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# *Jammern* [Whining] as a German Way of Speaking

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Several years ago I had a telephone conversation with a German friend who had returned back home to Germany after living and working in the United States for many years. After having been away from Germany for an extended period, she found herself frustrated and angry with her German colleagues. She explained that her coworkers didn't seem very supportive of her ideas nor were they very positive in their general outlook. My attempts to encourage her did little to douse her momentary bitterness, however, and before hanging up she said, "I just hate how Germany's become. It seems all my colleagues do is sit around and whine."

After hearing my friend's story, I realized that much of what she said resonated with my own perceptions of communication styles I had experienced during my seven years of living and studying in various parts of Germany. I began to wonder if there is a communicative phenomenon here that is indeed culturally identifiable and significant to German speakers. If so, what cultural meanings are attached to this type of communication? In what settings does it occur? What purposes or functions does it serve? What can the study of such communicative behavior tell us about the political, social, and cultural landscape of present-day Germany?

The present study focuses on a culturally distinctive and meaningful way of speaking in present-day Germany known as *Jammern*. I will use the translation "to whine" as the closest English equivalent for this term for talk. As an ethnographer of communication, I focus on locating and describing patterns of talk in order to understand how culture is revealed through communicative conduct of a particular social group. In order to accomplish this task, an ethnographer of communication must choose a road in, i.e., a particular focus that will help to unravel the ways speakers reveal their cultural value systems in their everyday interactions. Ethnographers of communication call such culturally significant talk a "way of speaking" (Hymes, 1974), which can be defined as "patterns of speech activity" within a speech community (p. 45). One particularly rich cultural resource for the ethnographer of communication is the metapragmatic or metacommunicative term, i.e., a cultural term for talk. These are the labels or names cultural groups give to their ways of speaking, e.g., 'chatting,' 'teasing,' or 'arguing' (see Carbaugh, 1989; Lucy, 1993; Wierzbicka, 1997). This knowledge is part of our communicative competence, or what we need to know in order to communicate appropriately in a particular social group.

The literature on metacommunicative terms is vast and interdisciplinary, with researchers from anthropology, communication, and sociology locating these distinctive terms for talk in

various languages—for example, Fitch's (1998) study of Spanish in Colombia; Rosaldo's (1973) study of Illongot; Katriel's (1986, 1990) research on Israeli; and Keith Basso's (1979) study on the Western Apache. Clearly, the study of cultural terms for talk provides a productive path for understanding how talk itself is valued differently across societies, and, in turn, unveils deep normative systems that often lie at the base of intercultural misunderstandings.

The present study is based on data from a variety of sources. First, over 600 articles that appeared in regional and national German media outlets over the last 12 years were analyzed for their use of the term *Jammern*. Second, extensive media coverage of the German advertising campaign, *Du bist Deutschland* ("You are Germany") was analyzed for references to *Jammern*. Third, 25 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with German native speakers living in Germany between the ages of 20 and 69. Interviewees were asked to speak to their uses of *Jammern*, including the meanings they attach to the term, the contexts in which it occurs, and their perceptions of *Jammern* as a communicative activity. Finally, fieldnotes collected during a four-month research stay in Landau, Germany with a focus on *Jammern* were also analyzed.

## SEMANTIC DIMENSIONS OF *JAMMERN*

In order to better unpack the semantic dimensions, topics, functions, act sequences of and responses to *Jammern*, it is important to first note that interviewees consistently mentioned the connections and contrasts to the term *Meckern*. The term for talk, *Jammern*, is related to *Meckern* in that one may argue that both terms fall under the larger semantic umbrella in English of the verb 'to complain.' However, comparable to the Israeli griping Katriel (1990) studied, *Meckern* has more to do with a type of grumbling about an aggravating situation outside of the speaker's own emotional world. Whereas *Jammern*, on the other hand, is closest to the English terms to 'whine' or 'yammer,' whereas 'whine' can mean to snivel or complain in a peevish, self-pitying way, and 'yammer' is to talk loudly, persistently, and clamorously. In contrast to *Meckern*, the individual who engages in *Jammern* as a way of speaking is whining or yammering about his or her own plight, i.e., the speaker directly expresses his or her emotional or physical distress (how badly he or she is feeling or doing), which is the focus of the talk.

