



**Real Life Methods**

Part of the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods

## **Exploring the potential of Qualitative Longitudinal Research (QLR) in policy related research**

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## **Objectives:**

- To consider the potential value of QLR in policy development
- To identify particular areas where QLR may have an impact on operational and strategic policy making

## Questions:

- Can we identify the strengths and opportunities of qualitative longitudinal research to identify/influence potential avenues for:
  - policy development?
  - are there particular areas of policy where QLR might be particularly useful?
  - and understanding the impact on policy?

## Sub-questions:

- Has Longitudinal research been something you have used in your work?
- How might QUALITATIVE longitudinal research offer some different insights from quantitative in your own areas of work?
- Can you think of any areas of your work where you might have benefited from the insights from a piece of QLR?
- What might be the sources of resistance in policy circles to QLR?

- Judge and Bauld (2006) note that with New Labour "there appears to be a more sophisticated recognition of the complexity, pervasiveness and durability of the social problems that have to be confronted. At the same time there is greater awareness of the need to learn lessons ... to promote social change".

- Considering subtle or pervasive influence on changing attitudes and perceptions over time.
- Contributing and increasing our understanding of how and why our social and material worlds come to be shaped in particular ways, how things might change, what those changes mean for those involved.

- Doherty et al. (2006) A Longitudinal Qualitative Study of Infant-Feeding Decision Making and Practices among HIV-Positive Women in South Africa
- Stewart-Knox et al.(2005) Smoking and peer groups: Results from a longitudinal qualitative study of young people in Northern Ireland
- Daniluk (2001) Reconstructing their lives: A longitudinal, qualitative analysis of the transition to biological childlessness for infertile couples

- Contributing and increasing our understanding of how and why our social and material worlds come to be shaped in particular ways, how things might change, what those changes mean for those involved.
- Investigating 'what matters' to people and 'what changes' for them, including the long term effects of social policy interventions.
- Asking about what things seem to stay largely the same and why

- Fieldhouse et al. (2002) qualitative longitudinal research with participants of the New Deal in Oldham, Manchester
- Corden and Nice (2006 a,b,& c) Qualitative longitudinal panel of incapacity benefits recipients. Department for Work and Pensions

- Tapping into the impacts of policy developments on people's lives and their own decisions/views about social behaviour.
- Informing policy for a range of constituencies across government, the voluntary sector, the business sector, the media and the general population.

## Timescapes

- Systematic interrogation and understanding of the rigour and validity of QL as a mode of social enquiry and explanation

Qualitative longitudinal research can contribute to evidence in policy making through:

- Considering subtle or pervasive influence on changing attitudes and perceptions over time.
- Contributing and increasing our understanding of how and why our social and material worlds come to be shaped in particular ways, how things might change, what those changes mean for those involved.
- Investigating 'what matters' to people and 'what changes' for them, including the long term effects of social policy interventions.
- Asking about what things seem to stay largely the same and why
- Tapping into the impacts of policy developments on people's lives and their own decisions/views about social behaviour.
- Informing policy for a range of constituencies across government, the voluntary sector, the business sector, the media and the general population.
- Systematic interrogation of the above through QL research facilitates understanding of the rigour and validity of QL as a mode of social enquiry and explanation

## References

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- Doherty, T., Chopra, M., Nkonki, L., Jackson, D., & Persson, L. A. 2006, "A longitudinal qualitative study of infant-feeding decision making and practices among HIV-Positive women in South Africa", *Journal of Nutrition*, vol. 136, no. 9, pp. 2421-2426.
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- Knox C & Hughes J 1994, "Policy Evaluation Development: Some Methodological Considerations", *Community Development Journal*, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 239-250.
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- Corden, A. and Nice, K. (2006a) [Pathways to Work: Findings from the final cohort on a qualitative longitudinal panel of incapacity benefits recipients](#), Department for Work and Pensions Research Report, vol. 398, Corporate Document Services, Leeds
- Corden, A. and Nice, K. (2006b) [Incapacity Benefit Reforms Pilot: Findings from the second cohort in a longitudinal panel of clients](#), Department for Work and Pensions Research Report, vol. 345, Corporate Document Services, Leeds
- Corden, A. and Nice, K. (2006c) [Pathways to Work from Incapacity Benefits: A study of experience and use of Return to Work Credit](#), Department for Work and Pensions Research Report, vol. 353, Corporate Document Services, Leeds