

Mass Observation Archive

How to combine information with the British birth cohort studies

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Contents

Summary	2
Background	2
The 1958 National Child Development Study (NCDS)	2
Sample size and data collection	3
Mass Observation Project	5
MO sample size and availability of data.....	5
What is Mass Observation ‘data’?	6
Complementary data from the 1958 cohort and MOP	8
The 1958 cohort at age 33: What Do You Think?.....	8
MOP: Responses to the autumn 1991 and Spring 2008 directives	10
Women & Men.....	14
Mass-Observation in the 1990s	14
Autumn 1991 Directive	14
Lifeline	20
Spring 2008 Directive	20
Hypothesis generation from qualitative MO material	22
Concluding remarks	23
References.....	25
Appendix	27

Summary

This resource report highlights how qualitative information from the Mass Observation Archive could be used in tandem with data from the British birth cohort studies. In particular it focuses on the 1958 cohort study and the Mass Observation Project that started in 1981, but also draws on the 1970 and 1946 cohort studies. The report highlights the rich qualitative data that has been collected as part of the Mass Observation Project since 1981. This could be used to generate hypotheses that could then be tested using cohort data and could also be used to provide illustrative material alongside quantitative analyses.

Background

The UK is home to the largest and longest-running longitudinal studies in the world. In 2012, the ESRC-funded the Cohort and Longitudinal Studies Enhancement Resources (CLOSER) programme, which aims to maximise the use, value and impact of these studies both within the UK and abroad¹. A large number of activities and research projects will take place within five areas of work:

- Data harmonisation
- Data linkage
- *Search platform*
- Research impact
- Training and capacity building

The aim of the *search platform* is to provide a single tool that enables researchers to find the variables they need for their analyses across all the cohort and longitudinal studies involved. The search platform will be designed for use by a wide range of researchers with very different levels of experience in data management, data analysis and data discovery. It will provide a simple, intuitive interface, which will return relevant results for both basic and advanced queries.

The search platform will also provide the opportunity to showcase other complementary data sources. In particular, contextual information can illuminate and enhance both quantitative and qualitative analyses using the longitudinal cohort and panel datasets that are part of CLOSER. The data resources that are used here are the quantitative 1946, 1958 and 1970 British birth cohort studies. This includes a special focus on the 1958 cohort, and the qualitative Mass Observation Project, which began in 1981.

The 1958 National Child Development Study (NCDS)

NCDS (also known as the 1958 birth cohort study), follows the lives of 17,000 people born in England, Scotland and Wales in a single week of 1958. The study adopts the life course perspective (Elder, 1985, 1998; Heinz, 1991, 2009) attempting to embrace holistically the

¹ For more information on the studies and research activities currently in CLOSER see www.closer.ac.uk.

course of human development, with the data collected being relevant to the particular stage of life reached. It thus provides an invaluable resource that can be used to monitor cohort members' physical, educational and social development and transitions into adult life. In the early years the focus was on home circumstances, parental attitudes and behaviours and the physical, cognitive and behavioural development of the cohort members. Through the school years educational achievement was brought into the picture, together with information supplied by teachers about the context of schooling. In adulthood the emphasis moved to participation in the labour market and the other domains of adult life, including partnership, family formation, housing and citizenship. Health, well-being and health-related behaviour have also been a recurrent theme throughout.

Information has been collected from a number of sources (parents, cohort members, teachers, and medical officers) and using different techniques (personal interviews, self-completion questions, assessment). Much of the information held is in the form of quantitative data and is available from the UK data archive². Responses to some 'open' questions included in the self-completion questionnaires have also been coded and deposited at the archive, together with transcripts from qualitative interviews carried out with a sub-sample of respondents in 2008.

Sample size and data collection

Since the birth survey in 1958, there have been eight further 'sweeps' of all cohort members at ages 7, 11, 16, 23, 33, 42, 46 and 50. In 2003 (at age 45), approximately 9,000 cohort members also participated in a special bio-medical survey so we could learn more about how development, environment and lifestyle affect people's health. In 2008, at age 50, 9,790 cohort members took part. The next survey is planned for 2013, when the cohort members turn 55. Figure 1 provides further details of the NCDS sample size over time. The sample at each interview remains representative, in most respects, of the general UK population of that age, although there is a trend towards under-representation of males and those less educationally advantaged (Hawkes & Plewis, 2006), which is a feature of all longitudinal studies. Figure 2 shows the participation and reasons for non-participation of the original birth sample (n=17,415) over time, with more than half of the original sample providing data at sweep 8 when age 50. Almost a third (30%) of the original birth sample of cohort members have participated in all eight follow-on surveys and a further 17% have only missed one of the eight follow-on surveys.

² <http://www.esds.ac.uk/findingData/ncdsTitles.asp>. Also see the NCDS pages on the CLS website: www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/ncds.

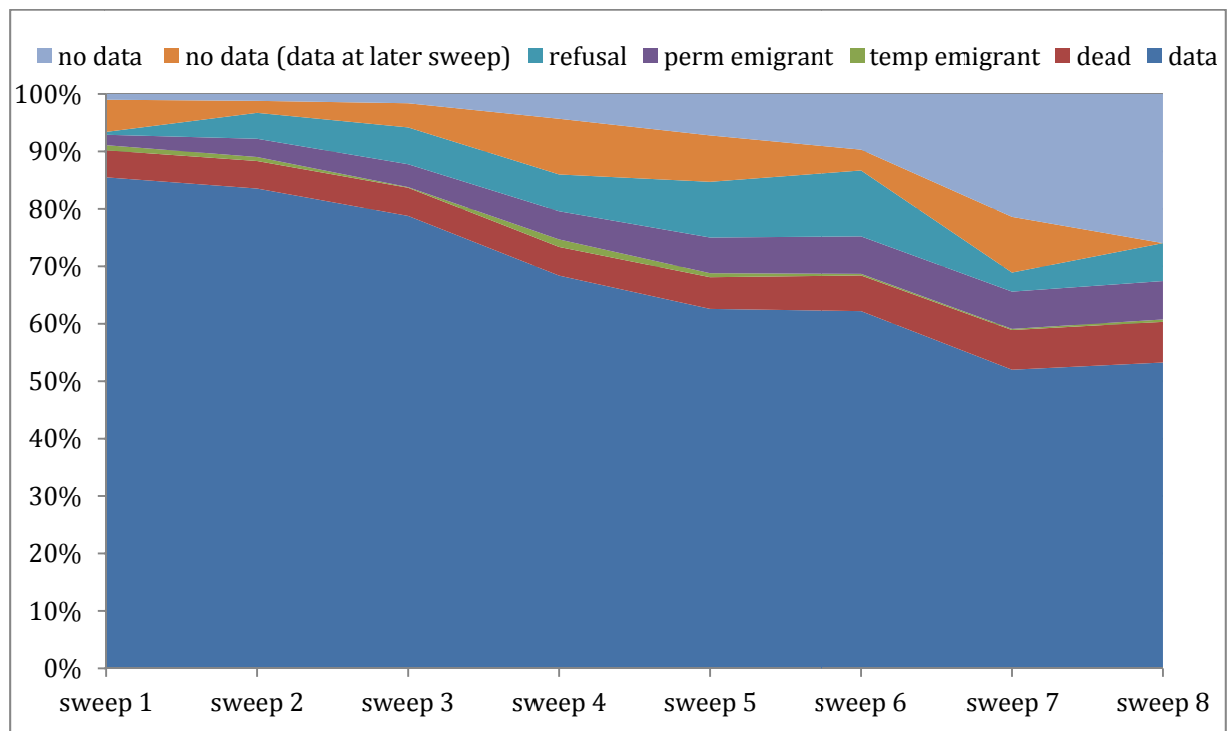
Figure 1: Targeted and achieved samples for NCDS sweeps

