

LIFE STORIES IN DEVELOPMENT: THOUGHTS ON NARRATIVE METHODS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

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Abstract

Qualitative research has taken a distinctly 'narrative turn'. This article questions whether and how narrative methods differ when used with young people. The discussion first explores young people's developing abilities to create stories about themselves and their worlds, as they connect their various experiences in order to make sense of them. Discussion then moves on to examine examples of research with young people using mobile and creative methods which have been chosen over conventional interview methods for their potential both to engage young people and to enable them to fashion their own stories. These examples come from a range of disciplines, including youth studies, social geography, anthropology and education. One common feature is the attempt to reduce power differentials between (adult) researchers and (young) participants. This, of course, is particularly salient for research with young offenders and in youth justice settings where complex issues of power and disempowerment are at play. The final elements of discussion suggest there would be benefits for criminologists in exploring narrative methodologies as a more participative way of researching with young people.

Keywords

Youth research; narrative methods; life stories; identity.