

# Pioneers of Social Research: Recording Quantitative Researchers

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## 1. Background: the original Pioneers Project and the website

**How did the Pioneers of Qualitative Social Research programme of life story interviews originate?**

From its start in 1994 Qualidata – now part of ESDS, the UK Data Archive at Essex – set about rescuing and archiving as many of the research data of classic examples of social research carried out by British researchers in the last fifty years as could be located. The projects searched for and subsequently archived included notable quantitative studies such as the Affluent Worker project, George Brown's work on mental health, and Peter Townsend's on poverty. Until then researchers' data – such as interviews or fieldwork diaries – generally languished forgotten in home or office cupboards, inaccessible to other researchers and in danger of destruction. Qualidata indeed reported some very serious losses, such as the data of all the early ethnic community studies in Britain, but also rescued much invaluable material. In some cases this material was archived at Essex (for example the entire lifetime's research of Peter Townsend on ageing, poverty and the family), but other social research went to the most relevant specialist archives elsewhere. Since then all data has been archived digitally, publicly available through ESDS.

British social research experienced an unprecedented flowering from the 1940s to the 1970s, and this enabled many researchers to carry out their research on a scale and with a methodological diversity which could not easily be repeated today. Thus Townsend, for his in-depth national study of old people's homes, *The Last Refuge*, not only used elaborate quantification, but personally visited over a hundred institutions throughout Britain, even taking a temporary job as a bath attendant in one home, recording and theorising from his experience. The high quality of such research makes it exceptionally worthwhile to revisit.

From the beginning, an in-depth life story interview with the most significant researchers was recorded, usually by Paul Thompson, to explain the context of the research – personal, social and intellectual. Essex University's Sociology Department has been one of the cradles of life story/oral history work in Britain, and indeed the archiving there of Thompson's interviews for *The Edwardians*, resulting in publications by many visiting researchers, was a key model behind the founding of Qualidata.

These interviews proved so rewarding that in a second phase the project was expanded to include all major researchers who had begun work by the mid-1970s. Each interview covers family and social background and key influences with detailed accounts of major projects. Because of their detail, these interviews are long – in Peter Townsend's case extending to twenty hours of recording. Altogether we have now recorded some 30 researchers, split between sociologists and anthropologists, and including 11 with women. Our interviewees also include Michael Young, Janet Finch and Colin Bell on family, kinship and community; W.M. Williams on rural and Meg Stacey on urban community studies; Dennis Marsden on single mothers and education; Stan Cohen on deviance and prisons; Ray Pahl on urban sociology; Paul Thompson on oral history; David Lockwood and Frank Bechhofer on the affluent worker; Sir Raymond Firth on anthropology in the Pacific and in Britain and Sir Jack Goody, Mary Douglas and Pat Caplan on Africa and anthropological theory; and John Davis and Peter Loizos on Italian and Greek Cypriot communities.

Most of the Pioneers interviews are already available as a resource through ESDS Qualidata, and copies are currently being made available at the British Library Sound Archive. All are fully transcribed as well as summarised in detail.

With these interviews alone the Essex Pioneers collection is already of unique value. We have published from it two special issues of the *International Journal of Social Science Methodology*: 7, 1 (2004) and 11, 2 (2008). We see it as a resource in parallel with the methodological autobiographical books of 'owning up' accounts in notable books such as Bell and Newby's *Doing Sociological Research* (1977), Roberts' *Doing Feminist Research* (1981) and more recently Alan Macfarlane's valuable but briefer filmed interviews with anthropologists.

These interviews can be rewarding in two different perspectives. Firstly we can look at them as individual biographical accounts, to understand the influences, fieldwork methods, feelings and experiences of a major and admired earlier researcher. We can also trace, through their notably acute social observation, how researchers' lives were shaped by family and society. We can see how their own experience, for example of social class or the extended family, could generate their key research concerns. In both ways coming to better understand an earlier generation of researchers can be an inspiration to younger researchers, offering models, and encouragement to develop new ideas from their own social observation and experiences.