	PMS	NCDS1	NCDS2	NCDS3	NCDS4	NCDS5	NCDS6	NCDS7	NCDS8
	1958	1965	1969	1974	1981	1991	(99/00)	2004	2008
	Birth	7	11	16	23	33	42	46	50
a	17,638	17,370	16,880	16,929	16,713	16,389	16,194	16,072	16,014
b	17,638	16,504	16,258	16,074	15,897	15,596	15,411	15,295	15,240
	Mother	Parents	Parents	Parents					
		School	School	School					
		Tests	Tests	Tests					Tests
	Medical	Medical	Medical	Medical					
		Subject	Subject	Subject	Subject	Subject	Subject	Subject	Subject
				Census	Census				
						Spouse/Partner			
						Children (e)			
						Children's Mother (f)			
c	17,415	15,425	15,337	14,654	12,537	11,469	11,419	9,534	9,790
d	17,415	15,051	14,757	13,924	12,044	11,044	10,979	9,175	9,408

Notes:

- a. Cross-sectional target sample - immigrants with appropriate date of birth included for NCDS1-3.
- b. Longitudinal target sample - only those born in Britain and still alive/not permanently emigrated.
- c. Cross-sectional achieved sample - immigrants with appropriate date of birth included for NCDS1-3.
- d. Longitudinal achieved sample - only those born in Britain and still alive/not permanently emigrated.
- e. For a random sample of one in three cohort members. Information was collected directly from 3,008 children of cohort members.
- f. This could be the Cohort Member, their Spouse, or Partner (same 1 in 3 random sample). 2,588 mothers completed the 'mother' questionnaire, giving information on 4,278 children.

Figure 2: Longitudinal participation of original birth sample (n=17,415)



Note for sweep 8: No cohort members are coded as 'no data' (data at later sweep) as sweep 9 (2013) has yet to be completed.

To illustrate the complementary use of birth cohort with qualitative data from the Mass Observation Project, we will draw on data collected in 1991 when 11,469 cohort members

were interviewed at age 33. This sweep of data collection comprised of many different components including the self-completion questionnaire, 'What Do you Think?' The specific questions we report on here are highlighted in Figure 3a and 3b. The complete questionnaire can be downloaded from the NCDS pages on the CLS website (www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/ncds).

Mass Observation Project

The Mass Observation resource comprises two studies. The original *Mass Observation Archive* (MOA) was set up in 1937 to study the everyday lives of ordinary people in Britain and create an 'anthropology of ourselves'. It ran until the early 1950s, although some limited material is available up to the mid-1960s. It combined information from two sources:

- A national panel of volunteer writers was recruited to reply to regular questionnaires and tasks, including writing diaries
- A team of paid investigators went into a variety of public situations and recorded people's behaviour and conversation in as much detail as possible.

Much of this information is available in both original and electronic format. Further details of the MOA and how to access the available information is included in the appendix.

In 1981, this idea of a national panel was revived when the *Mass Observation Project* (MOP) was formed. Through the press, television and radio, new volunteer writers or 'Mass Observation correspondents' were recruited from all over Britain. The MOP provides a structured programme within which "ordinary" people can write directly about their lives in the knowledge that what they send in will be archived for posterity. A qualitative longitudinal social data resource has been created with an emphasis on subjectivity and self-representation, with an aim of contributing to our understanding of everyday life in the late 20th and early 21st century. In 2012 Mass Observation (MO) celebrated 75 years of work.

MO sample size and availability of data

In contrast to the individuals in the birth cohort studies, the Mass Observers do not constitute a statistically representative sample of the population. Rather, they can be seen as reporters or "citizen journalists" who provide a window on their worlds. Despite not having active recruitment campaigns, in any given year between 150-250 people contact the MOP to ask if they can become a MO. Overall, more than 5,000 people have requested to become members of the MOP, while responses having been received from 3,335 individuals between 1981 to date. The current panel of active participants is around 500. Anyone age 16+ can be part of the MOP, though in reality it had become heavily biased towards older age groups, women and those living in the South East. The current recruitment criteria, which highlights the need to recruit men, younger participants aged between age 16 to 44, and people living in Northern parts of the UK, has been successful in redressing the balance of the MO sample. The profile of the current panel of active participants is 59% female. Thirty-six per cent are aged between 16 and 40 years and a further 26% are aged between 41 and 50 years.

Some MOs have remained in the project for a number of years, whilst others participate for just one or two years. Of the 3,335 individuals on the MOP database, 822 (24.8%) have responded to one directive. The average, median, number of responses received from an individual MO is 5, although more than 10% of MOs have responded to 50+ directives. A total of 14 people have been writing since 1981, with the maximum number of responses received from one individual being an impressive 174.

What is Mass Observation 'data'?

The MOs are sent "directives" or open-ended questions by post or email up to three times a year. The directives contain between two or three broad themes, which cover both very personal issues and wider political and social issues and events. The themes within a directive are commissioned by external collaborators from a range of disciplines, including academic researchers in history, sociology, English, media, development studies, health and social care, computing and psychology. The collection of responses from MOs comprises in-depth accounts (both opinion and experience) of everyday life: stories, memoirs, lists, letters, diagrams, drawings, maps, diaries, photographs, press cuttings, confessions, reports on people, places and events, across a wide variety of topics. The majority of information is returned in paper form, but responses are increasingly being returned electronically. Summary information is available online, but access to the MO responses received since 1981 is primarily available in hard copy only by appointment at the archive. However, a selection of responses from the 1980s have been digitised for the recently available '*Observing the 1980s*' online resource³. This brings together voices from the Mass Observation Project and the British Library Oral History Collections, alongside ephemera from the University of Sussex Library. The material offers a unique and inspiring insight into the lives and opinions of British people from a range of social classes and regions, combined with publications dealing with contemporary issues such as the Poll Tax, AIDS and the Falklands Conflict during the 1980s.

As an indication of the wealth of information collected by Mass Observation, Table 1 provides a list of the themes included in the directives sent out during the same years that NCDS surveys have so far taken place during adulthood. The table includes the ages that cohort members of the 1946, 1958 and 1970 cohorts would have been at each of these data collection points. This provides researchers with one way of narrowing their initial search of the MO data. By using the demographic information that can be provided by MO staff, researchers can select to read the material from MOs who are the same age as the members of the three cohort studies at the time of a particular directive. For example, in 1991, the 1946 cohort members were age 43, the 1958 cohort members were age 33 and the 1970 cohort members were 21 years of age. A complete list of all the directives issued since 1981 is available on the MOP website⁴.

³ <http://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/observingthe80s/>

⁴ <http://specialcollections.lib.sussex.ac.uk/CalmView/TreeBrowse.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&field=RefNo&key=SxMOA2>

Table 1: MOP directives issued in year of data collection for the 1958 cohort

Age of cohort members			Year	Directive Themes
1946	1958	1970		
35	23	11	Summer 1981	Currency, Royal wedding, Business premises, Unemployment, Holidays, Food
35	23	11	Royal Wedding Special 1981	Diary for the day
35	23	11	Autumn 1981	Currency, Pet food, Shopping strategies, Business premises, Unemployment, Liberal-SDP Alliance, Christmas
45	33	21	Spring 1991	Education; The uses of reading & writing & literacy diaries; Taking risks
45	33	21	Autumn 1991	Women & Men; Technology
53	41	29	Spring 1999	Going to the cinema; Current issues; Documenting the Millennium
53	41	29	Summer 1999	The Public Library; Body piercing & tattooing; Current events
53	41	29	Autumn 1999	Sleeping and dreaming; Millennium Diary
54	42	30	Spring 2000	Travelling; Collecting things
54	42	30	Summer 2000	Coming to Britain; Queen Mother at 100; Designing your own directive.
54	42	30	Autumn 2000	The Family; Gays & family; Current events.
58	46	34	Spring 2004	Using numbers; You and the BBC; Going to university.
58	46	34	Summer 2004	Letters; Email
58	46	34	Autumn 2004	Being part of research; Your most recent dream
62	50	38	Spring 2008	You & the NHS in 2008; Your lifeline
62	50	38	Summer 2008	Doing family history research; War: experiences and reflections; The Olympics
62	50	38	Winter 2008	The world financial crisis; Global poverty and health; The ups and downs of friendship

Complementary data from the 1958 cohort and MOP

We now detail the data we have used to highlight some of the research opportunities that are possible when different data resources are combined. We draw on responses that 1958 cohort members gave to questions on gender equality and the domestic division of labour collected in the self-completed questionnaire, *'What Do you Think?'* in 1991. Figure 3 and Table 2 detail the questions. To illustrate the range and depth of information sent in by the MOs we concentrate on two themes from two separate directives: *'Women & Men'* from Autumn 1991 and *'Your Lifeline'* from Spring 2008. We suggest how data collected from birth cohort studies, in particular the 1958 cohort, can be complemented by qualitative (MOP) data and how hypotheses can be generated from rich qualitative data and then tested more rigorously with quantitative data.

