**Pandemic Quarantine Acoustically Contributes to Mental, Physical Health Degradation**

*Changing noise codes, incorporating VR could help improve quality of life.*

\*\*\* EMBARGOED UNTIL JUNE 9, 2021 AT 1:45 P.M. EASTERN U.S.\*\*\*

MELVILLE, N.Y., June 9, 2021 -- The prolonged impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the interaction restrictions created widespread lockdown fatigue and increased social tension in multiunit housing. But small improvements in quality-of-life routines may help people cope with the health restrictions better than they previously could.

During the 180th Meeting of the Acoustical Society of America, which will be held virtually June 8-10, Braxton Boren, from American University, will discuss noise prevention techniques and the use of alterative acoustic stimulation to help those who find themselves in pandemic-related lockdowns. The session, "The Soundscape of Quarantine," will take place Wednesday, June 9, at 1:45 p.m. Eastern U.S.

While there have been studies about the harmful effects of noise in densely populated areas, Boren said a holistic approach to sound and its effects considers the context of sound to understand the impact on any given person.

"There were certainly anecdotal accounts of extroverted people who took comfort from hearing sounds from neighbors' apartments as a remedy against the extreme social isolation they were suddenly experiencing," Boren said. "Conversely, introverted people are more likely to be highly sensitive to noise stimuli and more likely to want to retreat into their homes as a sort of sanctuary from the external world."

Boren said municipal noise codes should be more sensitive to low-frequency noise, below 100 Hz or so, since this frequency range tends to travel long distances without being easily absorbed and has the longest wavelengths, which tend to be transmitted through walls and other structures. These noise sources, while not a huge annoyance in rural or suburban communities, can be one of the biggest detractors from quality of life in urban settings and should be taken more seriously as a society.

In his talk, Boren will outline how audio simulations, like virtual reality and spatial audio, can help people improve their quality of life. The human brain is accustomed to putting sound in spatial context, being enveloped or immersed in the sound, particularly for larger spaces.

"The lack of larger special gatherings during lockdown contributes to our feelings of isolation from each other," he said. "While a VR environment will help us experience this, for those who do not own a VR headset, there are still many ways that virtual communication channels could incorporate some of the acoustic attributes of these sorts of larger environments."

###

**----------------------- MORE MEETING INFORMATION -----------------------**

**USEFUL LINKS**

Main meeting website: <https://acousticalsociety.org/asa-meetings/>

Technical program: <https://acousticalsociety.org/technical-program-and-special-sessions/>

Press Room: <http://acoustics.org/world-wide-press-room/>

**WORLDWIDE PRESS ROOM**

In the coming weeks, ASA's Worldwide Press Room will be updated with additional tips on dozens of newsworthy stories and lay language papers, which are summaries of presentations written by scientists for a general audience and accompanied by photos, audio and video. You can visit the site during the meeting at <http://acoustics.org/world-wide-press-room/>.

**PRESS REGISTRATION FOR MEETING SESSIONS**

We will grant free registration for credentialed and professional freelance journalists who wish to attend the meeting sessions. If you are a reporter and would like to attend, contact the AIP Media Line at [media@aip.org](mailto:media@aip.org). We can also help with setting up interviews and obtaining images, sound clips or background information.

**VIRTUAL MEDIA BRIEFINGS**

Press briefings will be held virtually during the conference. Credentialed media can register in advance by emailing [media@aip.org](mailto:media@aip.org) and including your full name and affiliation in the message. The official schedule will be announced as soon as it is available, and registered attendees will be provided login information via email.

**ABOUT THE ACOUSTICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA**

The Acoustical Society of America (ASA) is the premier international scientific society in acoustics devoted to the science and technology of sound. Its 7,000 members worldwide represent a broad spectrum of the study of acoustics. ASA publications include The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America (the world's leading journal on acoustics), Acoustics Today magazine, books, and standards on acoustics. The society also holds two major scientific meetings each year. For more information about ASA, visit our website at [http://www.acousticalsociety.org](http://www.acousticalsociety.org/).

###