

Thematic guide: social class and social change (using qualitative data)

Areas such as class, poverty, and changing urban forms

Introduction

The themes of social class and social change cover many topics, including employment, social mobility and stratification.

The UK Data Service holds collections that represent diverse perspectives on these subjects.

The 1950s and 1960s were a prolific era for British sociology, especially in areas such as class, poverty, and changing urban forms. A significant number of these studies have become classics and continue to influence contemporary research.

Thompson and Lummis' classic collection *Family Life and Work Experience before 1918 (The Edwardians)* continues to influence current research into consumption, family and lifestyles. Similarly Marsden's study *Mothers Alone* explores the impact poverty and absent fathers had on families in the late 1950s/early 1960s.

Topics such as work, industrial relations, and the labour process are also covered in collections such as Marchington, Rubery and Willmott's *Changing Organisational Forms and the Re-shaping of Work: Case Study Interviews, 1999-2002*.

Searching for related materials

The [data catalogue](#) can be searched for data on social class and social change studies using subject terms such as:

- changing society
- employment
- mobility
- occupations
- poverty
- social class
- social inequality
- social stratification

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 social class and social change

[Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change](#)

[ESRC Research Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion \(CASE\)](#)

[Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research](#)

Summary of selected qualitative studies on social class and social change

Study name

[SN 5041 Changing Organisational Forms and the Re-shaping of Work: Case Study Interviews, 1999-2002](#)

Marchington, M., Rubery, J. and Willmott, H.

This project collected data, via in-depth qualitative case studies of inter-organisational networks, on the role of employment relations and how these new organisational forms operate in practice. They examined the increasing fragmentation of organisations, and evidence that human resources policies are unable to resolve the potential conflicts and contradictions inherent in the employment relationship. Sample: organisations in England and Scotland between 1999 and 2002

Coverage

Data: 161 interview transcripts and 146 interview summaries, based on eight case studies. Focus group notes are also included.

Topics

- trade unions
- employment
- management
- labour force
- human resources

Study name

[SN 4579 Cultural Industries and the City, 1980-1999](#)

O'Connor, J., Banks, M., Raffo C. and Lovatt, A.

This study examined the relationship between the cultural industries sector and strategies to promote Manchester as a competitive and creative city. Using in-depth qualitative interviews, the research examined the working practices of small firms, entrepreneurs and intermediaries working within the key sectors of music, fashion, multimedia and design.

Coverage

Sample: cultural entrepreneurs, managers and intermediaries working in Manchester

Data: 45 interviews

Topics

- cultural industries
- working practices
- identity
- economy

Study name

[SN 2000 Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973](#)

Thompson, P. and Lummis, T.

The major part of this collection comprises life story interviews originally collected as part of the study *The Edwardians: Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918*. The interviews were undertaken in the early 1970s and formed the basis of the first national oral history project in the United Kingdom.

Coverage

Sample: men and women born between 1870 and 1908

Data: 449 interview transcripts (in pdf format) and 444 quantitative cases

Topics

- age
- birth order
- childbirth
- community
- families
- marriage

Study name

[SN 5072 Mothers Alone: Poverty and the Fatherless Family, 1955-1966 \(Fatherless Families\)](#)

Marsden, D.

This study explored the lives and experiences of mothers living alone: unmarried, separated, divorced or widowed. The study asked about housing conditions, homelessness, diet and nutrition, family relations, marriage and marital breakdowns, and the levels and adequacy of community and national assistance. It examined the problems families faced as a consequence of both low income and the lack of fathers.

Coverage

Sample: mothers living on their own (or with children only), receiving National Assistance, in West Yorkshire and Essex during 1965-1966

Data: 116 interviews

Topics

- family structure
- housing
- income
- poverty
- children

Study name

[SN 4739 Qualitative Investigation of the Lives and Labour Market Experiences of People with Multiple Problems and Needs, 2001-2002](#)

Dean, H.

This study investigated the labour market experiences of people with multiple and complex problems and needs. A key research focus of the project aimed to question how well conventional welfare provision met the requirements of such people. It was argued that those who are most disadvantaged in the labour market tend also to be those who experience other disadvantages and the solutions that such multiple needs require are more complex than those on offer under the government's existing welfare-to-work policies.

Coverage

Sample: residents of Luton or Sheffield in 2001, (aged 17 to 64) suffering from no less than three specific problems/needs

Data: 50 interviews

Topics

- criminal justice system
- employment
- family
- homelessness
- multiple problems
- health
- unemployment

Study name

[SN 6056 Class and Ethnicity: Polish Migrant Workers in London, 1996-2006](#)

Eade J. and Garapich, M.

This study examines recent Polish migrations to London and the socio-cultural consequences for Poland and the UK as well as individual narratives about ethnicity, class, migration and multicultural Britain.

Coverage

Sample: Polish nationals living in London at the time of the research.

Data: 57 interviews, 1 fieldwork note

Topics

- ethnicity
- work
- migration
- culture