The 1958 cohort at age 33: What Do You Think?

In 1991, 11,469 cohort members participated in the study. Of these, more than 10,700 also returned the self-completion *'What Do You Think?'* questionnaire. This questionnaire gathered views and opinions across a number of topics such as gender equality, environmental concerns, racism, left-right political beliefs and political engagement, as well as marriage, social relationships, how respondents get on with their partner (if in a relationship) and life satisfaction. Figure 3 provides an example of how the questions were presented and Table 2 shows the full set of questions on gender equality and the domestic division of labour together with the percentage of cohort members who responded in each of the five answer categories ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

Figure 3: Example of how questions were presented in the NCDS *'What Do You Think?'* self-completion questionnaire at age 33.

Section C - Your Views 2						
Below are statements on some more topics. To what extent do you AGREE or DISAGREE with these statements?						
<i>Please circle one number for each statement</i>						
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Men and women should do the same jobs around the house	1	2	3	4	5
		(N509555)				
2	Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth	1	2	3	4	5
		(N509556)				
3	I would not expect my partner to be always faithful	1	2	3	4	5
		(N509557)				

Table 2: NCDS ‘What Do You Think?’ questions capturing views on gender equality and domestic division of labour

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
There should be more women bosses in important jobs in business and industry	16%	49%	24%	10%	1%
Women who do not have a job are dull	2%	3%	4%	49%	43%
Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay	9%	33%	29%	25%	5%
Women should have the same chance as men to get training to have a career	52%	46%	1%	1%	<1%
Men and women should do the same jobs around the house	18%	51%	9%	21%	1%
When both partners work full-time, the man should take an equal share of the domestic chores	37%	56%	3%	3%	<1%
If a child is ill, the mother should take the time off work	6%	31%	13%	40%	10%
It is less important for a woman to work than a man	2%	20%	13%	51%	14%
I would not want a woman to be my boss	2%	7%	12%	61%	18%
Wives who don't have to work should not	3%	18%	15%	54%	11%
Men and women should all have the chance to do the same kind of work	30%	59%	5%	6%	1%

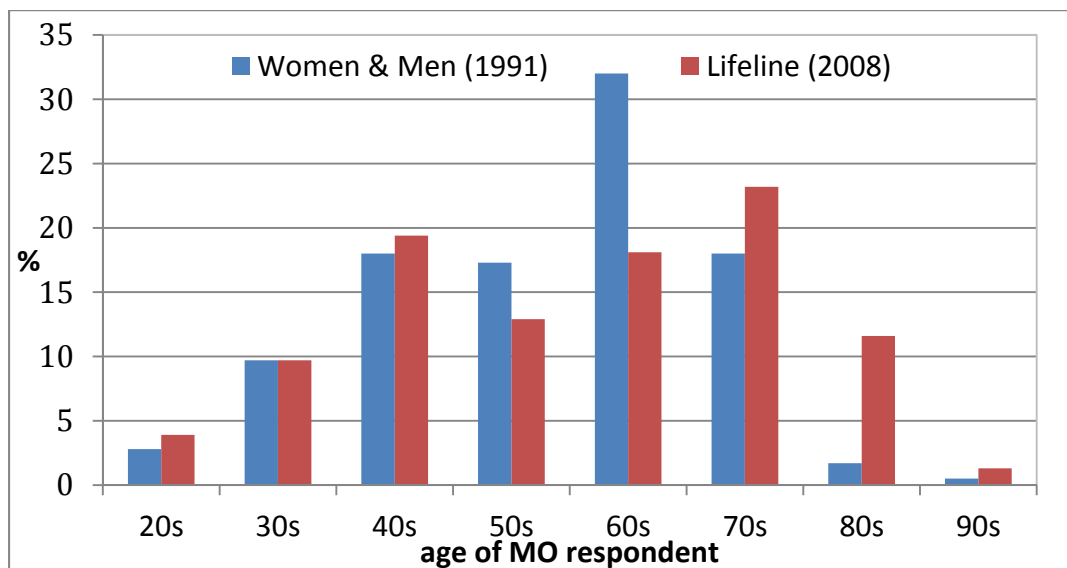
MOP: Responses to the autumn 1991 and Spring 2008 directives

The aim of the current MO recruitment criteria was to redress the leaning towards female and older respondents. In 1991, the autumn directive 'Women & Men' theme received 432 responses, including 302 (70%) from women and 120 from men (gender was not recorded for 10 responses). All but one of the responses were received by post and amounted to 2,273 pages of writing.

In 2008, the spring directive 'Your Lifeline' theme received 159 responses, comprising 103 (65%) from women and 53 from men (gender was not recorded for 3 responses). This time 42 responses (26%) were received electronically. Overall, responses covered 823 pages of writing, including a number of diagrammatic 'lifelines'.

In autumn 1991, the average (mean) age of the respondents was 58, with an age range of 23-94. In spring 2008, the average age of the MOs was 60 with an age range of 20-95. Figure 4 gives the percentage of MOs in each age group and clearly shows the increasing proportion of MOs in their 70s, 80s and 90s (21% to 36%), despite the average (mean) age over the 17 year period only increasing slightly. As of 2012, 17% of MO panel members were aged 70+, clearly showing the importance and success of the current recruitment criteria.

Figure 4: % of MOs in each age-group who responded to the 'Women & Men' [1991] and 'Lifeline' [2008] questions



In terms of matching the age of British birth cohort members in 1991, no MO was the same age as the 1970 cohort, two were age 33 (1958 cohort) and 10 were age 45 (1946 cohort). By including MOs whose age fell three years either side of the cohort members' age, the numbers increased to one for the 1970 cohort, 24 for the 1958 cohort and 55 for the 1946 cohort. In 2008, again no MO was the same age (38) as the 1970 cohort, three were age 50 (1958 cohort) and 7 were age 62 (1946 cohort). By including MOs whose age fell three years either side of the cohort members' age, numbers increased to 14 for the 1970 cohort, 17 for the 1958 cohort and 26 for the 1946 cohort.

It is also possible to explore the responses of an individual MO longitudinally. For example, once an individual MO has been identified by entering their unique reference number into the online search facility on the MO website, the years of involvement and the particular directives and themes responded to are listed. Table 3 provides a list of the contribution of the MOs born in 1946 or 1958 who responded to either the Women and Men directive in 1991 or the Lifeline directive in 2008. Two MOs born in 1969 and one in 1971 are also included to represent the 1970 cohort. Table 4 lists the responses to directives by an individual MO born in 1958. These highlight the incredible wealth of personal longitudinal information that can be obtained from individual MOs. Not only do MOs respond to the questions in the directives, but many also update their personal information – such as employment, health and marital status, where they are living and experience of family bereavement – when writing their stories.

Table 3: Longitudinal participation of MOs born in 1946, 1958 or 1970* who responded to either the 'Women & Men' autumn 1991 or 'Lifeline' spring 2008 directive

Unique Reference	Years when active member	Number of responses ²
Born in 1946		
A1706 ¹	1987 →	163
B3886	2006 →2011	23
C1990	1987 →1996	57
F218	1982 →	182
J931	1984 →2004	103
L1002	1984 →	129
L1477	1986 →1998	25
M1593	1987 →2001	82
M3408	2005 →	44
P1796 ¹	1987 →	163
R1321 ¹	1984 →	181
W976	1983 →1997	45
Z2276 ¹	1990 →2009	68
Born in 1958		
M3190	2005 →	54
O2049	1988 →2009	22
P878	1984 →1996	20
S3372	2005 →	32
W3163		
Born in 1969 or 1971		
C3167	2005 →	54
P2533	1990 →1996	8
P2957	2002 →	55

*No MOs responding to these two directives were born in 1970. The participation of those born in 1969 and 1971 are included to represent the 1970 cohort.

