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## Anti-Semitism in youth language: the pejorative use of the terms for "Jew" in German and French today<sup>1</sup>

*Kurzfassung:* Der Autor untersucht anhand qualitativer Interviews wie die Worte für "Jude" im Deutschen und Französischen abwertend und als Schimpfwort verwendet werden.

Die Formen, Funktionen und Auswirkungen des Phänomens sind trotz der zwei verschiedenen Sprachen und unterschiedlichen Kontexte in Frankreich und Deutschland ähnlich. Es wird gezeigt, wie der abwertende Gebrauch der Worte "Jude" im deutschen und "Juif" und "Feuj" im Französischen offenen Antisemitismus banalisiert. Der abwertende Gebrauch der *Worte* für "Jude" führt zu negativen und damit antisemitischen Konnotationen im *Begriff* "Jude", die nicht trennbar sind von antisemitischen Wahrnehmungen von Juden.

Darüber hinaus fördert der abwertende Gebrauch der Worte "Jude", "Juif" und "Feuj" die Etablierung einer antisemitischen sprachlichen Norm und eine antisemitische Sozialordnung, die gemeinsam den Boden bereiten für antisemitische verbale und physische Gewalt.

*Abstract:* The paper analyses how the words for "Jew" are used as insults and in pejorative ways in German and French, drawing on in-depth interviews.

The forms, functions and effects of this phenomenon are similar despite the different languages and different contexts in France and Germany. The paper shows how the pejorative use of the words for "Jew", "Jude" in German and "Juif" and "Feuj" in French, trivializes open anti-Semitism. The pejorative use of the *words* for "Jew" leads to negative and therefore anti-Semitic connotations in the *terms* for "Jews" which are inseparable of anti-Semitic perceptions of Jews.

What is more, the pejorative use of the words for "Jew" enhances the establishment of a norm of verbal anti-Semitism and an anti-Semitic social order which both prepare the ground for anti-Semitic verbal and physical violence.

"The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew."  
Jean-Paul Sartre

### 1. Introduction

The use of the word "Jew" as a slur or in a pejorative way is unacceptable in Western public discourse today. In the compilation of "Common Errors in English Usage" (Brians, 2008) we find: "'Jew' as an adjective ('Jew lawyer') is an ethnic insult; the word is 'Jewish.' ... The expression 'to Jew someone down'—an expression meaning 'to bargain for a lower price'—reflects a grossly insulting stereotype and should be avoided in all contexts." However, negative overtones of the word "Jew" have existed in many languages for a long time, probably as a result of the despised status of Jews and their demonization for centuries in the respective societies.<sup>2</sup> Some scholars claim that already at the end of the fourth century the term "Jew" was used as an insult (Perednik, 2001)<sup>3</sup> when church leaders such as St. John Chrysostom agitated in unprecedented virulence against Jews (Flannery, 2004, 50-65). Similar claims have been made for Polish (Lloyd-Jones, 2005) and Russian (Sacks, 2003, 47; The Racial Slur Database, 2009; Petrovskii-Shtern, 2009, 309) in the past centuries and, more recently and anecdotally for languages spoken in Maghrebian countries such as Berber (Brenner, 2004, 18; Wieviorka, 2005, 15). In Nazi-Germany, "Jude" [Jew] became an insult<sup>4</sup> and even after 1945, when open anti-Semitism was banned in the public discourse, "Jude" was used in a pejorative way in Germany in colloquial language (Benz, 2008).

The usage of the terms for "Jew" as a slur against Jews and particularly against non-Jews has reappeared today. There is mounting evidence that it is widely used as a slang word in French and German<sup>5</sup> and also in other languages such as Dutch

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1. The article was first published in German in a shorter version in the annual yearbook of the Center for Research on Antisemitism, published by Wolfgang Benz (Jikeli, 2009). The paper was presented at the International Society of Political Psychology, 32nd Annual Scientific Meeting, 14-17 July 2009, Dublin, Ireland. A shorter version was selected for publication in the Journal for the Study of Antisemitism.
  2. Alan D. Corré gives some examples in his discussion about the pejorative use of the term "Jew" in the *Lingua Franca*. (Corré, n.d.) See also (Hortzitz, 2005).
  3. A detailed summary of the book is available online in English (Perednik, n.d.).
  4. According to Holocaust survivors from Magdeburg (Wiengarn, n.d.).
  5. Reports and studies on the issue from France and Germany are discussed below.

(European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, 2008, 27). In Britain, the issue was discussed by *The Independent* in 1999 (Margolis, 1999) but it seems to be less frequent today.<sup>1</sup>

In France, three studies have dealt with the phenomenon. Didier Lapeyronnie analysed the anti-Semitic language, largely of youths with migrant backgrounds, drawing on interviews and observations in conversations and gatherings in a number of districts in the region Ile de France, Angoulême and Bordeaux from 2003-2005 (Lapeyronnie, 2005). Even though the main focus of the study was on social life in working-class neighbourhoods and not on anti-Semitism, Lapeyronnie observed explicit anti-Semitic vocabulary in every-day language, particularly with the usage of the term "feuj", the translation for "Jew" or "Jewish" in the French slang *verlan*: "The term "feuj" is in itself an insult or at least a pejorative attribute." (Lapeyronnie, 2005, 9, translation from French by the author) He found that "feuj" as an adjective [Jewish] is often used as a negative term with the meaning of weak, broken, or bad. Anti-Semitism is inscribed in the language of the group thus, he argues, the words become responsible in a sense and not the one who uses them. The individual can only avoid this form of anti-Semitism by silencing him or herself or by protesting against it. In both ways the individual puts him or herself out of the group. Protesting even validates and highlights the anti-Semitic notion. Therefore, witnesses such as teachers and youth workers and even more Jewish victims are trapped between scandalizing and therewith acknowledging the anti-Semitic meaning at a high emotional price and with consequences for the present and future collaborations, or ignoring it. The blunt anti-Semitic language is also an invitation for anti-Semitism: those who do not react become confederates. It creates a reciprocal recognition based on the exclusion and devalorization of the other. He concludes: "The vocabulary and the anti-Semitic insults create much more than a "climate". They construct a genuine "social order" which serves as a basis for legitimacy for acts of violence. From this point of view, there is no gap between verbal violence and physical violence as there is no gap between the common "vocabulary" and the verbal violence." (Lapeyronnie, 2005, 18, translation from French by the author) An article in the daily newspaper *Le Monde* in March 2009 reported on a game called "chat-feuj" [cat-Jew], played by students in a Parisian college. It confirms the use of anti-Semitic vocabulary to establish a social order: whenever the "cat" would catch another student he or she had to kneel down and ask for forgiveness for being Jewish (Le Bars, 2009; Brenner, 2004, 37).

