected, those who scored highly on the racism scale in NCDS adopted strategies to avoid social mixing (although whether this concerned race or class is not necessarily clear).

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Appendix 1: Topic guide

Learning and civic participation Topic guide

Research objectives

- To explore how individuals perceive civic activity (formal/informal, location of activity) and how these perceptions were shaped by their learning experiences and life history. In particular, to understand how adult education may have differing effects on informal / formal participations.
- To examine the role of learning on civic participation as embedded within the context of the life course (examining factors such as age, class, ethnicity, gender and tolerance)
- To examine the relationships between learning, the formation of identity and civic participation

Notes for interviewer

- Thank the participant for agreeing to be interviewed.
- Research project from the University of London to find out what people think are the outcomes from their education.
- Stress the anonymity of the interview, and that the interview will take around 60 minutes to complete.
- The respondent should be free to give whatever response they like, you will not be judging them on what they say and so they should feel free to give an honest answer.
- There is a show card which can be used with respondents if prompting fails to elicit any response.
- Use the show card for involvement in the community only if prompting fails. Remember that some of our respondents will have low level basic skills and may not be able to read the card: you may wish to just read the list out to them.
- Note that this is a topic guide for the interviewer, many of the terms on this topic guide are not ones which the respondent will be familiar with. Try to use the respondents own terms when re-phrasing topics.

Outline of interview

Current situation

Informal role

Formal participations

Drawing conclusions

Current situation

PROBE: General biographical details, including general health and family situation

Activities

PROBE: what might do in a typical week

INTERVIEWER: note and probe any activities other than direct employment.

Informal role

Child care / support activities.

Helping neighbours.

Community monitoring and control.

Other mutual activities.

PROBE: Reasons for taking part in these activities, role of adult learning (if any), role of identity (class / gender / ethnicity etc) and identity capital (self-esteem, confidence) in participation.

Type of skills used of gained from these activities (basic civic skills such as literacy / numeracy; generic civic skills such as computing; civic meta-competences such as organisational skills).

Intensity of activity in terms of time taken, degree of involvement, risks and benefits of involvement.

Changes in informal role over last ten years

Formal role

This section examines the role of learning in civic participation and identity work and its relation to learning.

Involvement in organisations / community

PROMPT: As a member of a group or helping out in other ways? (USE SHOWCARD A IF RESPONDENT NEEDS HELP)

- groups and clubs (secondary associations)
- political activity (including forms of activity such as contacting MPs)
- involvement in community protests and issues.
- disputes and negotiations at work.
- helping out in the community

PROBE: nature of group (inclusive / exclusive memberships, purposes of group – e.g. mutual support, community or political, ‘class’ or ‘ethnic’ strategy)

Effectiveness of group (reaching goals, community development, ethnic or identity group)

PROBE: Reasons for taking part in these activities, role of adult learning, role of identity (class / gender / ethnicity etc) and identity capital (self-esteem, confidence) in participation.

Type of skills used or gained from these activities (basic civic skills such as literacy / numeracy; generic civic skills such as computing; civic meta-competences such as organisational skills)

Intensity of activity in terms of time taken, degree of involvement, risks and benefits of involvement.

Reasons for lack of participation

PROBE:

- lack of economic resources
 - lack of time / time use
 - family demands
 - cultural factors
 - structural constraints

Changes in formal participations over last ten years

Drawing conclusions

How has community role informally / formally changed in last few years (up to ten years) and how might it change in the future

Any things that would like to add

Thanks for taking part (give out letter) and ask respondent if would be willing to take part in follow up activity (participant observation) in site of civic participation.

CARD A: TAKING PART IN THE COMMUNITY

Sports club / gym

Hobby or collectors group

Arts or cultural society

Parent Teacher Association

Tenants / Residents Group

Neighbourhood Watch

Trade Union or Staff Association

Pressure Group

Political Party

Conservation / Environmental Group

Church Group

Charity

Board of School Governors

Parish or Town Council

Group to help the sick or vulnerable

Local History group

Investment club

Support group

Other political organisation

Helping others generally (older or ill people in the community, helping with shopping, helping with childcare)

Other forms of involvement (organising parties and get-togethers with neighbours, home selling such as Tupperware parties, organising events)