Consistent across interviewees were the notions of *actionality* and *directionality* as core semantic dimensions of *Jammern* or what Carbaugh (2007) refers to as "radiants of cultural meaning" or "hubs of cultural meaning" (p. 174). Actionality here can be placed on a continuum of active versus passive, whereas *Jammern* is viewed as more passive ("passiv") as opposed to *Meckern*, which interviewees described as more active ("aktiv"). While both *Jammern* and *Meckern* are linguistic activities, and in that sense, require physical embodiment to achieve, the actionality aspect here refers to 'real world' behavioral actions that are (or are not) being accomplished. *Jammern* is a linguistic action that carries with it the weight of passivity. More specifically, it is a type of talk that accomplishes little in an individual's physical or objective world. If this way of speaking is to accomplish anything at all, it would be in the emotional realm of the individuals participating in *Jammern*, i.e., to make them feel better. In this sense, *Jammern* has similarities to Israeli griping in that it can serve to "relieve pent-up tensions" (Katriel, 1990, p. 104). According to interviewees with German speakers, there is the perception that while a speaker engages in *Jammern*, everything else (e.g., one's responsibilities, duties, etc.) is left unattended and uncared for. *Meckern*, on the other hand, is described as having the potential to accomplish 'real-world' change, in that through a speaker's complaining about an issue, something can and often does get done to solve the issue, usually by others. In this aspect, it is *Meckern* that appears to be closer to Israeli griping than is *Jammern*: Israeli griping is usually focused toward "problems with the

fabric of Israeli social life that 'somebody around here' should be able to do something about" (p. 104), i.e., an active actionality perspective.

*Jammern* is a linguistic action that stands in place of or as a substitute for behavioral action, whereas *Meckern* is a linguistic action that often serves as the impetus for some behavioral action to be undertaken. In particular, *Jammern* is perceived as a selfish choice, i.e., one that prevents the fruition of future change and development in both individuals' lives—families, workplaces, communities—as well as of Germany. It is a way of speaking equated with navel gazing, negative thoughts ("*negative Gedanken*"), pessimism ("*Pessimismus*"), dissatisfaction ("*Unzufriedenheit*"), and the person's lack of incentive to change for the better.

Concerning the semantic frame of directionality, *Jammern* has been described as a speaking activity that points the speaker inward ("*nach innen*") versus *Meckern*, which points the speaker outward ("*nach außen*"). *Jammern* is viewed as having to do with the emotional and personal realm of an individual; hence, linguistic action points inward toward the individual herself or himself. By contrast, the linguistic force of *Meckern* points outward and away from the individual toward something more concrete with which the speaker has an issue and would like to see changed. One interviewee summed it up accordingly: "*Jammern* is first and foremost a personal expression, while *Meckern* is a direct critique" ("*Jammern ist Selbstausdruck in erster Linie während Meckern eine gezielte Kritik ist*"). Again it appears that *Meckern* has more contact points to Israeli griping than does *Jammern*. Specifically, Israeli griping also points outward and away from the individual and "suggests an overwhelming, culturally sanctioned concern with the public domain" and restricts itself to "problems with the fabric of Israeli social life that 'somebody around here' should be able to do something about" (Katriel, 1990, p. 104).

According to interviewees, *Jammern* is detrimental to one's motivation ("*die Motivation wird beeinträchtigt*") and pulls the individual backwards both emotionally and psychically ("*Das zieht einen emotional und physisch rückwärts*"). *Jammern* may cause a person to become stuck in a mental rut of sorts, in which one's dissatisfaction and unhappiness takes over thus restraining the person from becoming motivated to start something new.

The analyzed articles revealed no positive meanings attached to *Jammern*; i.e., the written sources framed it solely as a negatively valenced linguistic activity. Interviewees also framed *Jammern* primarily as negative; however, some interviewees did reveal that *Jammern*, when done in a group, can carry some positively valenced meanings. For example, one interviewee described the positive characteristics of *Jammern* in the following: "*Jammern* seems to relax people. Mutual *Jammern* connects those who do it. You don't feel as helpless and meaningless if you whine in a group." In a sense, when members of a group participate in *Jammern*, the speaking activity binds interlocutors and can achieve feelings of solidarity ("*Solidarität*"). Thus, simply talking about a common plight or misery can create a sense of connection, community, and mutual understanding among speakers.

## TOPICS AND FUNCTIONS OF *JAMMERN*

Similar to Israeli griping, German speakers never whine "about something one feels good about" (Katriel, 1990, p. 103). However, in opposition to Israeli griping in which "the problem griped about has its locus in some aspect of that external reality" (p. 103) or "a problem related to the domain of public life" (p. 104), typical topics of German *Jammern* have their locus in some aspect of the speaker's personal life, i.e., the speaker's internal reality. Topics of *Jammern* all have to do with the speaker's sense of her or his own momentary plight. Interviewees often mentioned children's tendency to whine about their dissatisfaction in order to get something

they want from their caretakers (e.g., candy, toys, etc.). Elderly individuals were also described as prone to *Jammern*, specifically when it comes problems with their health (e.g., illness, pain). Other typical topics of *Jammern* tend toward whining about too much stress ("*zu viel Stress*"), too much work ("*zu viel Arbeit*"), or in contrast, concerns about unemployment ("*Arbeitslosigkeit*"). *Jammern* is also used to talk about relational worries or heartache ("*Liebeskummer*").

