

**WORKING WITH ARCHIVED CLASSIC  
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY STUDIES:**

**Illuminating Past and Present  
Conventions Around Acceptable  
Research Practice**

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# Historical comparative analysis of family and parenting: a feasibility study across sources and timeframes

- Exploring change and continuity in experiences of family and parenting practice over four decades
- Working with classic archived data from the 1960s

## *Issues:*

- Descriptors may change, content may endure
- Process mistakes

## *Classic Sociological Collections and Studies Used*

<b>Collection:</b>	<b>Study</b>	<b>Key topics and location:</b>
DENNIS MARSDEN	Parents and Education 1961	parental decisions about education, resources and philosophies, United Kingdom
	Salford Slum Re-housing 1962	rehousing of slum population on central redevelopment estate and over-spill area, employment, working class family life, working class community life, Salford
	Mothers Alone 1965-66	divorced, separated, widowed and unmarried mothers and their children, national assistance, living standards, poverty, support networks: fathers, wider family and friends, Colchester, Huddersfield
PETER TOWNSEND	Katharine Buildings 1957-1962	social change, housing, urban communities, urban renewal, working class life, family life, community life, rented accommodation, tenants, tenancy, East London
	Poverty in the UK 1967-68	poverty, deprivation, employment, unemployment, disabled, family, one parent families, children, elderly, housing, household budgets, living standards, nutrition, health, United Kingdom

## Extract from Marsden's Fieldnotes on 'The Family Upstairs'

June/July 1963, SN: 6225

We met the children, outside our back door, long before we knew who their mother was, and we had known the children two weeks before we happened to be talking to Sam with Frank when the mother came up. She was a bit guarded at first, but soon opened up on the subject of the children. Frank's a very big baby, and she accepted our compliments with pride. She lives just over us and was worried in case they disturbed us (they did last night, with TV on after 11, but before that we never heard them). 'I swore I'd never have another flat. I wanted a house. We was in a flat before and the woman downstairs used to complain.' This was when the boys were little. She said, 'These stairs get me', and it's a shame to see her bumping the pram up the four flights of stairs to the landing. As a result we don't see a lot of Frank. Her mother was over on Sunday, and lives close by, just over the bridge in Broughton.

# Children on the estate outside the Marsden's flat



# Acceptable and Unacceptable

- Judgmental fieldnotes from the past highlight self-censored contemporary fieldnotes
- Current 'good' practice means are 'bad' for reuse ends / 'bad' practice ends of the past are 'good' for reanalysis means
- How might future generations view contemporary acceptable practices?

Sam had an accident that nearly killed him. A builder's ladder had been left and some boys of around 10 and 11 were manhandling it when it fell over (or was pushed) and fractured Sam's skull. It happened at 10.05 at night and he had to be rushed into hospital for a brain operation ... From the newspaper accounts it appears that no blame can be pinned on anyone (although the original story was that the ladder had been pushed over deliberately perhaps).

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With the little girl June she seems rather over protective ... she takes June all the way to school which is quite a long way, possibly half an hours trip, just so that she can see her across the road.

## Working with archived classic family and community studies raises questions about:

- Past conventions around who's active in the research field – unacceptable from point of view of the present
- Present conventions around acceptable ethical fieldnote practice – a suspect narrative from point of view of the past