Appendix 2: Selected NCDS data

Name	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
SAMPLE CRITERIA							
Sample Group	Workclass f SE	Workclass f SE	Prof. Male NW	Workclass f SE	Workclass f SE	Prof. Male NW	Prof. Male NW
Adult Education 33-42	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Civic Participation 33-42	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y
EARLY EDUCATION							
Social class of birth	3m	3m	3nm		3m	3m	
Mother's interest in ed at 7	Average	Interested	Interested	Average	Average	No interest	Interested
Father's interest in ed at 7	No interest	Interested	Interested	No interest	Average	No interest	Interested
Father's interest in ed at 11	No interest	No interest	Interested	No interest	No interest	Interested	Interested
Mother's interest in ed at 11	No interest	Interested	No interest	Average	Interested	Interested	Interested
Mother's interest in ed at 16	No interest	Interested	Interested	No interest	Interested	Interested	No interest
Father's interest in ed at 16	Interested	Interested	Interested	No interest	Interested	Interested	No interest

ADULT EDUCATION							
Ac. Level at 33	1.00	2.00	3.00	1.00	3.00	4.00	2.00
Voc. Level at 33	0.00	3.00	0.00	0.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Academic Courses 33-42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00
Vocational Courses 33-42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Work related (unacc.) 33-42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	9.00	1.00
Leisure Courses 33-42	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Access courses 33-42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Basic skills courses	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Govt. training	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Main barrier to learning	work		work				work
FAMILIAL RELATIONS							
Family eats together...	Varies	Weekly	Daily	Daily	Weekly	Daily	
Family goes out together	5.00	Varies	Weekly	Weekly	> Once / yr	Weekly	
Visiting relatives	Monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Yearly	Weekly	Monthly	
Family holidays	Once / yr	Once / yr	> Once / yr	Once / yr	> Once / yr	> Once / yr	
Someone to turn to for advice	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Who turn to?		Father	Brother	Mother	Partner	Partner	Partner

Would they visit you?		Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Years known support person		41.00	41.00	42.00	17.00	5.00	5.00
Go out on own, or with friends	Never	< Once / month	Weekly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Weekly
CIVIC PARTICIPATON							
Voted in 97 election	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Who voted for	Lib Dem	Labour		Lib Dem	Labour	Lib Dem	Labour
Who would vote for now	Lib Dem	Other	Abstain	Labour	Labour	Lib Dem	Labour
Interest in politics	Not at all	Fair	Not very	Not very	Fair	Not very	Not very
Member of a union	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
religion	Other	C of E	C of E	RC	None	C of E	C of E
Attend religious meetings	Monthly	Weekly	Weekly	Monthly		Weekly	Monthly
Read a paper	No	No	2.00	Yes	No	No	No
Political party 33							
Political party 42							
Environmental group 33							
Environmental group 42							
Charity 33							
Charity 42							
Women's group 33							

Women's group 42							
WI 33							
WI 42							
PTA 33							
PTA 42		Yes			Yes		
Tenant's / resident's 33							
Tenant's / resident's 42				Yes			
Trade union 33							
Staff association 33							
Trade union 42	Yes						Yes
Staff association 42							
ATTITUDES (5 point scale)							
Racism at 42	2.00	2.40	4.40	2.00	1.60	1.00	1.80
Collectivism at 42	3.50	3.00	2.33	3.17	4.00	3.50	2.67
Authoritarianism at 42	3.83	4.00	4.83	3.50	2.67	2.83	4.00
Family values at 42	2.40	2.60	3.40	3.20	3.00	2.60	2.80
Political cynicism at 42	4.00	3.67	3.67	3.00	1.67	3.33	2.67
Environmentalism at 42	4.33	2.67	3.33	2.67	4.67	3.33	3.00
Work ethic at 42	4.00	3.67	3.67	3.00	4.33	2.00	3.00

EFFICACY / MALAISE AT 42							
I never seem to get what I want	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Malaise at 42			High malaise				
GROSS HOURLY EARNINGS AT 42							
Hourly pay at 42	9.76		17.78	3.13		29.85	15.27
Name	A	B	C	D	E	F	G

Name	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
SAMPLE CRITERIA							
Sample Group	Prof. Male NW	Prof. Male NW	Workclass f SE	Workclass f SE	Workclass f SE	Workclass f SE	Workclass f SE
Adult Education 33-42	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y
Civic Participation 33-42	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y
EARLY EDUCATION							
Social class of birth	3nm	1.00	3m	3m	3m	3m	3nm
Mother's interest in ed at 7	No interest	Interested	Interested	Interested	Average	Average	Interested
Father's interest in ed at 7	No interest	Interested	No interest	Interested	Average	Average	Interested
Father's interest in ed at 11	Interested	No interest	Interested	Average	Average	No interest	Interested
Mother's interest in ed at 11	Interested	Interested	Interested	No interest	Average	Average	Interested
Mother's interest in ed at 16	No interest	No interest	No interest	Average	Average	No interest	No interest
Father's interest in ed at 16	No interest	No interest	No interest	Average	Average	No interest	No interest

