

## POSTPRINT

Arnulf Deppermann<sup>1</sup>

# Positioning in Adolescents' Peer Co-Narrations: The Case of Mock Fiction

**Abstract:** Mock fiction is a genre of humorous, fictional narratives. It is pervasive in ado-lescents' peer-group interaction. Building on a corpus of informal peer-group interaction among 14 to 17 year-old German adolescents, it is shown how mock fiction is used to sanction identity-claims of peer-group co-members that are taken to be inadequate by the teller of a mock fiction. Mock fiction exposes and ridicules those claims by fictional exaggeration. Mock fiction is an indirect, yet sometimes even highly abusive means for criticizing and negotiating identities and statuses of peer-group members. The analysis shows how mock fiction is collaboratively produced, how it is used to convey criticism and to negotiate social norms indirectly, and how, in addition, it allows for performative self-po-sitioning of the tellers as skilled, entertaining tellers and socio-psychological diagnosticians.

**Keywords:** conversational narrative - humor - peer-group interaction - positioning - conversation analysis

---

1 Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache, R5, 6–13, 68161 Mannheim,  
deppermann@ids-mannheim.de.

# 1 Story-telling among Adolescents

From early on in his work, Günter Mey has insisted on analyzing the perspective of the subject as a key to a new understanding of children and youth (Mey 2003, 2013, 2018). Instead of taking a developmental approach that studies children and adolescents from the perspective of differences to and acquisition of adult skills, he was among the first in psychology to advocate a cultural approach. This means to study children’s and youth’s practices and self-conceptualizations in their own right, as resources to build generational and peer-cultures and as displays of identity. More recently, Günter Mey has turned to material products of youth culture, such as fanzines (Dietrich and Mey 2018), pictures (Mey and Dietrich 2017) and video-clips (Böder et al. 2019; Dietrich and Mey 2019). Youth-cultural products offer a direct access to adolescent’s practices, their stylistic choices and meaning-making in ways that cannot be captured by interviews and surveys. Next to visual and textual objects of this sort, and often in conjunction with them, peer-group interaction offers a window on cultural practices of adolescents.

Story-telling is a predominant activity in leisure-time peer-group interaction among adolescents. However, their stories differ very much from the “default narrative”, which Ochs and Capps (2001, p. 20) define this way: “One active teller, highly tellable account, relatively detached from surrounding talk and activity, linear temporal and causal organization, and certain, constant moral stance.” In contrast, narratives in adolescent peer-group interaction are almost exclusively small stories (Georgakopoulou 2007; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008). Table one compares the main differences between small stories in adolescent peer-groups and storytelling in autobiographic research interviews, which is the model for traditional notions of “big stories” (Bamberg 2006).

**Tab. 1** Differences between narratives in autobiographic interviews vs. adolescent peer-group interaction

	<b>Narratives in autobiographic interviews</b>	<b>Narratives in adolescent peer-groups</b>
<i>Teller</i>	One	Several
<i>Tellability</i>	Biographically relevant New for the addressee	Breaking news Retellings of known events
<i>Embeddedness</i>	Specifically arranged communicative event	Occasioned by and functionally embedded in everyday talk

<i>Linearity</i>	Linear representation of causally ordered events Comprehensive gestalt	No clear temporal and causal order Discontinuous
<i>Moral stance</i>	Certain, stable, and reflected moral stance	Uncertain, fluid, emerging, disputed moral stances
<i>Genres</i>	Full-blown personal narrative Retrospective representation of single events	Condensed story-fragments Habitual narratives Prospective fiction

This article deals with one specific genre of small stories, that is, mock fiction. By 'mock fiction', I refer to the telling of fictional stories whose non-factual nature is obvious to all participants, which is deemed to ridicule and make fun of (at least) one of the participants and which conveys some implicit moral criticism. Such stories are locally occasioned by actions of the future story-protagonist that are seen as violating norms of appropriate behaviour in some way. The violation then is marked by a mock fiction which implies the portrayal of the target in terms of a stigmatized identity-category.

My study draws from audio-recorded interactions of adolescents, collected during participant observation in 1996–1998.<sup>2</sup> Nine mock fiction narratives have been analyzed. The participants are members of a peer-group of male middle class adolescents living in a small town in Germany, aging from 14 to 17. Recordings were made at the local youth centre, on the skate-ground, at restaurants, on bus-trips, and in a youth hostel. In these interactions, identity-construction by narratives plays a prominent role. However, mostly the focus is not on the self, but on portrayals of others.

In section 2, I shortly introduce the concept of 'positioning' as an approach to the study of selves and identities in social interaction. Section 3 analyzes two instances of mock fiction in adolescents' peer-group interaction. Section 4 summarizes the structural properties and the competences involved in producing mock fiction and it discusses its role in adolescents' culture.

---

2 Recordings were made by Axel Schmidt. They were used for the DFG-research project 'Kommunikationskulturen Jugendlicher' (Cultures of adolescents' communication; NE 527/2-1), led by Klaus Neumann-Braun at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University of Frankfurt am Main 1998–2000.

