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Using the other for oneself

Conversational practices of representing out-group members among adolescents

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Representing and assessing other social groups is a primary issue in verbal interactions of adolescent peer groups. By the representation of others, the peer-group gains its own identity *ex negativo*. The paper analyzes instances of naturally occurring peer group interactions. It is argued that the default orientation towards interactional competition and entertainment that is distinctive for adolescents' peer group interactions leads to a preference for stereotypical representations of the other. By constructing images of the out-group, the peer group creates highly involving and entertaining interactive events that strengthen consensus and emotional cohesion among the group members. While the practice of stereotyping others tacitly reproduces common moral standards, it simultaneously avoids imposing them explicitly on the individual member. Convening on what we are not and what we do not want to be by stereotyping others thus can be seen as a solution for the problem to reconcile the need for a common group identity and shared normative expectations with the need for individual freedom and absence from obligations.

A major issue in the development of social and personal identity in adolescence is the distinction of one's own identity from those of members of other social groups. Adolescents set themselves apart both intergenerationally from the generation of their parents and from children and intragenerationally from other youngsters who differ in their socio-stylistic orientation. These distinctions are realized by various interactional, emblematic, and actional practices, for example, by self-presentation, provocation, conflict, avoidance, or geographic segregation. Peer group interactions are a most important arena for the conversational construction and assessment of social identities of self and other. Aspects of the other's identity are made present by stylizations. These representations of the other can serve to cope with experiences with members of other social groups; they can also provide

opportunities for a vicarious and often fictional realization of forms of action that would be stigmatized if the actor performed them as expressions of his own desires and intentions. These portraits, however, also point to identities that the portrayers claim for themselves, typically in sharp contrast to those of the ones represented. In this chapter, I will investigate this process of how a group of male adolescents conversationally achieves their collective identity as a peer group by distinction from other social units. In particular, it will be shown

- that representations of others' identities are used as a resource for accomplishing competition and entertainment, which are the most generally preferred keyings of interaction in the peer group;
- that people who are not members of the peer group tend to be portrayed stereotypically (or at least in a way which builds on a tacit consensus about stereotypical attributions);
- that the conversational construction of others' identities contributes to creating a sense of belonging together that provides for a synthesis of two opposing motives: It establishes group cohesion and involves all participants in a common we-feeling, while simultaneously warranting autonomy and distinction of the individual in the context of the peer group.

Before I will analyze different conversational practices of portraying members of the out-group in the third section of this chapter, I will first sketch my understanding of 'identity,' which is inspired by ethnomethodology and conversation analysis; then, in the second section, I will turn to a short description of the data and the methods used.

Towards an empirically grounded notion of 'identity-in-interaction': Social categories from the perspective of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis

The notion 'identity' is most popular in sociology and qualitative research. From a theoretical point of view, 'identity' is a means for the scientific constitution of the unity of the individual as an agent: By relating them to a common identity, the different, ephemeral actions of an individual are bundled and projected onto timeless, more or less stable dimensions of attributes, and these are understood as being related to one another by a uniform, overarching structure of subjectivity. 'Identity' thus builds a bridge between the individual and society: Identity is seen to be a product of social interaction; specifically, individuals obtain their identity most importantly by their membership in social groups. Theorists like Erikson (1966), Mead (1967), Habermas (1992), or Tajfel and Turner (1986) all subscribe to these fundamental functions of identity. 'Identity' is not only an abstract descriptive notion; it is also used to explain actions and to predict possibilities for

future action. These notions of 'identity' from social theory, however, prove to be problematic for the empirical study of identity-in-interaction. They posit conditions that cannot be assumed as premises, but rather refer to issues that are far from being settled: For example, are facets of personal identities consistent over situations, stable and coherent over time, can the subject reflect on his or her actions, and can s/he formulate them in words? Moreover, social theory aims at an aggregate, temporally extended level of 'identity' that can only very rarely be captured when studying the detail of ordinary interactions. Everyday interactions mostly have no manifest biographic reference; it is only occasionally that biographical episodes are told and that aspects of continuity, reliability, or biographical change move into the interactional focus. Furthermore, some of the defining properties of classic notions of 'identity,' such as reflexivity, expressive authenticity, or awareness of intentions, cannot be captured by the analysis of talk-in-interaction – and, indeed, maybe not in any empirical way. At the very least, these mentalistic concepts would have to be deeply reformulated in order to be fitted to the methodology of the empirical investigation of talk-in-interaction.

An empirically grounded notion of 'identity-in-interaction' has to start with cases in which participants themselves make concerns of identity relevant for their business at hand in an interaction. Such a conception of 'identity' has been developed by various researchers from ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, and discursive psychology (Antaki & Widdicombe 1998). These approaches do not aim at a theoretically informed view of the description and explanation of actions with recourse to 'identity.' Instead, they focus on how participants in an interaction identify themselves and others in their talk, which means that they focus on the interactional and linguistic organization they use for this and on which occasions and for which ends identity becomes an issue for speakers. Interaction is not viewed as a more or less transparent, epiphenomenal medium that is only useful as a tool that mirrors the more substantial and motivating realms of cognition or social structure (for a critique see Bamberg, 1999; Coulter, 1990; Edwards, 1997). On the contrary, talk-in-interaction is seen as the primordial site of the accomplishment of social facts (Schegloff, 1991). It is a reality *sui generis* in a Durkheimian sense, which means that it is structured by practices that are to be studied in their own right (specifically regarding 'identity,' see Widdicombe, 1998). The construction and attribution of identities is one of those social facts that is interactively organized.

Starting with Sacks (1972, 1979, 1992), principles governing this organization have been studied in terms of membership categorization analysis (see also Hester & Eglin, 1997; Jayyusi, 1984). It revealed that attributions of identities are closely tied to the participants' practical concerns: They are used to warrant attributions of blame, justifications, or explanations, or to claim authority, expertise, or credibility,

and so on. Constructions of identity thus are resources that participants use in a way that is sensitive to the pragmatic, expressive, and moral concerns of the interaction at hand. Identities play a central part in the design, the course, and the results of talk-in-interaction as well as in the intelligibility of accounts (Hester & Eglin, 1997; Sacks, 1972). This local view of identity contrasts sharply with prevailing essentialist conceptions of identity, which claim that identities are made up of social or personal properties that characterize a person without regard to specific contexts.

Conversation analysis instead asks when and how participants make a certain identity relevant. Moreover, the situated interpretation of identity-categories is not fixed, but can also indexically and flexibly be adapted to the local context. For instance, the categorization "youngster" is not self-evidently relevant because a person is 14 years old. It is to be asked: When does s/he use this categorization to describe her/himself? How is "youngster" interpreted in different contexts of use (e.g., in contrast to "adult" versus as a categorization used by adults themselves)? When does the identity as a youngster become irrelevant because other identities (such as "pupil," "heavy metal-freak," or "German") are at issue? Identity thus strictly and only matters in the way that it is relevant for the participants and in its specific "procedural consequentiality" for the interactional process (Schegloff, 1991). Unlike other approaches, it is not the individual in isolation who "owns" an identity. The attribution and negotiation of identities is part of the interactional process, and so identities are studied as collaborative achievements of all parties to a conversation.