The analysis revealed that *Jammern*, as a primarily negative, passive, and even selfish way of speaking, has functions that can be sorted into two main categories: (1) achieving release from one's own emotional turmoil or physical pain, and (2) to prompt empathetic and sympathetic responses in listeners. In the first category, *Jammern* appears to be a vehicle for self expression ("*Selbstäußerung*") to share negative feelings ("*negative Gefühle*"), a bad mood ("*schlechte Stimmung*"), or even sadness ("*Traurigkeit*"). In many ways, this closely resembles the Israeli griping function of relieving "pent-up tensions and frustrations" (Katriel, 1990, p. 104); however, the difference between the functions of Israeli griping and German whining lies again in the locus for said tensions and frustrations. While *Jammern* is viewed as an excuse ("*eine Ausrede*") of sorts because the person is experiencing self pity ("*Selbstmitleid*") and may be too lazy ("*zu faul*") to actually take action and improve her or his circumstances. Some interviewees attributed selfish motives to the person engaging in *Jammern*, i.e., the speaker feels so bad that she or he wishes to spread a bad mood and bring others down as well ("*Andere runterziehen*").

The second main function category involves the speaker seeking a sympathetic or empathetic response from the listener. Specifically, interviewees perceived the individual who participates in *Jammern* as trying to provoke pity in the listener ("*Mitleid erregen*") and seeking support ("*Unterstützung bei den anderen zu bekommen*") as well as comfort ("*Trost*") from others. A typically quoted phrase by many interviewees sums up this the viewpoint: "*Geteiltes Leid ist halbes Leid*" ("shared misery is half the misery"). If the speaker who uses *Jammern* is successful, she or he will ultimately feel better in that her or his co-interlocutors will attempt to build them up. However, interviewees pointed out that such success is not always achieved. In fact, many admitted that they have often felt anger ("*Wut*") and aggression ("*Aggression*") toward those who engage in *Jammern*. Some told stories of purposely leaving conversations with those who whine or directly telling those speakers to stop whining. One interviewee summarized this in the following: "I want to avoid those who whine because why should I listen to that? I want to tell them, 'Stop whining! Get up and do something to help yourself!'"

## SETTING AND ACT SEQUENCE OF *JAMMERN*

Katriel (1990) describes the setting for the enactment of the Israeli Griping Ritual as private homes on Friday evenings culminating in a speech event known as the "griping party." Although German interviewees did not identify such a formally defined or labeled setting or context for *Jammern*, the enactment of this way of speaking may certainly occur at public gatherings or parties. Interviewees, however, cited more intimate one-on-one or small group settings as the context in which *Jammern* usually occurs. The reason for this most likely lies in the personal and intimate nature of the topics mentioned by interlocutors during *Jammern* as opposed to those topics dealt with during Israeli griping that deal with problems in the public domain. In other words, one is more likely to engage in *Jammern* around intimates who may display empathy or sympathy for one's personal plight than in front of a group of aquaintances or even strangers with whom one does not wish to share such intimate, private life details.

For many, *Jammern* was described more as a monologue than as an interactive achievement—though both are possible. While *Jammern* among strangers certainly occurs, intimates are more likely to engage in *Jammern*. This is mainly due to the personal and emotional nature of the topics

that typify *Jammern*. If the person who engages in *Jammern* has a listener with an empathetic ear, she or he may well talk for an extended period without much uptake or verbal engagement from the listener. This monologue quality of *Jammern* allows the speaker to vent her or his frustration. Some view the act of *Jammern* as a metaphoric release valve for the pent-up negative emotions the speaker may be experiencing. The less interruption from the listener, the more effective the *Jammern* monologue may be for the speaker.

