

Mass-Observation in the 1990s

Spring 1992 Directive (1)

Personal hygiene

The theme of this directive is personal hygiene with a special emphasis on the sorts of products you use to wash yourself and keep yourself clean and presentable! BBC Radio Four is making a series of six programmes to be called "Keep it clean" which they hope to broadcast next summer. They will be looking at the subject historically, using old advertisements and oral history and they have also decided to use Mass-Observation - which is why I am now asking for your views and experiences on the subject. Please answer with your usual wit, perceptive insights and candour. Personal experiences, short (true) stories, random thoughts and sudden insights all welcome.

The seven products are:

Soap	Aftershave
Deodorant	Toothpaste
Shampoo	Handkerchiefs
Toilet paper	

For each of these products, please use the questions below to get your thoughts flowing. As usual, you don't have to answer every question individually. They overlap and are meant to stimulate your thoughts. Use the products as your headings so that your comments on each one can be separated. They will be used in different programmes. Please don't just use one word answers, try to write as fully as you can and explain your reply, possibly with experiences, examples etc. Please feel free to mention brand names.

Questions about the seven products

Please answer the eight questions for each of the products (as appropriate)

1. How vital is this product in your life? Why?
2. What type of product so you usually buy? (not necessarily the names, but is it the luxury type or the supermarket brand?)
3. What influences you in your choice? (eg parental influence, advertising, health matters, cost, availability, brand name etc)
4. Have your habits changed over the years? If so, why?
5. Who buys this product for your household?
6. Do you ever use this product in ways other than those for which they have been designed?
7. If you have a partner or spouse, what do you feel about his/her use of this product?
8. Do you share this product with your partner/spouse (or anyone else)? Do you insist on using it separately?

General questions

Which of the seven products would you least like to be without?

Which other products (not mentioned here) do you have strong feelings about?

Do you feel our society is placing more emphasis on cleanliness than in the past? If you think this, please explain why. How sensitive are you to other people's smells?

Please end your reply with any other general comments you may have on the subject. *Are there any parts of this directive (or the topic itself) which you feel are too intimate for you to write about? Please let us*

know if you decided to restrict your answer in anyway. This sort of information is very important for us to have.

DEADLINE

To be of greatest use to us, please return your reply as soon as possible to the Archive, and definitely before Wednesday 19 February.

Return to: The Mass-Observation Archive, The Library, University of Sussex, FREEPOST BR2112, Brighton

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DS 17.1.92/Dir No.36 (1)

Mass-Observation in the 1990s

Spring 1992 Directive (2)

The Pace of Life

We often say that life is getting faster or that time flies as we get older. This directive is about the pace of life. Are you speeding up or slowing down? If you find yourself speeding up is this your choice or is something (or someone) driving you? We all remember how, as children, Christmas or birthdays took ages to come but now they follow hard on the heels of each other. There are many more 'labour saving devices' but perhaps we work just as hard, where does the extra time go? Studies of television watching suggest we have plenty of time for that but there is also evidence of mounting stress.

More people have 'paid employment' than ever before and we are interested in the effect this has on how much we pack into our lives and how it may be altered by retirement. Your answers will be studied by Jenny Shaw, a sociologist at Sussex, who has asked us to send out this directive. Jenny is researching how we experience the pace of life and what makes it change. The world we live in changes but we also change as we get older. It is often hard to sort out these changes. Jenny hopes to make a start on your replies in May, so please try to write in before then. As always, your anonymity will be preserved.

You may wish to think about the theme for a while before committing your thoughts to paper. We have supplied some questions to get you thinking, but they are only there to stimulate and guide you. You will find, (as you often point out in your replies to previous directives) that the questions overlap. This is unavoidable and it doesn't matter if in turn your replies overlap. It is always better if you can give full and descriptive replies, with examples from your own experience.

First of all, before you start, please could you note on the top right hand side of your answer, under your M-0 number, your sex, age, marital status and occupation (or former occupation if you are retired), number of people in your household, especially children. It would also be really helpful if you could note down (a) which people in your household are in employment and (b) which people are based at home full-time. Please give details.

The Direction of Change

Do you feel at the moment that your life is faster or slower than it was?

It is often said that the pace of life is increasing, do you think this is generally true or perhaps only for some people? Please explain your answer.

If you compare yourself to your parents at any particular stage in life, who did the most in terms of paid or domestic work, leisure or caring for others?

Have the number of activities which give your mind time to wander increased or decreased?

Please turn over

How it affects you

Given your age, is the pace of your life about right, too fast or too slow?

If you have, or had, to spend more time on paid work, what happens to the rest of your life?

If you can choose where or when to work, does this make life easier?

If you have (or had) responsibilities for children and/or parents *and* a job how do (did) you manage?

When have you felt most (or least) rushed? How is this affected by money, children or work?

When you feel particularly pushed for time what do you have to cut out?

What do you now find time for that you could not do before?

Do you try to do several things at once?

What emotional or health costs, or benefits, have resulted from changes to the pace of your life?

How does the pace of life affect the sort of holidays you want?

Causes

Do you feel you have any control over the pace of your life? Where does the pressure come from? Yourself? Work? Children? Parents? Partners?

If you find life is speeding up is this because some things take longer or because you are doing more?

Do you worry about not finishing things?

Is there a particular time of the day when you are especially fraught or under pressure?

If you use a car, does it mainly ease your life or lead to new pressures?

Do you experience your time differently through your children?

If you are very busy, how do you decide when enough is enough?

Do you ever feel you need to replace things just because they have become dated?

This is a question to get your imagination going: if you were to think of yourself as an object or machine that represented how you lived your life, what would it be?

People's time is valued differently. Who do you think are the winners and losers?

One day diary

From time to time, we ask everyone to keep a diary of everything they do on just one day. We haven't asked you to do this for over a year, but we would like you now to record how you spend **Friday 13 March 1992**. Please write it on separate sheets of paper and send it in with the rest of your reply. You might like to end it by telling us whether you consider it to be a fairly typical day or not. Please write in as much detail as you can and include your own thoughts and feelings as well as actual events.

DS 17.2.92/Dir. No. 36 (2)

The Mass-Observation Archive, the Library, University of Sussex, FREEPOST 2112, Brighton BN1 1ZX.

Note: "The 1992 General Election" directive is mentioned in the covering letter of the Spring 1992 Directive.