The multifaceted relevance and usability of identities in talk-in-interaction relies on the fact that identity-categories are (more or less closely) associated with category-bound actions and properties. These connections provide for rich inferential potentials (Sacks, 1992, p.40; Schenkein, 1978). Knowing that a person belongs to a certain category (e.g., 'professor'), we can infer that the person also has properties (e.g., 'professional knowledge') and performs actions (e.g., 'reads scientific literature') that are definitional, typical, or normatively required of the incumbents of category membership.[1] In turn, accounts of actions and properties may be used to suggest an inference to the relevance of the associated identity-categories. Identity categories and their associated actions, properties, and expectations concerning motives, aims, knowledge of category incumbents are tools for the organization and interpretation of experience. They reflect relations of belonging and distinction and of sympathy and disrespect. In short, they are means for the articulation of social structure by the members themselves (Coulter, 1996).

1. Jayyusi (1984) discerns different statuses that actions and properties can obtain with respect to their associated categories.

An important difference lies between the in-group categories that the speaker assigns to her/himself (in the actual conversation), and the out-group categories, to which s/he does not see her/himself to be belonging. Studies in the tradition of Social Identity Theory found systematic differences in the representation of in- and out-groups:[2] In-groups are more positively evaluated than out-groups, which are overwhelmingly associated with negative properties; in-groups are perceived as being internally more heterogeneous than out-groups, whose members are seen to be characterized by only few stereotypical features that are attributed to all category incumbents without a difference. In general, contrasts between groups are accentuated and overrated, while similarities and commonalities are ignored or treated as being irrelevant. Stereotyping results in stable cognitive schemata, which are resistant against change and disconfirming experiences. As a consequence, category members are subject to reductive, overgeneralized, and inadequate perceptions that rest on the schematically based association of features. Individuals perform social comparisons to enhance their self-esteem and to justify their category-related attitudes and actions: They favor the in-group by comparing themselves to weaker (stigmatized, inferior, unsuccessful, and so on) groups, focus on features that provide a positive distinction of the in-group, and interpret similar actions positively, when performed by in-group members, and negatively, when done by out-group members (e.g., 'peaceful/reasonable' versus 'coward/weak'). There is an attributional asymmetry: While negative actions of out-group members are judged to be intentional, dispositional, and without a rational motive, the same actions performed by in-group members are excused as being unintentional, caused by circumstances, or discarded as an irrelevant exception. These tendencies of stereotyping increase when groups find themselves in a conflict or in a competition over scarce resources.

Social Identity Theory and research on stereotyping have been criticized for reifying stereotypes as cognitive structures determined by objective category membership without taking into account that categorizations of self and other vary with contexts in the way ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts have shown (see above; Widdicombe, 1998). A conversation analytic approach to stereotyping thus will start from instances of talk in which respect for and assessment of members of social categories become an interactional issue. It could be shown that participants stereotype others in hyperbolic and emotional ways (often with indignation) if their partners approve of the stereotype and join the activity (Bergmann, 1996; Nazarkiewicz, 1999). Speakers, however, show that they are sensitive to the danger of being reproached of prejudice: They use various protective strategies,

2. See Hogg (2001), Hogg & Abrams (1988), Hilton & von Hippel (1996), Spears, Oakes, Ellemers & Haslam (1997), and Tajfel & Turner (1986).

such as jocular keying of stereotypical representations, framing their assertions as subjective experience without claims to generalization, explicit denial of hostile attitudes or reference to positively valued members of an out-group (see e.g., Wetherell & Potter, 1992). A major theoretical problem still rests with 'stereotype,' 'prejudice,' and similar categories as analysts' predicates. They are normative, ironic categories that imply that the researcher has a more adequate conception of the social reality than the participants have and they communicate a moral critique of their practices of categorization. Although stereotypical descriptions are regularly characterized by specific design features, they cannot be identified on behalf of these features alone – the attribution of stereotyping always rests on a comparison between the reality as it is represented by the participants and the researchers' own view of the "real facts" (Hausendorf, 2000).[3] Moreover, typifying, selective perception, inductive generalization, and category-based expectations are basic cognitive and communicative principles, which are needed in order to cope with experiences and to gain agency by reducing the complexity of reality (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996). So, it is far from evident when typifying starts to be stereotyping, and the research on stereotypes itself becomes a site for ideological debate.

Data and methods

This study is part of a larger conversation analytic and ethnographic research project on talk-in-interaction among German male adolescents. For more than two years, two participant observers regularly accompanied a peer group of adolescent boys ranging from 15 to 17 years of age during their leisure time. The peer group consisted of about 10 core and another 10 peripheral members living in a small town in Germany. We recorded about 30 hours of naturally occurring interactions in various settings, such as in the local youth center, on bus trips, on the skateground, in restaurants, and so forth. Additionally, we conducted in-depth interviews with the members of the peer group and with youth workers, the mayor, parents, and additional relevant others. Together with the field notes and other ethnographic documents, the interviews and the membership competencies that we acquired during fieldwork establish an ethnographic framework, which pro-

3. The use of the notion of 'stereotyping' as an analytic predicate thus means, that the researcher departs from the stance of 'ethnomethodological indifference' (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970), which prohibits her/him from any supposition about how the things participants talk about really are.

vides an interpretative backdrop for our conversation analyses of tape-recorded data; that is, we aim at an ethnographic conversational analysis.[4]

Ethnography converges with conversation analysis in some fundamental starting points:

- it emphasizes the need of working with authentic, unstructured empirical data, that is, data that originate from situations in the field that were not arranged by the researcher;
- it aims at reconstructing cultural processes by developing and refining its analytical concepts "bottom up," that is, "from the data themselves" (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973, p. 290); special attention is paid to "emic," that is, members' categories that can serve as a guideline for the search for and reconstruction of phenomena;
- it understands culture as constituted by symbolic actions and it emphasizes the paramount importance of verbal interaction;[5]
- the careful analysis of single cases is the point of departure for the development of theoretical claims and their validation.

Ethnography plays a double role in our work on adolescents' interactions: It is necessary for the access to the data, and it is used as to improve our analytical capacities.

