

### **Social symbolism and mobilization: social symbols as a neglected research topic**

by M. Verkuyten

The importance of symbols for social reality is a topic which has not been studied much in western sociology. The present paper argues for a systematic study of symbols and the role they play in social life. Attention is focused on the relationship between symbols and social-political mobilization. Using two real-life examples concerning 'battles of symbols' – during the 1930s in Germany and during the Persian Gulf war in Great Britain – the importance of symbols for mobilization is illustrated. The questions why symbols are useful in this respect but also what their consequences are in social life, are being addressed.

### **Youth, their planning of the life course, and the relevance of sex differences**

by Joep de Hart

In this article various aspects are analysed of the time tables used by 687 Dutch former high school students (average age 23.9 years) with regard to their life course. Results indicate that generally the respondents plan their lives according to five stages. In a number of respects clear differences between males and females are detected. Female respondents attain more transitions in the common life course at an earlier age, they work with more compressed time tables, and they make the transitions in their life course in a more synchronical way. As to the precision of the time tables and the possible rejection of elements of the common life course, we detected no differences between males and females. A plea is made for more interdisciplinary and longitudinal research of the life course.

### **At which age give women birth to their first child**

by Karin Sanders

In this article a description is given of the age at which women born between 1940 and 1960 give birth to their first child. The later women are born, the less children they give birth to before the age of 26. This difference is explained too. The central question is: *'How can changes in the ages at which women born between 1940 and 1960 give birth to their first child be explained?'* In order to explain these changes, three theories are tested: Easterlin (1980), the 'generation'-theory (Becker 1985) and the 'life-perspective'-theory (Sanders 1991). Two theories: Becker (1985) and Sanders (1991) are equally well supported. But the 'life-perspective'-theory is more economical and is therefore preferred.

**Denominational fissions and the achievement of status in a Dutch maritime community**  
by Durk Hak

In The Netherlands one finds villages and towns in which the population as a whole still consider themselves as belonging to a (protestant) denomination. For instance, Bunschoten/Spakenburg, Marken, Staphorst/Rouveen and Urk. Contrary to these first three, the denominational homogeneity at Urk has disappeared. In the period from 1947 to 1988 the number of denominations increased from 3 to 10. In this article an explanation is given for the strong increase in denominations at the protestant Urk. At the same time an explanation is given why all the newcomers are found on the 'experiential' (bevindelijk) wing of (Dutch) calvinism.