Michel Wieviorka and his team of researchers used the district Trois-Ponts in Roubaix in the north of France and Sarcelles, a town close to Paris as case studies for their investigation of anti-Semitism in France (Wieviorka, 2005). Trois-Ponts is a neighbourhood characterised by social exclusion and mainly Maghrebian immigrants and has no visible Jewish community. In contrast, Sarcelles has a strong and visible Jewish community. The majority of the population and also the majority of the Jewish community in Sarcelles are immigrants and their descendants. The researchers observed open anti-Semitism in the language in both areas, including the use of the terms "Juif" and "Feuj" [Jew] as insults, often without an explicit intention of expressing anti-Semitic attitudes. However, labelling someone as "Jew" is often used as an accusation of being stingy - a classical anti-Semitic stereotype. Similar to the findings of Lapeyronnie, they observed that the use of anti-Semitic language among youths puts pressure on individuals to use this very language and to adopt the according discourse (Wieviorka, 2005, 144-145).

Emmanuel Brenner and a number of teachers witnessed widespread and open anti-Semitism in schools from all parts of France, including anti-Semitic language such as the use of "Juif" and "Feuj" in a pejorative sense. Brenner noted that "the noun 'Juif' [Jew] does not need to be preceded by the attribute 'sale' [dirty], as in 'sale Arabe' [dirty Arab] or 'sale nègre' [dirty negro]; it has insulting significance in itself." (Brenner, 2004, 37, translation from French by the author). The authors of all three studies noted that these and other forms of open anti-Semitism among youths are often ignored and diminished by teachers, youth workers, politicians and religious leaders even though those open forms of anti-Semitism are unacceptable in public discourse.

In Germany, the use of the expression "du Jude!" [you Jew!] as an insult against non-Jews has been discussed in a study by Barbara Schäuble and Albert Scherr based on 20 interviews with groups of youths in different parts of Germany and with different religious and ethnic backgrounds (Schäuble & Scherr, 2007, 18, 32). They argue that this form of communication is anti-Semitic even if the intention is not necessarily anti-Semitic and even if anti-Semitism is often not central in the world views of those who use the term "Jew" as an insult.

Other recent reports on anti-Semitism in Germany affirm that "Jude" is widely used as an insult, namely the brochure on anti-Semitism in "Muslim-socialized milieus" by the Amadeu-Antonio-Stiftung (2009),<sup>2</sup> a report for social workers in Berlin-Kreuzberg (amira, 2008) and a study on Holocaust Education in Bavaria (Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2008). Anecdotal evidence of the usage is listed in the report on anti-Semitism in Germany for 2007 by the Stephen Roth

1. Our interviews in London which were similar to those in Paris and Berlin indicate that this usage of the word "Jew" in Britain is not as common as in France and Germany among youths. Stenström et al. (2002) did research on common insults among youths in London and did not report of the use of "Jew" as an insult.
2. In the publication Jochen Müller explains the use of "Du Jude" as an insult largely with the function of degradation of others and states that they are only rarely "expressions of a comprehensive antisemitic ideology." (p. 30).

Institute (2008) and the reports by apabitz on anti-Semitic incidents for 2006 and 2007 (apabiz, 2007 and 2008). The examples include incidents of football fans and Neonazis, showing that the phenomenon is not limited to youths with migrant or Muslim backgrounds. Michael Reichelt (2009) analysed 14 incidents of the use of the word "Jude" as a slur by football players and fans in Saxony.

In addition, experts such as Wolfgang Benz (2007), director of the Centre for Studies on Anti-Semitism, Gottfried Kößler (Welt Online, 2008) from the Frankfurt-based Holocaust Research Institute Fritz-Bauer-Institute, Juliane Wetzel (2008), Centre for Studies on Anti-Semitism, and Volkhard Knigge (Weber, 2008), director of the memorial site of Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora have acknowledged and commented on the phenomenon.

Some scholars however have downplayed its anti-Semitic content. Nils Bahlo for example argued that the word "Jew" may have another semantic meaning in youth language such as "idiot" or "looser". He explains its pejorative meaning as a function of degradation of others within the context of the performance society and with the need of youths to test their limits. He sees youths as the "movers and shakers" of language and concludes that, "eventually, adults always feel tread on their toes with the change of their own language habits." (Radio Bremen, 2009, translation from German by the author).