If you want to obtain recordings of authentic interactions among adolescents, you cannot simply address some teenagers and make them talk into your microphones. Just as in other social settings that are not equally accessible for everyone, it is necessary to first gain trust and acceptance by members of the field. This involves being there for some time on a regular basis, accounting for one's presence, and finding a role that fits into the local scenario. In our research project, this access to the field was provided by my co-worker Axel Schmidt, who had been working as a youth-guardian in the local youth center for several years. When the research project started, he had been closely acquainted with most of the adolescents under study for several years. Secondly, profound knowledge of the social organization of the field is necessary in order to collect a sample of recordings that includes the instances of the most typical genres and occasions of interaction. Specifically, the researcher has to become familiar with relevant settings, purposes, the range of participants, time schedules, and rhythms of interactional occasions (daily, weekly, during the year) that each may go along with distinctive genres, topics, and styles of interaction. Only such familiarity can provide a systematic search for and variation of data; it prevents premature generalization of singular observa-

4. The methodological conception and specific procedures are described in detail in Deppermann (1999, 2000).

5. There are, though, versions of ethnography that rather insist on the cognitive basis of culture.

tions and paves the way to accumulate a holistic portrait of the interactional practices of a peer group.

Data analyses can profit from ethnographic knowledge in several ways:

- The analyst always has to keep in mind that interactions are not just verbal exchanges between speakers and hearers, but encounters between embodied participants who often simultaneously perform reciprocal actions. Since adolescents like to move around, refer to objects or clothing, and so on, sometimes a lot of information needed for the interpretation of some stretch of data is not found on tape and has to be supplied from field notes.
- Ethnographic knowledge enhances the analysts' interpretative skills. Knowing how adolescents interpret their own actions; being acquainted with (often divergent) perspectives from different actors; having traced the history of topics, interpersonal relations, or settings; knowing local norms and values, referents of utterances, and idiosyncratic word meanings; understanding innuendo, allusions, and cut-off turns – all this contributes to a deeper and more adequate analysis of conversational data. Often, this knowledge is indispensable in order to understand or even notice aspects of data that would go unnoticed or interpreted mistakenly if the analyst were only to rely on his/her stranger's competence. To be sure, ethnographic knowledge does not have to be posited as a resource for interpretation that is truthful and relevant beyond doubt. Rather, it has to be demonstrated that ethnographically derived knowledge leads to a more detailed and more consistent interpretation. That is, the analyst has to refrain from premature subsumptive use of ethnographic information on conversational data. Its validity and its relevance always have to be proven regarding the recorded data at hand; it must be shown to be consequential for the interactional process. In this way, ethnography and conversation analysis can enrich one another, because a lot of ethnographic findings can also be substantiated and elucidated concerning their constitutive technical details by conversation analysis.

In the approach presented in this chapter, ethnography thus supplements conversation analysis. We do not aim at a traditional, "comprehensive" ethnography of a peer group. Rather, ethnography is a subsidiary, though indispensable, tool for systematizing and improving the conversation analytic work.

Practices of portraying members of other social groups in adolescents' conversations

In the conversations we recorded, talking about absent people who do not belong to the peer group is a very frequent activity of the adolescents. Almost all references to out-groups involve a reference to specific members who are part of the

adolescents' local field of action and perception. There are six sets of social categories by which the youngsters organize their relevant social others:

- other male adolescents, who mostly pursue a different lifestyle: gays ("Schwule"),[6] beaneaters ("Hawacks/Kanaken"), trash ("Assis"), college students ("Studenten")
- girls, who are predominantly categorized by attractiveness and moral criteria: attractive girls (*'cute chicks'*: "Mucken/Schnitten"), sluts ("Schlampen"), silly girls (*'broads'*: "Tussen")
- adults who try to control the youngsters' activities (mayor, teachers, youth worker)
- significant others from the village
- members of the families (parents, siblings, grandparents)
- public persons known from the media (sport stars, artists, singers).

The orientation towards youth cultural scenes and their components (music, sports, clothing, looks, and so on), which is said to be the major concern in adolescent peer cultures, most strikingly plays only a very minor role in the conversations we recorded. Translocal youth cultures become only relevant when connected with one's own experiences and with respect to lived social relations (i.e., who hangs on to which style and who attends which club?).

In what follows, we look at how members of out-groups are portrayed in conversation. While there are various interactional practices by which others may be depicted, it will be shown, that there are some basic procedures which govern the portrayal of others. Our analysis focuses on three cases, which are each discussed in three steps: (1) Attribution of features: Which features are attributed to the category-member? (2) Assessment: How is the category-member evaluated? (3) Interactional process: How are categorizations interactively organized? How are they occasioned? How are the individual participants sequentially involved in working out the portrayal? What is the interactional function of the portrayal?

Portraying an out-group member

Our first case comes from a round of gossip. Bernd reports that a 38-year-old woman is said to have sexual interest in a boy of the same age as the participants. Denis adds that this woman was an "assischlampe" (*trashy slut*),[7] and he reports on her behavior and her looks.

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6. Words in quotes are German expressions (participants' codes), English translations are given in italics.

7. «assi» morphologically is an abbreviative derivation of «asozial» (*asocial*).

Case 1 [Juk 17-23 „assischlampe"/"assislut" 6.12.98]

01 Bernd: eyj und auf jE:den fall, (-)
ey and A:nyway, (-)
02 dem sei mudder will was von einem; (.)
his mother wants a piece of one of them; (.)
03 der is- (.) der is so alt wie WI:R. (.)
he is- (.) he is as old as wE: are. (.)
04 die mudder, (.) die is so (<<all> wirklisch>)
the mother, (.) she is so (<<all>like>)
05 achtunddreißig oder so, (.) oder
thirty eight or so, (.) or
06 neunund[dreißsch.
thirty [nine.
07 Denis: [<<gehaucht >ey und die is so ASSI:::;>]
[<<aspirated>ey and she is so TRASHY:::;>]
08 Frank: [<<p, gehaucht> und die is so widerlisch h]
[<<p, aspirated> and she is so disgusting h]
09 Frank: ey alder.>
ey buddy.>
10 Bernd: =hej <<staccato> die die> die hat schon bei dem,
=hey <<staccato> she she> she already was at his,
11 die hat schon bei dem vor=m HAUS gstanden
she already stood in front of his HOUSE
12 und hat geSUNgen und so=n dreck, (-)
and sung and such a dirt, (-)
13 na un hat RUMgeschrien. (.)
yeah an has scrEAmed around. (.)
14 <<lachend> hh hh haha.> (-)
<<laughing> hh hh haha> (-)
15 Denis: ey, (.) <<singend> die mutter is so Assi::,
ey, (.) <<singing> the mother is so TRASHY::,
16 so=ne As[sischlampe:.>]
such an TRA[shslu:t.>]
17 Alex: [<<lachend> rhumgesungen.>] (.)
[<<laughing>sahng around.>] (.)
18 Denis: eh,=WA::. (.)
ah,=WA::. (.)
19 Alex: ((lacht))
((laughs))
20 Knut: <<gehaucht> uha::,> (--)
<<aspirated> oohu::,> (--)