However, similar to Katriel's (1990) formulation of the Israeli Griping Ritual, *Jammern* may also take on a spiral pattern rather than a linear one. During a gathering at a friend's house in Germany, I listened to four elderly individuals engage in this type of interactive, mutually reinforcing sequence of *Jammern*. As one gentleman initiated the act sequence by talking about the pain that accompanied his recent knee replacement, an elderly woman in the group then launched into a description of the pain she was experiencing due to arthritis. One after the other, the individuals seemed to build on each other's suffering, sometimes offering consoling words to one another, but more often attempting to trump the suffering of the previous speaker. Unlike Israeli griping, the locus of the talk is not outside of the individuals and something the speakers wish to see changed, e.g., taxes, government scandals, bureaucracy, etc. Rather, in the case of *Jammern*, each interlocutor's focus is on her or his own dilemma. This difference is worth noting, since Israeli griping and German *Jammern* contrast with each other by, on the one hand, looking outward as a unified group toward a shared locus for which change is sought (e.g., *griping*) and looking inward as individuals toward seemingly different emotional or physical experiences for which no change may be sought or even possible (e.g., *Jammern*).

## CLIMBING OUT OF THE *JAMMERTAL*: A CASE STUDY IN GERMANY'S QUEST FOR A NEW WAY OF SPEAKING

Within the ethnography of communication it can be quite difficult to locate and explicate a distinct 'way of speaking' in the discourse of any cultural group. One way in which the characteristics, components, and boundaries of a 'way of speaking' can be found is through those cultural practices that strongly contrast with the phenomenon. The *Du bist Deutschland*! ad campaign—as well as the talk about and around the campaign—provide the ideal contrast to *Jammern*, and it is this case study to which I now turn. The campaign's main goal was to rid the German public of its downtrodden outlook. The television and print ads explicitly refer to *Jammern*, thus solidifying the cultural importance of this 'way of speaking,' while simultaneously providing Germans an alternate, more positive way to think and talk. Within the ad campaign itself, as well as in the public's and national media's responses to the campaign, lies a goldmine of evidence for how *Jammern* is achieved and understood by German speakers.

It was September, 2005, and Germans were beginning to prepare for the soccer World Cup that would take place in stadiums throughout Germany during the summer of 2006. As the nation looked forward to one of the biggest sporting events in the world, the largest ad campaign in German history for non-commercial purposes was put into action. The "*Du bist Deutschland*" ("*You are Germany*") campaign was coordinated by 25 leading German ad agencies within the initiative titled, "Partners for Innovation." All agencies worked pro bono, and the total budget was 30 million Euros. The campaign was meant to move Germany from "a vale of tears" to "the peaks of creative heights" ("Du bist Deutschland!", 2005). In light of the culture of *Jammern* that was reigning in Germany at the time, many believed that the "*Du bist Deutschland*" campaign was desperately needed.

Beyond recent economic woes, Germans had long felt tensions with any display of patriotism and were quite conflicted with the notion of Germany as an "imagined community" (Benedict,

1991). Prior to 2006, it seemed, "the difficulty in creating a positive identification with the German nation was illustrated by society's general reluctance to use national symbols" (Welch & Wittlinger, 2011, p. 44). The nation's Nazi past had always been a liability when it came to German national identity; however, when Gerhard Schröder became Chancellor in 1998, his leadership of the Red-Green coalition did much to balance Germany's Holocaust memory with a new outlook toward the future. As Welch and Wittlinger (2011) point out, Schröder worked to free national German identity from the binds of the Nazi past while simultaneously recognizing German culpability, which soon led to "very confident expressions of national identity which contributed to the 'normalization' of Germany, unprecented in the postwar period" (p. 46). Piwoni (2013) cites this venture into hosting the soccer World Cup as a positive moment in the *Patriotismusdebatte* (patriotism debate) where a "new, open, and pluralistic understanding of nationhood" was burgeoning (p. 17).

As the "*Du bist Deutschland*" ad campaign took root, there were many who spoke in support of its goals. TV personality Reinhold Beckmann stated, "There has to be a different spirit in our country. Everyone searches for something they can hold onto—values [. . .] You can't find those here in Germany right now. Maybe this campaign can create some solidarity and optimism." In the same vein, well-known TV moderator Günther Jauch explained, "*Jammern* gets boring after a while. Blaming everything on relationships, on society, on the state, on some dark anonymous powers—that's not the way" (Kühn, 2005). In the above translated quotes, as was the case throughout the campaign, *Jammern* was a referenced cultural way of speaking by both the media and the general public. In line with the analyzed interview data, *Jammern* is negatively valenced and cast as a way of speaking that keeps its participants in a downtrodden and passive state. At the time, Germany still felt some of the consequences of the economic crisis that had gripped its economy a few years earlier, and many believed it was imperative that Germans free themselves from their passivity and move toward actively working toward a better Germany. In this sense, *Jammern* became more than a way of speaking—it also symbolized a way of thinking that had seemingly taken over the nation.

