

The Mass Observation Project

Summer 2008 Directive

Part 1: Doing Family History Research

Family history research seems to be an increasingly popular pursuit. TV programmes such as "Who do you think you are?" continue to be extremely popular, whilst millions of people are researching their family history either over the internet, or in public record offices and other archives. We would like to find out why you think family history research is so popular, and what role – if any – it plays in your life and the life of your family. We are still interested in hearing your opinions, even if you do not know anybody carrying out family history research, or find family history research uninteresting.

(For brevity we have called it FHR)

As usual, please start each part 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.

Your views on Family History research

- Why is FHR so popular?
- Why has it become so popular now?
- Who does FHR?
- What questions might FHR answer in people's lives?
- Do you think FHR might be particularly important to certain groups of people? Which, and why?
- How do you think an interest in FHR relates to local or national history?
- How do you think people do FHR? (e.g. What resources do they use? How do they write up their findings?)

Family History Research in the media

Please tell us about an occasion when you have watched a TV programme or read something about FHR.

What did you find most interesting or memorable about it, and why?

Or if you haven't, do you find it uninteresting, and why?

Family History Research continued

If you do FHR yourself.....

- Why did you first become interested in it?
- Have your reasons for doing FHR changed? How and why?
- Who do you do FHR for?
- How do you collect your information and pass it on? (if you do)
- Please describe an occasion when FHR has been discussed in the family.
What happened, and how did everybody feel?
- What have you learnt through your FHR about yourself, your family and local or national history that you find most interesting, memorable or important?

If somebody in your family does FHR.....

- Who do they do FHR for?
- How do they pass their findings on? (if they do)
- Have they told you or another family member about their research?
- Please describe an occasion when FHR has been discussed in the family.
What happened and how did everybody feel?
- What have you learnt about your family history that you find most interesting, memorable or important?
- Are you interested in FHR? Why/why not?

If nobody in your family does FHR.....

- Are you interested in FHR? Why/why not?
- Is anybody interested in it, but not doing any research?
- Why do you think nobody is interested in it?
- What role do you think FHR might play in a family? What questions might it answer?

Part 2: War: experiences and reflections

Since we started writing this Directive, the events in Georgia have unfolded...meanwhile the war in Iraq continues..... what does it mean to you? Do you follow the news from war zones and from areas in the world in conflict, oppression and distress – Iraq, Afghanistan, Darfur, Zimbabwe?

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

How do you find out about war? Newspapers, television, films, the internet, books, radio?

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War continued

How does the news of war connect to your own direct experience? Have you experienced conflict first hand either here (say during the Second World War) or in other countries?

Have you ever been in the military (in wartime or peace time) or been attached to any units in support of military activities? Your memories would be much appreciated, and especially any comments about how your experiences affected the rest of your life if you feel they did.

Are you involved in any current activities in support of the troops? Please describe.

What do you think about anti-war protests? Have you been involved in any such activities?

Are there any photographic or film images of war which have had a particular impact on you?

Honouring those who die in war: do you buy poppies for Armistice Day? What do you feel about war memorials and services of remembrance?

Please use these prompts as a way of exploring the subject bringing in your own experience as it relates to your reply. Feel free to consider any historic conflicts which you feel are relevant.

Part 3: The Olympics

This directive will reach you after the Olympic Games in China have ended but please take a moment to record your views on the Olympics – possible themes might be:

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

- Sport and sports people: what taking part means and what you think about the different sports represented.
- The Olympics as a major festival or spectacle – how different countries prepare and host the games, the costs, the facilities, the impact and the long term value to the host countries.
- The political issues, especially this year with the demonstrations and critiques of China.
- Media coverage and whether you followed the Games yourself (and how).
- Your views about the next Games in 2012.

Please make sure that you include any direct experience or involvement with the Games and don't hesitate to tell us stories on the subject from your own experience.

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