## 2 Positioning Analysis of Narratives

In line with Davies and Harré (1990) and Bamberg (1997; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008; Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann 2002, 2004; Deppermann 2013a, 2015), ‘positioning’ is used here as a key to the study of situated identities in talk. Compared to other types of social actions, narratives are particularly rich in offering opportunities for positioning self and others in interaction: They allow for and require the expression of subjective perspective, affective, evaluative and moral stance, they include re-enactments and detailed descriptions of actions and events and they operate on at least two temporal levels. Positioning by narratives is done by portraying characters in a story world (level-1/descriptive positioning); this level of positioning is situated on the content level of the interaction. The other mode of positioning is performative positioning (level-2). It is accomplished pragmatically by the actions people perform in interaction that imply an implicit (sometimes also explicit) claim about social and personal identities, moral stances and the relationship between the actor and the co-participants. Performative positioning often amounts to an enactment of situated identities: Positioning can be accomplished by performing category-bound actions (Sacks 1972, 1992; Deppermann 2013b), which are regarded as being typical or even constitutive of a certain identity-category.

## 3 Mock Fiction

Mock fiction is a paramount example for how story-telling and narrative identities are closely tied to the practical concerns of peer-group interaction. In the data studied, mock fictions always are occasioned by an action of a peer-group member that is regarded as being inadequate by his peers (see also Drew 1987). Two instances will be analyzed in this article. The first example “The proles” (section 3.1) shows how an emerging difference in adult social identities and socio-stylistic orientation between members of the peer-group is treated in a humorous, yet clearly critical fashion. The second example “Victim of rape” shows how the display of an unaccepted political stance is sanctioned by a mock story. Each example will be discussed in terms of

- story structure, i. e. its initiation and its collaborative construction;
- participation framework: relationship between tellers, target and audience;
- activities, their narrative design and their interpretive relationship to identity-categories;

- descriptive and performative positioning, i. e., the relationship between self-positioning of the teller vs. other-positioning by the story;
- the relationship of identity-portrayals by mock stories to larger practical, normative and identity concerns of the peer-group.

### 3.1 “The proles”

The first example of mock fiction is occasioned by a complaint. Bernd, Wuddi, Frank, Denis and Knut<sup>3</sup> are on their way home from a weekend trip. Wuddi and Bernd, who are on vocational training, complain that they still have to work for another two or three weeks. Denis, who like Knut and Frank still attends school, responds to this complaint with the ascription of the derogatory identity-category “Bauern” (lit.: *farmers*) to them (translated here as *proles* because it designates people with a stereotypical lower working class habitus). Knut, Denis, Frank and Wuddi then go on to construct collaboratively a mock fiction of how Bernd’s future life as a prole returning home from work will look like.

#### *ex.1 [Juk 17B: 20:11–21:33 “Schaffen und schuften”]*

```

001 Denis:  ((sings)) (.)
002 Wuddi:  <<len> noch DREI woche Abeide:> - (--)
           another three weeks of work
003 Bernd:  <<p> noch ZWO woche Abeide:>; (.)
           another two weeks of work
004 Denis:  <<f> !A!BEIDE->
           work
005         wie die !BAU!ERN labern se sch[on>;          ]
           they babble like the proles already
006 Wuddi:  [ <<t,nasal>a:h-]
           PRT
007 Wuddi:  [ <<t,nasal>a:h- ] [ ((grunzt)) ]
           PRT ((grunts))
008 Frank:  [ <<gepresst,t>mir] Abeide [hiä:          ]
           we work PRT
009         die gÄnze zeit nur Abeide hi[ä:]
           all of the time only work PRT

```

---

3 All names in transcripts are pseudonyms.

010 Wuddi: [nur [schufte- ]>  
only toil

011 Denis: [NUR am sch]Affe(.)hiä;(.)  
only labour PRT

012 [schufte (un schaffe-)]  
toil and labour

013 Frank: [(räuspert sich)) nur] SCHAFFE SCHUFTE  
(clears throat) only labour toil

014 un widder SCHAFFE hiä:>.=  
and labour again PRT

015 Denis: =((laughs))

016 XM: ((laughs))

017 XM: ((belches))

018 Denis: <<tremolo>der maut> wird ma so einer hier; (-)  
Maut<sup>4</sup> will become one of that kind PRT

019 <<f,gepresst> Aj (nach) seiner Abeid hiä- (.)  
<<f, choked voice> hey after his work PRT

