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### **Filming “A Life”: Seriality in the Longitudinal *Up Series***

This paper explores the specific use of seriality in Michael Apter's *Up Series*. In 1964, *Seven Up* first documented the lives of a group of children at the age of seven. Since then, Apter has regularly revisited the participants every seven years up to the most recent *56 Up* (2012). This paper argues that the way in which this longitudinal documentary employs seriality creates a singular aesthetic experience of time that will be conceived through Gilles Deleuze's notion of “a life.”

To lay out this argument, the paper will proceed in three steps. First, I will examine the series' relation to its own past by drawing out the frequent moments in which the social actors fail to recognize their younger selves. Oftentimes they look at themselves in an earlier film from the series and say “that's not me.” It will be seen that, even though any sense of a stable identity across time is broken, a consistency of character persists. Second, I will look at the focus the way the series projects itself into the future, asking participants to picture themselves seven years head. This dreaming of a future self is more often falsified than confirmed by the unexpected intervention of life itself. So, once again, the series foregrounds the tensions or breaks between its various installments rather than continuities. In the third and crucial step of the argument, I will focus on what it is that persists across the variations and breaks within the series. It will be seen that the consistency across the series arises from the *impersonal* traits that qualify each of the lives depicted. The seriality of the *Up Series* manages to bring out the singular forces of liveliness that characterize ‘a life’ but that are irreducible to notions of identity or personality. Interestingly, then, seriality is what allows this documentary about a group of individuals to go beyond its focus on the individual and create a sensation of life as immanent, processual, and transindividual.

Looking at this specific longitudinal documentary will furthermore allow me to draw more general conclusions on the productivity of serial modes of reception.

### **Biographical note**

Toni Pape is Assistant Professor at the Department of Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam. His research focuses on the aesthetics of contemporary television and participatory media cultures. Toni earned his Ph.D. in 2014 from the Department of Comparative Literature at Université de Montréal, with a thesis entitled “Figures of Time: Preemptive Narratives in Recent Television Series,” currently under review with Duke University Press. A condensed introduction to the topic has been published as “Preemptive Narratives, Modes of Attention, and the Politics of Perception” in *Spectator* 43.2 (Fall 2014): 63-72. Toni's current research project, entitled “The Aesthetics of Stealth,” investigates modes of disappearance in video games, television series, and contemporary art.