21 Denis: die is,
she is,
22 Alex: =<<lachend> vorm haus gestanden und gesungen.>
=<<laughing> stood in front of the house and sang.>
23 geil,
fucking great,
24 Denis: =der ihr kleiner sohn, (.) der, (.)
=her younger son, (.) he, (.)
25 als der kleine sohn elf war oder [so
when her younger son was eleven or [so
26 Bernd: [das
[that
27 is die [NOTgeile muddi,]
is the [DESperate[8] mommy,]
28 Denis: [da is se an mir] (.)
[then she passed] (.)
29 mit dEm an mir vorbeigefahren,
me by with hIm,
30 <<all> kleine sohn elf jahre alt,> (-)
<<all> younger son eleven years old,> (-)
31 <<all> nebe der gehockt,> (.)
<<all> sat next to her,> (.)
32 <<all> kipp graucht;> (.)
<<all> smoked a fag;> (.)
33 <<all> mit de oma noch hinte drin,> (.)
<<all> with grandma in the rear,> (.)
34 <<all> kipp graucht,> (-).hh
<<all> smoked a fag;> (-).hh
35 ts:: e:h, (.) GOTT, (-)
ts:: ey:, (.) GOD, (-)
36 vOll die assis. (.)
rEAlly the trash. (.)
37 Frank: <<t, rauhe Stimme> asozial=o=WÄHhh.,> (.)
<<low onset, rough voice>asocial=o=WAHhh.,> (.)
38 Denis: e:h=die is so, (.)
a:h=she is so, (.)
39 die is so richtig <<f> E::klich,> (.)
she is really so <<f> disGU::sting,> (.)

8. *desperate* here means "desperately searching for a sexual partner".

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40 Denis: [die hat so miniröcke an                    ]
          [she wears such mini skirts                 ]
41 Bernd: [aber de große zecher is ja net so asozial,] (.)
          [but the elder zecher is not that asocial, ] (.)
42 Bernd: [aber de kleine is schon voll asozial.      ]
          [but the younger one is already really asocial. ]
43 Denis: [und so BOMberjacke un versIffte BLONDgfärbte
          haar-]
          [and such BOMberjackets an filthy BLONDly dyed hair-]
44 Denis: un(=so) (.) <<gepresst> ö:h'- (.)ö:h'- (.)>
          an(=like) (.) <<choked voice> a:h' (.)a:h' (.)>
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Attribution of features

Denis categorizes the woman talked about as an "assischlampe" (*trash slut*; line 16), while Bernd calls her "notgeile muddi" (*desperate mommy*; line 27). The content of these categorizations is made clear by the account of her looks and actions:

- "notgeile muddi" (*desparate mommy*) refers to the public display of sexual interest that a woman who is also a mother has in an adolescent who is more than 20 years younger than she is (lines 01–14). This categorization relies on a moral standard for adequate actions of incumbents of the category 'mother,' from which the woman talked about deviates.
- "assischlampe" (*trash slut*) is also a categorization of moral, but also of aesthetic, deviance. The woman is portrayed as a mother who does not fulfill her parental duties: She allows her 11-year-old son to smoke and sit in the front seat of her car. The reference to the grandma, who also smokes (lines 33p.), the clothes (mini skirts and bomber jackets), her neglected looks (filthy dyed blonde hair), and the animation of non-lexical sounds in a choked voice (lines 40–44) all are category-bound activities of a socio-stylistic type of lower working class members, who are marked by a lack of hygiene and civilization.

Assessment

"[N]otgeile muddi" (*desperate horny mommy*) und "assischlampe" (*trash slut*) are social categorizations that do not refer to categories that would exist for just any member of society. The terms are defined with respect to the normative and aesthetic relevancies of the adolescent speakers. Moreover, these categorizations require one to select only those actions and features of the categorized persons that

are consistent with these highly abusive terms.[9] The woman's action is portrayed as being extreme (lines 12f.), and no information is offered that could serve as a legitimization. The person is represented as someone who acts irreflexively and incompetently; her behavior is not a result of rational choices, but reflects habitus. Singular actions are the grounds for a generalizing and reductive judgement about the person as such (see also line 36), which is established by the categorizations "assischlampe" and "notgeile muddi." The participants construct a self-validating account: The generalizing abusive categorizations act as a search procedure that calls for details that bolster this evaluation; in turn, the abusive categorizations establish an interpretative frame that clarifies the indexical meaning and the evaluative import of the descriptive details.

The moral verdict, however, does not lie at the heart of the evaluative affect displayed (as it would be, e.g., in the case of indignation). The moral judgement is only the precondition for the extensive performance of disgust and contempt that is displayed lexically ("assi" (*trashy*, lines 07, 15, 36), "widerlisch" (*disgusting*, line 08), "dreck" (*dirt*, line 12) as well as prosodically (aspirated, singing intonation, non-lexical sounds mimicking spitting and vomiting in lines 18, 20, 35, 37). This aesthetic, somatically demonstrated contempt does not only refer to bodily facts (hygiene, clothing, sexuality); the participants take it as a license to use their own bodies as an expressive field for the performance of affective behaviors that are themselves nasty. Social contempt and bodily disgust are celebrated as a performance: Deviance from norms is not criticized as a moral scandal, but it is acclaimed as an entertaining grotesque.[10] The social world is represented as a funny caricature, full of abnormities that are expressively displayed and commented on.

Interactional process

The two main speakers, Denis and Bernd, both assess the woman talked about very negatively. A closer look, however, reveals that they attribute quite different properties to her, and they do not show if one agrees with the other's assertions. While the participants mutually echo their extensive performance of disgust and contempt, the accounts concerning the woman's actions are much less attended to. The participants primarily orient themselves to the performance and experience of a shared evaluative affect, by which they confirm shared assessments and simul-

9. This is, of course, a reflexive argument, because the abusive character of the terms is established and warranted by the selection of deviant, disgusting behaviors and features.

10. This is also evidenced by laughter and by singing, aspirated and laughing intonations in various turns.

taneously establish an entertaining interactional event. In this, Bernd and Denis compete for the audience's attention. Already before Bernd reaches the climax of his story, Denis and Frank deliver a devaluating comment: "und die is so assi/widerlisch" (*and she is so trashy/disgusting*, lines 07f.). As later recyclings of this formulation show, this was already a pre-announcement of Denis' own account (starting later with line 15), which Bernd once again confronts with his contrasting thematic focus of sexual deviance.

The orientation to competition and entertainment is the most pervasive mark of the interactional style of the in-group interactions of the peer group under study (Deppermann & Schmidt, 2001; Neumann-Braun, Deppermann, & Schmidt, 2002). Given this general orientation, it comes as no surprise that references to members of out-groups are realized in succinct and reductive extreme assessments that rapidly express their point and tend to become generalizing and scandalizing caricatures. Descriptive precision and multifaceted, pondered assessments are dispreferred and have little chance for interactional uptake (cf. Bernd's story orientation, which is overlapped by Denis' and Frank's assessments in lines 07p., and Bernd's distinction of degrees of trashiness of the family in question in lines 42p., which does not receive any reaction). Because of these orientations, gossip and slander are the primary genres that are used for talking about out-group members. The performance of these genres thus provides for a resource for the self-positioning of the individual member of the peer group: It is not the most realistic portrayal of the other that is at issue, but speakers gain attention and respect by accounts that contribute to establish an entertaining and emotionally involving sense of sharing.