¹ These MOs responded to both directives.

² Includes responses to themes and directives, 'special reports' and other material.

Table 4: Longitudinal participation of an individual MO [1983-1996]

Link to webpage	Directive and Theme
SxMOA2/1/14/1/2/286	Winter 1983 Directive
SxMOA2/1/14/1/2/286	Winter 1983 Directive
SxMOA2/1/15/1/4/463	Spring 1984 Directive
SxMOA2/1/16/1/3/404	Summer 1984 directive
SxMOA2/1/17/1/2/340	Autumn 1984 Directive
SxMOA2/1/20/2/3/494	Autumn 1986 Directive. Part 2: Major Events
SxMOA2/1/20/3/3/511	Autumn 1986 Directive. Part 3: Christmas Day Diary
SxMOA2/1/21/1/3/472	Spring 1987 Directive Part One
SxMOA2/1/21/2/2/427	Spring 1987 Directive Part 2
SxMOA2/1/23/1/5/497	Summer 1987 Directive. Holidays
SxMOA2/1/24/1/4/439	Autumn/Winter 1987 Directive. Part 1: The car
SxMOA2/1/24/2/2/390	Autumn/Winter 1987 Directive. Part 2: The Hurricane and Floods
SxMOA2/1/25/1/5/409	Spring 1988 Directive. Clothing
SxMOA2/1/30/1/3/428	Autumn/Winter 1989 Directive. Part 1: Relaxants and Stimulants
SxMOA2/1/30/2/1/361	Autumn/Winter 1989 Directive. Part 2: The 'Backing Britain' Campaign
SxMOA2/1/33/1/3/420	Autumn/Winter 1990 Directive. Part 1: Celebrations
SxMOA2/1/33/2/5/420	Autumn/Winter directive 1990. Part 2: Gulf Crisis
SxMOA2/1/33/3/1/415	Autumn/Winter 1990 directive Part 3: Organisations
SxMOA2/1/35/1/2/276	Autumn 1991 Directive. Part 1: Women and Men
SxMOA2/1/35/2/2/276	Autumn 1991 Directive. Part 2: Technology

Note: by clicking on any of the above links, further details of the individual response are provided including length, whether handwritten, typed or word processed, and its location within the archive.

Link to MO profile:

<http://specialcollections.lib.sussex.ac.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Persons&id=DS%2fUK%2f427>

Women & Men

There were numerous questions within the 'Women and Men' theme. Some MOs responded to them all, others only commented on the ones where they felt they had experience or knowledge. Figure 5 details the questions in full. The areas highlighted in bold are areas also asked in the NCDS self-completion survey entitled '*What do you think?*' in 1991.

Figure 5: Mass Observation Autumn 1991 Directive

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?

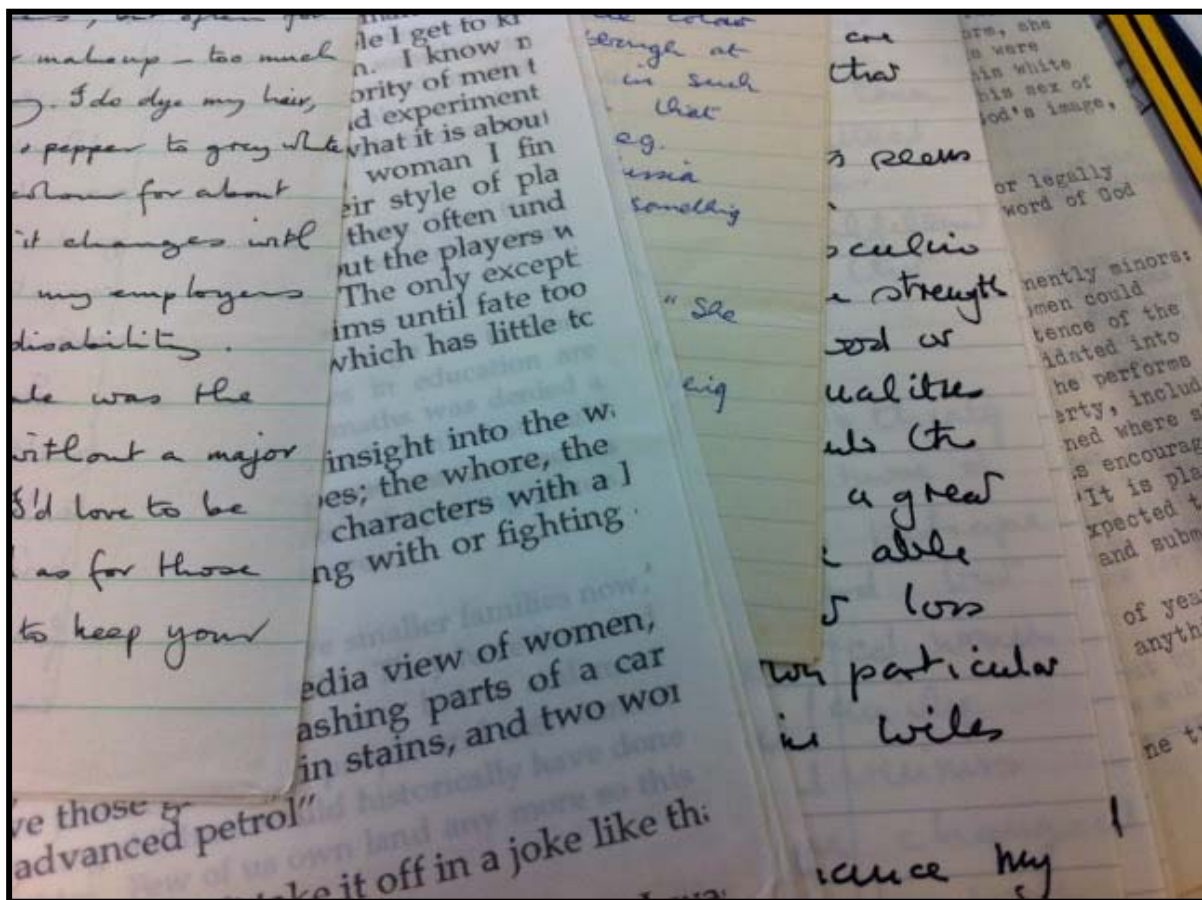
Please explain your views. What is a "New Man"? Does he exist? For men only: Are you one? Or would you like to be one? What is a "liberated woman"? Does she exist? For women only: Are you one? Or would you like to be one?.

Do you think a liberated women 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?

The very different way of asking questions in the two data sources – quantitatively and qualitatively – is immediately apparent. The quantitative NCDS questions ask respondents to select their response from a number of pre-determined answer categories, the qualitative MO questions are designed to allow for very individual responses that will vary in both content and length. This potentially makes the resources very complementary.

The length of the response received varied enormously. For example, there were seven women filed under ‘A’ in the boxes holding the transcripts. Their responses ranged from a post card, 5-8 sides of handwritten script to a 42-page detailed document. There was also an apologetic note from one woman saying that despite best efforts she could not manage to write anything cohesive on the subject. There was a mixture of handwritten and typed responses, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Sample of responses to the Autumn 1991 directive



Using responses to the ‘Women & Men’ theme of the 1991 Autumn directive to illustrate attitudes on gender equality and the domestic division of labour held by NCDS cohort members when age 33 in 1991.

The 1958 cohort data shows a clear gender division in the support for ‘equality’ in both the workplace and the home, with women showing stronger support than men. The data allows us to show how this support varies between different groups of men and women, for example, by employment status, highest qualification, marital and parental status. This is

well documented from a variety of sources including articles using cohort data (e.g. Wiggins & Bynner, 1993; Cheng, et al 2012). Highest qualification level is used as an illustration here. For both men and women, those with an academic degree (or vocational equivalent (NVQ5 or higher) showed most support for measures of equality of opportunity between the sexes and those with no formal qualifications showed least support. Differences between these two groups were greatest among women.

Differences in support for sharing domestic tasks were far less apparent by qualification level. For women, employment status was also associated with views on equality of opportunity. More women in full-time employment were supportive of equality in the workplace and the home in comparison with women who were in paid part-time employment or with a full-time home-care role. These patterns are shown in figure 7 and 8.

