



checklist

- Topics that lend themselves to narrative forms of enquiry within the social sciences are often experiences or events shared by a number of people, which are personally significant for the individual and also tell us something important about aspects of social life or a particular society.
- Oral history aims to explore what it was like to live in a past era and to capture and preserve the memories of a cohort while they are still alive. It allows researchers to uncover the cultural repertoires that narrators draw on when telling a story and the social values reflected in the story and in the way the story is presented.
- Remember, a narrative approach to social research is concerned not only with the story-telling components or characteristics of an account, but also with the social interactions between interviewer and interviewee that encourage and influence the way that an account is presented.
- The importance of interviewer/interviewee interactions means that narratives are described as being 'co-authored'. As such, make sure that when developing interview questions you are aware that as a researcher you are occupying the role described by Plummer (1995) as that of a 'coaxer' who may either facilitate or inhibit the act of narration. You may also unconsciously be guiding the narrator to tell their story in a particular way.



projects

Option A – You have been asked to carry out narrative interviews on the subject of childhood with three people of different ages. The interviews should last approximately one hour. You will need to develop an interview guide consisting of six or seven main questions together with subsidiary prompts. One of the interviewees should be interviewed on two occasions so that you can explore the advantages and any disadvantages of multiple interviews with the same person.

Option B – Identify some examples of online blogs in the public domain that are concerned with the same central life event or experience. You are required to carry out a narrative analysis on three of the blogs you have identified. Before starting the analysis, you will need to decide inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting your sample and how much material you will select from each blog for your analysis. As part of your analysis, consider how Plummer's identification of three social groups involved in the social production of narratives fits with this type of data.