

# Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973

Principal Investigators: Thompson, P., Lummis, T. Study  
Number: 2000

## Introduction

This study comprises life story interviews originally collected as part of the study: Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 'The Edwardians'.

The interviews were undertaken in the early 1970s and formed the basis of the first national oral history project in the United Kingdom, as well as the basis for Professor Paul Thompson's, 'The Edwardians, the remaking of British society', (1975, 1992).

The original study materials were initially archived, catalogued and disseminated by Qualidata. Full paper/microfiche transcripts are held at the National Social Policy and Social Change Archive at the University of Essex and the original sound recordings are deposited at the British Library National Sound Archive.

"We would sometimes be advised to keep away from a certain clique or the 'lamb brow' lot. One hotel on the corner of Seymour Road is called. The Lamb Hotel and the road that runs up there is called Old Road. But we in our boyhood days it was known as the lamb brow for some reason or other, and it was a rather slummy area with a rough lot of lads. Big catholic families very roughly brought up, some of them hadn't any footwear. We used to challenge them to our patch to play football or cricket and this would generally {ILLEGIBLE} end with stone throwing going on and this was terribly discouraged. Possibly for two reasons. First of all these lads didn't hesitate to use bad language which we were never permitted. And second because the stone throwing usually ended in somebody's window being broken and this would mean we forfeited pocket money until the window was paid for, so that there was discouragement to associate with this group of boys. But it never prevented us because there was something of a challenge here, you see, if it came to a fight we were as good as they were. This would involve sometimes interference by parents these sort of stone-throwing fights, and sometimes fisticuffs or wrestling would be broken up by parents." (Interview 054)



*Family, Life and Work Experience 1*

## Method

A total of 537 life story interviews were recorded with a cross-national sample of people born before 1918 in the UK. Six major occupational groups and three classifications of location, gender and regional distribution were used as the basis for the sample.

The respondents were chosen by a variety of means, including through social workers, old people's homes, personal contact and advertisement.

The interviews were recorded on reel-to-reel audio tape and later transcribed as typed, paper documents. The interviews were open-ended, guided by a schedule and of between one and six hours' duration.



## Archive resources

The interview transcripts are available from the UK Data Service as SN 2000, and through ESDS Qualidata Online, which aims to improve access to archived qualitative data.

The Edwardians collection actually formed the basis of the development work for the online resource, providing content-based access to a multimedia collection of these life story interviews. ESDS Qualidata Online provides access to other collections too.

The original audio recordings have also recently been digitised and will be available for download in the coming year.

[Explore Edwardians data at ESDS Qualidata Online.](#)

## Teaching resource



Interview extracts from the study have been used in the UK Data Service teaching resource.

The resource provides instructors and students with materials designed to assist in teaching qualitative interviewing.

This study has been used as an example of the oral history approach to interviewing.

## User documentation

UK Data Service user documentation for *Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973* can be downloaded in the form of a PDF user guide from the catalogue record page.

[Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973: Study description and documentation.](#)

More detailed information, including press reviews and an interview with the depositor is also available from [QualiBank](#).

## Publications and other resources

The main published outcomes arising from this study are:

Thompson, P.R. (1975/1992) *The Edwardians: the remaking of British society*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1975; London: Routledge, 2nd edition, 1992.

Thompson, P.R. (1978/1988) *The voice of the past*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978; 2nd edition, 1988.

Thompson, T. (1981) *Edwardian childhoods*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

There have also been many secondary users of this study, some 88 between 1973 and 1996, originating not only from the UK but also from Italy, Canada, the USA, Australia and Greece.