

Mass-Observation in the 1990s

Autumn 1991 Directive

Part One: Women and Men

This was a difficult directive to write - I knew what I wanted to get you writing about but it was hard to think up the right sort of questions. Some of you will, I know, hate this; others will love it. If you want to set your own questions instead of mine, please do and tell us about any difficulties you may have in writing on this subject. Please give plenty of examples from your own experience.

What comes to mind when you think of "**masculine**"? And when you think of "**feminine**"?

Do you think of particular qualities or character traits? How closely do these fit with your own experience of being male or female? How close do you think your own ideas of masculinity/femininity are to those portrayed in the media, or more widely in society? Please give details.

Do you do anything to enhance your masculinity or femininity, either now or when you were younger? Please give details and say why you do what you do. (Does it work?)

Have you ever wanted to be the opposite sex? Is there anything you have been prevented from doing because of your sex?

When has being a man or a woman mattered most to you?

Do you think there have been significant changes over the past few years in what we expect from men and from women? If you think there have been changes, please describe them (with real examples if possible) and say (a) whether you approve, (b) whether they have affected you personally, (c) whether they have gone far enough - or too far? Why do you think they have occurred?

When you answer these questions, please comment across a range of issues. Some of these might be women in top jobs, men doing housework and child care, personal appearance (including hair, jewellery and cosmetics), women in heavy jobs, men as midwives, single sex schools, men only clubs, women only groups, women in the priesthood, financial responsibilities in the family, equal pay, women in politics, sexual harassment, leisure.

Equality between the sexes: social, political, sexual, economic: do you think men and women are equal in Britain today? Please explain your views.

What is a "New Man"? Does he exist? *For men only*: Are you one? Or would you like to be one? What is a "liberated woman"? Does she exist? *For women only*: Are you one? Or would you like to be one?

Do you think a liberated woman is the same as a feminist? Please explain what you mean by a feminist.

Finally, do you think that our gender roles are interesting or important enough to be the subject of serious study?

Part Two: New Technology

Please remember to start your answer to this part on a new sheet of paper.

1. Please list all the gadgets in your home which you associate with new technology. Video recorders are obvious, but don't leave out domestic gadgets like washing machines. In fact, if in doubt, include everything electric or electronic in your home at the moment.

Beside each item, note the following:

- (a) Who owns it
- (b) Who uses it (Please note ages and gender)
- (c) Who can't use it? (either because they are forbidden to or because they don't know how to)? (Please note ages and gender)
- (d) What is it used for?
- (e) How long have you had it?
- (f) Was it worth getting?

2. Do you use a word-processor? At home? At work? Have you been trained? What do you use it for? Please note down your job if you use it as part of your job. How well do you feel you use it?

3. Do you use a supermarket or library with the new computerised checkouts? What do you think about them?

4. Do you use a cash dispenser to obtain cash from a bank or a building society? Do you pay for goods or services using credit card and telephone? Have you tried the new telephone banking services for paying bills etc?

5. Which other new financial services do you use? Are there any you deliberately avoid?

6. What piece of equipment has made most difference to your (or your parents') lives?

7. Have you encountered any of the following: fax machines, portable telephones, microwave ovens, personal stereos, car phones. What do you think of them?

8. If you could afford it, which new piece of equipment would you most like to have?

Some notes on replying to directives

We are still operating the same system as before. Please remember to put your number on all your contributions. No names should appear on your actual directive reply but it is helpful if you include your name and address on a separate sheet. You should find sticky labels enclosed. Please write on your name and address and return *only one* of them (still on its backing) with your directive for us to use when we acknowledge receipt of your directive. The other two can be saved for the other two directive replies later in the year.

We still have a FREEPOST address so that you don't need to use stamps: The Mass-Observation Archive, FREEPOST 2112, The Library, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 IZX. If you want to use a stamp, then please address it to the M-0 Archive, the Library, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9QL.

I plan to see all your replies myself, but I still have to give priority to fund-raising. Please accept my apologies in advance if you receive a standard acknowledgement. When possible, other members of Archive staff will reply to you.

Many thanks for all your help!

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