020 RESI, (-)  
<<female name> Resi>

022 bring ma\_e BIER-> (.)  
bring me a beer Resi

023 Frank: <<f,gepresst> RESI-> (-)  
<<f, choked voice> Resi>

024 Denis: <<f,gepresst> RESI-> [(lacht))  
<<f, choked voice> Resi> ((laughs))

025 Frank: [(lacht))  
((Laughs))

026 Kurt: <<lallend>bring mer mal e bier.>> (.)  
<<slurry voice> bring me PRT a beer>

027 Frank: ((lacht)) (.)[(lacht)) ]  
((laughs)) ((laughs))

028 Wuddi: [<<singt> u:::h]>  
((sings))

029 Frank: [<<singend>haun daun dau;>  
((sings))

030 Denis: [<<singend>haun daun dau;>  
((sings))

031 Frank: ((laughs)) .hh

032 ja doch- (.)  
yeah really

---

4 Maut is Bernd's family name.

- 033 de bernd (.) de bernd wird später mal so  
*Bernd Bernd will become one of those*
- 034 einer der wenn er HEIM kommt- (.) weißt=so, (.)  
*who when he comes home you know like*
- 035 Knut: <<f, gepresst> EY,  
 <<f, choked> hey,
- 036 mei B[IER]> -  
*my beer*
- 037 Wuddi: [in Unterhemd (.) und unterhose DASitzt;]  
*he sits in undershirt and pants*
- 038 Frank: [ga ga ganz klar (.) in Unner(.) ]  
*definitely in*
- 039 hemd und unnerhose so- (.)  
*undershirt and pants like*
- 040 auf so\_ner COUCH sitzt die Füße hOch[gelegt]- (.)  
*on kind of a couch he sits the feet laid on top*
- 041 Wuddi: [totAl]  
*absolutely*
- 042 [der] alkoHoli[ker]-  
*an alcoholic*
- 043 Frank: [es- ] [es] es bIEr NEber sisch-  
*he has the beer next to him*
- 044 <<t> aber nur franZÖsisches-> (-)  
*but only french beer*
- 045 Denis: ((laughs))
- 046 Frank: und (.) und dann die SPORTschau guckt.(-)  
*and and then he watches the sports' show*
- 047 Bernd: <<p> hä: wieso guck isch die SPORTsch[au]?  
*PRT why do I watch the sports' show*
- 048 Frank: [<<f, gepresst>die  
 049 SCHALKER die SCHALKER wieder hier; (-)  
 <<f, choked voice> Schalke Schalke again PRT
- 050 haben sie !UFF!getrumpft die SCHalker;>  
*they've been going strong Schalke*
- 051 Denis: ((laughs)) (((laughs))) ]
- 052 Bernd: [<<p>eh scheiße ey.>]  
*hey shit hey*
- 053 (1.6)
- 054 Denis: ((swallows))((sighs))
- 055 Frank: oder de KNUT wird so einer.  
*or Knut will become one of that kind*

056 (1.3)  
 057 Knut: ah nee; (---)  
*oh no*  
 058 Frank: äh doch de' (.) de' (.) de' (.) KNUT wird so einer  
*uh but yes Knut will become one of that kind*  
 059 der hockt sisch dann- (-)  
*he will sit down then*  
 060 Auch in seinem BA:sketballanzug hin noch so  
*also in his basketball dress still*  
 061 mit FUFFzisch SESCHzisch jahren so-  
*with like fifty years old*  
 062 (1.3)  
 063 oder?  
*don't you?*  
 064 (1.0)  
 065 oder meinstest du spielst bis dahin kein BASKetball mehr?  
*or do you think that you won't play basketball anymore then*  
 066 Several: ((laugh))

## a) Story structure

### 1) Collaborative deviation-categorization

The quote from the prior turn “!A!beide” (*work*) in 004–005 indexes one of the category-bound actions of the proles, i. e. their self-stylization as hard workers. Note that Denis uses the temporal modal “schon” (*already*), adumbrating that Wuddi and Bernd, who are on vocational training, have already adopted the habitus of their new social environment.

### 2) Collaborative mock fiction

In 018, Denis’s story-preface declares Bernd to be a future member of the category ‘proles’. He starts to deploy a scene of Bernd returning home from work on some future evening (019), which is collaboratively worked out by Denis, Wuddi, and Frank. They paraphrase, repeat, and extend their partners’ turns, building a mock habitual fiction of Bernd’s future life as a prole (020–051).

## b) Participation framework

In his initial categorization of the proles, Denis refers to both Bernd and Wuddi (004–005). However, Wuddi immediately participates in working out the tease (006–007), i. e., he defines himself as not being meant by the criticism, but belonging to the attackers. The status of being target or attacker is not simply dependent



on whose actions belong the class of problematic actions (Deppermann 2013b). Rather, being attacker or target can be negotiated, possible targets may manage to deflect possible devaluation by changing sides and taking successfully part in the collaborative construction of the mock story. This malleable status of being subject to an identity-ascription gives evidence of the fluid nature of social structure in the peer-group and of the relevance of rhetorical skills for the definition of category-membership.

### **c) Activities, their narrative design and their interpretive relationship to identity-categories**

The tellers collaboratively describe and enact a scene, which abounds with stereotypical details, amounting to an exaggerated parody. Denis's quote "abeide" (*work*, 004) is taken up by Wuddi, who produces deep growling sounds with choked voice. These are considered to be stereotypical category bound actions of the proles, indexing an uncivilized masculine habitus (Schwitalla 1994; Deppermann 2007). The following category enactment proceeds by pseudo-quotes of the proles, imitating and paraphrasing the term *arbeiten* (*work*), which gave rise to the mock fiction, in alliterated, formulaic talk ("schaffen und schuften", *toil and labour*), which indexes the stubborn, ritualized and dull self-positioning of the lower working class as hard-working men. This is done with a stylized proletarian vocal habitus, i. e., choked, hoarse voice, low register and the abundant use of the attention getter *hier* (*here*). Beginning with 020, the tellers construct a stereotypical home scenario of Bernd as a prole: he comes home from work in the evening, orders his wife to serve him beer (the stereotypical proletarian beverage, 020–026), thus practicing stereotypical traditional gender roles of a heterosexual couple. His wife is called "Resi" (020), which is a Bavarian name, indexing an old-fashioned, conservative, backwoods culture. He is enacted as being drunk (026), later on, he is even said to be an alcoholic (041–042). He is described as sitting in front of the tv-set wearing underpants and tanktop (037–040), which is the stereotypical garment of proles who feel at ease at their home without care about aesthetics of clothing, while watching football (046). The broadcast "Sportschau" (*sports show*) is the stereotypical favourite show of proles. Characteristically again, Bernd as a prole (or maybe the anchorman on tv, who is not clear) is enacted to praise the football team Schalke 04 (048–050), which is the favourite team of the German lower working class living in the Ruhr valley, where the stereotypical German prole abides.