Secondly, we can trace significant themes which run across whole sets of interviews, and which are still very much relevant today. Examples include gender and kinship, the pleasures of research, or how ideas develop; and research design, fieldwork methods, ethics, and methods of analysis. Through tracing these themes we can tap some of the long experience of earlier qualitative researchers on issues which still very much concern us.

## 2. Opportunities for Online Resources

The in-depth interviews give the researcher's 'owning up' accounts as a unique resource both for research publications and also as a potential major asset for future social science methodological teaching, and indeed the wider public, presenting the cumulative experience of the past in a readily available form for the future.

As regards future on-line access, the UK Data Archive will assert its wishes to provide copies of the all of the Pioneers interviews through its download system, as the Pioneers collection. See <http://www.esds.ac.uk/findingData/snDescription.asp?sn=6226&key=pioneers>

We intend to continue to host a basic Pioneers site that links to the interviews. The current basic site is at: <http://www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata/pioneers/about/introduction.asp>

So far each interviewee has been added to the website accompanied by a brief biography and where possible, text and audio interview extracts. The full interview summary, a full transcript and the audio interview are available through Qualidata's normal user registration. In the long run we hope it may be possible to download all these documents through the website. The user guide will contain background and in some cases details of the methods used, e.g. interview guide. The site will link to any data collections we have or links to any that sit in other archives, and also links to related on-line biographical collections such as Macfarlane's films on the Cambridge University website, 'Leading Thinkers'.

We are currently transferring a set of the interviews to the British Library. It is likely that the interviews will then also become downloadable through the new British Library website.

### 3: List of Pioneers so far interviewed

Bechhofer, Frank	Harris, Tirril
Bell, Colin	Kapferer, Bruce
Bertaux, Daniel	Leonard, Diana
Blaxter, Mildred	Lockwood, David
Brown, George	Loizos, Peter
Caplan, Pat	Marris, Peter
Davis, John	Marsden, Dennis
Cohen, Stan	Moore, Robert
Davidoff, Leonore	Moser, Claus
Douglas, Mary	Newby, Howard
Elder, Glen	Oakley, Ann
Finch, Janet	Okely, Judith
Finnegan, Ruth	Pahl, Ray
Firth, Raymond	Smith, Raymond T
Frankenberg, Ronald	Stacey, Meg
Goody, Jack	Thompson, Paul
Goulbourne, Harry	Townsend, Peter
Hall, Peter	Wallman, Sandra
Hall, Stuart	Williams, W. M.
Hargreaves, David	Young, Michael

#### 4: Proposed interviews with primarily quantitative social researchers

We believe that the value of the whole collection both for understanding the development of social research in the last fifty years and for its methodological relevance would be greatly enhanced by adding a further group of twenty researchers whose approach was primarily quantitative (and in most cases whose work was already being archived, thus not falling within Qualidata's scope). We have in mind particularly social researchers who led the development of survey research and longitudinal studies, but we would also wish to include some examples of pioneering research from beyond sociology with a notable social dimension (such as Sir Michael Rutter's pioneering longitudinal work on child development).

Possible interviewees would include:

##### Statistics and survey methods

**Sir Claus Moser** (b 1922), led post-war development of the survey method, wrote main textbook, *Survey Methods in Social Investigation* (1958); also *British Towns, a Statistical Study* (1961) and *Statistics and Economic Policy* (1974); LSE as lecturer to professor 1946-70; Warden of Wadham College, Oxford; Director of General Statistical Office 1967-78; President Royal Statistical Society 1978-80; (has agreed to be interviewed)

**Sir David Cox** (b 1924), leading statistician and prolific publisher of 300 books and papers – e.g. *Theory of Stochastic Processes* (1965); *Analysis of Binary Data* (1969); *Theoretical Statistics* (1974); *Applied Statistics, Principles and Examples* (1981); *Analysis of Survival Data* (1984); worked at Cambridge Statistical Laboratory 1950-56; Professor of Statistics at Birkbeck London 1956-66, at Imperial 1966-88, and Warden, Nuffield College, 1988-94.

**Angela Dale (b 1945?)** survey researcher especially on women's employment, ethnicity and family; *Flexibility and the Peripheral Workforce* (1988); *Highly Educated Women* (1997); Emeritus Professor of Quantitative Research and Director of Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research at Manchester, just retired; from 2002 ESRC Research Method Programme Director.