Representing out-group members who do not act category-bound

The first case was an instance of a portrait of an out-group member who performs actions that are judged to be typical of the out-group. The conversational portrait thus can at once be seen as an explication and as a confirmation of the stereotypical image of the out-group. In the next segment, out-group members who do not conform to the expectations about category-bound actions are depicted. However, this does not lead to making these category-bound expectations into a problem, but to a negative assessment of the deviant out-group members.

The next transcript is from a recording of an excursion that the peer group made to Austria. When the adolescents arrived, they explored the unknown site and formulated and assessed their impressions. The group worked to develop a shared perspective on relevant objects, such as the local dialect, the currency, the size of the town, stores, and women. They apply the categories and relevancies that are most important for structuring their life world at home to the new situation and interpret it in terms of the dichotomy 'same as at home – different from home.'

Case 2 [Juk 16–32]

01 Denis: aber wEnigstens, (.)
but at lEAst, (.)
02 ham die hier auch (.) normale klamotten, (.)
here they also wear (.) regular stuff, (.)
03 <<acc> die biff ä:h, (.) die biffkes. (.)>
<<acc> the biff a:h, (.) the biffkes. (.)>
04 die schlUchten scheißer, (---)
the cAnyon shitters, (---)
05 Knut: he::, (.)
hey::, (.)
06 kuckt mal ob irgend einer
just look if anyone
07 jemand <<laughing> en BAFfelo sieht, (..)
someone <<laughing> sees a BUFfalo[11]*, (..)*
08 Denis: hähä. (.)
haha. (.)
09 Knut: ja=n ka↑NAcke. (..) ↑HÄ, (.)
yea=a: ↑BEANeater. (..) ↑HA, (.)
10 Denis: was? (.) wo?
what? (.) where?
11 Knut: =[laughing] isch W↑EISS es net, (.)
=[laughing] I don't KN↑OW, (.)
12 Denis: <<p> hast=u ein [ges,>]
<<p> *hav=ya seen [one,>]*
13 Frank: [ja,] (.)
[*yes,] (.)*
14 Frank: isch hab AUch kanacken gesehen, (.)
I have ALso seen beaneaters, (.)
15 da da oben, (.)
there up there, (.)
16 Denis: [ja da oben die zwo, (.) die da gestanden haben.]
[*yeah up there those two, (.) who stood there.*]
17 Frank: [a, (.), a, (.) am, (.) am lift mit schIschuh,]
[*a, (.), a, (.) at, (.) at the lift with skIshoes,*]
18 Frank: ich dacht so
I thought like

11. «Buffalo» does not refer to the animal of the Great Plains, but is the name of a brand of shoes which «Kanaken» (*beaneaters*) preferentially wear (at least in the adolescents' opinion). Consequently, it here is used as a metonym for "Kanaken" (*beaneaters*).

```
19          <<continuously falling pitch, aspirated> N↓Ä:::::.>
            <<continuously falling pitch, aspirated> N↓O:::::.>
20  Denis: =hey, was das für=n Assikhipphe? hahaha- (--)
            =hey, what a trAshfhagh is this? huhuhu-(--)
```

Attribution of features

This excerpt starts with Denis' assessment of the clothes that Austrians wear (lines 01–04). He calls them "schluchtenscheißer" (*canyon shitters*) which is an equally abusive term for a national group as Knut's and Frank's "Kanacken" (*beaneaters*, lines 09 and 14) for an ethnic group. By the adverb "wenigstens" (*at least*, line 01), Denis suggests that the Austrians ("hier", *here* in line 02) are defective with respect to his own norms and that the fact that they wear "normale klamotten" (*normal clothes*) was not to be expected. "Normal clothes" neither refers to an Austrian nor to a German average standard. It does not have the descriptive sense of "usual," but the normative sense of "acceptable" with respect to the ethnocentric aesthetic preferences of the peer group. The local reference term "hier" (*here*, line 02) is reformulated by the personal reference term "schluchtenscheißer" (*canyon shitters*, line 04). This acts as a self-repair, because "schluchtenscheißer" contextualizes the relevant stereotypical expectation. This stereotype is part of shared cultural knowledge and must be used in order to recover the locally relevant category-bound features, which are not – in contrast to the case discussed in the previous section – explicated. The stereotype refers to people living in the mountains, wearing dirndl, leather trousers and other old-fashioned, folkloristic clothes, listening to German folk music, and holding more conservative views. It is only against the background of these stereotypical assumptions that the observation about "normal clothes" becomes reportable as a contrast.

Knut achieves a topic transition by shifting the focus to another social group with distinctive clothing: He asks jokingly, if anyone had seen a "buffalo," that is, an adolescent of Southern European, Turkish, or Arabic origin. The request continues the practice of appropriating the new surroundings by comparison with the familiar. For the peer group, "buffaloes" (line 07, rsp. "Kanacken", lines 09ff.)[12] are

12. While the term «buffalo» is a peer-group-specific adaption, «Kanacke» is widely used as an abusive name for people who look like foreigners of southern origin in Gemany. «Kanacke» strictly is neither an ethnic nor a national category term, because its use is only based on perceptual features that are interpreted to index national and ethnic membership, although it clearly covers people with very different ethnic origins and national identities. The great importance that «Kanacken» have for the adolescents under study is also reflected by the fact that there is a vast variety of names used for them (such as «Ölem,» «Lan,» «Gellocke,» «Hawack»). Each of

a most relevant out-group; they are judged to be dangerous and aggressive braggarts. It is to be noticed that the mere presence of "buffaloes/kanacken" would count as news, irrespective of what the "buffaloes/kanacken" do. Their introduction as an object of talk that is intrinsically interesting is ratified by Frank, who reports a behavior of category-members: He saw "kanacken" who went skiing (lines 14–17). Just as with the "schluchtenscheißer" before, the grounds for his negative assessment "N↓Ä::::" remain implicit. The negative assessment clearly is based on the fact that skiing is not a category-bound action for "Kanacken," given the stereotypical expectations of the participants.[13]

Both for the "schluchtenscheißer" and for the "kanacken," it is the deviance from category-bound expectations, which are themselves not communicated, that is the basis of an assessment. Nevertheless, the category-bound expectation reveals itself to be stable and immune against disconfirmation: It is not that the negative stereotype of the other becomes revised in the light of a discrepant observation, but – at least in the case of the "Kanacken" – the discrepant observation is devaluated and used to support the negative assessment of the social category.

