

The Way We are Now.¹

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The Way We are Now is an exciting photo-ethnographic project, with the potential to combine research in creativity with research in well-being. It has a particular focus on the use of new technology with an innovative method. The new technology is a mobile phone/camera/recorder. The innovative method is the Experience Sampling Method (ESM) for investigating daily life, extended to include images, which has not been done before. Delle Fave (2007) notes that the ESM can be used to capture emotions, motivations and cognitive processes as they occur, and that it reduces the problem of distortion of memories occurring in retrospective methods, though the ESM is seen as complementing and not replacing other research methods. The output from the project will include exhibitions of the art work, a CD Rom, and published articles. The project draws on my previous practice-led research funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council www.creativity-embodiedmind.com and my research on well-being www.wellbeing-esrc.com

The research is underpinned by the writings of Merleau-Ponty (1962), who claimed ‘that modes of thought correspond to technical methods, and that to use Goethe’s phrase ‘what is inside is also outside’’. The importance of this intertwining of perception and technology is also recognised in the writings of anthropologists who view technology as skilled practice.

The ESM in this project involves a series of short questions being answered on a card, and a photograph of the surroundings taken, at a signal from the mobile phone, eight times a day at randomly selected times between 9.30 am and 9.30 pm, pre-programmed in the phone, for seven consecutive days. Full details of signal sampling, and the questions are given in the appendix.

The questions are on activity, enjoyment, interest, challenge, skills, visual interest and happiness. The questions on activity and subjective well-being have been used previously in research with the ESM. (e.g. Clarke and Haworth, 1994; Haworth and Evans, 1995; Haworth, Jarman, and Lee, 1997) With the exception of the question on the activity being undertaken, answers are chosen from pre-coded alternatives, making recording on a card simple: for example:

Q2 How much were you **enjoying** the activity
1 2 3
low enjoyment moderate enjoyment high enjoyment
Q3 How **interesting** did you find the activity
1 2 3
low interest moderate interest high interest

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the IMPACT 5 International Printmaking Conference in Tallinn, Estonia in October 2007. The conference had a concern with investigating slices of time and the production of political-poetic statements.

There is a small space on the card for any comments at each signal. At each signal, brief comments are also recorded on the mobile phone.

Each day a photograph was taken of a heading to an article in three newspapers: The Guardian, The Sun, and the Lancashire Telegraph. Each day a photograph was also taken of a topical image in the newspapers. The two images from the newspapers for each day (one of the headings to the news paper articles, the other of a topical image) constitute a media view of the world. The images can be taken from other aspects of the media, such as TV, magazines, etc. They provide a comparative view to the images of daily life taken at the ESM signals.

The previous is downloaded into the computer to provide the raw material for the creative production of large-format, and smaller, prints. A qualitative evaluation is also made of how typical the week of the ESM was for the participant. A log is also kept of the project, for both the ESM phase and the creation of prints. This includes thoughts on the project, techniques, and the creative process.

The investigation was undertaken for one week in each of the four seasons of the year. At least one large-format print (44 inches x 65 inches) will be made for each season. An image of the print for autumn is shown in figure 1 in the appendix. The print combines selected text and images from newspapers, including the political, with images of daily life, to produce a statement on **'The Way We Are Now'**. Each column in the print represents one day. A presentation on the project was made at the IMPACT 5 International Printmaking Conference in Tallinn in October 2007. The conference had a concern with investigating slices of time and the production of political-poetic statements.

Prints are also being made where each image taken at an ESM signal has colour codings along side it of the answers to the questions asked at the ESM signal. For example, the question on enjoyment is coded low enjoyment: pale red, moderate enjoyment: bright red, high enjoyment: deep red. The question on interest in activity is coded, low interest: pale blue, moderate interest: bright blue, high interest: deep blue. Challenge is coded using orange; Skills is coded using green; Visual Interest is coded using purple; Happiness is coded using yellow. The key to the colour codings is presented with the print. An example of part of day one for the winter ESM, and the key to the colour codings, can be seen in figures 2 a and 2 b in the appendix.

A large cylinder print on transparent plastic will also be made. The circumference of the cylinder will be 42 inches and the height will be 65 inches. On the upper part of the cylinder will be the band of modified images taken from the newspapers. The seven vertical strips of images, one for each day, will have further graphic work associated with them related to the questions in the ESM study. Each image will have next to it colour coded bars relating to the answers to questions in the ESM on psychological states, and challenge and skill. Each day will form a tube in the overall cylinder. The outside of the cylinder will also have graphic work on it based on the life history of the person doing the ESM (based on a graphic technique used in sociological research). The sound recordings made in association with each image could be selectively activated electronically. The cylinders will thus constitute a new form of portrait of the person. The idea for the cylinder is based on modern theories of the brain and consciousness,

relating to quantum computing occurring in tubules in nerve dendrites (Hameroff and Penrose 1996; Woolf and Hammeroff 2001; www.consciousness.arizona.edu) The ideas for the cylinder print occurred during the process of making the first large format print, and related to the structure of that print.

Group Work

A similar study, based on the 'The Way we are Now' has been undertaken by a group of 11 staff at Manchester Metropolitan University from the Centre for Social Change and Well-Being, in which the author is a member. Preliminary results were presented at a National Conference on 'Health and Social Change: Challenges and Controversy' at Manchester Metropolitan University in 2007, organised by the Research Institute for Health and Social Change (RIHSC 2007). The study is being prepared for presentation at other conferences, including a conference on 'Research in Real Life' at Manchester Victoria University in September 2008. Papers are being written for publication. Further analysis of the data can be undertaken, drawing on research and concepts presented in Haworth and Veal (2004) and Haworth and Hart (2007), including an analysis of themes across the group, such as the incidence of 'flow' and the pursuits involved; and the relationship between work, leisure and well-being. Currently there is considerable interest in innovative qualitative research, including visual research methods (e.g. Pink 2006, Rose 2007). The project could be undertaken by different individuals and groups in society, and in different countries. It could reflect on sustainable life-styles.