## 2. Methods, research settings and respondents

This paper examines the forms and functions of the pejorative use of the words for "Jew" in German and French and particularly the question how this relates to anti-Semitic attitudes and to an anti-Semitic perception of the terms for "Jew". I do this on the basis of qualitative interviews with 77 male youths who identify themselves as Muslim in Germany and France. The focus on young Muslims is due to the fact that the interviews are part of a larger research project on patterns of anti-Semitism among European Muslims.<sup>1</sup> However, reports show that the phenomenon is widespread far beyond religious or ethnic minorities in Germany and France (see above). The guided semi-structured face-to-face interview was chosen as the investigative method in order to produce data material which allows discovering specific argumentations and stereotypes of the subject group. It gave the interviewees the greatest possible freedom to express their views and experiences. At the same time, the partly standardized and structured interviews allowed comparisons between, and classification of the interviewees' attitude patterns. The interviewers tried to ask questions as an outsider (Young Jr, 2004), not judging the interviewee, but also not necessarily hiding the point of view of the interviewer (Wieviorka, 2004). However, in the analysis of the interviews it was kept in mind that the responses of the interviewees are a reaction to the interviewer and also a self-presentation. After pre-tests with interviewees of different ethnic and religious backgrounds and sex which did not show major differences in the way interviewees talked about the relevant issues, I conducted most of the interviews in Berlin and all of the interviews in Paris myself.<sup>2</sup>

The sample of interviewees was selected as follows: potential interviewees were approached randomly outdoors except for eight participants who were interviewed in a youth club. The interview was closed if the person did not fall into the subject group: 14-27 years old, male and self-identifying as Muslim.<sup>3</sup> Most of the participants were interviewed individually, some in groups of two to four, allowing some observations of group dynamics and influences from peers. The focus of the interviews was on perceived discriminations, the perception of Jews and international conflicts, particularly in the Middle East.

The interviews were conducted in Berlin in the districts Kreuzberg and Neukölln and in Paris in the districts Belleville and Barbès from 2005 to 2007. Many residents in these districts are immigrants or their descendants, mostly from Muslim countries. Particularly Belleville and Kreuzberg have a long history of accommodating immigrants, including Jewish immigrants. However, during National Socialism almost all Jews in Kreuzberg were murdered and Jewish presence was destroyed. As a result today, Jews and Jewish life are hardly visible in Kreuzberg and in the bordering district Neukölln, except for a synagogue with a small community of which many members are not local residents. In contrast, in Belleville Orthodox Jews can be seen regularly, some local shops and cafés are owned by Jews, and, even though a minority, many Jews live in Belleville and some Jewish pupils attend local public schools, others attend Jewish faith schools.<sup>4</sup> In Barbès, Jewish life is far less visible than in Belleville but much more than in Berlin-Kreuzberg or Neukölln.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Relation between data collection and analysis consisted mainly in coding

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1. The research project is conducted by the International Study Group Education and Research on Antisemitism, funded by the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah and the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research. My dissertation at the Center for Research on Antisemitism, supervised by Professor Wolfgang Benz, also focuses on the analysis of these interviews.
  2. I have German-Christian backgrounds but converted to Islam for practical reasons of marriage in 2003. I did not emphasise these backgrounds in the interviews but my German background can easily be deduced.
  3. Two exceptions were made with 13 year old interviewees who both gave interesting interviews.
  4. Increasingly, Jewish parents send their children to Jewish faith schools, possibly to avoid antisemitic harassments (Le Bars, 2009).

and finding patterns from the data. The analytical strategy can be described as predominantly phenomenological. It is based on a five stage method described by Christiane Schmidt (2004).<sup>1</sup> In the first stage categories for the analysis were set up in response to the material from pretests in open coding (inductive coding) and partly preset, particularly concerning biographical data. In a second step these categories were brought together in an analytical guide that was tested and revised. Thirdly, using this analytical and coding guide, all interviews were coded accordingly. Fourthly, on this basis case overviews were produced and compared to each other giving special attention to comparisons within the groups of interviews from each country and to comparisons between them. The relationship of some analytical categories were explored and further investigated. The overviews were used to select individual cases for in-depth single-case analysis in the fifth stage. The analysis followed procedures of qualitative content analysis using the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti. A standard procedure of inductive category formation was used according to Philipp Mayring (2004). The categories were further differentiated, progressively given empirical content and modified accordingly, leading to the formation of a typology (Kelle, 2004).<sup>2</sup> This paper focusses on the analysis of the category of pejorative use and potential pejorative use of the words for "Jew" including all relevant excerpts from the interviews. The paper largely presents the description of its subcategories and their relations. Interview excerpts are used to show how it is expressed. They are selected as representative examples of the particular subcategory, trying to equally use examples from France and Germany. The case overviews on the one hand and the analysis of other categories such as the use of the words for "Jew" in general<sup>3</sup> or particular anti-Semitic stereotypes on the other hand served as important background information for the analysis presented in this paper.

The cross-national comparison poses a particular problem in the analysis and was met by giving special diligence to the influences of the national contexts and a separate pre-analysis for each country.<sup>4</sup> However, the major differences of contexts do not allow for a completely satisfying comparative strategy. We have to bear in mind the fact that the general language usage concerning the words for "Jew" is influenced in fundamentally different ways in France and Germany particularly as a result of the murder of European Jewry by the German National Socialists. Commonalities between the two languages on the pejorative use of the words for "Jew" are therefore the more surprising.

In the following, I present observations about the pejorative usage of the terms for "Jew" from the interviews. Firstly, I examine forms and functions of the phenomenon, revealing the mechanisms and effects of trivialization and even the establishment of a norm of blunt expressions of anti-Semitism. Secondly, I show how deeply the pejorative use of the terms for "Jew" is connoted to Jews and anti-Semitic views about Jews. Then I discuss the question of individual responsibility against the background of a norm of anti-Semitic language in some social circles and differences to other slurs which are offensive to minorities. I conclude with a summary of the effects of the pejorative use of the terms for "Jew".

### 3. Forms of pejorative use of the terms for "Jew" in German and French

The main formal-linguistic difference between the pejorative usage of the words for "Jew" in German and French is that the German adjective "jüdisch" [Jewish] is rarely used in a pejorative way in contrast to the equivalent French adjective "juif" or, in the popular slang *verlan*, "feuj". In German, "Jude" [Jew] is used as a slur or accusation, often preceded by "du" [you] and mostly without any further attributes as "du Jude!" It is usually directed against non-Jewish peers. The French noun "Juif" or "Feuj" is also used as an insult of itself, sometimes in the form of: "T'es un Juif, toi" [You are a Jew].<sup>5</sup> Common attributes, if any are used, are "sale" [dirty] in French and "scheiß" [literally: shitty] or "dreckig" [dirty] in German.<sup>6</sup> Such negative adjectives are added more often if the slur is applied against Jews than if it is applied against non-Jews. The words "Jude", "Juif", or "Feuj" are often pronounced with disgust and voiced loudly. Their pejorative usage is part of the normal vocabulary of every-day colloquial language of many interviewees.