Assessment

In this passage, assessments operate on two levels: Firstly, there is an implicit stereotypical expectation regarding the social categories, which is negative and which can already be gleaned from the abusive category-terms. Secondly, there is a manifest assessment of perceived category-members. The latter assessment rests on the discrepancy between category-bound expectations and the observed cases. The shared expectation is taken for granted and provides for reportability, since it is the deviance from category-bound expectations that makes the facts presented noteworthy.[14] In the case of the "schluchtenscheißer", this deviance is appreciated or at least attenuates the negative assessment of the category (cf. "wenigstens", *at least*, line 01). In the case of the "kanacken", Frank expressively stages his negative affect in line 17 by an aspirated voice in a low frequency, with continuously falling

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them is derived from a specific aspect that is attributed to the category (such as typical clothing, language, looks).

13. However, the precise source of incongruence with the stereotype is not that clear: It might be that «Kanacken» are judged to be poor and thus not able to afford skiing; they are asssociated with warm climate, which is in contrast to winter sports; they are considered to be incapable of skiing, and so on.

14. Otherwise, it wouldn't be reportable that people wear ski-shoes while waiting at a ski-lift. Disregarding the stereotyical expectation, only the contrary would be reportable, that is, people who were not appropriately dressed for skiing.

intonation, extreme prolongation of the vowel, which makes him sound incredulous and full of contempt. Frank seems to contextualize that the fact that "kanacken" go skiing is almost ontologically anomalous, against nature. The absence of any further explanation or challenge points to the taken-for-granted status of the stereotype and its evaluation in the peer group.

Interactional process

Just as in the case "assischlampe", the participants orient themselves toward the provision of entertaining contributions. Like in other humoristic genres (as jokes or comedies), incongruence between expectations and events and the devaluation of out-groups are used as a means for creating funny moments (cf. Attardo, 1994). The collection of social categories – here in connection with lifestyle concerns (clothing, sports) – is used as a resource for creating interactional coherence and for competing for entertaining contributions to collective slander about out-groups. More specifically, the participants orient to selecting abusive terms for social categories that are taboed or unknown in adults' conversations. Our ethnographic observations show that especially the "kanacken" have an almost ubiquitous relevance as an object of talk – any observation relating to them is newsworthy and establishes a potential for the performance of comic and entertaining interactional sequences.

Looking at the in-group from the stylized perspective of the out-group

Out-group members are not just represented "for themselves". Often, it is precisely the way they relate to the in-group and, most importantly, the views they hold concerning the in-group that becomes an object of talk. Consequently, the stylization of the perspective of the other on the self is a major resource for simultaneously representing the other and oneself in contradistinction. In the next excerpt, members of the adolescent peer group sit in a caravan that was lent to them by the local youth guards. Just before the transcript starts, one part of the youngsters (the "savants") played a trick on the others ("the ignorants") by requesting them to hand them objects (a bottle, a toy cow, etc.) that the savants had glued to the walls and to the desk of the caravan. The ignorants' failures to lift the objects pleased the savants, while the ignorants reacted with irritation (see Mark's insult in line 01). Denis now focuses on the possible consequences that this mischief could have for the group: The town's mayor had announced a visit to the area where the caravan was parked, because neighbors had complained about noise, dirt, and the neglected state of the

caravan. With reference to this control visit, Denis imagines how the mayor might try to remove the cow from where it sticks:

Case 3 [Juk 13–1]

01 Mark: ihr [seid voll die A:schlöscher.]
you [are real Assholes.]
02 Denis: [haha des is ja sEhr geil,].hh
[huhu that is rEAlly hot,].hh
03 Denis: <<laughing> de BÜRGERmeister kommt mOrgen,
<<laughing> the MAYOR will come tomOrrow,
04 Otto: [sieht die kuh hier,]
[sees the cow here,]
05 Denis: [.hhh oder Übermorgen,] (.)
[.hhh or the day After,] (.)
06 Denis: [und ihr BABBT, (.) *((laughs))*]
[and you STICK, (.) ((laughs))]
07 Many[15]: [*(kichern))*]
[((chuckle))]
08 Denis: ihr BABBT, (.) mit sekundenkleber, (.)
you STICK, (.) with crazy glue, (.)
09 was ja gar net Assig is,
which is absolutely not trAshy,
10 auf des holzteil die kuh fest.> (.)
the cow onto that wooden part.> (.)
11 Many: *((laughter))*
12 Denis: .hh und wenn de des ABreisst,
.hh and if ya rip it OFF,
13 dann sin Unten noch die
then there'll still be the
14 Denis: [stOffteilschen, (.) im sekundenkleber drin;]
[particles of cloth, (.) dOwn in the crazy glue;]
15 Many: [*((laughter))*]
16 Michi: [*((laughs))*]
17 Bernd: [geb mer ma bidde] em meier sei wasserflasch.
[just gimme please] meier's waterbottle.

15. «Many» is not a name but refers to simultaneous actions of more than one participant.

Attribution of features

In contrast to the cases presented above, the term "mayor" is not derogatory *per se* and does not imply a specific attitude of the speaker. The fictional scenario which Denis projects[16] intertextually alludes to the well-known schema of comedies in which official authorities (like policemen, teachers, mayors, or directors) in vain try to re-establish order. Used as a reference form in this interactional context, "mayor" makes relevant a stereotypical role conception: The mayor is held to be an official authority who represents the public order, and who acts as a control and as an executive, which indexically means that he is going to restore the order in the caravan. These category-bound expectations are not made explicit, but have to be known in order to grasp the comic incongruence between the arrival of the mayor and the disorder in the caravan.

Assessment

In contrast to the cases 1 and 2, it is not the representation of typical or untypical behavior of out-group members that is at issue. In case 3, the participants make fun of the out-group member's perspective on the in-group; this results in a self-promotion of the in-group. In cases 1 and 2, out-group members were straightforwardly categorized from the peer group's perspective. In case 3, however, we find a complex layering of evaluative perspectives from different points of view, which is typical of humorous portraits (see Bakhtin 1981):

- The basic layer is the *categorization of the out-group from the in-group's view* – the mayor is firmly established as an authoritative controller and as a representative of the narrow-minded world of the adults, and thus is assessed negatively.
- The second layer is provided by the *assessment of the in-group that it attributes to the out-group*. The mayor's alleged perspective is articulated when Denis, with an ironic inversion, calls the disorder in the caravan "assig" (*trashy*, line 09). Thus a self-categorization of the adolescents from the point of view of the other can be found here. It refers to deviant and disgusting behavior which indexically means that the damage caused by the objects stuck to the caravan cannot thoroughly be repaired – "particles of cloth" that cannot be removed (lines 13p.) will remain.
- The third layer consists in the *assessment of the out-group's perspective on the in-group by the in-group itself*. The mayor's perspective is devalued as his at-

16. It is not only fictional because of the imagination of the mayor's actions, but also, because it was not to be expected that the mayor would really enter the caravan in order to control its state.

tempts at gaining control are made fun of. The fiction of the mayor trying to restore order has several aspects of comic disrespect. Already the imagination of the mayor who enters the narrow and dirty caravan is most comic, because – in Goffman's (1959) terms – he would be acting on a stage that is not suitable for his claimed status and that would thus be threatening his status. Moreover, the attempt at restitution of order fails; instead, he even increases the disorder as he tries to remove the toy cow and leaves ugly remainders of cloth. The sublime – the mayor – is compromised by the humble – the adolescents and their caravan – in several respects.