Importantly, the mock fiction is not just an arbitrary abusive imagination; it starts from the actual behaviour of the target, extrapolating, exaggerating and projecting it into the future. The mock story serves as a social mirror which is supposed to nip things in the bud by threatening the target with ridicule, should he continue

to behave in a way which could be seen as indicative of developing the identity of a prole. It is thus a control device which is sequentially triggered by what is seen as a problematic identity claim put forth by a category-bound action (Drew 1987).

### **d) Descriptive and performative positioning**

On the level of descriptive positioning, mock fiction is not about the teller. Yet, self-positioning of the teller is at issue, nevertheless. Relevant identities of the teller are not located on the content level of the story-world, but on the interactional plane in terms of performative positioning. Mock stories, teasing, and other genres of playful criticism do not directly condemn deviation morally, but sanction it by ridiculing the target. The teller does less position himself as a moral prosecutor than as a smart analyzer, who is not led astray by the partners' performance and who is able to expose it via the construction of an entertaining communicative event. These genres are thus not only a resource for other-positioning; narrative and rhetorical practices make it a major resource for performative self-positioning as clever, creative, and humorous.

In mock fiction, tellers indulge as animators in behaviours in a quotative, parodic mode, which would be sanctioned if performed as fully responsible authors in Goffman's terms (Goffman 1981). It is thus a *carnevalesque* practice (Bakhtin 1981) that opens up an arena for the playful enactment of stigmatized identities in an unserious, as-if mode. The tellers act out expressive possibilities beyond the range of actions licensed by their ordinary identities. They get acclaimed for the entertaining show without being blamed for incriminated moral and social commitments that are linked to the stigmatized identities themselves which they enact (Deppermann 2007).

### **e) The relationship to larger practical, normative and identity concerns of the peer-group**

This mock story has a biographical dimension in dealing with the transition from school to work. The members of the peer-group, who had a homogenous educational background, have started to pursue different educational trajectories. Therefore, the cohesion of the group in terms of commonalities and the stance taken towards emerging social differences have to be renegotiated. This age-related conflict between workers and pupils concerns the relative prestige and superiority of stylistic standards and life-worlds, which imply different aims and assessments regarding earning money, education, and becoming a student. The mock story can be understood to express sneaking suspicion about other peers' biographical

change in terms of betraying peer-group values and changing allegiances from the adolescents' side to the adults' side.

### 3.2 “Victim of rape”

In the next extract, we see Wuddi creating a fictional scenario about how he would drive through his hometown singing the first verse of the German national anthem and burning Aldi-plastic bags, if Germany wins the upcoming football match against Turkey.<sup>5</sup> Both imagined actions can be seen as racist acts: the first verse of the national anthem is officially forbidden because of its imperialistic content and Aldi-bags index the stereotypical favourite shop of Turkish immigrants in Germany. Important background knowledge for this excerpt is the fact that Wuddi works at a car factory, the majority of his colleagues being of Turkish origin. Denis and Till react to Wuddi's fictional scenario with a competing fiction, saying that his fiction was caused by the fact that he was raped by his colleagues at the factory. Then follows some verbal duelling between Wuddi and Till.

#2 “aufs maul” (Juk 24-1; Youth center)

```

001 Markus: wuddI:, (.)
002         <<len, staccato>das thema is jetzt ABgeh[akt.      ]>
              this topic is FInished now
003 Wuddi:                                     [[<<h>mit=em] Auto:,>(-)
              with the CAR
004         äh: nich mit mei=m-(.)
              uh not with mine
005         meins is zu auffällig,(.)
              mine is too striking
006         von meiner mUtter da so das KENNzeichen abschrauben; (---)
              remove the PLATE of my mother's car
007         mit der FLAGge; (--)
              with the FLAG
008         durch rhEInhofen HUPen, (.)
              through RHEInhofen
009         ALditütn raus
              hanging out aldi-bags

```

- 010 ANstecken und so was- (---)  
*setting them on FIRE and stuff*
- 011 ???: .hhh (---)
- 012 Alex: die BRENNen auch so gUt;  
*they BURN so good don't they*
- 013 Fabian: <<hiccupping,h> ha hu>  
 014 <<snorting> brhh:>
- 015 Wuddi: aber SPIritus macht=s möglich.  
*but ETHYL alcohol makes it possible*
- 016 Denis: o:h MA:NN-  
*oh my GOD*
- 017 (1.1)
- 018 Denis: <<laughing> wuddi hat heut im werk bestimmt  
*today for sure at the factory*
- 019 aufs MAUL gekriegt weil er so-> (.)  
*wuddi was beaten up because he*
- 020 <<chuckling> .hhu> (.) KOmisch abgeht;  
*acts so WEIRD*
- 021 (1.0)
- 022 Denis: WUDDi is in die toilette versEnkt worden.  
*WUDDI was plunged into the toilet*
- 023 Wuddi: <<pp,creaky voice>ja=ja meyer<sup>6</sup>>  
*yes yes meyer*
- 024 Denis: [<<cresc, acc> an BEInen fEstgehalten worden]  
*he was fixed by his FEET*
- 025 Wuddi: [<<pp, singing, mimicrying> i:ja:: u:::,> ]
- 026 Denis: und über die toilette [gehÄNGT.]>  
*and HUNG over the toilet*
- 027 Till: [a EIner ] hat=n mit=m kopf ins- (.)  
*uh one has pressed him by the head into*
- 028 ins pissoIR gedrückt und de anner hat=n grad von hinten  
*into the urinal and the other one has from the back*
- 029 richtig ma:->  
*really*
- 030 Xm: <<p, exhaling> the->
- 031 (1.0)
- 032 Denis: mit=em SCHWEIF;(.)  
*with the tail*
- 033 <<h, laughing, sighing> ah->=