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1. The strategy was applied in the study "Familie und Rechtsextremismus" (Hopf et al., 1995).
  2. The process was simplified in this study. It was successfully applied by Walter R. Heinz et. al. on semi-structured interviews with young people on work related issues (Heinz et al., 1998).
  3. Leading to an analysis of the perception of the terms for "Jew", that is an analysis which meaning the interviewees connote with the words for "Jew." An important observation for example was in which contexts the definite article was used.
  4. For a discussion of difficulties and strategies of cross-national comparison studies see (Van de Vijver, 1998; Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik & Harkness, 2005).
  5. Starting with a lower case the noun "juif" relates to Judaism. Starting with a capital letter the word "Juif" denominates a members of the Jewish people (Larousse, 2007, 565). In the following, I use the spelling "Juif", starting with a capital letter, even though I cannot know which of the both spellings the interviewees would have used.
  6. Insults are often used to distance oneself from the other and to purify oneself. Therefore they are often related to dirt (Douglas, 1992).

### 3.1 Trivializing open anti-Semitism in the language

Participants trivialize the pejorative use of the terms for "Jew" mainly in three ways: Firstly, through widespread and frequent usage. Particularly in group communication the pejorative use of the terms for "Jew" can be obsessive. Secondly, interviewees declare that the pejorative use of the terms for "Jew" is nothing serious, that it is "just for fun" and belittle it by comparing it to other insults. Thirdly, participants substitute or report of the frequent substitution of a number of negative attributes with "Jew".

#### 1. Widespread and frequent usage

Almost all interviewees are familiar with the pejorative use of the terms for "Jew" and some admitted using it themselves or even used it during the interview. The excerpt below from an interview with Sharif<sup>1</sup> in Berlin is one of many examples showing the air of self-evidence for the use of "Jew" as an insult:

Q: Have you ever heard that "Jew" was used as an insult on the street?

Yes, sure. Well, very often.

Q: In what kind of context, how does it come about?

Simply that it was said to somebody "you Jew" who then was offended ... that was in school, everywhere really.

(Sharif, Berlin, P16: 152-159)<sup>2</sup>

The frequent usage leads to habituation and to the perception that it is nothing scandalous; nobody is shocked about this form of anti-Semitic language even if not all agree on using it and many know that it is offensive. Consider the statements of these two friends from Berlin:

Umur: Well, "you are a Jew", like that. That is said everywhere.

Orhan: Yes, that's everywhere and everybody uses it. But that doesn't mean that everybody hates Jews.

(Umur and Orhan, Berlin, P32: 371-372)

We will see what comes with its usage and what the effects are.

#### 2. Denying or belittling any anti-Semitic meaning

Frequently, participants consider the pejorative use of the terms for "Jew" as "nothing serious", trivialize it as "a little joke" and "just for fun". "Yes, I've heard it but usually it's for a laugh ... it's not serious." (Hachem, Paris, P37: 269-275) "Jew" is an insult for fun, I'd say so, just for fun every now and then." (Umur, Berlin, P32: 386). It is often used among friends: "Sometimes we say it among us - but that's for fun - I sometimes say to him "you Jew", or he says it to me, we do it for fun." (Murat, Berlin, P14: 215) Acknowledging its widespread use often goes along with pointing out that it is inconsequential or that it should not be equated to hatred against Jews. Some of those who are principally unaware about the offensiveness of such language regard it as a form of normal ever-day racism which should not be taken too seriously - as they also hate Nazis. Tunay explained:

I hate Nazis but all the same - well, Jews - I've nothing against Jews - but to talk rubbish sometimes - everybody does it. But anyway, there's racism, sure.

(Tunay, Berlin, P30: 169)

Or, as in the example below, participants believe that the pejorative use of the terms for "Jew" is similar to actions they perceive as anti-Muslim. However, Haroun struggled to make that analogy and eventually comes up with cartoons of Mohammed in the Danish newspaper XXX:

"Ah it's a Jew [Feuj]<sup>3</sup>." If you say, "it's a Jew"[Feuj] ... These are racist jokes ... And then, you see, it's true that ... the Jews they may feel a little bit of racism from Muslims. But not very much. We personally, then it's up to them to, to to to be like us ... These are topics we are going into ... It's not good. There's a bit of everything, there is, I don't know, you could say the cartoons for example of Muhammad... That's racist.

(Haroun, Paris, P58: 1946-1991)

Massoud, another participant from Paris, contrasted the pejorative use of "Juif" and "Feuj" with "what happens today to the Arabs" after a confirmation from his friend Khalil that "Jew" is used as an insult:

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1. All names of interviewees are pseudonyms. The names are chosen from a list of common names among people of their particular ethnic backgrounds.
  2. All interview excerpts are translated by the author. The numbers indicate the number of the interview and the paragraphs.
  3. The original term for "Jew" is put in brackets in the translation from French as the two different terms "Juif" and "Feuj" can only be translated as "Jew".

Q: Have you heard about that also at school or on the street, ... that people say "dirty Jew" [sale Juif] or "Jew" [Feuj] or something like that.  
Khalil: Yeah, yeah, this also, yeah.

Massoud: But it's less often ... It didn't go as far as what happens today with the Arabs. It's, it's far less frequent.

(Khalil and Massoud, Paris, P53: 939-947)

Others like Fatin simply do not feel concerned, arguing that they they do not identify as Jewish:

I don't care, well, to be honest I don't give a shit, ok, I don't think it's right but I don't care, am I a Jew? No. You see. I don't care and they don't mean it so seriously, you just say it like "you Jew", for teasing, but I don't care.