- The fourth layer is the resulting *self-enhancement of the in-group*. While the predicate "assig" (*trashy*) normally counts as a negative assessment among the peer group (see case 1), it gains a positive connotation if used by the mayor, because he represents an out-group that stands for order and narrow-mindedness. In contrast to these values, "assig" (*trashy*) contextualizes autonomy and deviation from the adults' bourgeois standards. "Assig" thus does not imply any positive features per se (in a denotational sense), but it acquires a positive value by its potential for distinction from the adults' world. Moreover, the imagination of the mayor's failure implies a subversive, resistant triumph. The participants assume the identity of outlaws who, at least for a moment, manage to threaten the hegemonic order and invert the power relations.

The negative assessment of an out-group, which is itself negatively assessed by the in-group, is thus used for self-representation *ex negativo*. It most notably rests on an imagination of the out-group member's perspective and not on his factual actions towards the participants.

Interactional process

Saying "haha das is ja sehr geil" (*huhu that is really hot*, line 01), Denis assesses the state of the caravan with respect to imagining the upcoming mayor's visit. The category 'mayor' is introduced and assessed in the context of a fictional scenario. Both Denis' intonation, which is interspersed with particles of laughter and outbreaths, and the participants' reactions (laughter, chuckling) contextualize the jocular key of the fiction and an orientation toward entertainment. The comicality of the scenario is at once evident for all participants: Otto continues Denis' opening of the fiction by stating the fact that will arouse the mayor's rage for order: "sieht die kuh hier" (*sees the cow here*, line 04), and the other participants laugh (line 07). It is especially the statement of creative and concrete details that produces comic effects. A further humoristic device is Denis' use of the practice of 'playful reproach': He contrasts the actions of the adolescents (sticking objects)

with the fact, that they knew that the mayor's visit was due (lines 03pp.), phrasing it in a construction that is routinely used for making a complaint or a reproach (see Günthner, 2000). By excluding himself with this activity from the peer group (cf. "ihr babbt..."; *you stick...*, line 06), he assumes the role of the prosecutor and projects the consequences that the group's behavior might have. Framed as a playful reproach, the scenario gains further comic potential as it is unfolded with the ironical voice of the critical adult. This double-voicing (Bakhtin, 1981, p.324) mocks the adults' moral perspective by its playful performance and thereby further euhances the collective entertainment.

Conclusion

Stereotyping in conversation is a resource for competitive entertainment and it is a way of reconciling group-identity with individual autonomy. In this section, I shall sum up the constitutive features of talking about out-groups in our data. Then I will discuss in more detail how they can be understood as a systematic resource adapted to the constitution of the peer-group as a processual social entity.

This study analyzed conversational processes of talking about out-groups in adolescents' peer group interactions, which, in order to take place, require a specific setting and a specific selection of participants. These interactions are neither motivated nor restricted by thematic or functional constraints (contrary to, for instance, institutional interactions), and the participants are free from role-related obligations. This lack of preconditions provides an interactional space, which, however, is not arbitrarily used. The interaction is consistently structured by a preference for interpersonal competition and for the production of self-entertainment (see Deppermann & Schmidt, 2001). These preferences most generally govern how the problem of what comes next is to be tackled. Stated differently: How do the adolescents create shared interactional involvement and common experience under the condition of lacking prestructuration, and how do they limit the scope of suitable contributions to the interaction? In our data, competition and entertainment are realized by various interactional genres, such as jokes, gossip, ritual insults, and jocular conflicts, grotesque or caricaturing fictions, puns, bragging, playing tricks, and so forth. Talking about members of out-groups is one of the resources for creating interactional events that fulfill the standards of competition and entertainment. The structural and procedural properties of the talk can only be understood adequately if they are seen as resulting from the preference for competition and entertainment. This preference favors

- focusing on such behaviors of members of out-groups that in some way violate norms and expectations;

- the reduction of the out-group's portrayal to only few features, which are mostly negatively assessed, and the dispreference for a multifaceted, reflected, and refined account of the out-group;
- the dramatization and the extreme (hyperbolic) formulation of actions and features of the out-group tending towards grotesque and caricature;
- the dispositional attribution of refused actions of members of the out-group and the generalization of singular actions and of fragments of knowledge to an assessment of the person as a whole.

All of these preferences are accentuated by the orientation to conversational competition among the participants, which results in sequences of topping one another in the production of accounts that comply with these features. The ways out-groups are represented in adolescent peer group conversations thus match very closely with what is called "stereotyping" in Social Identity Theory (cf. section 1). As to its formal properties, conversational stereotyping is immanently motivated by the preferences for competition and entertainment. Their contents, however, are motivated by the practical relevance that specific social categories have for the adolescents: They represent rivals ("kanacken", *beaneaters*), controlers (*mayor*), counter-images to norms of conduct ("assischlampe", *trash-slut*), or social groups which dominate the present situation ("schluchtenscheißer", *canyon shitters*). It is difficult to judge how far the features attributed to the out-groups comply with the adolsecents' experience. At least in some cases, specific experiences are the starting point for the construction of stereotypes, which are developed according to the preferences discussed above. Stereotypes may be conversationally constructed, explicated, and elaborated on (see the first section of this chapter); or, they may be presupposed as shared, taken for granted knowledge. Negative assessments may be based on behaviors that are held to be category-bound; behavior then is rejected, because it violates the normative and moral standards that the in-group holds to be valid in the situation (*type-deviance*). Negative assessments may altenatively rest on deviations of the individual category-member from category-bound norms (*token-deviance*). Token-deviance can result in the negative assessment of a category-member's behavior even in cases where the behavior as such is positively assessed but seen as being improper for members of that category (see the section on *beaneaters who go skiing*). Both kinds of deviance are generated by a common intepretive procedure: The noticing of *factual* deviation from an ethnocentric expectation of the in-group is taken to be *morally* abnormal.

