

# Summaries

**Marije I. Bosnak**

*People who won't listen*

*A Sociological View of Sound Pollution*

In most noise pollution research the sound source and the sound itself are the focal points of study. This article analyses the results of exploratory research on the socio-cultural and psychological context of the experience of noise. Sound pollution is interpreted as a acoustical intrusion on personal space and on privacy. For many the private home coincides with personal space, so sound can cause a feeling of crowding. The analyses focusses on the experience of vulnerability and powerlessness, the characteristics of noise and sounds and the properties of the human auditory organs. The article shows that the sharp distinction between acoustical and non-acoustical factors does not contribute to a better understanding of the complex process that leads to the experience of sound pollution. The conclusion contains arguments to include a socio-cultural perspective into the study of noise.

**Giselinde Kuipers**

*Telling Jokes*

*On 'Canned' Jokes, Social Background and Humorous Communication Styles*

The appreciation of 'canned' jokes – in Dutch, these are called 'moppen': short stories, ending in a punch line, which are usually not invented by the teller – varies greatly between groups. Data from a questionnaire filled out by a representative sample of the Dutch population and interviews with 66 people show that canned jokes are told and appreciated more often by men than by women, and are more popular among the working class and the lower middle class than among the higher middle class. People are usually aware of these differences between men and women: many people claim that women are not supposed to tell jokes. Lower class people are usually not aware of the relation between class and telling jokes: it is part of their class culture. Higher educated people, however, are usually aware of this class difference and many of them consider telling jokes 'bad taste'. Moreover, the data show that people who work in trade enjoy jokes more than people in other professions. This is explained by the fact that telling jokes is a relatively fast and safe way of establishing rapport with others, which is very helpful in sales situations. To explain these differences in the appreciation of canned jokes, the concept of communication style is introduced. The reasons people give for liking or disliking canned jokes usually refer to joking as an activity: a way of communicating with other people. Telling jokes is a relatively disruptive, competitive, impersonal,

exuberant and emphatically humorous form of communication. Hence, telling jokes is probably more in accordance with, or appropriate to, the communication styles of men and lower class people: research shows they often have a more aggressive and competitive way of communicating. Many of the objections of people who do not like jokes, both women and higher class people, are related to these characteristics of jokes: interviewees often claimed, for instance, that they preferred more personal and less contrived forms of humor than canned jokes. The fact that canned jokes are a predominantly male and lower class genre is probably reflected in their content, and this, in turn, probably increases gender and class differences in the appreciation of jokes.

**Judith Paauw**

*Photogenic death*

The photo reportage of funeral services is a new phenomenon in Dutch professional photography. Although photography in relation to death has a long history of memento mori pictures and other post-mortem photography, this new development can be interpreted as an aspect of the development of 'informal' family albums and modern technology. The most important difference with the 19th century post-mortem photography is, that pictures of the event (the funeral service and burial) as such are collected in an album, while photo's of dead bodies - when they exist - are kept hidden from the public view. This development is discussed in terms of the informalization process, the late 20th century taboo on looking at the dead body and technological changes. The study is based on the examination of research of Dutch family albums, on a survey held among professional photographers, and on interviews with members of that group.

**Margit van Wessel**

*Wealth and its Social Worth*

*Consumers in the Land of Gandhi*

Middle-class status in Baroda, a city in India, involves the consumption of other and much more goods than consumed by earlier generations. However, established morality qualifies the pursuit of status through consumption as illegitimate. In addition, some people fear that consumption of modern goods signals the onset of a shallow and meaningless society, it is considered to conflict with true emotional life and empathy. The pursuit of enjoyment and status through consumption also runs counter to the ideal of 'simplicity', the ideal of abstinence from material pleasures. In local discourse on social and cultural conditions, consciousness of the distance between ideal and reality with regard to consumption is ever present and marks local evaluation of and debate about, modern consumer culture.

*Involvement with the Public Realm*

*Friendly Interactions with Strangers*

The dominant sociological perspective on the public realm is that it is an area void of important emotional experience and personal interactions. In contrast the private realm is seen as the place where one experiences and expresses intimate feelings and thoughts. Interviews with so called 'new urbanites', singles and couples without children, show that meaningful interactions do take place in the public realm. I describe why my informants have these interactions and the way these interactions are organized; what do strangers do to create a verbal interaction. These interviews were held for my PhD research on *The Warm City* which focuses on the 'intimate' use of urban public places, contrasting the wellknown cold and anonymous image of urban life.