(Fatin, Berlin, P6: 123)

Some only have a vague feeling that it is a "bad word" which should not be used with strangers.

[This word] is not good.

Q: If you say that to a Jew, he's going to take offence or ...

Yeah, if I don't know him. If I know him, we are used to this word.

(Cherif, Paris, P47: 220-223)

This kind of vague feeling for the abusive character of this slur and comparisons to behaviours which are perceived as hostile against the own community usually do not lead to a condemnation or to restraint from the use of it. On the other hand, there are some who are not aware about the offensiveness of this kind of vocabulary because they believe the underlying stereotypes to be true. They do not understand why someone is shocked about the use of the very term for "Jew" as an insult because for them "Jew" is understood as being negative. They rather think that the person labelled as such should be offended by this grave insult. A respondent explained:

Even among us, if there's a guy with some cookies and he doesn't share, we tell him, "fuck, you're a Jew ["Juif"]."

Q: But don't you find it upsetting, do you think that's normal?

No but me, if someone says that to me I tell him "get lost, hook it, stop calling me like that."

(Hakim, Paris, P34: 635-637)

The insults "Jude", "Feuj", or "Juif" are perceived the more serious the more Jews are seen in a negative way or even hated:

Yes in my class somebody once called an exchange student "Jew" and he then just beat him, he didn't want to be called like that.

Q: Who beat whom then, the exchange student?

Yeah, he was offended by that.

Q: Was he a Jew?

No, it was a normal Muslim, an Arab.

Q: What do you think why he was so offended by someone calling him "you Jew"?

I think he hates the Jews, he didn't want to be called "Jew".

(Necet, Berlin, P12: 166-172)

Necet has Turkish backgrounds. He believes that "most Arabs hate the Jews" (Necet, Berlin, P12: 153) and thus he thinks that it is only natural that an Arab exchange student is particularly offended by being labelled "Jew". Others relate the seriousness of the insult "Jew" to a Muslim identity: "for example, we are both Muslims; if I say to him, 'Jew' then I'm not a Muslim any more." (Salih, Berlin, P23: 135). Two friends explained that there are different levels of seriousness between different insults, placing "you Jew" somewhere between "you victim" and "fuck your mother":

Ramzi: Well, that's among friends, For example I say, "you victim, you Jew, how are you doing?" And like, "Hey, fuck your mother" That's all for example like among friends. Like a little bit of fun.

Ahmed: Well now, not "fuck your mother!", no ... it doesn't matter how long you know him. If somebody says to me "I fuck your mother!", I'll beat him up, I'm honest. Because that has something to do with my honour.

Q: (LAUGHS) If somebody says, "you Jew", is that still ok?

Ahmed: No, ... there are certain limits ... All my friends they know the limits, they know it.

(Ramzi and Ahmed, Berlin, P33: 531-536)

Another way of trivializing the use of "Jew" as an insult is to compare it to other ethnic insults in a way that wrongly suggests that it is a kind of nasty but fair game in which everybody uses each others' ethnic identity as an insult:

If you're quarrelling with the guy, I mean, he says to me "sale Arabe" [dirty Arab], I say to him, "dirty Jew" [sale Feuj].

(Masmud, Paris, P48: 398)

This kind of comparison misses the point that "Jew" is the term which is applied to individuals of any ethnic identity. The discrepancy is even more obvious in Sharif's equivocal comparison:

[T]hat's rather for fun if someone is called "Jew" or whatever. But naturally, that's an insult for an Arab. Just the same as it is an insult for a Jew if he is called 'Arab', that's just the same.

(Sharif, Berlin, P16: 169)

### 3. Substitutions of other words with the term "Jew"

Last but not least, open anti-Semitism in the language is trivialized by the substitution of negative attributes with the term "Jew" which is discussed in more detail further below to show which kind of attributes are replaced. However, here is an apt example which summarises this phenomenon. Sharif explained that instead of a longer expression, or a "paraphrase", it is easier and shorter to use the term "Jew":

That are always these ... images one has of Jews: that he ... has a long nose, that he has always a lot of money and that he's stingy. That's what is meant by it in the end. You could circumscribe it but you just say "Jew" for it.

(Sharif, Berlin, P16: 159)

#### 3.2 Establishing a norm of open anti-Semitism through anti-Semitic language

The trivialization of anti-Semitic language and its frequent usage leads to a norm of open anti-Semitism through consensual validation and repetition, particularly if no opposition to its usage is voiced. A norm of anti-Semitic language is accompanied by anti-Semitic prejudices and the establishment of a social order by labelling others as "Jews". The threat of exclusion is a crucial part of establishing a social order. Nabil described that labelling someone as "Jew" had been used in his school to exclude a student:

[I]n our school, in our class, it was rather like for fun, like, "ugh, he is a Jew, don't talk to him".

(Nabil, Berlin, P4: 55)

The threat of exclusion through labelling someone as "Jew" can also be observed in some of the group interviews. In one group interview the conversations turned to Jewish pupils in schools. Nazim stated that there are no Jews in his school. This was used by another participant to label Nazim himself as "Jew" which he denied. He got acknowledged and the interview continued only after he assured the group that he has the same ethnic identity as the other group members:<sup>1</sup>

Nazim: In our school there aren't any.

Amir: You, you're a Jew [Juif]!

Nazim: No, I'm not a Jew [Juif].

Amir: What are you then?

Nazim: I am an Arab!

Amir: Ah ok.

(Nazim and Amir, Paris, P50: 237-256)

Some interviewees exclude religious or ethnic minorities from their collective community and label these minorities "Jews". One interviewee for examples declared that Alevites are not Muslims whereupon his friend exclaimed that they are "Jews". Another one told us that he has been labelled "Jew" by Turks for his Kurdish identity.

