

Thematic guide: Social institutions (using qualitative data)

Demonstrated the significant impact and influence that institutions exert



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Introduction

Institutionalisation has been one of the most frequently-discussed concepts in social research since the 1960s and 1970s.

Academic and empirical studies from that time onwards demonstrated the significant impact and influence that institutions exert, for example, schools, hospitals, penal or religious institutions.

Social research into institutions, often controversial (see Michel Foucault or Thomas Szasz), has initiated many changes in the provision of health care, community and social policy, psychiatry and mental health, and palliative care.

The UK Data Service holds a diverse collection of studies on these topics. Among them is Gittens' classic collection *Severalls Hospital: Interviews for 'Madness in its Place', 1913-1997* which presents a social history of British psychiatric care in the twentieth century. This collection is archived with an extensive collection of photographs and architectural plans of the hospital.

Searching for related materials

The [UK Data Service catalogue](#) can be searched for data on social institutions using subject terms such as:

- mental health
- patients
- residential care
- social services
- elderly
- imprisonment
- living conditions
- social exclusion.

Every data collection is accompanied by comprehensive documentation. These are open access and available to the public from the website and it is not necessary to be a registered user to access and download them.



The content of the documentation varies by collection, but usually includes information such as the initial proposal, interview schedule, description of methodology, end of award report, and so on. In some cases more details are provided, such as the coding schemes of the original researchers or examples of the consent forms used.

Other resources on health studies

[Centre for Social Justice and Change - University of East London](#)

[Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland \(CELCIS\)](#)

[Asylum Projects](#)

[Foucault.info repository of texts](#)

Summary of selected qualitative studies on health

[SN 4890 Severalls Hospital: Interviews for 'Madness in its Place', 1913-1997](#)

Gittins, D.

This research is based on the life stories of patients and workers at a large psychiatric hospital in Essex and presents a social history of British psychiatric care in the twentieth century. This collection is archived with an extensive collection of photographs and architectural plans of the hospital.

Coverage

Sample: Past and present Severalls' staff and patients.

Data: 30 (plus 56 image files).

Topics

- hospitals
- mental health
- institutions
- health
- medical history.

[SN 4750 Last Refuge, 1958-1959](#)

Townsend, P.

In the late 1950s Peter Townsend undertook a national study which investigated the provision of long-stay institutional care for old people in England and Wales. The study sought to ask "Are long stay institutions for old people necessary in our society, and, if so, what form should

they take?" Interviews were conducted with local authority chief welfare officers, matrons, wardens and proprietors, as well as residents.

Coverage

Sample: Chief welfare officers, matrons, wardens and elderly people in residential accommodation in England and Wales, 1958-1959.

Data: 194 interviews, 22 field notes, 112 photographs.

Topics

- old age
- residential care
- care
- retirement
- nursing
- poverty
- welfare services
- loneliness.

[SN 6124 Being a Doctor: a Sociological Analysis, 2005-2006](#)

Nettleton, S.

This project investigated the views and day-to-day experiences of medical clinicians and examined how they are being shaped by ongoing social, policy, organisational, and technological transformations. It was an exploratory study which aimed to develop a sociological understanding of the views and experiences of doctors working within the National Health Service.

Coverage

Sample: doctors working in the North of England, 2005-2006.

Data: 50 interviews.

Topics

- employment
- health services
- local government
- policy making.

SN 1670 Coping Responses to Marital Violence: a Longitudinal Study of Women Who Sought Help From a Refuge, 1976-1980

Pahl, J.

The aim of this study was to investigate the problems faced by women who have to leave home because of violence; the helpfulness of the individuals and agencies to which they turn for assistance; and, in particular, the usefulness of the refuge as a response to the problems of battered women. The archived collection only includes the interviews with the women involved with setting up and running the refuge.

Coverage

Sample: Women staying at the centre, who had children and who stayed for more than four days.

Data: includes 9 of the interviews with women involved in setting up and running the refuge.

Topics

- women
- children
- domestic violence
- refuge
- health
- marriage
- social housing
- social support.

SN 5199 Classroom Assistants in Primary Schools: Employment and Deployment, 1999-2001

Hancock, W.R.

This study investigates the ways in which classroom assistants in primary schools are deployed in classrooms, and the terms and conditions under which they are employed. The study aimed to understand the range of practices which govern the employment of classroom assistants, and the ways in which they are deployed in classrooms. It sought to understand the factors that determine employment practices and patterns of deployment, and how these are interrelated.

Coverage

Sample: LEA staff and representatives of trade unions and professional associations, head teachers, teachers and classroom assistants. LEAs: Tower Hamlets, Lancashire and Suffolk

from 1999-2001.

Data: 46 interviews and 68 questionnaire files.

Topics

- teachers
- school
- education
- employment
- deployment
- special needs
- local education authority
- curriculum.

SN 6599 Food Practices in Residential Care, 2007-2008

Punch,S., Emond, R., McIntosh, I. and McIntosh, I.

This study explored the use and meaning of food practices within the context of children's residential care homes in Scotland. It investigated the role played by food practices in relation to the exercise of care, control, reward and punishment within an institutional setting. The research explored how the distribution and provision of food is understood and conducted. It also examined the possible ways in which these practices can be resisted and negotiated by children within residential care homes.

Coverage

Sample: Children (aged 9 to 18) and staff, living and working (respectively) in three residential care homes in Scotland, 2007-2008.

Data: 50 interviews; 12 focus groups.

Topics

- care
- punishment
- food
- children
- social workers
- workplace
- adolescents
- behavioural.

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