---

6 Meyer is Denis's family name.

- 034 Wuddi: =(ja wem) erzählst=e jetzt eigentlich deine geSCHICHten,  
*well to whom do you actually tell your stories now*
- 035 Till: <<laughing> ach [was? .hhh ]  
*uh what?*
- 036 Wuddi: [*<<dim> aus*] deinem LEben da-=  
*from your life*
- 037 Till: =<<all> mEIne geSCHICHten oder was?=  
*my STORIES or what?*
- 038 =im werk oder was?=  
*at the factory or what?*
- 039 Wuddi: =nein; (.)  
*no*
- 040 deine geschIchten wie=s bei dir auf der SCHule abgeht- (.)  
*your stories what is happening at your SCHOOL*

### a) Story structure

Wuddi carries on with his fiction in spite of his peers' request to close the topic (001) and a sarcastic comment (012). Wuddi's story is not reacted to with a social categorization. Instead Denis counters with a mock fiction about Wuddi: He is said to have been beaten up at the factory by his co-workers, who are mostly Turkish, because he is supposed to have produced similar racist statements at work as he does in the current interaction (018–019). In lines 22–33, the mock fiction is collaboratively expanded by Denis and Till: Wuddi is said to be plunged into the toilet by his head and to be raped from the back.

### b) Participation framework

Wuddi's initial story is a fictional announcement. In their mock fiction, Denis and Till refer to Wuddi by name and in third person (i. e., laterally; Günthner 1999). Denis and Till co-construct the story addressed to all others present as a story revealing news about Wuddi to others. There is both collaboration and competition between story-tellers (here: Denis and Till), who build on each other and compete for the more successful climax of the mock story possibility of quick changes of targets (022–033). In turn, Till becomes the target of Wuddi's counter: He attributes to Till to transfer his own experience of humiliation at school to Wuddi's (034–040).

### c) Activities, their narrative design and their interpretive relationship to identity-categories

Wuddi's fictional story constructs a fantasy centered around antagonistic social identities: He assigns to himself a public, space-claiming German national iden-

tity of strength, epitomized by driving through his hometown with the German flag, horning (007–008). Correspondingly, the Turkish outgroup is ridiculed and humiliated by burning Aldi-bags, a stereotypical accessoire of people of Turkish origin living in Germany (009–010). In their counter mock fiction, Denis and Till ridicule Wuddi as a victim of physical force and rape, thus assigning him a low status in his local community at work. Identities are collectively constructed, the local ascription of facets of identity to a person here becomes an object of conflict on the one hand and of mutual elaboration on the other.

#### **d) Descriptive and performative positioning**

Denis and Till display their analysis of Wuddi's fictional scenario as being morally unacceptable by positioning him in a scenario which contradicts the one that Wuddi constructed before on the story-level. While he positioned himself as the triumphant humiliating his Turkish co-workers, they position him as their humiliated victim. On the performative level, Denis and Till do not only reject Wuddi's racist fiction, they also reject his self-positioning, i. e. his claim to superiority. Mock fiction is used to reject a claim to an identity that is perceived to be inadequate and to correct on a violation of social norms (here: racism). The fictional scenario playfully humiliates the target, the scenario is framed as non-serious by telling in a laughing voice interspersed with laughter. Denis and Till do not reproach Wuddi directly of being racist or claiming a false identity of strength. Mock fiction is a way to convey criticism in line with the stylistic preference for entertainment and competition, which is operative in adolescents' leisure-time interactions (Deppermann and Schmidt 2001) and which implies a preference for indirect, yet rude and abusive criticism in a non-serious mode (Deppermann and Schmidt 2000). Performative positioning therefore is of utmost importance for the negotiation of identities in the peer-group. The target of the mock fiction is attacked by a metonymic transposition: The fictional there and then is used to criticize the target in the here and now. Aggressive actions which are attributed to a third party in the fiction (i. e. Wuddi's co-workers) vicariously represent the negative moral assessment of the story-tellers. Constructing the mock fiction, attackers position themselves as creative and humorous. The problematic identity-claim of the target thus is not only criticized and sanctioned, but it is exploited as an opportunity for performative self-positioning by story-telling. Constructing identity by mock fiction does not rely on using category-labels.

### **e) The relationship to larger practical, normative and identity concerns of the peer-group**

The non-serious status of both fictional stories is obvious to all participants. Although the rape scenario is fictional, it nevertheless indexes a state of affairs held to be known by all members of the peer-group: Wuddi fears his co-workers of Turkish origin because they are a majority and they are physically stronger than him. The fictional scenario acts as to reject and correct on an inadequate self-positioning by Wuddi in terms of his social status. Finally, the conflict shifts to the level of social identities and the values attached to the corresponding social milieus: While Wuddi counter-attacks Till as someone inhabiting a low position at his school, Till adumbrates that not his school, but the factory is the proper setting in which abusive and violent behavior is to be expected. Thus, both the individual's hierarchical position in their social milieu and the valuation of the milieu itself are disputed by way of mock fiction.

## **4 Conclusions**

### **4.1 Narrative Structure of Mock Stories**

Mock stories are occasioned by and tailored to situated conduct: They are devices for criticizing and sanctioning inadequate self-positioning and claims to social entitlements. A derogatory portrayal of the target provides a starting point for collaborative story-construction.