#### 3.3 Personal responsibility for using anti-Semitic language

If an anti-Semitic usage of language is established then anti-Semitic statements become part of the language. Lapeyronnie has described in detail the mechanisms resulting in difficulties for individuals to oppose anti-Semitic language or even to abstain from it (see above). This leads to a morally difficult question: Are those who use anti-Semitic language responsible for its anti-Semitic content or is the language totalitarian in a way which takes all responsibility away from the individuals? Or, put in another way, do individuals have a choice using anti-Semitic language? Generally, it can be said that all interviewees have learnt a discourse, at least in school, in which anti-Semitism is not the norm within the language. Thus the question can be reduced to the impact of social circles: is the norm of anti-Semitic language within social circles and among peers so strong that they cannot escape it? Inevitably, this depends on the particular social circles and peers. The observations show that opposition or even abstention from anti-Semitic expressions within certain groups are difficult for some interviewees and would quickly lead to exclusion, particularly if a social order is established partly through anti-Semitic language. An interviewee in Berlin was asked what he would do if his friends offended and attacked a Jew. He declared:

I cannot hold back my friends, otherwise they would start taking the piss out of me.

Q: What would they say then?

"Hey, Jew, why do you help him?" and therefore, I'll just stay quiet.

(Ismail, Berlin, P22: 453-355)

However, for most interviewees social pressure of anti-Semitism is less strong. What is more, all respondents have the

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1. Most Interviewees believe that an Arab and Jewish identity are alternative even though, paradoxically, many interviewees know about the fact that there are Arab Jews.

option of staying at distance or leaving these groups even though it might come at a high emotional price and demands intellectual efforts. Therefore, those who use anti-Semitic language have to be held responsible for its usage and, as we shall see, for its anti-Semitic content.

Some respondents gave proof that they can distance themselves and even speak out against anti-Semitic attitudes of their friends and family. One interviewee for example introduced himself "for fun" in a new school as being born in Beirut to a Jewish father. Hence one of his classmates wanted to hit him (and the interviewee eventually withdrew the claim of having a Jewish father). He stated that his father would have "killed" him if he knew of his statement. Another respondent does not understand why the term "Jew" is used in a negative sense among his classmates. His statement may serve as an example showing how youths can question anti-Semitism in the language. On the other hand, the interviewee is also an example how naïve young people can be influenced by anti-Semitic language, searching for a rational answer why Jews are portrayed in a negative way. He said:

I also heard that in our school ... But I didn't understand why they are saying "you Jew." They were persecuted in Germany, killed, but that was also like religious discrepancy. Otherwise, in our school, in the chat there's always written "a Jew burns", or something like that. There I have seen it, like name-calling, I have also heard of.

Q: What do you think then?

Well if, I haven't experienced anything negative from the Jews, like they didn't harm me ... I cannot abuse them if I don't know them. But my friends do it sometimes but ... they just don't know them, they don't know us, either. If they have abused us ... I wouldn't like it either. They don't know us and we don't know them but we abuse them. What they do to us, I don't know but ...

(Tayfun, Berlin, P13: 223-231)

The question of the degree of individual responsibility and guilt for the use of anti-Semitic language against the background of widespread anti-Semitism within the communication of the social circle remains difficult as the group dynamics and functions of anti-Semitism need to be taken into consideration. However, the anti-Semitic language goes far beyond simply fulfilling group functions by voicing anti-Semitic resentments: the content is anti-Semitic - as will be shown in the following.

### 3.4 Anti-Semitic language and anti-Semitic content

"The insult expresses the disgust, a form of physical interiorisation of anti-Semitism."

(Lapeyronnie, 2005, 17, Translation from French by the author)

We have seen that negative meanings of the terms for "Jew" are established in various ways through its pejorative usage. The negative connotations are trivialized and banalized to such an extent that one might think that the terms for "Jew" and their negative meanings have nothing to do with "real Jews" and thus its usage is not anti-Semitic. The use of the terms for "Jew" can be regarded as a metaphor. However, which metaphors we use is far from meaningless as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have shown on a general level. The metaphors we use both reveal and shape the way we think (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Therefore, the pejorative usage of the words for "Jew" cannot be separated from the general meaning of terms for "Jew" and thus reveal and transport anti-Semitic attitudes. Monika Schwarz-Friesel and Holger Braune applied the cognitive theory of text world models, which is used in linguistics, for an analysis of conceptualisations of Jews in texts. The model allows the analysis of the implicit potential of inferences of information in texts or statements drawn by the recipient. According to them, a univocal anti-Semitic conceptualisation of Jews in a text world is conceptually closed and does not allow inferences opposing the patterns of thinking and world view of the author (Schwarz-Friesel, 2009). I argue that the use of the words for "Jew" as an insult or in a pejorative way does not allow positive inferences and is connoted to the terms for "Jew". The conceptualisation of Jews is therefore closed and thus anti-Semitic.

Five observations from the interviews support these general insights into the close relationship between words, language, metaphors and meaning and content:

1. The pejorative meanings of "Jew" match typical anti-Semitic stereotypes.
2. Those who use "Jew" in a pejorative way usually also show anti-Semitic attitudes in other ways.
3. Many interviewees themselves connect the use of "Jew" as an insult with Jews in many ways.
4. The use of "Jew" as an insult is understood by others as negative attitudes against Jews.
5. Some interviewees directly insult Jews as "Jews" with an anti-Semitic intention.

Let me exemplify all five points.

1) The words for "Jew" take meanings which are close to typical anti-Semitic stereotypes: most prominently stingy and also treacherous. Consider the explanations interviewees gave for the meaning of the pejorative use of the terms for "Jew".

For example if, I don't know, my mate, I ask him for a cigarette, he says, "wait a second." After half an hour I have a look, I ask him again, "what about the cigarette now?" He says, "wait a second." I say, "Jew, give me the cigarette how long should I wait?"

(Umur, Berlin, P32: 367)

Amir: For example if he does it to me or if he slaps me in the neck, I'll tell him, "dirty Jew" [sale Feuj], you know.

