

1 - researchcub.info There is an excellent fit between the speaking voice and the psycho-social approach, in that the voice connects inner and outer worlds while simultaneously challenging such a division. It remains, however, relatively neglected, both as a psycho-social research resource and as a topic for the psycho-social researcher. This article argues that, while researchers are developing increasingly sophisticated ways of harnessing visual research methods, the oral dimension remains marginalised, with voice almost invariably collapsed into speech. Despite the methodological challenges created by using the voice as a psycho-social research tool, attention to the paralinguistic has the potential to enrich research and deepen our psycho-social understanding of human behaviour. The speaking voice is the nodal point of human communication: notwithstanding the growth of social media and virtual bonds, it remains the prime instrument through which we establish relations with others, acting as connective tissue among both strangers and intimates. Given this centrality, the neglect of the speaking voice as a psycho-social research topic and resource is curious, especially in the context of the enormous interest in conversation and speech over the past few decades. Yet where voice is referred to at all it is often its metaphorical meanings that are signalled: the voice as signifier for political presence and power, a synonym for enfranchisement. Literary studies have also appropriated it, along with other terms from the auditory lexicon such as tone and register, to signal narrative viewpoint or perspective.

1 This article is based on a paper given at the Association of Psycho-Social Research conference at the University of West of England, Bristol, June 2016, and Karpf's PhD submission, *The persistence of the oral: on the enduring importance of the human voice* (2016)

2 Contact: A.Karpf@londonmet.ac.uk Anne Karpf Listen! The human voice as a neglected psycho-social research topic and resource 34 is often also elided with dialect or accent, especially in the UK, or it is used as a proxy for speech and language. Again and again major thinkers sidle up to the voice, seem about to grasp it and then turn on their heels. Bourdieu (2014), for example, came tantalisingly close to describing how social and cultural factors are 'implicated' in the voice but never quite spelt it out. Yet his notion of 'doxa', the relationship between habitus and 'the field to which it is attuned', conceives of the body as a 'living memory pad' (Bourdieu, 2014, p.68), producing 'body automatisms' that are below the level of consciousness, including bodily expressions of emotion such as laughter, along with 'deep-rooted linguistic and muscular patterns of behaviour' (Bourdieu, 2014, p.69). The human voice is located precisely at the nexus of the linguistic and the muscular. Or there is Ahmed (2004), who makes many illuminating points about signs and how they work on and in relation to bodies through their 'stickiness'. Hate speech becomes sticky, she argues, through repetition, e.g. of the word 'Paki', which accumulates a history to which it is bound. She suggests, further, that naming something as disgusting in a speech act is performative; thereby, the sign itself becomes 'sticky' and fetishistic. Yet, remarkably, the fact that we learn to recognise these signs in part through intonation is relegated to a footnote, even though it is surely the oral register through which it is shouted in hate speech that is the most 'sticky' aspect of the word 'Paki', and disgust is performed at least as much through the

