

The Mass-Observation Project

Spring 2001 Directive

Part 1: Hair and hairdressing

This directive is about hair care and choice of hairstyle when you were a child, as you grew up in your teens and twenties and as an adult. I have been asked to cover this subject by a postgraduate student, Alice Macdonald (and all of us at the Archive thought it would be an interesting subject to do). Needless to say, it is addressed to men as well as women.

If you are a professional hairdresser or you care for other people's hair (children, friends, older people) please state this at the start of your reply.

As usual, please remember to start 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.

Feelings now about hair and appearance

How do you feel about your hair - is it one of the aspects of your appearance that you feel is an asset or does your hair "let you down"?

Do you think it expresses you as a person accurately or does it contradict the kind of person you feel you are? Has your hair ever been a "problem" - if so in what way and how has that made you feel about yourself? Have you ever chosen or needed to wear a wig or hairpiece?

Do you think it is important to have your hair cared for regularly and to look well-groomed, if yes - why? - Social asset? For work? For sex-appeal? For comfort? Self-respect?

Do you think you notice other people's hairstyles? Do you think you make judgements about someone according to their hair colour or style? Have you found you have been right or mistaken by doing this? Does your judgement depend on whether the person is male or female?

Childhood

Who cared for your hair when you were little?

Can you remember what your hairstyle was like then? Do you remember whether you liked it or not? How often was your hair washed and what was used to wash it? How did you dry it?

Were you ever taken to the hairdresser?

As a young person

As you got older, what style did you choose and what made you choose it?

Were you influenced by your friends' styles or by the styles of film or pop stars?

How often did you wash your hair then? Did you do anything else to your hair - set it with grippers or curlers yourself or use lotions, hair oil, Brylcreem? Did you ever colour it?

Straighten it? Did you go to a hairdresser or barber? If you did, what kinds of services did you request? Please mention anything you think of as relevant - cuts, Marcel waves, a perm, colouring? How were they? Did you always go to a hairdresser as a young person - if so how often - regularly or for special occasions like a wedding or a special date? If you didn't go to a professional hairdresser, whom did you get to see to your hair? Did you change your style or colour frequently? Can you remember a style that you particularly liked - a special date or dance - your wedding etc.?

Your hair in adult life

Did becoming a parent change your attitude to your hair?

Have you cared for other people's hair? Please say who it was. Did you enjoy that - if so why?

If you have a partner or spouse, does he or she notice your hair? Do they like it done a certain way and not want it changed or encourage you to try different styles.

What do you feel about colouring hair or straightening hair? Have you experienced any problems with your hair or someone's whose hair you care for, eg. falling out, colour or perming going wrong, dandruff, oiliness, head lice? Please describe what happened.

Hair care products: advertisements and costs

Off the top of your head (so to speak!) can you recall any advertisements for hair products on television or in newspapers and magazines. Please list anything you can think of - especially brand names, images, claims etc. Are you aware of having been influenced by particular adverts or by claims made on the product packaging (including "not tested on animals")? Do you have favourite brands of shampoo? About how much do you spend on your hair in a year (rough estimate)?

Going to the hairdresser or barber

Can you remember any especially good or bad experiences when you had your hair done? How do you feel about having your hair done - is it a treat or something you put up with? How do you regard your hairdresser - is it a friendship? Are you in control as the customer or do you feel rather threatened, over-awed and powerless?

Can you describe the last visit to the hairdresser or barber - give as much detail as possible, describing the place, the décor, the people, the cost including tips (and how you decide to tip or not), the music (if any) the conversations and the services you received.

And one for the men: do barbers really say "Anything for the weekend sir?"

Part 2: The next General Election

(Please start your reply to Part 2 on a new piece of paper but you can add part 3 on at the end as we shall file them all together.)

As I prepare this directive for going to press, there is still doubt about whether the election will be called for May. If I wait to see, it will be too late to include in the Spring Directive so I am relying on you to decide how to respond to this part of the directive.

If there should be an election in May, please spare as much time as you can to recording your reactions to the news, to the activities of your local political parties, to election broadcasts, to the debates and discussions you hear all around you, at home, at work, out and about. In effect we would like to receive anything YOU yourself feel is relevant to the present situation. Your views on the present Foot and Mouth disease crisis would also be welcome.

If you want to keep a diary, or an occasional diary, in the run-up to the election, please do. Even if the election is postponed, your views on the current issues would be appreciated.

As usual, please remember to start 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.

Part 3: Marks and Spencer

One of the items much in the news lately is the problems of Marks and Spencer. Some of you will remember the directive we sent out on shopping in 1995 which we did at the request of two colleagues at this University - Jenny Shaw and Janice Winship. Their interest then was the role of department stores, and in particular the place of M&S in people's everyday lives. They have asked me to ask for your views again with the following question.

M&S: Once the star of the high street and a mainstay of British Life
- all we seem to hear about now is its failings.

Do you share this view and in your experience has M&S changed?

ONE IMPORTANT NOTE If you are keeping a diary or writing several reports, please save them up and send them in all at once if you can. It doubles or trebles our workload (and our Freepost bill) if you write to us frequently because we have a meticulous system of recording every single items that arrives. If you e-mail us, please **DO NOT** zip your files into a .exe attachment as we have been warned that these may contain viruses.