Figure 7: % men and women ‘strongly agreeing’ to gender equality questions by highest held qualification at age 33

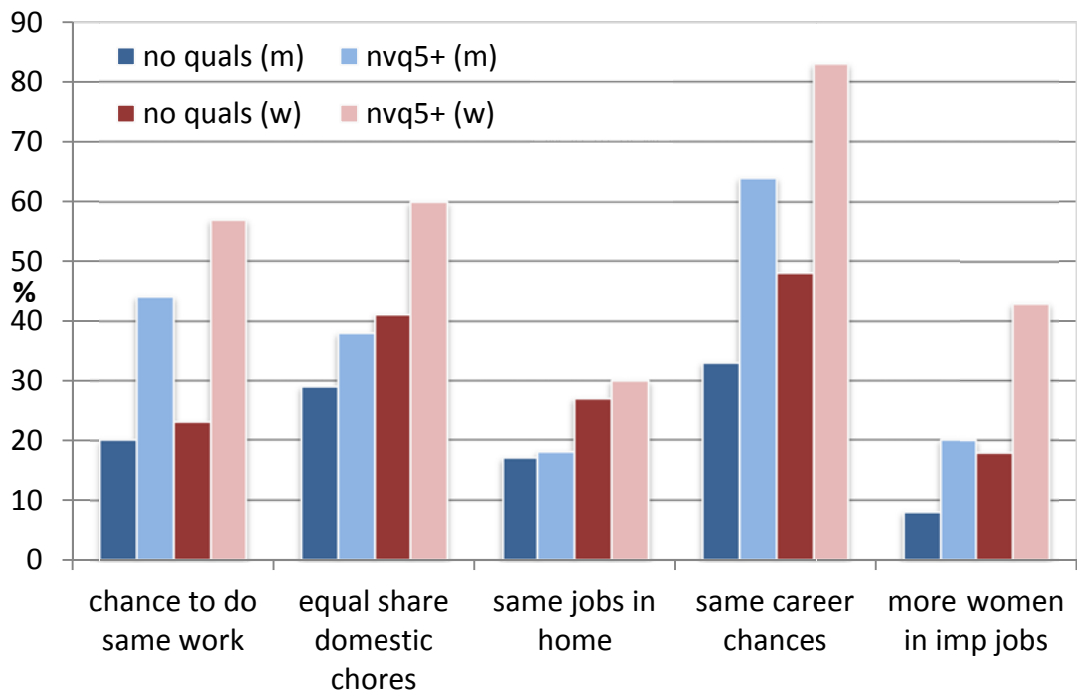
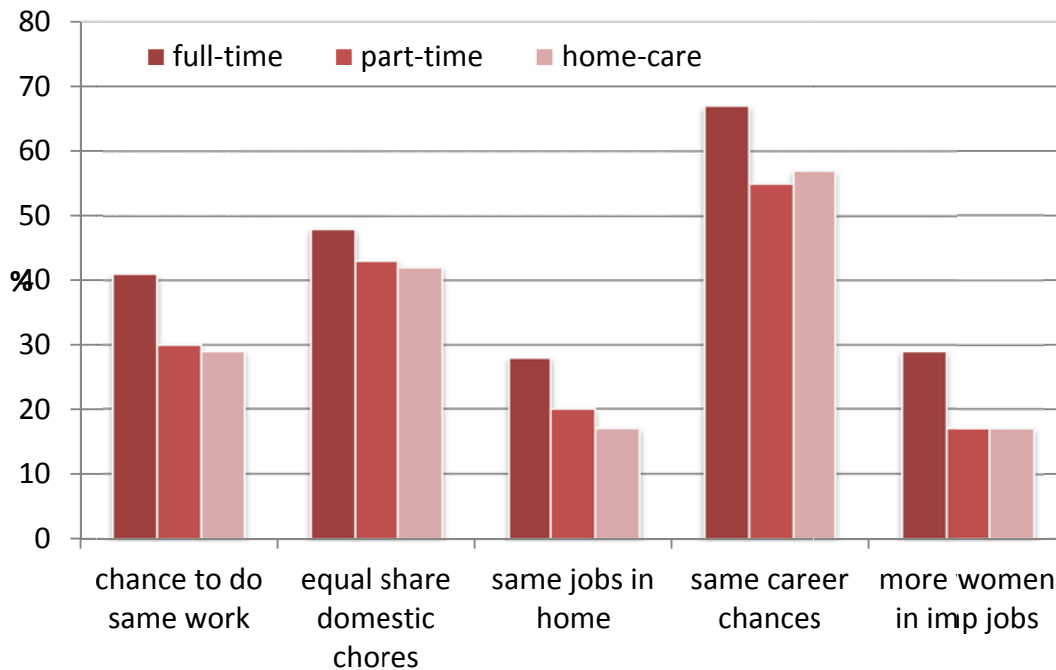


Figure 8: % women ‘strongly agreeing’ to gender equality questions by employment status at age 33



To increase understanding of views and how they differ across demographic and socio-economic groups, it is important for research to put findings in their wider social context. For example, what was the employment and equality legislation in place when these views were obtained from 33 year olds in 1991? How many men and women held specific qualifications, what percentages of women were in paid employment and how many worked full-time or part-time, etc? This information is readily available from other sources, including the General Household Survey⁵, (a multi-purpose continuous survey collecting information on a range of topics from people living in private households in Great Britain), or Social Trends⁶ (draws on data and statistics from a wide range of sources and is widely used to provide background statistics in journal articles and other research publications). However, it is equally important to get a more detailed picture of how individuals live their life, in order to get a clearer picture of the life behind the view. Extracts from the writings of the MOs of a similar age to NCDS cohort members can bring the stories behind the different views to life. These rich accounts can also give a sense of how people spontaneously write about these issues, i.e. what vocabulary or ‘discourse’ they use.

A number of quotes show the struggle that women have experienced to achieve the same opportunities as men, the belief held by women that they have to be ‘better’ in order to achieve the same as men, and also the pervading inequality of opportunity from stereotypical held views about the role of women. A number of extracts are included in Figure 9.

⁵ The General Household Survey [GHS] is carried out by the Office for National Statistics For further information go to <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ghs/general-household-survey/index.html>

⁶ To access the numerous Social Trends publications, go to <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/index.html>

Figure 9: Extracts from responses sent in by female MOs born in 1958

I remember once when I was at school they acquired their first ever computer and formed a small club. I was the only girl who wanted to join. (My father was involved in computing so perhaps it did not seem quite so alien to me as to the other girls) They never told me when the meetings were, so that was the end of my acquaintance with computers until I went to university. (I eventually did a combined degree in environmental sciences and computing when I went to university).

P. 2533.
and so I argued my point, took a self-defence course and stayed out. I walk darkened streets on my own now as well. I'm not going to let men stop me but I also carry a personal alarm.
Similarly I was told I couldn't go to University because I'd just get married and waste it! So I went regardless. I'm presently involved in a battle which might stop me wanting to do something I want because I'm a woman. I want to leave my teacher training course but can't because I can't get any date money because I live with my partner. According to them I'm dependent on a man. However I do believe the government were taken to the European court over this and women can now claim as independent people!
I'm lucky though. I'm assertive enough to get what I want. Other women may be daunted by the continual battle to get what you want and there are some cultures where doing this would lead to ostracism from that community. You have to push harder and battle for longer to get anywhere if you're a woman. You only have to look to see that women M.P.'s are usually older than male M.P.'s and that it's harder for a woman teacher to become the head of a school than it is for a man even though there are less males in the profession.

I think I love the world of play by mail games so much because I have never encountered sex discrimination there. Perhaps the fact of most communication being by mail has something to do with it, you are accepted on the face value of what you write. It always amused me that correspondents assumed I was single unless I signed myself as Mrs. It is presumably more of an insult to assume a single woman is married than vice versa. Or perhaps men simply like to view an unknown woman as potentially available.

When has being a woman mattered most to me? When I'm with my children I guess. Love them or hate them, I would never be without them. I don't think their father is quite so close to them although they all love each other a great deal.