vocalisations that accompany words such as 'That's disgusting!' or, more succinctly, 'Yuk!' Strangest of all, Wetherell (2012), in her pioneering exploration of the circulation of affect, alights on vocal states in some other case-histories, especially in her analysis of the conflict between a pair of teenage girls, but never dwells on their vocality. She argues for the multimodality of situated affective practices, including bodily actions and storytelling, that together create 'an integrated Journal of Psychosocial Studies, Volume 11, Issue 2, October 2018 35 and organic unfolding and weaving' (p.89). Is there not space here for the modality of voice? The purr, the gabble and the whine, are they not constitutive of meaning, a symphony of signs that draw on cultural repertoires of shared understandings that they also help construct? This article suggests that the speaking voice is a rich research topic for psycho-social researchers. It is also a potentially valuable research tool, even though as a resource too it has been neglected. Over the past decades visual methods, from photographs and documentary film to video diaries, have been increasingly embraced by qualitative researchers and yet attention to the oral and aural has scarcely developed. An innovative research method, the 'visual matrix', currently being developed, for instance, explores ways of fusing 'imagery, affect and visualisation... to inquire into phenomena that research participants may find difficult to put into words' (Visual Matrix Workshop, 2015). This has been deployed interestingly to help gauge reaction to local public art (Froggett, 2014). Yet although the final report of the project refers to the 'emotional tone, pace and vibrancy' (p.61) of participants' reactions, it is (understandably perhaps, given its remit) mostly mute about the vocal dimension. Plummer (2001) devotes three lines to sound archives in his catalogue of 'documents for life' compared with a page-and-a-half to visual data. Reasons for the marginalisation of the voice A number of different factors are responsible for the discursive absence of the speaking voice. While ideas around embodiment have provided a supportive milieu in which to develop thinking about the voice, they do not provide a perfect fit. Just as the concept of 'nonverbal behaviour' has proved to be a valuable conceptual home for research into the voice yet also one with limitations (since, pace Bourdieu, and leaving aside bodily sounds such as sighs and sobs, Anne Karp Listen! The human voice as a neglected psycho-social research topic and resource 36 grunts and cries, it is hard to conceive of voice without words), so too does embodiment take us only so far. For the paradox faced by both researchers, interviewees and indeed speakers themselves is that the voice is the product of the solid materiality of the body and yet, as soon as it has been produced, becomes fleeting, temporary and insubstantial 'materiality at its most intangible' (Dolar, 2006, p.59). 'That which is only audible', wrote Simmel, an early theorist of the senses, 'is already past in the moment of its present and provides no 'property'' (Simmel, 1907). The voice, as Dolar puts it, 'is like a bodily missile which separates itself from the body.... the voice is plus-de-corps: both the surplus of the body, a bodily excess, and thenomore-body, the end of the corporeal' (Dolar, 2006, pp. 70-71). In addition, the increasing dissemination of voice through electronic media, along with the emergence of the synthetic voice, problematises the identification of the voice with the body. The auditory field, at least in modern Western cultures, is thus harder to analyse than the visual field and gesture has proved easier

to describe than voice. (Interestingly, spatial metaphors are often deployed to elucidate the paradoxical nature of the voice. As with Dolar, above, so LaBelle conceptualises the voice 'as something expelled from the mouth, but which never leaves me behind... The voice does not move away from my body the voice stretches me; it drags me along' (LaBelle, 2014, p.5.) This may help explain the difficulty of researchers in retaining a focus on the audible voice. Indeed, a great deal of the interest in the embodied voice arose just at the point where, thanks to new communications technologies, it was becoming disembodied. Perhaps we should be looking elsewhere for a sensitivity to vocal communication, for instance in the proliferation since the early 1990s of scholarly literature in the field of sound studies. 3 Which have recently acquired their own biographers, e.g Connor, 2014; LaBelle, 2014; Gillie, 2010 Journal of Psychosocial Studies, Volume 11, Issue 2, October 2018 37 One of the earliest and most influential texts was Murray Schafer's exploration of the 'soundscape', an elegy for and a celebration of a lost, rich sonic world, first published in 1977. Murray Schafer argued that the soundscape was changing, with humans now inhabiting an acoustic environment different from any known before and one in which they suffered from the effects of noise pollution (Murray Schafer, 1994). In response Schafer originated the concept of 'acoustic ecology', a deep appreciation and understanding of the relationship between human, animals and the sonic environment (Cummings, 2001). The studies that followed explored sonic culture in all its variety, amounting to 'a cultural phenomenology of mediated aural practices' (Droumeva and Andrisani, 2011). Coming at the same time as a boom in interest in both oral and aural cultural forms from the audio book and podcast to the soundwalk and sound art it might be surmised that we are living in a golden age of interest in sound. It is striking, however, that the human speaking voice occupies a relatively insignificant position in much of the research in sound studies and mediated aurality.

THE HUMAN VOICE AS A NEGLECTED PSYCHO-SOCIAL RESEARCH TOPIC AND RESOURCE 1

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