Mock stories are not planned from the outset. They emerge turn by turn by the collaboration of multiple participants. There is no overarching story design like, e. g., the Labovian schema 'abstract-orientation-complication-climax-evaluation-coda' (Labov and Waletzky 1967). The initial derogatory categorization functions only emergently, post hoc as an abstract that serves as a guiding frame for the story construction. There is only little amount of orientation information given, because the peer-group members share extensive common ground. Therefore, fictional stories do not need detailed descriptions of temporal, personal and local circumstances. Usually, it is only relevant who does what to whom.

Each segment of the evolving story consists of a turn that is produced as a possibly self-contained or – when added to an already formed narrative structure – possibly last climactic unit. A major criterion for its felicity is that it has to suit as a humorous portrayal of the incriminated moral deficiency attributed to the target. Collaborative additions to the narrative structure provide for a new climax, confirm

or correct the prior climax. By this requirement, collaboration is also competitive in terms of who succeeds to outdo the prior turn by adding a new climax which receives more acclaim. This pressure for outdoing the co-teller results in an escalating dynamic of fictionalization (Kotthoff 1999, 2007). Sequentially, they build on non-fictional categorizations and assessments of the situated behaviour of the target. Then they transcend the present local context by enlarging the temporal scope, i. e., by turning to past and future matters, and by projecting real world states of affairs to fictional worlds.

The unplanned, cumulative narrative structure results from the fact that a basic requirement for conversational and even more for research interview narratives is not satisfied: There is no suspension of the local, turn-by-turn organization of turn-taking. Consequently, the narrator has a very limited turn space and no assured ticket for a monological delivery of a complex multi-unit-turn narrative. Instead, each contributor to the story has to be prepared to make his point, i. e. produce some kind of climax or punchline, within one turn, because he can never be sure that he will manage to keep the turn after a first turn-constructive component is recognizably finished. Turns that do not arouse interest in the audience run the risk of being disregarded and the speaker will lose the floor to other participants (see Deppermann and Schmidt 2001).

## 4.2 Narrative Competence in Mock Fiction

Narrative competence in competitive peer-group interaction does not mean to be able to plan a story with an intricate plot unfolding its morale over a sequence of narrated events. Instead, contributors to a narrative have to dispose of rhetorical skills of quick, flexible and contextually sensitive response. This includes

- a. to diagnose deviation from social norms and the social categories which are relevant to the local peer-culture and its moral order in a contextually sensitive way,
- b. to deploy relevant social categories in terms of scenarios of actions which are recognizably category-bound (prototypical) and funny in terms of their phenomenological properties,
- c. to select features, actions etc. that can be seen as revealing caricatures or as pinning down telling actions of the target,
- d. to connect neatly with prior turns by reusing, expanding on and topping the descriptions provided by them (Goodwin 1990). Consequently, repeats, paraphrases, thematic extensions by describing similar actions and properties, amplifications



and the continuation of scenarios are the building blocks of contributions to emerging narratives in peer interaction.

### **4.3 Identity Ascription by Mock Fiction and the Moral Order of the Peer Group**

Mock fiction is used as identity-diagnosis and -control. Their primary concern is to deal with identity-claims which are seen as being problematic, inauthenticity and deviation from stylistic preferences of the group being the most relevant occasions. The tellers show that they

- a. attentively monitor their peers' actions,
- b. closely watch if displayed intentions, motives and dispositions are in line with the real, hidden motives, which can be gleaned from contradicting contextual reasoning or be read off from leakage of information given off inadvertently (Goffman 1969),
- c. are always ready to assess local actions in terms of global psychological dispositions and morally implicative traits.

Adult outsiders often react to such sequences of interaction shocked because of the massive violations of norms of politeness. Yet, mock fiction, to the contrary, like teases (Drew 1987), act as a light device of social control to maintain the moral order of adequate identities and actions in the peer-group. This is because the harsh abusive categorizations and descriptions in mock stories provide for a mode of rude indirectness of criticism. Their hyperbolic design frames them as humorous and unserious. They do not imply a severe degradation or even exclusion of the target as a group member. In turn, tellers use hyperbole for stylizing themselves, projecting a masculine identity made up of strength, humor, coolness, creativity and playful violation of bourgeois norms.

Both in terms of their sequential placement in interaction and with regard to the social category they attribute to the target, however, they are designed to convey a serious core of criticism. This core is not made explicit by a serious reproach regarding incriminated actions and pertinent norms. Since they do not make any reaction from the target conditionally relevant, the result of the controlling action is not fixed, i. e., there is no need for both target and story-tellers to excuse themselves, withdraw actions etc. Interactionally, only the success of the story in terms of collaborative production and audience acclaim displays how the story is evaluated. But the story may have long-term consequences, which, however, may

not show up in the communicative event itself and may not be observably linked to the story. E.g. the target may change his behaviour, yet without losing face by officially confessing and seeking for excuse. At the same time, there are no obligatory commitments which arise out of the story for either party.

