

Mass-Observation Project Autumn Directive 2000

Part 1: Your Family

*Back in 1984, we sent out a directive on "Relatives, friends and family", but many people have joined the Project since then so it seemed a good time to re-open the topic. How you tackle this question is entirely up to you. You need to decide what the word "family" means to you and how far you should extend the definition. We will be interested in whatever you choose to write. Please use your discretion about how you answer and certainly DON'T use real names**.*

Please remember to start each part of your reply with a very brief mini-biography: your M-O number, (NOT name), sex, age, marital status, town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.

Some people may feel that they don't have a family in the commonly accepted or traditional sense. If this is how you feel, please tell us and describe your own situation.

What does the word "family" mean to you?

Describe your family

How would you describe your family? You may like to talk about your "immediate" family or the people you live with, or your "extended" family. You may want to explain about relations, and whether people live near you or not. Mention ages and whether family members are male or female. This is your opportunity to give us an overview.



How well do you get along?

Please go on to write about the kinds of family relationships you have - who you get on with, who you don't get on with, how people in your family get on with each other (or not).

Family occasions

Do you all meet up for family occasions? What kinds of events might these be? Can you describe the last one you attended?

* Remember that if what you write could be considered libellous, or if using names would identify you or someone close to you, we simply cannot add your directive reply to the main collection which we can show to researchers. There is a fine balance between being candid (which we encourage) and revealing information about identifiable people.

Family problems

In your experience what do you think have been the most difficult times for your family?

Family secrets

You might want to use your discretion about how much you say here, but please mention in general terms any secrets you know of (or suspect) in the past or in the present-day, and the sort of issues that make them secret. Who knows and who doesn't know?

The value of a family?

Do you value your family relationships? Have you ever had a time when they were especially important to you or to another member in a way that other relationships were not?

Escaping from your family

Have there been time in your life when you wanted to escape?

Step-parents and children

What has been your experience with step-relations, yours or others in your family?

Adoption

Do you have any experience of adoption? Are you adopted or have you adopted children? Are there adopted children elsewhere in your family? Please tell us about it.

Part 2: Gays & Lesbians in the Family

Our researcher is interested in having you reflect on the gays and lesbians who are/were members of your families. Are/were they sons, daughters, uncles, aunts, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces and 'step' family members? Obviously M-O Correspondents who are themselves lesbian and gay can reflect on some of these themes from their own perspective.

Are/were gay and lesbian family members 'known' or merely 'suspected' gays and lesbians in the family? What were the characteristics or behaviours that made you and/or other family members suspicious of their sexual orientation?

Family knowledge

Would you describe the 'family knowledge' about lesbians and gays as being an 'open secret' or was it openly discussed and accepted? Were these gay and lesbian relatives (and their partners) included in all or only some family relationships? Who were they closest to? Who were they the most distant from?

Being part of the family

Were they treated differently to other family members? What did these gay and lesbian family members contribute to your experience of family life? Was their participation in family life somehow different from other members of the family? When these gay and lesbian family members grew/grow older did/will they receive 'family support' and care?

Part 3: Topics in the News

I was tempted to send you a "Special" during the "Petrol crisis" (should I call it that?) to ask you to record how you were affected, but already there has been even more news. So please discuss the issues below and add any others you feel are important.

- ◆ **The Party conferences: personalities, issues, the relevance to everyday life**
- ◆ **How "New Labour" is faring, including your views of Tony Blair**
- ◆ **The conflicts between the Israelis and the Palestinians**
- ◆ **The impact of the October weather: the floods in the South-East if you live in that area, but also other climatic changes or events which have affected you or your friends and family recently**
- ◆ **The railways: the recent accident on the Leeds to London line: what does it mean to you about the railways, about privatisation, about public services and transport policy in general?**

Please take some time to comment on any of these subjects, especially where you have been personally involved, or on any other items from the news which you feel we should be covering at this time. Opinions of course are wanted, but also stories and experiences. Your replies to this general part 3 is much appreciated by our researchers as you often cover items of interest to them. Please give each topic a clear heading before you start to write.