Consistent with the preferences for competition and entertainment, stereotyping is done in a jocular key. Primary moral genres such as complaints, criticizing, or critical discussions about moral issues are very seldomly done. Although moral deviance basically provides for the reportability of the behaviors of a person, it is

only a prerequisite, which is to be exploited for the perfomance of an entertaining and emotionally involving communicative event. To achieve this, it is not necessary that all participants really approve of the same attributions of properties to the social category or person who becomes the object of stereotyping. Sometimes, the participants do attribute very different properties (see case 1 above). Such differences do not affect the collective process of stereotyping, if the participants manage to recover and understand their partners' attributions and if they agree on the general expressive-humorous mode of negative assessment of the represented other. Collective stereotyping thus does not seem to require shared mental representations, but rather the willingness and the competence to join a collective praxis of assessing, which rests on a consensus about posssibly relevant expectations regarding social categories. These become accentuated in an occasioned and locally specific way. Properties and assessments are not invariably associated with a category; for example, the category 'assi' (*trashy*) is negatively assessed as a categorization of an out-group, while it is positively assessed when applied to the in-group from the standpoint of an out-group with values and normative expectations to which the in-group opposes. Such differences often are not simply contradictions. They result from the complexities of the normative social order from the peer group's point of view. The asssessment of properties depends on the interpersonal and intercategorical relation (as discussed with the mayor) and on the membership of incumbents of one social category in other social categories (e.g., being 'trashy' as a 'mother' versus as an 'adolescent'). These contingencies show that identities often are not attributed by simply looking at the target category and its members. As case 3 most clearly shows, the peer group locates its self- and other-categorizations in the context of its constructions of others' discourses about the group. Attributions of features and assessments are performed in a field of perspectives which mutually represent, stylize, comment, and assess one another – and do so as well with the constructions of their mutual second and third order representations (cf. Bakhtin, 1981). Interactionally, this layering of perspectives is evoked by reported speech (Günthner, 1999), by the jocular, ironic, caricaturing design of the representation of others, and by the comments, interpretations, and affective performances that the peer-group enacts as part of the representational activity. The mutual reflexivity of social cognition and its conversational representation thus is a genuine source of its own for the accomplishment of socio-categorial attributions and assessments.

Stereotyping is a resource both for producing entertainment and conversational competition and for coping with problematic social experiences. Beyond these obvious findings, we can gain an enlarged understanding of the functions and payoffs of this resource, when we relate it to more general requirements and restrictions of the peer-group-interaction. Stereotyping is a way to implicitly enhance the

in-group by devaluating the out-group without violating the taboo of self-praise: While the out-group is portrayed as being defective with respect to a certain standard, it is implicitly claimed that the in-group does better and fulfills the standard in question. Since this self-enhancement is always deniable, it is, however, not jeopardized by embarrassment and objection, as it would be in the case of overt self-praise. The identity and the cohesion of the in-group emerges *ex negativo* by distinction from others. The features of identity that are positively claimed for the in-group are to be inferred from what is refused in others. Still, the precise content of the in-group identity as well as its norms and values remain unstated and rather vague: They are only present as a constitutive backdrop for the production of funny moments, which grow out of the representation of their violation by out-group-members. The practice of entertainment presupposes a normative and moral order – those who do not share its core-assumptions will find the conversational representations of others neither funny nor even reportable at all. This order is confirmed and reproduced by the entertaining conversational practices without ever becoming thematic or even problematic itself. A successful contribution to conversational entertainment, however, does not only reproduce the normative and moral standards of the group; the speaker also has to play with these standards in a creative way. But there are further reasons for the reproduction of the peer group's normative and moral order to become realized only by talking about deviant behaviors of out-groups. Firstly, behaviors in accordance with the norms would not be reportable: It would not be interesting to tell that one wears clean clothes, regularly washes himself, or looks for sexual partners of the same age. These are taken-for-granted assumptions, which could not be brought up without causing embarrasment and inferences that would not be welcome. Nevertheless, such facts about the person are basic elements of claims to personal identity and social prestige, which regularly have to be confirmed. Secondly, making norms explicit would run counter to the preference for jocularity and entertainment – it would not match a self-presentation as cool and casual, and it would block the emergence of funny moments.[17] Most importantly, stating positive norms explicitly would restrict the individual's scope of action, because it would establish definite obligations for the members of the peer group. This would contradict the desire for individual autonomy and informal participation, and it would provide for disagreement and struggles over the right who may tell whom how to behave. These problems do not develop when talking in the peer group about inadequate behaviors of non-members. Derogatory talk about out-groups thus can be seen as a solution for the structural problem of how to achieve social integration as a group while simultaneously max-

17. This is to be seen by the fact that activities like requesting information, reflecting remarks, or argumentative discussions are absent or being ignored.

imizing the individual's autonomy within the group and minimizing his/her obligations towards the group. It is easier to reach consensus on what you are not or what you do not want to be (as a group) than on what you positively are or want to be. Positive norms would not only be more obligatory, they would also restrain the individual's options more strictly than stating the refused options does. Integration of action is achieved by performing emotionally involving interactional events (and therefore based on shared practices); this also requires convergence on content-related norms that are regularly confirmed by jocular negative assessments of out-groups. They operate as a means of social control over the members of the in-group. Still, they stay implicit, diffuse, and open to interpretation as to their precise content and as to the degree of obligation for the individual. What is even more interesting, possible sanctions of the group against its members are kept unspoken. Nevertheless, they become evident for everyone who participates in gossip and slander about out-groups.

While the restrictive potential of such sequences of stereotyping stays latent for the participants, it manifestly offers them an arena for individual self-presentation: In the competition for entertaining contributions, every member of the peer group has the chance to make points and enhance his/her status by producing the most absurd or grotesque fantasy, the funniest or most unexpected remark, or the most creative or coolest retort. There is a "cooperative competition" (Eckert, 1993), by which the group's identity and its cohesion, social control, and integration are accomplished *ex negativo* and *en passant*, while the participants manifestly orient to fun, entertainment, competition, and coping with social experiences. For the individual, conversational stereotyping is a resource to gain status in the group by contributing to the constitution of the group's identity *ex negativo* in an entertaining way.

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Transcription conventions

(following Selting, Auer, Barden, Bergmann, Couper-Kuhlen, Guenthner, et al., 1998)

[ ]	segments of talk spoken in overlap
=	latching, contraction of syllables
(.)	tiny gap between utterances (< 0.25 seconds)
(-)	pause 0.25–0.5 seconds
(--)	pause 0.5–0.9 seconds
(1.0)	pause measured in seconds
:	prolongation of a sound
strEssed	stressed vowel/syllable

.	falling final intonation of a tum-constructional unit
;	slightly falling final intonation tum-constructional
-	level final intonation tum-constructional
,	slightly rising final intonation tum-constructional
?	rising final intonation tum-constructional
↑	rise in intonation
(unclear)	dubious hearing
<<f>>	*forte*, loud voice
<<p>>	*piano*, soft voice
<<all> >	*allegro*, faster than surrounding segments of speech
<<acc> >	*accelerando*, accelerating
<<high> >	comment on the way a segment is spoken
((sleeps))	description of non-vocal activities
.hh	in-breath