#### **4.4 Mock Fiction as a Conversational Genre in the Context of Youth Culture**

Mock fiction belongs to a set of competitive practices and genres that are constitutive of male peer-group cultures in general. Other examples are ritual insulting (Labov 1972), rude directives (Goodwin 1990), and disrespecting (Deppermann & Schmidt 2000). All of these practices are marked by rudeness, verbal aggression, abusive language, and violation of taboos (concerning (homo-)sexuality, death, excretion, violence, and rape). Yet, they often include elements of humor, rhetorical skill, and verbal innovation-design features that distinguish the most accomplished performances, which are highly treasured and which bestow their producers recognition and social prestige. These competitive genres are the everyday grounds from which more formalized artful, public, and mediated variants such as hip hop battles (Deppermann and Riecke 2006; Morgan 2009; Schröer 2013: 200–221) have developed, which finally have become professionalized and commercialized. Of course, in particular in youth culture, there is constant remediation-mediated genres become models themselves, which feed back again into everyday practice (Androutsopoulos 2017). Research on everyday peer-group interaction complements the study of youth cultural artifacts (like fanzines, pictures, and video-clips) in important ways. The practices and genres of everyday peer-group interaction and youth cultural artifacts share socio-stylistic commonalities that are constitutive of a sense of belonging to a common culture (Böder et al. 2019). Yet, artifacts are edited products, which are artfully and thoughtfully tailored in order to create well-reasoned effects in an (imagined) audience – thus they lend themselves to an analysis of cultural semiotics and symbolism. In contrast, social interaction is the arena in which the taken-for-granted routine practices of the management of everyday life-world concerns are played out. Thus, often it is not so much distinction from various generational or socio-stylistic out-groups that is at issue (which has been the main interest of Cultural Studies from their very beginning). Rather, the management of relationships within the peer-group itself, i. e., the negotiation of individual statuses and socio-psychological properties, group-internal hierarchies, and behavioural norms within the group prove to be more relevant for the situated production of identities. Many facets of adolescents' identities that matter to them

in everyday life and that are consequential for their agentive capacities and their status within the peer-group cannot be articulated in autobiographical interviews. Thus they will not be accessible in the context of a biographical interview with a stranger. They are intrinsically performative, being tied to situated action in interactional sequences. Identity-claims, ascriptions and disputes hinge on pragmatic, bodily and interactive dimensions of situated conduct that do not lend themselves to reflexive awareness and explicit description. A comprehensive understanding of youth culture will require an understanding of these everyday interactive practices in their particular details, by which youth culture gets enacted, produced, maintained and changed in real time day by day – which is the bedrock for all artistic production and reflexive self-conceptualization.

## Transcription conventions

**GAT2** (Selting et al. 2009)

[ ]	overlap and simultaneous talk
=	latching
(.)	micropause (shorter than 0.2 sec)
(-), (--), (---)	brief, mid, longer pauses of 0.2-0.5, 0.5-0.7, 0.7-1.0 sec.
(2.85)	measured pause (more than one second)
geht_s	assimilations within units
:, ::, :::	segmental lengthening, according to duration
äh, öh, ehm	hesitation signals, so-called 'filled pauses'
so(h)o	laugh particles within talk
haha hehe hihi	laugh syllables
akZENT	strong, primary stress
ak!ZENT!	extra strong stress
akzEnt	weaker, secondary stress
?	rising to high
,	rising to mid
-	level
;	falling to mid
.	falling to low
↑	to higher pitch
↓	to lower pitch
<<h>	high register
<<f>	=forte, loud
<<p>	=piano, soft
<<pp>	=pianissimo, very soft
<<all>	=allegro, fast
<<len>	=lento, slow
<<cresc>	=crescendo, continuously louder
<<dim>	=diminuendo, continuously softer
<<acc>	=accelerando, continuously faster
.h, .hh, .hhh	inbreath, according to duration

h, hh, hhh	outbreath, according to duration
{{coughs}}	para- und extralinguistic activities and events
<<creaky voice>> >	commentaries regarding voice qualities with scope
{solche}	uncertain transcription
English	free English translation (which preserves German word order as far as possible)

## References

- Androutsopoulos, J. (2017). Media and language change: expanding the framework. In C. Cotter & D. Perrin (Hrsg.) *The Routledge handbook of language and media* (pp. 403–421). New York: Routledge.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). Discourse in the novel. In M. M. Bakhtin, *The dialogic imagination. Four essays* (ed. by Michael Holquist) (p. 259–422). Austin: U Texas.
- Bamberg, M. (1997). Positioning between structure and performance. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 7, 335–342.
- Bamberg, M. (2006). Stories – big or small. Why do we care? *Narrative Inquiry*, 16/1, 139–147.
- Bamberg, M., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2008). Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis. *Text & Talk*, 28(3), 377–396.
- Böder, T., & Eisewicht, P.; Mey, G. & Pfaff, N. (Hrsg.). (2019). *Stilbildungen und Zugehörigkeit. Medialität und Materialität in Jugendszenen*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Davies, B., & Harré, R. (1990). Positioning and the discursive production of selves. *Journal for the theory of social behaviour*, 20, 43–63.
- Deppermann, A. (2007). Playing with the voice of the Other: Stylized ‚Kanaksprak‘ in conversations among German adolescents. In P. Auer (Hrsg.), *Style and social identities – Alternative approaches to linguistic heterogeneity* (pp. 325–360). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Deppermann, A. (2013a). Editorial: Positioning in narrative interaction. *Narrative Inquiry*, 23(1), 1–15.
- Deppermann, A. (2013b). How to get a grip on identities-in-interaction: (What) does ‚positioning‘ offer more than ‚membership categorization‘? Evidence from a mock story. *Narrative Inquiry*, 23(1), 62–88.
- Deppermann, A. (2013c). Analytikerwissen, Teilnehmerwissen und soziale Wirklichkeit in der ethnographischen Gesprächsanalyse. In M. Hartung & A. Deppermann (Hrsg.), *Gesprochenes und Geschriebenes im Wandel der Zeit. Festschrift für Johannes Schwitalla* (pp. 32–59). Mannheim: Verlag für Gesprächsforschung.
- Deppermann, A. (2015). Positioning. In A. De Fina & A. Georgakopoulou (Hrsg.), *Handbook of narrative analysis* (pp. 369–387). New York: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Deppermann, A., & Riecke, A. (2006). Krieg der Worte: Boasten und Dissen im HipHop-Battle. In B. Richard & K. Neumann-Braun (Hrsg.), *Ich-Armeen. Täuschen – Tarnen – Drill* (pp. 157–165). Paderborn: Fink.

