

R1.1 *Introduction to Diary Research: Exploring the Everyday in Higher Education (0172)*

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Diary research, which is under-used in the higher education research field, is more commonly implemented in the research field where social sciences and health sciences intersect (eg. Furness and Garrud, 2010; Milligan, Bingley and Gatrell, 2005). In this presentation, we provide an introduction to diary method, the key types, the challenges and issues, and discuss the potential for this method to be more widely used in the field of higher education research. Diary research can take the form of unsolicited diaries, which pre-exist the research, and which are particularly useful for historical analysis. We focus on solicited diaries, which are created and collected specifically for research purposes, and which can therefore be designed and adapted to meet research questions and the target participants (Cucu-Oancea, 2013). Solicited diary research can accord with the full gamut of epistemological and theoretical positions, and can produce data for quantitative and qualitative analysis. As such there are examples of time-use diaries which produce regression models (Mullan, 2018), and diaries which produce poem-like analysis in the postqualitative school of thought (Taylor and Gannon, 2017). Diaries are often used in tandem with other methods, and in particular are coupled with interviews to form the diary-interview method, where the diary forms the basis for successive or retrospective interviews. The format of diaries can be adapted to suit participants with specific conditions, as shown in studies of people with dementia (Bartlett, 2012) and disabilities (Kaur, Saukko and Lumsden, 2017), enabling the representation of voices of marginalised groups and communities in research. Forms of diary research include written (paper and on-line), photo, video, audio, and a combination of these; moreover, diary research can follow both short and intense timescales and periods of months or years.

While the first part of the presentation introduces the different types of diary research, the second part discusses the challenges and issues that arise across diary research (Filep et al., 2017), no matter which type – although, as the other presentations in the panel show, these challenges and issues vary hugely across different empirical contexts. We present four principal areas of challenge in diary research: attrition of participants; variation in quality and quantity of entries; the modification of behaviour that results from diary-keeping; and ethical issues relating to personal and private content. The presentation ends with a discussion of the relevance of diary research to current concerns in higher education (Henderson, forthcoming; Travers, 2011), which leads into the other presentations in the panel.