Nadem: If he does things of traitor as well...

Aswad: For a laugh, I go like, "Jew [Feuj], how's it going."

(Amir and Aswad, Paris, P50: 252-254)

Additionally, the general equation of "Jew" with "bad" and, particularly, the use of labelling someone as "Jew" as a means of exclusion has striking connotations to the history of demonizing Jews and to the exclusion of Jews as the enemy from within. The following statement is an example of exclusionary function of labelling someone "Jew".

"You Jew" [means], that you are something worse, that you are not up to our level so to say.

(Fatin, Berlin, P6: 124-125)

Labelling someone as "Jew" makes him or her a Jew - as conceptualised by those who use it - even if it is only temporarily: the anti-Semites define who is a Jew. It also shows how illusionary and lunatic Jewishness is in the mind of anti-Semites.

2) There is a correlation between the pejorative use of "Jew" and anti-Semitic stereotypes: all but two interviewees who use "Jew" as an insult also showed anti-Semitic attitudes in other forms such as the conviction that "the Jews" are rich and particularly influential in business or the media.

3) The interviewees themselves do not consistently separate between a pejorative use of the words for "Jew" and concrete Jews. In fact, interviewees directly relate the pejorative use of the words for "Jew" to anti-Semitic attitudes. This can be observed in the interviewee's description below of its pejorative usage and his immediate association with the perception of Jews by others:

If you say, "dirty Jew" [sale Juif], I know many people who are, erm... who don't like the Jews [Juifs].

(Samed, Paris P38: 313)

But anti-Semitic attitudes can also be related to their own pejorative usage of the words for "Jew". One interviewee for example explained an anti-Semitic proverb and stated that it is an allusion to Jews, portraying stereotypes he actually believes in:

Eating Jewish [manger en juif], that's hiding for eating ... That's an expression that the Jew [sic!] [Juif] doesn't want to share ... the misers. Often the miser, it's a Jew [Juif], "ah you are a Jew [Juif], share it!", you see? ... There are often little connotations to Jews [Juifs] like that.

Q: And do you think that there is something true to it, in that?

Sure ... I don't know.

(Sabri, Paris, P57: 549-559)

Even if interviewees often do not have concrete Jews in mind when using the word "Jew", concrete Jews are always connoted in the use of the words for "Jew". Participants demonstrate this by expressing negative stereotypes against Jews and a general negative view about Jews in different contexts. The answer of an interviewee illustrates the confusion, ambiguity and eventually the conflation of the two interweaved meanings of "Jew". Halil was asked if he can imagine having a Jewish friend and responded, "well... yes, how can I say, if he's alright, not such a Jew." (Halil, Berlin P26: 199)

Another interviewee suggested that he once thought that labelling someone as Jewish is not a serious insult. But now, he argued, he thinks that it is an utter disgrace to be Jewish because of the way (some) Jews dress. Thereby he clearly referred to Jewish people and linked the pejorative use of the word "Jew" to Jews. The insult "Jew" against anybody transforms back into resentments against Jews. Consider his own words:

I have a friend and one day on the train someone said to him, "you're a Jew [Juif]." Afterwards he told me, "no, you are crazy, it's a disgrace to be Jewish [juif]"... And why do they put on caps, the Jews [Juifs]? Hats, and then they all look the same... it's strange.

(Hakim, Paris, P34: 639)

One respondent even thinks that the way Jews behave has led to the use of the very term "Jew" as an insult:

They have played so many games and therefore they are a persecuted nation from then until today ... Today, here in Berlin, the word "Jew" has even become an insult ... If you're in a group for example and somebody talks bullshit, in the past you said: Oh, shut up you asshole" .... Today you say, "man, shut up, you Jew" ... To say, "Jew" has become an insult ... That must come from somewhere.

(Ümit, Berlin, P27: 187-189)

Another one described the way in which a Jewish Holocaust survivor had entered his classroom as, "he comes in like a Jew". He expressed general discontent about the fact that the Holocaust survivor had visited his school, concurred with other students who had abused him verbally and physically and subsequently cursed the Holocaust survivor during the interview:

What does he do in our school? He provokes us on purpose ... there are many Palestinians. He walks in like a Jew, like a son-of-a-bitch. I agree with them, fucking-Jew, hey.

(Suleiman, Berlin 28: 149)

The relation between anti-Semitic language and anti-Semitic attitudes can culminate in the execration of Jews and the wish for their extermination because "a Jew is a Jew" as bluntly expressed in the statement below.

If I am the boss? ... Then I would say ... that the damned Jews should be burnt ...

Q: And that are all Jews?

Well some Jews, maybe there are Jews who are nice, too. I don't know.

Q: And those who are nice, they should also be burnt?

Yes.

Q: Why?

Because they are Jews nevertheless. Jews are, a Jew is a Jew anyway.

(Bashir, Berlin, P19: 90-100)

4) The inferences from the pejorative use of the terms for "Jew" are negative concerning Jews. It is understood by others as anti-Jewish and further anti-Semitic attitudes can easily be related to it. In the following excerpt of a conversation with a group of youths one of them denied any significance of ethnic insults whereas his friend's response to the question of the usage of "dirty Jew" was that he has problems with "the" Jews:

Q: You don't say among yourselves, I don't know, "dirty Jew" [sale Juif] or something like that?

Kamel: No, it depends, just for fun we say "sale Arabe", just for fun but we don't think it.

Abib: They bother me the Jews [Juifs].

(Kamel and Abib, Paris, P36: 515-517)

5) Interviewees use the terms for "Jew" in anti-Semitic intention also directly against Jews, even though, usually, with an additional negative attribute such as "scheiß" [literally shitty] or "sale" [dirty]. Kassim from Berlin for example reported that he and his friends had shouted "scheiß Juden" in a synagogue during a school trip. Others said that they or their school-mates had insulted Jewish pupils in Paris as "dirty Jews" [sale Juifs].

