

## **Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth 2008-9**

### **5-Day Intensive BNIM Research Interview Trainings Biographic-Narrative-Interpretive Method (BNIM)**

**5 days for 6 people:**

**2008. November 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup>**  
**2009 – March 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>.**  
**2009 –June 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>; 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>**

The value of open-narrative interviewing and insightful interpretation is widely recognised, but rather than having to invent the wheel for themselves, many people welcome a systematic immersion into principles and procedures that have been shown over two decades and many countries to generate high-quality work. An excerpt from an email we received from one university may be suggestive:

*“... a number of the trainees who graduated this year got top awards in their doctorate projects... BNIM and narrative projects were considered to be of a particularly high standard by both internal and external examiners, and were very well received. The course director was very impressed and has told me that the standard of the research of those undertaking these projects (using BNIM) has improved the standard of the whole cohort.”*

For over nine years in the UK, and more recently in New York (USA), in Auckland (NZ), Ljubljana (Slovenia), and Sydney (Australia), we have been running BNIM intensive trainings designed for PhD students and postdoctoral researchers in various pure and applied fields. Comments include:

*Elvin – A richness beyond what I could imagine.*

*Sasha - thank you, for a wonderful training course. I learnt so much - and it was a great experience for us all as a team, and in terms of all of our intellectual and skills development.*

*Mark – I could go away and practice now. I liked the balance of how and why. I really got my head round that and could explain it to someone else.*

Recently completed PhDs and clinical doctorates by researchers using BNIM range over topics such as: reintegration of returning Guatemalan refugees; identity in informal care; men coping with sexual abuse; psychosomatic study of breast cancer; love and intimacy; motivation in occupational therapy; South African migrants to NZ; nurses' and health visitors' learning and their professional practices; relationship experiences in psychosis (such as those of, and with, hearing voices people) and hospitalisation. We know of 18 more PhDs, clinical doctorates and post-doctoral research projects in process. Anglophone universities involved include Birkbeck College, Birmingham, Central Lancashire, Dublin, de Montfort, East Anglia, East London, Essex, Exeter, NUI-Galway, Idaho, Kings College London, Leeds, Leicester, Massey, Oxford, Oxford Brookes, Plymouth, Queens University (Belfast).

BNIM assumes that “narrative” expresses both conscious concerns and unconscious cultural, societal and individual presuppositions and processes. Integrally psycho-societal, it supports research into the lived experience and reflexivity of individuals and collectives, facilitating understanding both the ‘inner’ and the ‘outer’ worlds of ‘historically-evolving persons-in-historically-evolving situations’, and particularly the expectedly surprising *interactivity* of inner and outer world dynamics. It *especially* serves researchers who need a tool that supports understanding spanning sociological *and* psychological dynamics and structures, and these treated not statically but as situated, affected *and active* historically and biographically.

For an example of BNIM case studies we recommend the European Union seven-country SOSTRIS project (edited) *Biography and social exclusion in Europe: experiences and life-journeys* (2002: Bristol, Policy Press). Other books, articles and reports are listed in the full bibliographies of the free *Short Guide to BNIM*.

BNIM research provides an innovative base for policy review and for better policy, and for professional or activist practice.

When you do the course, you automatically become a member of the <Biographic-narrative-BNIM> email list where news, questions and discussion circulate. Methodology can be lonely without a secure base and like-minded people working in the same way as you. The course, the textbook, the free *Short Guide* and the email list offer you support in using part or all of the *BNIM tool-kit* in your own work and for liaising with others.

## Summary

Designed for PhD students and professional researchers, the course provides a thorough training in doing BNIM biographic narrative interviews, together with 'hands-on experience' of following BNIM interpretation procedures. Students develop a sense of how their own research projects might use such aspects and components.

Taught by Tom Wengraf and Caroline Barratt in Muswell Hill, North London, the course's small number of students ensures close coaching and support for the intensive work that is needed for you to fully acquire both the understanding of principles and also the practical capacity for proceeding with the systematic procedures involved in BNIM – usable both for BNIM but also for other types of narrative interviewing and interpretation.

You will be expected to have looked at (not read!) chapters 6 and 12 of Tom's textbook, *Qualitative research interviewing: biographic narrative and semi-structured method* (2001: Sage Publications). *Before the course starts*, you are expected to have studied some bits and scanned others of the most recent version of the *Short Guide to BNIM* which will be sent to your email address. This preparing-by-reading means that most of your time during the 5 days can be spent on clarification and practical exercises, learning-by-doing.

## Programme (subject to revision) for 5-day intensives

### Thursday and Friday

We start with a short introduction to the Biographic-narrative-interpretive method, the history of its development, and to the principles behind its practice. The point and timing of using open-ended biographic narrative interviews rather than (only) the more conventional semi-structured and attitude-and-argument focused ones is clarified. You get to see the value of the 3 quite different subsessions. The bulk of the first two days is then almost entirely devoted to learning the craft of BNIM interviewing practice. This involves learning to ask narrative-pointed questions (both open and also focused) and not inadvertently interrupting or deflecting the interviewee. Apparently simple, it rapidly becomes clear that such a craft requires repeated and carefully-monitored practice to be successfully achieved. Pencil-and-paper and repeated interview practice exercises ensure such success is achieved by the end of the 2nd day.

### Monday to Wednesday

We outline the principles and you engage in the key practices of BNIM interpretive work. We explain the importance of the twin interpretive tracks of 'living of the lived life' and 'telling of the told story' analysis, and micro-analysis, and how you convert the raw transcript into two series of processed data for each track. You learn the significance of the future-blind chunk-by-chunk approach peculiar to BNIM by practice – by doing parts of a narrative text analysis, a micro-analysis and biographical data analysis. You see the value of bringing the separated tracks together in an integrated 'case account'. Finally, on the basis of case-presentations, you practice systematic case-comparison and the generalising *and* particularising modelling towards which BNIM work is typically oriented. The course ends with our looking again at how you might best use all or part of the BNIM approach within your individual research projects, and, given the existence of sceptical research and applied policy audiences, how to defend your choice to use such an in-depth biographical research method with a necessarily low-N sample.

**After you start your work**, to help you avoid un-necessary errors, we *advise on your eventual design of a SQUIN* for your first pilot BNIM pilot interview, and then – if you wish -- *comment on your transcript and then on your data-processing* of that transcript for subsequent interpretation. The cost for such consultancy is included in the course fee.

**To reserve a place on one of the courses.** To reserve a place, you need to send us a **deposit of £225** (or the full amount).

Places are reserved in strict order of deposits (or full payment) received. **Deposits etc.** are returnable up to the first day of the previous month, ie. until 1<sup>st</sup> February and 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009 respectively.

2009. In 2009 the first course will run on **March 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>**. The cost will be **£725** if paid in full **before 1<sup>st</sup> February 2009**; otherwise the cost rises to **£825**. The second course will run on **June 18-19 and 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>**.

A third course will run in the Autumn of 2009 (**autumn dates to be announced**).

The cost will be **£725** if paid in full **before 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009**; otherwise the cost rises to **£825**. **You secure your place by paying a deposit (£225) or the full payment.**

**All inquiries** and bookings, and requests for the most recently updated version of the *Guide to BNIM*, please contact [tom@tomwengraf.com](mailto:tom@tomwengraf.com).