

The Mass Observation Project

Autumn 2006 Directive

Part 1: Your home: its decoration and contents

Start with a general introduction telling us about your home - for example, do you call the place where you now live your home? What does the word "home" conjure up to you?

What about other homes you have lived in? Have you moved about a lot over the years? Take a few minutes to describe it in as much detail as you can.

Some questions to prompt you:

- How long have you lived at your present home?
- Are you happy living there?
- In what ways do you personally 'make' a home?
- What does your home look like? (drawings, diagrams, photos welcome)

Furniture and decoration

- Is style and decoration important to you?
- What was the last piece of furniture you acquired for your home?
- When did you last decorate or change a room?
- How did you choose the colours?
- Do you get rid of things? If you do, tell us how and where..... and why!

Your taste

- How would you describe your taste?
- Where do you shop for or acquire the things in your home?
- Do you like modern things or vintage/antique styles?
- Do you choose household items by price/function/looks or a combination of all three?
- Is your taste and style similar to or distinctly different from that of your friends or family? What do you think the biggest influence on your taste is?

Television and homes

What do you think of home make over shows on TV? Do you watch them or like them?

Your ideal home

What would your ideal fantasy home look like? Where would it be? What kind of building and location? Describe some of the furnishings and decoration of your ideal home.

Send us a picture – drawn or cut from a magazine – that best matches your ideal home?

What brings you to live in the specific home you have? How, if it all, might it be a better place to live?

Special task

Choose just one room of your home and describe it.

Include details of decoration, furniture, technology (TV, DVD player, etc) and pictures and objects.- send a photo if you can.

As usual, please start all three parts of your directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your MO number, (NOT name), sex, age, marital status, the town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.

Remember not to identify yourself or other people inadvertently within your reply.

Part 2: Quoting and Quotations

Most of us enjoy quoting other people at some point or other, in both talking and writing. Do you? If so we would like to hear from you. Your own views and experience are as always what matter but this time we have given quite a number of prompts to suggest the kinds of topics you might like to comment on.

When you're speaking.....

- What sorts of things do you quote? Eg a conversation you've had with someone? newspaper headlines? family sayings? well-known quotations from, say, the Bible or Shakespeare? jokes? poems?
- Are there people you specially like to quote? (eg a favourite aunt? co-worker? grandparent? authorities of some kind (bosses? teachers?)? religious leader(s)?) Why do you like quoting them?
- Do you ever quote proverbs? Why? And in full or shortened form? Do you have a favourite proverb?
- When you're talking rather than writing do you have ways of conveying that you're quoting (eg tone of voice? gesture? 'he said', 'she said' ... ?)
- In what kind of situation might you find yourself quoting? Please give examples.
- Do you possess any books of quotations? If so do you use them? How? If not why do you think some people *do* use them?

When you are writing.....

- Do you use quotation marks ('' or " ... ") when you write?
- What are you intending to convey by using them?
- Do you ever put quotation marks round special words or phrases even if they're not actually quotations from someone specific? Why? Please give examples. Are quotation marks the only way to get across the point you're making here?
- The traditional rule was that *direct speech* (e.g. He said 'I agree') had to have quotation marks, but not *indirect (or reported) speech* (e.g. He said that he agreed). Many people feel hesitant (perhaps rightly?) about just how this works in their own writing. How do you feel about this? Are you always clear which is which when you're writing? Do you think it matters?
- Do you use double (" ... ") or single (' ... ') quote marks when you write? Is it different if you're hand-writing? word processing? emailing? texting on a mobile?

What about other people's quoting?

- How do you react when other people quote? Why do you think they do so? Does it increase or diminish their authority? Do they sometimes overdo it?
- Do you notice quote marks when you read? If so what do you think the writer is trying to convey? Or do you just take this for granted without really noticing?
- Do you have experience of children learning to use quotation marks in reading or writing? Have they found it difficult? Why?
- Teachers sometimes complain about their students' plagiarism [quoting other people without saying so, and thus implying that the words are their own]. Some commentators believe this is now a growing problem because of material that can be easily downloaded from the web. Do you have views on this?

Part 3: Age

Please clearly state your age at the start of this section as well as your other biographical information.

Some general thoughts on age

What do the categories 'young', 'middle aged', 'old age' or "old" mean to you?

Where would you position yourself?

How do you decide how to place people in other age categories?

Do you think you have any assumptions about people at different ages?

(Try setting out your thoughts about a man or woman of 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90.) Have you changed over the years in how you think about age and ageing? Please give details.

Do you think the process of ageing affects men and women differently? If you do, please say how. How do you think about your own ageing?

What do you think are the gains and losses of getting older? Please speak from your own experience, whatever age you are. Please cover mental, physical emotional and spiritual aspects.

Your own experience

In your experience, what have been the ages of 'key changes' for you in your life so far? Can you say what these have been and why they were important? What has been your favourite age so far?

If you are under 65 and you could choose, what would be your ideal way of spending the years after you reach 65? If you are 65 or older, how does life shape up to your expectations? If you are over 85 how does life shape up? Looking back over your life so far, would you have done anything differently?

Care and older people

Many people fortunately remain active and independent until a very late age. In this section, however, give your opinions and experiences of the kind of care and support people can obtain if they do need some form of care as they get older.

What do you think about the care we provide for older people in Britain? What do you think are the good points about it? The bad points?

Can you tell us what care has been taken of members of your own family, for example, your great grandparents, grandparents, parents, you yourself?

Have any of them been in a nursing home, sheltered accommodation, or other kind of institutions? Have you ever worked in a hospital, home for older people, or in any other welfare service which supports older people? Please give details, including the years of your employment and the nature of your work.

What is your opinion of institutional care? (Please include care at home, special homes and hospitals, support services.) Please note that you don't have to have had direct experience in this area to answer. We would be interested to hear everyone's opinion, although you should of course describe any direct experience.

Have you personally ever taken care of an older person, either at home or at their home? Are you currently in the situation of being taken care of by someone? Please tell us about either (or both) experience.

How would you like to be taken care of as an older person (this overlaps with the last question in the first section, but please use this section to talk more about support services

and actual care if you become infirm). Is there anything you are afraid of or worry about? Do you have any special wishes? If you feel you have already covered this question, please say so.

What sorts of care should be provided for older people – try and give examples of the range of care?

What should care for older people look like in the next 10-15 years?

Finally, what kind of priority do you think politicians give, or should give, to the care of older people in this country?

Do you think that, as a society, we respect older people? Please explain your answer (and give examples if you think this will help).

Please feel free to comment on the questions and any points you think should have been covered.

Please post your response to:

**The Mass Observation Archive
FREEPOST BR 2112,
The Library
University of Sussex,
Brighton BN1 1ZX**

Or by email to: moa@sussex.ac.uk

Note on the new postage costs

If you use our Freepost address instead of a stamp please take account of the new postage regulations about the costs of large envelopes. If you can, please use A5 size envelopes rather than the A4 size unless you are sending very weighty documents!

The Post Office has details of the new prices.

Thanks