More is expected from women now. So many women with children have to go out to work (have to as opposed to choose to) It saddens me. Equal opportunities in education are marvellous though. My mother who had A levels in maths and further maths was denied a university place because her county would not give a grant to a girl. I don't think that could happen now. I am really glad to have had my education. University gave me so much, a husband, knowledge of natural sciences and computers, an introduction to role playing games, confidence in myself that I had never had before, friends. I could go on forever.

Why have these changes occurred. Well, here is my best guess. We have smaller families now so women finally have times when they are not pregnant or feeding a child. They have time and opportunity. This has occurred when living standards are higher than ever before and more income is needed to support the lifestyle. Complex jobs need skilled people and men cannot supply enough skilled workers. Also, women with young children would historically have to work on the land, small farming and growing vegetables. Few of us own land any more so the option for a woman to work at home has gone.

My definition of the ideal man is one who will treat me as an equal and will still open doors

As MOs are all ages, we can also see the differences in the views held by men and women in different age groups. Figures 10a and 10b show extracts taken from the responses of a man born in 1946, showing how he saw the differences between men and women, and of a woman, also born in 1946, describing how she did not feel pressure to continue in paid employment when she had children.

Figure 10a: Extract from a response from male MO born in 1946

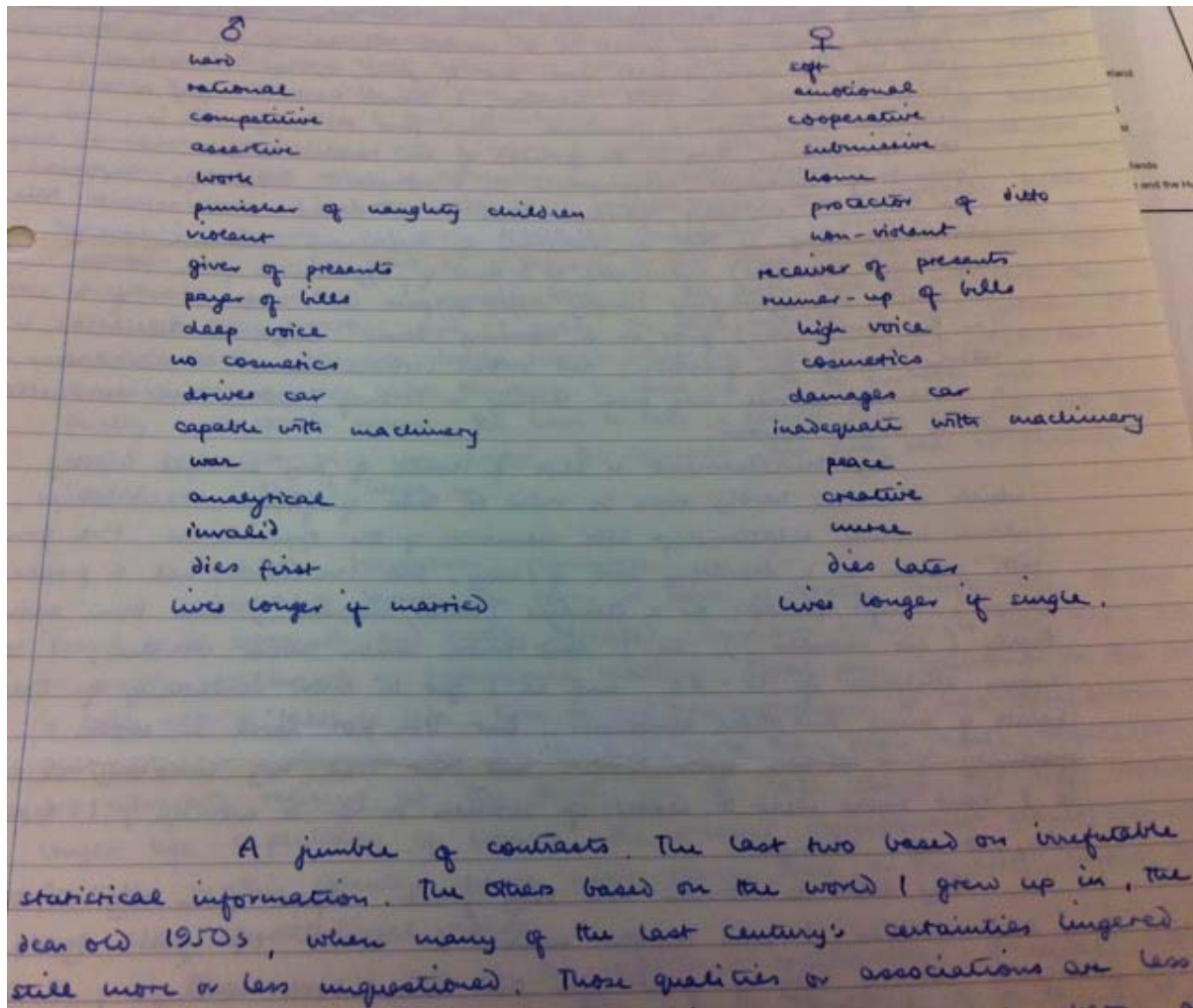
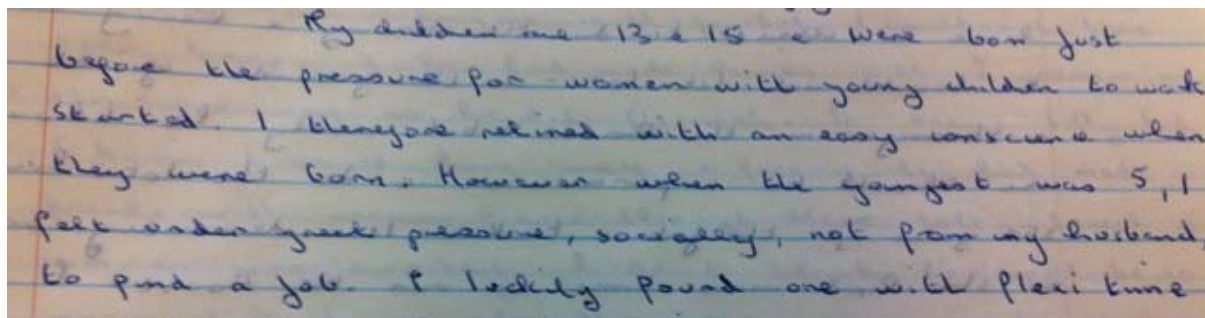


Figure 10b: Extract from a response from a female MO born in 1946



Lifeline

In 2008, 547 MOs sent in their responses to at least one of the directives. The spring directive received 198 responses that covered 823 pages. Figure 11 details the full 'lifeline' theme that MOs were asked to respond to. Again, the length and type of response varied from short bullet-points to lengthy scripts and detailed 'lifeline' diagrams. Figure 12a and 12b give two examples.

Figure 11: Your lifeline

Spring 2008 Directive

Part 2: Your life line

Mass Observation is all about people's lives looking back and forwards. In Part 2, could you draw us your "life line" marked up with the key events in your life. If you have never done one before, you start in the year of your birth and come up to the present. Then you mark off as many key events as you think are really important to you. I don't want to prompt you too much as part of the reason of asking you to do this is to see what you think ARE the key

events. Just to give you an idea, you might want to mark up the year you started school, or began working for a living, moving house, major travelling experiences, meeting new friends and partners. If you got married or had children those dates might be included. But there are lots of other events which you may feel should be included (like, say, the day you joined

Mass Observation!).