To conclude, the inferences of a pejorative use of "Jew" are always negative and imply negative conceptualisations of Jews. The inferences are not open for opposing views even though the level of negative inferences varies. The relationship between the pejorative use of the words for "Jew", negative conceptualisations of Jews, and anti-Semitic attitudes are symbiotic.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.5 Differences between the pejorative usage of the terms for "Jew" and other minority groups

Many other popular insults such as "pédé" [French for poof], "Schwuchtel" [German for poof], or ethnic insults such as "sale Arabe" [dirty Arab] and "dreckiger Türke" [dirty Turc] are not only an offence against those labelled as such but they are also an offence in itself against the respective minorities. The main differences to the insult "Jew" are different ideological connotations. However, a phenomenological particularity is the use of the same term "Jew" both as a neutral term for self-identification and as an insult (often) without any further pejorative adjectives against non-Jews and Jews.<sup>2</sup> This shows that in a discourse in which "Jew" is used as a general insult, Jewish identity is necessarily understood as negative in itself – otherwise the insult would not be understood as an insult. Furthermore, it demonstrates the inherent repulsion of abstraction and the contradiction of anti-Semitism: everyone can become a Jew; the insult is not attached to ethnic backgrounds, religion, gender or class. On the other hand, those who are ethnically identified as Jews or who understand themselves as Jews cannot escape the anti-Semitic effect of the discourse in which "Jew" is used as an insult. There are similarities to labelling a person as "schwul", "homo" [gay] or "Opfer" [victim],<sup>3</sup> terms which are not pejorative in other contexts. The pejorative use of these words as insults fulfil similar functions of exclusion and the establishment of a social order. However, these terms are not ethnicising and therefore possibly less essentialistic, and, what is more, they have different ideological connotations. Differences in the underlying patterns and ideologies surface when framing the obser-

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1. However, not all respondents who unambiguously showed antisemitic attitudes use "Jew" as an insult.

2. Elizabeth Stokoe and Derek Edwards (2007) observed that usually, racial insults involve pairing national or ethnic identity categories with a pejorative word.

3. The term for "victim" is a common insult among youths in Germany but not in France: a person is victimised by labelling him or her "Opfer". It might be related to secondary antisemitism resulting in the wish of making the victims of the Holocaust responsible for becoming victims. However, my data does not allow for any conclusions on that matter.

vations as expressions of general attitudes and patterns of thinking.<sup>1</sup> Despite similar functions, the slur "victim" refers to different ideological connotations, namely to social Darwinism rather than anti-Semitic world views. The pejorative use of "schwul" or "pédé" implies a sexist perception of masculinity, whereas the one of "Jew" contains anti-Semitic inferences as shown above. The abstraction of labelling potentially anybody as Jewish and thereby demonizing and excluding him or her fits into an anti-Semitic pattern of seeing Jews as the lurking enemies from within.<sup>2</sup> Other ethnic insults rather suit a racist degradation and hierarchization - a core pattern of racism. A fitting example is the French expression "travail d'arabe" [work of an Arab] with the meaning of bad workmanship. The expression implies that the work of an Arab is regarded as inferior.

#### 4. Conclusions

The effects of the pejorative use of the words for "Jew" in German and French today are anti-Semitic in a number of ways. It allows individuals to voice open anti-Semitism under the cover of anti-Semitic language. Anti-Semitic language is trivialized through its widespread and frequent usage, assertions of its irrelevance and the substitution of a number of negative attributes with the words for "Jew". In addition to that, its functions of exclusion, degradation, and establishing a social order within youth groups impede opposition to it, particularly if an anti-Semitic norm of communication has been established within the group. Negative connotations about Jews are disseminated by making them self-evident and part of everyday language through consensual validation and repetition even if those who share this language are not necessarily fervent anti-Semites. The pejorative use of "Jew" necessarily implies negative inferences and conceptualisations of Jews. It enhances a Manichean perception of Jews and non-Jews in which Jews and those labelled as such are regarded as negative or evil. Rationalizing anti-Semitic prejudices becomes obsolescent, the negative connotations of the term "Jew" is sufficient to justify hatred against Jews: "a Jew is a Jew anyway." (Bashir, Berlin, P19: 100) The exclusion and defamation of those who are, albeit temporarily, labelled "Jews" effectively lead to the exclusion and defamation of Jews and those labelled as such. The paper confirms and adds to results of previous studies from France of a close relationship between anti-Semitic language and verbal and physical violence for the French and the German context. It demonstrates that the pejorative use of the words "Jude", "Juif" and "Feuj" cannot be separated from anti-Semitic attitudes.

Surprisingly, there are only minor differences between the pejorative use of the terms for "Jew" in German and French such as the fact that the adjective "Jewish" is used frequently in a pejorative way in French but rarely in German. The German term "Opfer" [victim] is also used as an insult and fulfils similar functions within youth groups as "Jew". However, the main differences of the slur "Opfer" and other in-itself-offensive slurs such as "fag" and ethnic insults in comparison to the slur "Jew" are the different ideological connotations that the respective terms hold.

Interviewees from France use and associate the insult "Jew" more directly against Jews than their counterparts in Germany, presumably because Jews are more present among their social circles. However, the pejorative use of "Jude", "Juif", or "Feuj" in German and French equally enhances the dissemination and consolidation of anti-Semitic attitudes and world views and prepares the grounds to verbal and physical violence against those depicted temporarily as "Jews" and particularly against Jews.

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1. General attitudes can be understood as influencing broad behavioural dispositions which are "reflected equally well in verbal responses and overt actions." (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005, 182).
  2. Similar phenomena were observed more generally and interpreted by other scholars. E.g. Werner Bonefeld stated with reference to Jean-Paul Sartre "antisemitism does not 'need' Jews ... It is an abstraction that excludes nobody. Anyone can be considered a Jew." (Bonefeld, 2005, 158).

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