**National Centre for Research Methods & The University of Edinburgh**

**Researching Lives through Time: Qualitative Approaches**

**A two-day training programme**

**11th & 12th June, The University of Edinburgh**

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This methodology course explores the broad theme of researching lives qualitatively through time, with a particular focus on Qualitative Longitudinal (QL) methods of research. The course will establish the significance and value of dynamic approaches to social enquiry and show how time is not simply a vehicle for a study, the medium through which it is conducted (as in classic longitudinal approaches) but is also a rich theoretical construct and topic of enquiry that drives the generation and analysis of data. The course will highlight the power of QL research to discern the factors that shape the life course, to understand *how and why* changes and continuities occur, for whom, and under what circumstances (as opposed to a more narrow and surface picture of what changes and when, across broad segments of the population). The course will be tailored to the needs of doctoral researchers and delivered through a series of 4 lectures, 4 interactive workshops, research ‘surgeries’, and the provision of power point handouts and reading lists.

The course is suitable for PhD researchers who are interested in dynamic approaches to social enquiry and wish to develop some skills in Qualitative Longitudinal methodology to support their current or future research. **Researchers who register to attend will be expected to attend for the whole course, and to do some preparatory reading, along with some preparation in advance for the final workshop.**

**Recommended Reading**

Neale, B. (2015)Time and the Lifecourse: Perspectives from Qualitative Longitudinal Research ***in*** Nancy Worth and Irene Hardill (eds.) *Researching the Life course*, Bristol, Policy Press. This book chapter explores the conceptual foundations for QL research and suggests ways of ‘slicing’ time as the basis for empirical enquiry

Thomson, R. Plumridge, L and Holland, J. (2003 (eds) Longitudinal Qualitative Research: Special issue of the *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 6, 3. A collection of articles that explore the principles and practice of QL research.

Corden, A. and Millar, J. (2007) (eds.) Qualitative Longitudinal Research for Social Policy: Special issue of *Social Policy and Society*, 6, 4. A collection of articles on QL research, with a particular focus on policy settings and the analysis of QL data.

**Lecture One: Researching Lives Dynamically through Time: Introduction**

This session will give a broad introduction to Qualitative Longitudinal Research. We will trace the gradual development of a ‘temporal’ turn in contemporary social science and explore the synergies and distinctions between varied social scientific approaches that engage centrally with time, namely social anthropology, sociological community re-studies; oral and life history research, and life course/longitudinal research. We will cover both prospective (looking forwards) and retrospective (looking backwards) studies, with a particular focus on life course research. The session will explore varied planes of time, and suggest new ways of thinking qualitatively about time as the basis for empirical enquiry.

**Workshop One: Generating Temporal Insights.** Attendees will gain a greater appreciation of the conceptual building blocks for life course research (turning points, transitions, trajectories). They will try out varied ways to generate temporal data through one to one interviewing, before re-convening to share insights and observations.

**Lecture Two: Crafting Temporal Field Enquiry: Design and Practice**

This session will explore different approaches to the design and conduct of dynamic research, including the complex mix of ethnographic, interview based and documentary methods used to generate temporal data. The idea of temporal research as a craft, as much as a robust social scientific mode of enquiry will be introduced, and the rich repertoire of field methods and techniques designed to ‘capture’ time in the field, and to engage with and maintain samples over time will be explored and illustrated. Achieving a balance between depth and breadth of data generation is a particular issue in temporal research, one that impacts on sampling strategies and the choice of field settings. Creative ways of sampling, for example, through cross generational designs, will be outlined.

**Workshop 2: Temporal Research Design.** Researchers will work in small groups to design a study that engage with time, drawing on the principles of temporal logic, framing and sampling set out in the lecture.

**Lecture Three: The Ethics of Temporal Research**

This session will begin with an overview of the key principles of qualitative research ethics and go on to consider how the need for ethical literacy is magnified and inflected through temporal research. Issues will include consent as an ongoing process, sustaining ethical relationships, including the balance between reciprocity and maintaining the boundaries of professional research relationships in the field; the nature and extent of participation in long term field research, and the resolution of ethical dilemmas, using both proactive and reactive ethical strategies.

**Workshop 3: Temporal ethics.** Researchers will work individually and in small groups to consider, tackle and resolve a number of ethical dilemmas that might arise in the field.

**Lecture Four: The Analytical Journey**: **Managing/Analysing Temporal Data**

This lecture will consider the key principles of managing complex temporal data for long term use and re-use, an important issue in that temporal data are both complex and extensive, even where the number of cases in a sample is relatively small. The lecture will explore the process of analysing such data, beginning with an overview of the principles of qualitative data analysis and considering the complexities of temporal analysis that involves working in three dimensions: case, theme and time.

**Workshop Four: The analytical journey.** Researchers will work individually and in small groups to conduct an initial analysis of data drawn from the Following Young Fathers study ([www.followingfathers.leeds.ac.uk](http://www.followingfathers.leeds.ac.uk)). They will work with selected material from interview transcripts, and analytical files such as Pen Portraits, time maps, and framework grids. Some advance preparation will be needed for this workshop; materials will be sent to attendees in advance of the course.

**Course Timetable.**

**11th & 12th June 2018.**

The course will run from 9.45am to 5.30 pm each day.

**Please make sure you arrive on time!**

9.45-10.00 registration and overview of the day.

10.00-11.00 Lecture and discussion

11.15 -11.30 break

11.30-13.00 Workshop

13.00-14.00 lunch

14.00-15.00 Lecture and discussion

15.15.-15.30 break

15.30-17.00 Workshop

17.00-17.30 surgery – drop in for those students who would like to consult with Bren about their current or planned research.

There will be a final short plenary session at the end of the course