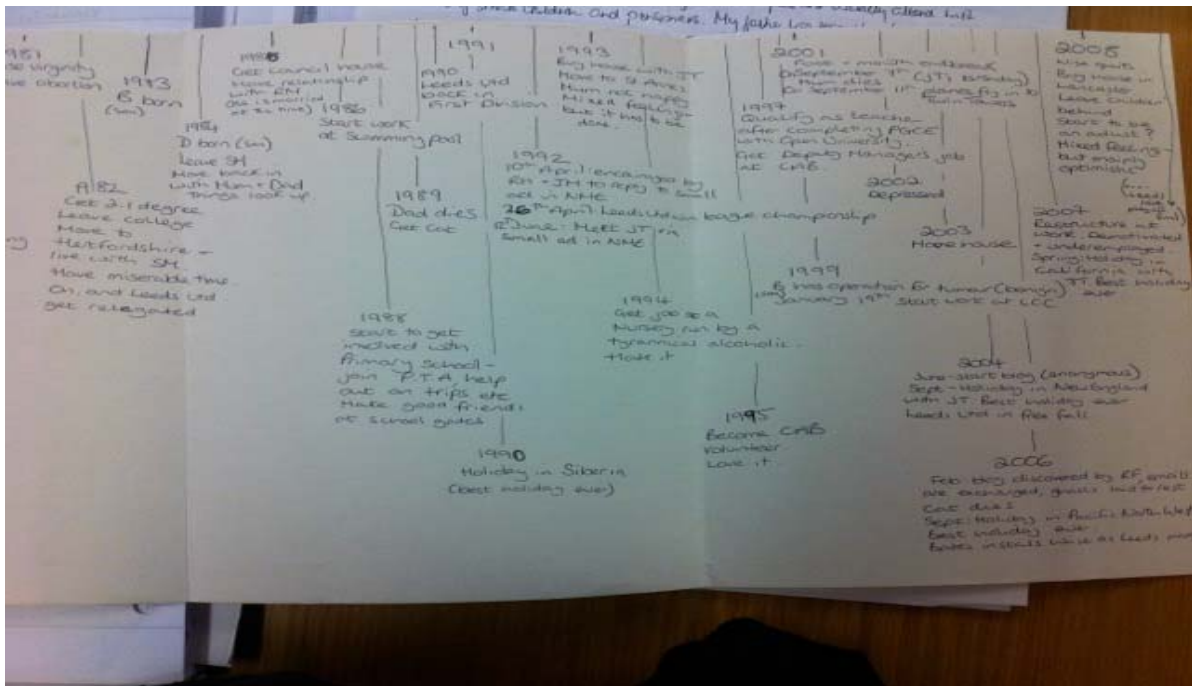
This can be as detailed as you wish, and can run on to as many pages as you need. Try to make it as legible as possible - PLEASE! Avoid using real names but if you are mentioning other people use initials and make sure you add their relationship to you (eg "my brother was born").

Figure 12a: Examples of a written 'Lifeline' response received in 2008

1964 - September. Began schooling - at Holy Trinity C of E school. Early memories which made an impact: older teacher with superstition about left-handers trying, unsuccessfully, to make me write right-handedly; racing through the early reading books; mother forgetting, only once, to collect me from school and standing waiting for her by railings in playground; wonderful ^(male) teacher in Class 3 who made

and A for sociology. Accepted by University of Newcastle Upon Tyne
 Sept 1978 - went up to Newcastle - too many bags - tricky train journey - most of it in tears after leaving boyfriend at King's Cross. Arrival at Newcastle station - immediately loved the city, a love which endures. Met P. lifelong friend (later to be husband's best man, and eldest daughter's godfather) at station & shared taxi to halls of residence. Freshers Ball - 2 days later. Met S. - future husband!
 3 extremely happy years; loved studying, had fantastic social life, excellent tutors, wonderful friends.

Figure 12b: Example of a diagrammatic 'Lifeline' received in 2008



Hypothesis generation from qualitative MO material

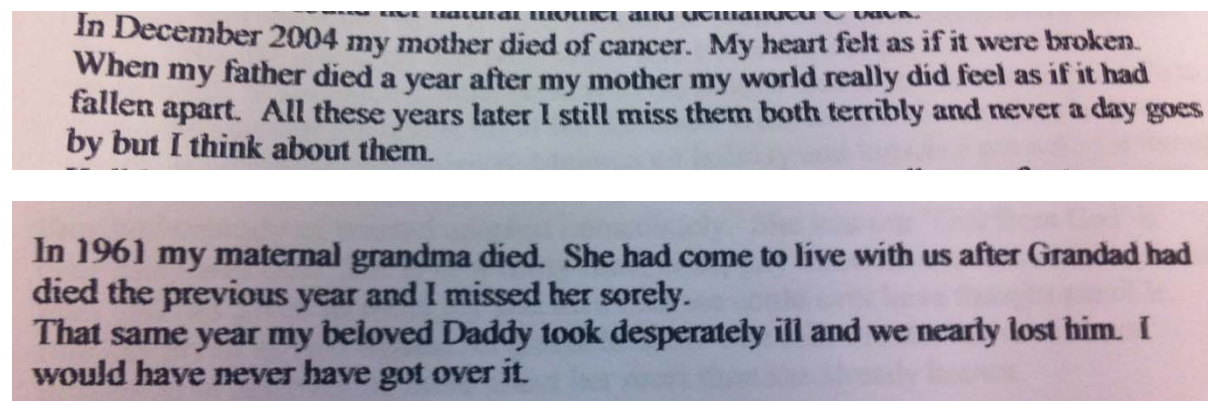
In the second example highlighting the complementarity of the two data resources, the MO responses provide the starting point for generating hypotheses that can be explored further using the longitudinal data provided by the 1946, 1958 or 1970 cohorts. We have observed the different ways that individuals described the key events in their life. Some 'lifelines' were extremely detailed, whilst others provided a much broader picture that concentrated on births, deaths and marriages.

Using the example in figure 12a, we can see a relationship change following a move away to university. This is a major transition in a person's life as it (then) usually involved a move away from the family home for the first time and often to a different part of the country. Complete employment, relationship and housing histories are available for the birth cohort members, with the 'status' being available on a month-by-month basis. As such, it would be possible to see how many relationship endings or beginnings coincided with moving away to university. These economic status and partnership status data files are available to download from the UK Data Service for the 1958 and 1970 cohorts.

The incidence and 'inter-relationship' of different life events can also be traced from the information written down by MOs and collected from members of the birth cohort studies. It would be possible to use mass observation data to understand what is important in individuals' lives at different time points and therefore inform what questions could be asked in subsequent sweeps of a cohort. For example, how connected are the death of a parent or other significant family member to a change of career, a house move or relationship breakdown? The death of a parent and the emotion experienced was mentioned by many of

the MOs, and also in a number of qualitative interviews that were carried out with a sub-sample of 1958 cohort members in 2008 when age 50⁷ (Elliott et al, 2010). The large quantitative 1958 dataset, as indeed the 1946 and 1970 cohorts do, also show 'when' the death of a parent occurred, and the detailed 'histories' allows researchers to see what else happened either prior to or following the death. Figure 13 gives some examples of the emotion MOs have attached to parental death or illness.

Figure 13: Examples of how MOs wrote about death and loss



Another possibility for combining research resources would be to contrast how 1958 cohort members *talk* about their life story (which they were asked to do during the semi-structured qualitative interview that was carried out when they were 50) with how MOs of similar age *write* about their life and the key events that have happened to them. Both methodologies have particular strengths and weaknesses. For example the writer can tell an uninterrupted story and be less conscious of being 'politically correct', whereas the talker can be interrupted and answers explored to enhance understanding and gain further depth. Additional comparisons can also be made with interviews carried out in 2010 with members of the 1946 cohort and the older Hertfordshire Cohort Study (HCS), who were born between 1931 and 1939 (Elliott et al, 2011). This semi-structured interview was very similar to that carried out with the 1958 cohort in 2008.

Concluding remarks

To conclude, this resource paper has highlighted some of the rich and diverse longitudinal 'data' that is available in the UK. Although mixed methods research is becoming increasingly familiar with researchers (e.g. Cresswell, 2009; Bergman, 2013), this is not always accompanied by knowledge of what 'other' data there is, be it qualitative or quantitative, that can both complement and enrich research findings.

⁷ <http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=6691&type=Data%20catalogue>

The paper therefore showcases the richly rewarding Mass Observation material to quantitative researchers more familiar with large-scale longitudinal birth cohort or panel datasets, and similarly shows the immense value of these quantitative resources to qualitative researchers across different disciplines. It includes examples of how material from these research resources can be used together but is by no means exhaustive, aiming instead to highlight the diverse and creative range of research opportunities that exist for future analysis.