ADULT EDUCATION							
Ac. Level at 33	3.00	4.00	3.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	3.00
Voc. Level at 33	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	0.00	4.00
Academic Courses 33-42	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Vocational Courses 33-42	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Work related (unacc.) 33-42	2.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	9.00
Leisure Courses 33-42	0.00	2.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	2.00
Access courses 33-42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Basic skills courses	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Govt. training	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Main barrier to learning	Work	Work				Family	
FAMILIAL RELATIONS							
Family eats together...	Daily	Daily	Daily		Weekly	Daily	Varies
Family goes out together	> Once / yr	Weekly	Once / yr		Weekly	Weekly	Weekly
Visiting relatives	Never	Weekly	Yearly		Monthly	Never	Yearly
Family holidays	> Once / yr	> Once / yr	> Once / yr		> Once / yr	Never	>Once / yr
Someone to turn to for advice	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Who turn to?	Brother	Male friend	Partner	Fem friend	Mother	Fem friend	Partner

Would they visit you?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Lives with
Years known support person	41.00	30.00	19.00	3.00	42.00	20.00	
Go out on own, or with friends	Never	Weekly	Monthly	Monthly		Never	<Once / month
CIVIC PARTICIPATON							
Voted in 97 election	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Who voted for	Labour	Conservative	Labour			Labour	
Who would vote for now	Labour	Labour	Labour	Labour	Conservative	Other	Green
Interest in politics	Fair	Fair	Fair	Not at all	Not very	Not at all	Not very
Member of a union	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
religion	URC	C of E	C of E	C of E	Christian	Baptist	Christian
Attend religious meetings	Never	Monthly	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly	Monthly	Never
Read a paper	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Political party 33							
Political party 42							
Environmental group 33							
Environmental group 42							Yes
Charity 33							
Charity 42							Yes
Women's group 33							

Women's group 42							
WI 33							
WI 42							
PTA 33			Yes				
PTA 42			Yes				Yes
Tenant's / resident's 33							
Tenant's / resident's 42		Yes					
Trade union 33							
Staff association 33							
Trade union 42	Yes		Yes				
Staff association 42							
ATTITUDES (5 point scale)							
Racism at 42	1.40	1.80	1.60	2.00	3.00	3.80	2.20
Collectivism at 42	3.67	2.00	3.67	3.67	2.67	3.33	3.50
Authoritarianism at 42	3.50	4.83	2.50	3.67	3.50	3.50	3.50
Family values at 42	3.20	3.80	2.20	2.00	2.20	3.40	3.60
Political cynicism at 42	2.33	3.00	2.67	3.33	3.00	3.33	3.33
Environmentalism at 42	4.00	4.33	4.67	3.33	3.67	4.33	4.00
Work ethic at 42	3.67	4.00	2.33	2.67	3.00	2.67	2.67

EFFICACY / MALAISE AT 42							
I never seem to get what I want	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Agree
Malaise at 42				High malaise			
GROSS HOURLY EARNINGS AT 42							
Hourly pay at 42	16.64	13.20	8.61		7.14	4.34	5.77
Name	H	I	J	K	L	M	N

Identity, learning and engagement: a qualitative inquiry using the NCDS

In contemporary adult education there are concerns with issues of identity and engagement in civil society. In particular, how do personal and collective identities impact upon participation in education and in the wider civic and political sphere? In this report we outline how the work involved in maintaining and constructing adult identities also enables us to understand types and intensity of involvement.

Using the NCDS (National Child Development Study) we identify fourteen individuals who vary according to their degree of adult learning and civic participation. We nest these individuals within various identity 'contexts' (class, gender, geography, attitude). By integrating data from interview and longitudinal data we gain a valuable insight into various 'identity strategies' employed and their implications for education policy.

The conceptual framework developed in this report presents a new way of thinking about participation in adult learning and memberships of other bodies such as PTAs or school governorships. Work on policy initiatives to widen participation or to increase participation in civil society is often reduced either to personality characteristics or 'background' characteristics (such as social class). Examining individual strategies of the 'self' within social contexts enables us to appreciate the dynamic and purposive considerations behind involvement (or lack of it) in education and the civic sphere.

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