

Questionnaire on yodelling by Georg Simmel (1878)

Translated by J. Peter Etzhorn, from *Jahrbuch des Schweizer Alpenclub*, 14:552-554, 1878-9

To members of the Alpine Club:

In the interest of anthropological research, which aims at assigning an appropriate place to the curious phenomenon of yodelling within the history of human forms of expression, I request answers to the following questions. Moreover, I request information concerning possible existing literature on this subject. I would also like to request that attention be paid to it, and that it be observed if the occasion should present itself. If from previous experience and recollections, it should already be possible to provide exact answers to these questions, I request that they be answered not with a simple "yes"--if the answer should be positive--but instead so as to provide as precise information as possible concerning the situation under which the observations occurred, as only then can a psychologically valuable conclusion be drawn, in particular with respect to questions numbered 5, 8, II, 14, and 15. In addition, I request correspondence on all other observations concerning yodelling which are not anticipated in my subsequent questions; I would also greatly appreciate any transcriptions of yodelers in musical notation.

1. Between what ages do inhabitants of the mountains engage in yodelling?
2. Are there specifically different types of yodelling found in one and the same region?
3. Do different types of yodelling exist in different mountain areas, and how do they differ?
4. Are there any observations which indicate that perhaps the altitude of the places of residence is related to differences in yodelling, and if so, how?
5. What is the relationship between the spoken language and yodelling?
6. What are the surrounding circumstances under which yodelling is generally practiced?
7. In which cases is it employed for special, practical purposes of communication?
8. Can it be established that yodelling is a purely acoustical reflect of emotions, i.e., are there certain emotions for which the inhabitants of the mountain regions seek an expression through

yodelling irrespective of whether they are being listened to or even of listening to themselves, comparable to one's crying and groaning in response to pain?

9. What kinds of emotions are these? Are they, for example, those of sexual excitement?

10. Can it be established that yodelling serves as a medium of communication between boys and girls, similar to some Schrudelhupfeln, even if not directly comparable to the purposes of the mating call among animals, though, nevertheless, a sign of mutual inclination and agreement? Or does it serve related purposes if only from one side?

11. How important for the exercise of yodelling are the factors of habituation, of its enjoyment and of the ambition to be able to yodel with greater perfection than the others? Also with respect to the opposite sex?

12. Do women also engage in yodelling? From which ages on? And, is it distinguished from the yodelling of men?

13. Is the enjoyment of playing with the echo, perhaps, a factor in the perfection of yodelling?

14. During the course of time is there a general decline in yodelling, perhaps, observable?

15. Has anything been observed in the regions outside of the Alps or in the flat terrain which is identical or only analogous to yodelling?

For relevant information, in complete subservience [sic], asks

Georg Simmel

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