**Anthony Heath** (b 1942), statistical researches on education, social mobility, ethnicity, stratification: *Social Mobility* (1981); *Rational Choice of Social Change: a Critique of Exchange Theory* (1976); *How Britain Votes* (1985); Nuffield College Oxford.

##### Social mobility and social class

**John Goldthorpe** (b 1935), has led quantitative research on social mobility; established the Goldthorpe Class Scheme; also developed sociological rational choice theory: books include *The Affluent Worker* volumes (1963 etc), *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain* (1987), *The Constant Flux* (1992); Nuffield College Oxford.

**W. G. (Garry /Viscount) Runciman** (b 1934) trained at Columbia as survey researcher with Lazarsfeld; developed new theory of relative deprivation, *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice* (1961); also a leader of neo-Darwinian evolutionary sociology; also a shipowner; Trinity College, Cambridge.

**Robin M. Blackburn** (b c 1933) early work on trade unionism, then developed international stratification scale, alternative to class analysis; worked with **Ken Prandy** and **Sandy Stewart**; *Union Character and Social Class* (1967); *Perceptions of Work* (1972); *Social Stratification and Occupations* (1980); Emeritus, Sociology and Clare College, Cambridge.

**Duncan Gallie** (b c 1945), researcher on changing work processes, trade unions and the economy, in France and Britain; *In Search of the New Working Class: Automation and Social Integration within the*

*Capitalist Enterprise* (1983); *Social Inequality and Class Radicalism in France and Britain* (1983); *The Social Change and Economic Life Initiative* (1988); *Trade Unionism in Recession* (1996); Nuffield College, Oxford.

#### Medical sociology and health

**Raymond Illsley** (b 1922), founded the Medical Sociology Unit at Aberdeen, where he is an Emeritus; *Social Aspects of Teenage Pregnancy* (1983); (Aberdeen University holds a 1985 interview with him)

**Sir Michael Rutter** (b 1934), set up pioneering longitudinal epidemiological studies in Isle of Wight and London; special interests child development; the interaction of biological and social factors; and protective and risk factors. His work has given child psychiatry 'a solid scientific base'. Very many publications, best-known *Maternal Deprivation Reassessed* (1972). Consultant Psychiatrist at Maudsley since 1966 and Professor at King's College, London.

#### Sociology of education

**Harvey Goldstein** (b 1939) educational sociologists known for using multilevel modelling methodology; *Recall Method in Social Surveys* (1979); *Monitoring Children* (1983); *National Child Development Study Report* (1958 cohort) (1972); Institute of Education 1977-2005; Professor of Social Statistics, Centre for Multilevel Modelling, Bristol.

**A.H. (Chelly) Halsey** (b 1923) pioneer of British sociology of education, with **Jean Floud** published *Education, Economy and Society* (1961) and *Social Class and Educational Opportunity* (1973); also researched on social mobility with Goldthorpe; *Trends in British Society since 1900*; *The British Academics* (1961); *History of Sociology in Britain* (2004).

**Jean Floud** early pioneer of sociology of education, with Halsey; later Mistress of Nuneham College, Cambridge.

#### Gender

**Sara Arber** (b 1949) research on ageing and gender; *Doing Secondary Analysis* (1988); *Gender and Later Life* (1991); *Women and Working Lives* (1991); *Ageing, Independence and the Life Course* (1993); Surrey.

**Jean Martin** government survey researcher, especially on gender and employment: ONS, then Bristol.

#### Economics and Poverty

**Sir Anthony B. (Tony) Atkinson** (b 1944) is an economist who has worked especially on inequality and income distributions, and developed the Atkinson Index; many reports on the economics of poverty from 1980s onwards; held posts at Cambridge, UCL, LSE, Essex and Oxford, Warden of Nuffield College 1994-2005.

#### Not included

##### Few books or signs of key research activity

Ken Prandy and Sandy Stewart (significance is through work with Robert Blackburn rather than independently)

John Westergaard (published little)

##### Too young?

Gordon Marshall (60?)

Jay Gershuny (60?)

John Scott (60s)