- Deppermann, A., & Schmidt, A. (2000). Disrespecting: A conversational practice for the negotiation of status in juvenile peer-groups. In E. Németh (Hrsg.), *Pragmatics in 2000: Selected papers from the 7th International Pragmatics Conference*. Vol. 2 (pp. 156–164). Antwerpen: International Pragmatics Association.
- Deppermann, A., & Schmidt, A. (2001). Hauptsache Spaß – Zur Eigenart der Unterhaltungskultur Jugendlicher. *Der Deutschunterricht*, 6/01, 27–37.
- Dietrich, M., & Mey, G. (2018). Inszenierung von Jugend(lichkeit) und Generation(alität). Entwicklungspsychologische Perspektiven auf Szenen. In JuBri-Forschungsverbund Techniken jugendlicher Bricolage (Hrsg.), *Szenen, Artefakte und Inszenierungen. Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven* (pp. 71–107). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Dietrich, M., & Mey, G. (2019). Visuelle Jugendkulturforschung: Trends und Entwicklungen. *Diskurs Kindheits- und Jugendforschung*, 14(3), 293–307.
- Drew, P. (1987). Po-faced receipts of teases. *Linguistics*, 25/1, 219–253.
- Georgakopoulou, A. (2007). *Small stories, interaction and identities*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Goffman, E. (1969). *Strategic interaction*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania UP.
- Goffman, E. (1981). Footing. In E. Goffman, *Forms of talk* (pp. 124–159). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Goodwin, M. H. (1990). *He-said-she-said. Talk as social organization among black children*. Bloomington: Indiana UP.
- Günthner, S. (1999). Polyphony and the ‚layering of voices‘ in reported dialogues. An analysis of the use of prosodic devices in everyday reported speech. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 31, 685–708.
- Kotthoff, H. (1999). Coherent keying in conversational humor: Contextualising joint fictionalisation. In W. Bublitz, U. Lenk & E. Ventola (Hrsg.), *Coherence in spoken and written Discourse* (pp. 125–150). Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Kotthoff, H. (2007). Oral genres of humor. *Pragmatics*, 17/2, 273–296.
- Labov, W. (1972). Rules for ritual insults. In his *Language in the inner city: Studies in the black English vernacular* (pp. 297–353). Philadelphia: Pennsylvania UP.
- Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967). Narrative analysis. In Helm, J. (Hrsg.), *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts* (pp. 12–44). Seattle: Washington UP.
- Lucius-Hoene, G., & Deppermann, A. (2002). *Rekonstruktion narrativer Identität. Ein Arbeitsbuch zur Analyse narrativer Interviews*. Opladen: Leske und Budrich.
- Lucius-Hoene, G., & Deppermann, A. (2004). Narrative Identität und Positionierung. *Gesprächsforschung*, 5, 166–183.
- Mey, G. (2003). *Zugänge zur kindlichen Perspektive. Methoden der Kindheitsforschung*. Berlin: TU, Institut für Psychologie.
- Mey, G. (2013). „Aus der Perspektive der Kinder“: Ansprüche und Herausforderungen einer programmatischen Konzeption in der Kindheitsforschung. *Psychologie & Gesellschaftskritik*, 37(3/4), 53–71.
- Mey, Günter (2018). Jugendforschung: Konjunkturen, Krisen, Konstruktionen. In A. Kleeberg-Niepage & S. Rademacher (Hrsg.), *Kindheits- und Jugendforschung in der Kritik* (pp. 273–297). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Mey, G., & Dietrich, M. (2017). From text to image: Shaping a visual Grounded Theory methodology. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 17/2, Art. 2, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-17.2.2535>.
- Morgan, M. (2009). *The real hip-hop: Battling for knowledge, power, and respect in the LA underground*. Durham: Duke UP.

- Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (2001). *Living narrative*. Harvard: HUP.
- Sacks, H. (1972). On the analyzability of stories by children. J. Gumperz, & D. Hymes (Hrsg.). *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of speaking* (pp. 235–345). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Sacks, H. (1992). *Lectures on conversation*. 2 Vols. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Schroer, S. (2013). *Hiphop als Jugendkultur?* Berlin: RabenStück.
- Schwitalla, J. (1994). Die Vergegenwärtigung einer Gegenwelt. Sprachliche Formen der sozialen Abgrenzung einer Jugendlichengruppe in Vogelstang. In W. Kallmeyer (Hrsg.), *Kommunikation in der Stadt. Teil 1: Exemplarische Analysen des Sprachverhaltens in Mannheim* (pp. 347–509). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Selting, M., Auer, P., Barth-Weingarten, D., Bergmann, J. R. et al. (2009). Gesprächsanalytisches Transkriptionssystem 2 (GAT2). *Gesprächsforschung*, 10, 353–402.