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Publications based on Mass Observation data

For a comprehensive list of publications based on MO material, particularly related to the original Mass Observation Archive from 1937, see:

http://www.massobs.org.uk/menu_publications.htm

There is no comprehensive publications database available for publications based on MOP material post-1981. A selection of recent publications is listed below:

Hubble, N. & Tew, P. (forthcoming). *Ageing, Narrative and Identity: New Qualitative Social Research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nordqvist, P and Smart, C (forthcoming) 'Grandparents of donor conceived children' in *We are Family? Perceptions of relatedness in assisted conception families*, eds. T. Freeman, F Ebtehaj, S. Graham, M Richards. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pollen, A. (2013). Research Methodology in Mass Observation Past and Present: 'Scientifically, about as valuable as a chimpanzee's tea party at the zoo'? *History Workshop Journal*, doi:10.1093/hwj/dbs040

Savage, M. (2007). Changing Social Class Identities in Post-War Britain: Perspectives from Mass-Observation. *Sociological Research Online*, 12(3), 6. <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/12/3/6.html> doi:10.5153/sro.1459

Smart, C. (2011) 'Families, Secrets and Memories'. *Sociology*, 45(4): 1-15.

Publications based on birth cohort data

For a comprehensive list of publications based on 1946 cohort data see:

<http://www.nshd.mrc.ac.uk/findings/publications.aspx>

For a comprehensive list of publications based on 1958 and 1970 cohort data see:

<http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/Publications.aspx?sitesectionid=70&sitesectiontitle=Publications>

Appendix

Introduction to the Mass Observation Archive



The MASS OBSERVATION Archive (MOA) has been held at the University of Sussex since 1970 when it was first opened up as a public resource for historical research. The Archive holds all the material generated by Mass Observation between 1937 and 1949, with a few later additions from the 1950s and 1960s.

The Archive results from the work of the social research organisation, Mass Observation. This organisation was founded in 1937 by three young men, who aimed to create an 'anthropology of ourselves' by gathering information on everyday life. They recruited a team of observers and a panel of volunteer writers to study the everyday lives of ordinary people in Britain. This original work continued until the early 1950s.

Two different sources were used to gather the information:

- A national panel of volunteer writers was recruited to reply to regular questionnaires and tasks, including writing diaries (Personal Writing).
- A team of paid investigators went into a variety of public situations and recorded people's behaviour and conversation in as much detail as possible (Topic Collections).

Personal writing

The personal writing contributed by the national panel of volunteer writers falls into three types.

- Diaries, 1939-65: About 500 men and women kept personal diaries, which they sent to Mass-Observation in monthly installments.
- Day Surveys, 1937-38: One day diaries written by people from all over Britain who volunteered to be members of MOs national "panel" of observers.

- Directive replies: "Directives" or open-ended questionnaires on a variety of subjects including personal issues were regularly sent out to the national panel of volunteers.

Topic collections

A team of paid investigators went into a variety of public situations and recorded people's behaviour and conversation in as much detail as possible. The raw material has been arranged by theme or title of study into a series of over 80 topics, filed as TC01 to TC80⁸. For example, TC59 Children and Education 1937-52 includes information gathered from:

- Child Survey 1937-40
- Children and the War 1939–47
- Children and the War 1937–47
- Miscellaneous Essays by School Children (sent in by Teachers) 1937-38
- Miscellaneous Material by School Children (sent in by Teachers) 1937-42
- Miscellaneous Essays by School Children (sent in by Teachers) 1938, including Magazines and Publications

Both personal writing and topic collections feed into the production of 'file reports' and ultimately the books that have been produced on the information held in the MOA. A complete list of publications is available at http://www.massobs.org.uk/original_publications.htm

What's available for users?

The MOA is available both digitally and in original format.

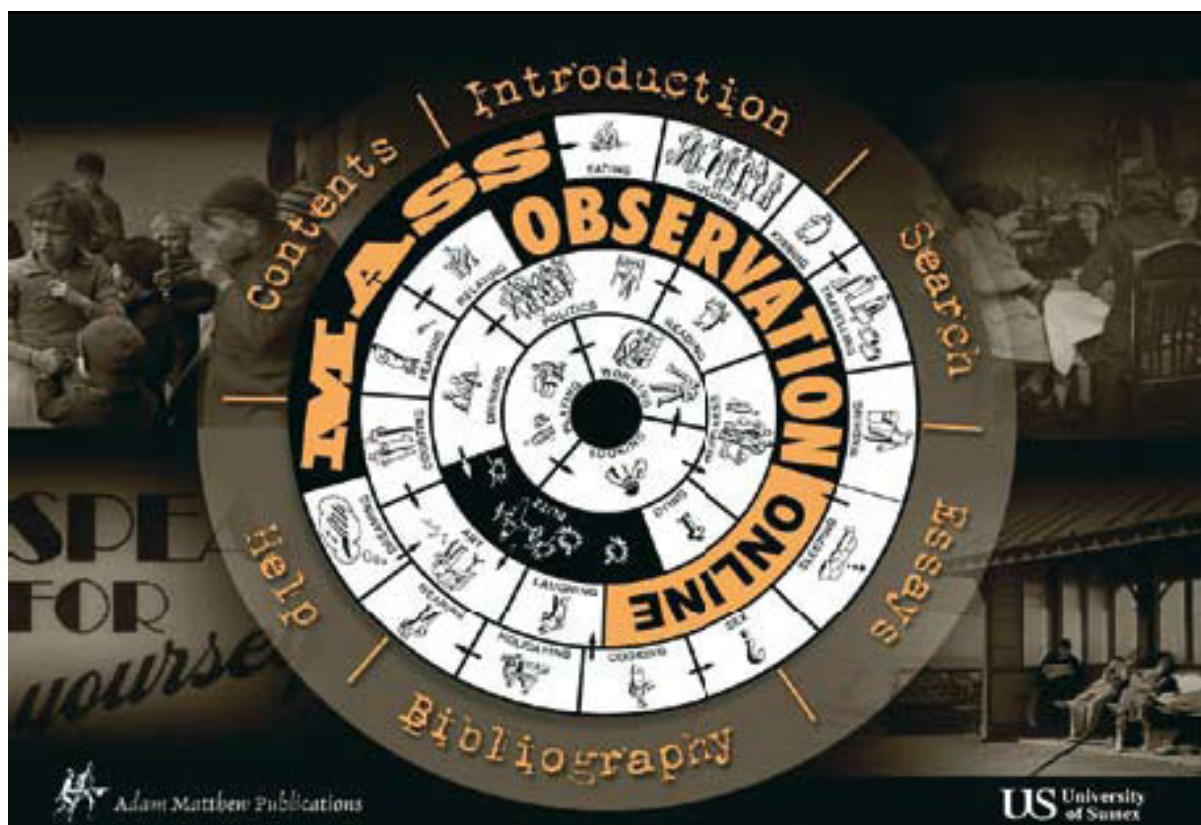
Digital access

Selected parts of the Mass Observation Archive are available digitally for public and university libraries to purchase⁹. The entire File Report sequence, early Mass Observation Publications and selected Topic Collections are available along with the diaries and directive responses from 1939 to 1945.

The resource also includes interactive maps, bibliographic resources and essays on various aspects of Mass Observation.

⁸<http://specialcollections.lib.sussex.ac.uk/CalmView/TreeBrowse.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&field=RefNo&key=SxMOA1%2F2%2F59%2F7>

⁹ http://www.massobs.org.uk/accessing_material_online.htm



Original papers

The original written responses and observations are available to users who visit the archive in person, together with more than 3,000 summaries combining both data types of information, which have been written by Mass Observation staff. They provide a good starting-point for getting to know the information held.

For example, in March 1946, summaries included 'Future Outlooks', 'Modern Homes Exhibition', 'Posters on the Buses' and 'World Organisation and the Future'. In 1958, the single summary 'Attitudes towards the use of detergents' was produced.

There are also a number of books, papers, booklets for use for teaching students age 14+ and podcasts. The booklets for students were produced by the Archive during the 1980s. They are freely available. The topics include:

- The Blitz
- Evacuation
- Children at war
- Children's essays 1937: The finest person that ever lived
- AIDS