References

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APPENDIX

The ESM Study

Sampling Details

The study was run for seven days from Monday to Sunday inclusive. The time period for each day was from 9.30 a.m. to 9.30 p.m. Each day was split into 8 one and a half hour blocks e.g. 9.30 –11.00; 11.00-12.30. Each one and a half-hour time period was split into six 15 minute periods, numbered 1-6 e.g. 9.30-9.45 numbered 1, 9.45-10.00 numbered 2. A die was rolled to select one of the numbers. The time chosen for the number selected was the beginning of the time period e.g. if number 1 was for 9.30-9.45 the time signal is 9.30; if number 6 was for 10-45-11.00 the time signal is 10.45. The 8 signal times are entered into the calendar, with alerts, on the phone for each day for the whole seven days, prior to the study. Signal selection and entering of times is done by someone other than the person undertaking the study.

Tasks

When each signal alert goes, one photograph is taken of the surroundings using the mobile phone camera. A series of questions are answered on a small postcard 13.7 cm by 8.7 cm. A short recording (approx one minute) is made on the mobile phone about the situation and feelings. If the questions cannot be answered within 15 minutes of a particular signal, they are not completed. The signal is then considered to be missed. However, in some cases a photograph may be taken after an event, such as the building in which an activity had been undertaken. Where a photograph is not taken, the space in the image is filled graphically at the discretion of the investigator/artist.

Questions For The ESM

The questions were hand written on the post card (landscape orientation) using the space on both sides. The question number was written along-side the question. The number to select as an answer, and the meaning of the number, was written below each question. For each questions the key word(s) was highlighted in a colour (green for all questions)

Q1 What was the **main thing** you were **doing**

Q2 How much were you **enjoying** the activity

1 2 3

low enjoyment moderate enjoyment high enjoyment

- Q3 How **interesting** did you find the activity
 1 2 3
 low interest moderate interest high interest
- Q4 How **challenging** did you find the activity
 1 2 3
 low challenge moderate challenge high challenge
- Q5 Were your **skills**
- 1 Less than required by the challenge
 2 Equal to the challenge
 3 More than required by the challenge
- Q6 How **visually interesting** did you find the scene
 1 2 3
 low interest moderate interest high interest
- Q7 How **happy** were you feeling at the time
 1 2 3
 low happiness moderate happiness high happiness
- Q8 Any other **brief comments**

Design of the Answer post card

A separate card is filled in for each day. The Project, day, date, and day number, is specified at the top of each card (portrait orientation). A space is left for a written answer to questions 1 and 8. The number selected for the answer to the other questions is written next to the question number on this card. The signal number is highlighted (in green in my study) Examples of answers are given for signal 1

AHRC PROJECT Monday 23 Oct 06 Day 1
Signal 1 Q1 Booting up computer
 Q2 1 Q3 1 Q4 1 Q5 3 Q6 1 Q7 2
 Q8 Weather brightening up
Signal 2 Q1
 Q2 Q3 Q4 Q5 Q6 Q7
 Q8
Signal 3 Q1
 Q2 Q3 Q4 Q5 Q6 Q7
 Q8
Signal 4 Q1
 Q2 Q3 Q4 Q5 Q6 Q7
 Q8

The above is repeated for all 8 signals. This can fit on a post card. The phone, question and answer card, and pen are carried with one for the whole time period for each day of the study. In some instances the phone may have to be switched off, e.g. during the period of attendance at a theatre production. If a signal occurred during that period, it is considered missed, though in some cases a picture can be taken after the event.



Figure 2a Media and signals 1-3 day 1 winter

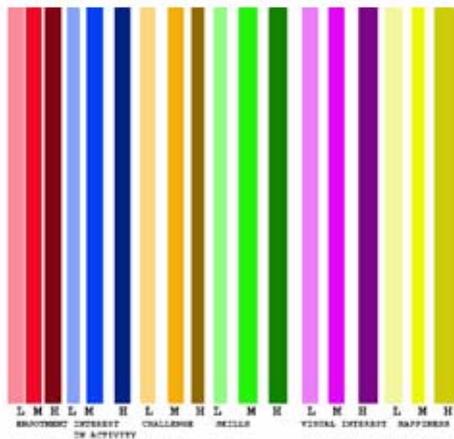


Figure 2b
 Colour Codings

Author Note

John Haworth is a Research Fellow (part time), in the Department of Psychology and Social Change, and the Research Institute for Health and Social Change; and an Honorary Research Fellow, Department of Fine Art, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK.

He has a PhD in psychology and a Masters degree in fine art (printmaking). His fine art prints have been exhibited nationally and internationally. He has been a gallery artist for many years exhibiting prints made by traditional methods. His more recent work also involves the use of digital media. Prints have been selected in 2001, 2003 and 2004 for the Art and Technology International Digital Print Award Exhibitions, which are aimed at highlighting the best work in the area of creative digital media. Since July 2000 he has had several solo exhibitions of digital art in Manchester, curated by Comme Ca Art Ltd.

Examples can be seen at www.commeccart.com and also in the gallery at www.creativity-embodiedmind.com From 2nd February- 26 April 2008 he had a solo exhibition at Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery:- ‘Transitions’: an exhibition of digital fine art prints, and a new photo-ethnographic project on ‘The Way We are Now’.