

Chapter 3

Topic 7 Secondary sources

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Activity: Discussion

Using documents to study childhood

Learning objective

At the end of this activity you should be able to:

- Evaluate the strengths and limitations of using different types of documents for studying a sociological topic.

You are studying childhood in 19th century Britain, using paintings of children and parliamentary reports on child labour.

- Paintings of children were usually specially commissioned by parents and created by professional artists.
- The parliamentary reports were official investigations into children working in factories and mines during the industrial revolution. They included statements given by the children themselves to government inspectors about their experiences of work.

In small groups, use Scott's four criteria (authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning) to evaluate the strengths and limitations of these two types of document in studying childhood.