One interesting aspect of the campaign was the choice to use the informal pronoun *du* to speak to an entire nation. As a term of address, the informal *du* pronoun (in contrast to the formal *Sie*) is imbued with multiple culturally significant social meanings (see Winchatz, 2001, 2007). The choice to use the informal *du* was highlighted throughout the media coverage of the campaign. For example, when asked why he chose the informal pronoun *du* for the campaign, Oliver Voss (creator of the slogan) said, "You want to get through to people with language . . . and with '*Du bist Deutschland*,' the reader cannot turn away due to the direct address form." When Voss was asked if the direct address form was trying too hard to butter up to the German public, he stated,

> Actually, it's quite the opposite—we think we're provoking the public by using the [informal pronoun] *du*. The sentence contradicts itself so obviously, that it sounds strange, but it's not necessarily wrong. You expect the German flag and other symbols when you hear "Germany"—in contrast, the small 'buddy-like' *du* and that big word "Germany" initially don't seem to fit together. But what belongs together will ultimately grow together. Many people react negatively when they hear the word *Deutschland* ("Germany"). We wanted to overcome the complexes, the whining, the apathy with this campaign.
>
> (Fragen an Oliver Voss, 2005, p. 9)

Thus, creators of the ad campaign purposely used the informal pronoun *du*—which has been found to connote solidarity, friendship, and closeness (Winchatz, 2001)—in order to move Germans away from solitary *Jammern* toward a more unified active and optimistic future.

The analyzed media outlets agreed that a dark cloud had hovered over the nation at the time, and in a state of depression and despondency, Germans engaged in this way of speaking in order to cope. However, there was also a clear consensus that *Jammern* could not be ignored as a

harmless pastime, but rather must be viewed as a hindrance to the positive energy needed to dig the country out of its economic and political slump. For example, many writers referred to Germany as a "vale of tears" ("*ein Jammertal*"—literally "valley of whiners")—a perception evident in the following quote from Bernd Gottschalk, Union functionary of the Automobile Industry: "If Germans see a light at the end of the tunnel, they first tend to make the tunnel longer." Similarly, Erich Sixt, the CEO of the car rental company Sixt, noted: "At some point we need to stop with the whining" (Raus aus dem Jammertal, 2002).

The perception of Germans as whiners wasn't helped by those who drew intercultural comparisons between Germany and the US based on their experiences of working in both countries. The head of IBM, Raizner, who was interviewed upon his return from the US, stated, "Everyone who is familiar with the USA knows that not everything over there is great, but they don't constantly whine about things!" Similarly, in an editorial from March, 2003, one author claimed that "no one in the U.S. whines as skillfully as here [in Germany]." There were many, however, who were dissatisfied with the culture of *Jammern* that had seemingly taken over the nation and who called for drastic changes in Germans' perspectives and, consequently, their ways of speaking. The head of Porsche, Wendelin Wiedeking, called for businesses "to commit to Germany and stop whining." Similarly, Jürgen Gallmann, the former General Manager of Microsoft Germany, called for "a change in mentality" in Germany and further stated, "we should stop whining and roll up our sleeves." Clearly, an appeal was being made for Germans to stop sitting around whining and to get up and do something. Renowned business consultant Roland Berger summed up the vision of many: "My dream for Germany: a more critical, happier, more positive, and more communicative country with more trust from its citizens in themselves and in their country's future" (Roland Berger sucht, 2003).

Of course, not everyone was on board with the positive message of the "*Du bist Deutschland*" campaign. Beyond various satires that were published of the campaign mocking what some Germans found to be a message that reeked of fake optimism and manipulation, the "*Du bist Deutschland*" ad campaign did hit a snag from which it could not recover. Competing media outlets published a picture from a Nazi era banner spanning across the top of a stage that read, "*Denn du bist Deutschland*" ("Because you are Germany"). What mastermind advertising professionals thought was a slogan that would help Germans get past their WWII history instead became a slogan that reminded Germans of that very history. Piwoni (2013) reminds us that any change in national identity discourse is complex, and national identity change—especially in the German case—has been fraught with many difficulties. The "*Du bist Deutschland*" campaign had played a mostly positive role in a rise of national pride among Germans in 2006; however, it eventually ended on a somewhat sour note by referencing an unexpected reminder of the nation's Nazi past that continues to counter and complicate many Germans' attempts at imagining a different and more positive national community identity.

## THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND ACADEMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF *JAMMERN* AS A CULTURAL WAY OF SPEAKING IN GERMANY

Thus far, this chapter has focused on the formulation of the cultural way of speaking, *Jammern*, that has been shown to be distinctive and meaningful to interlocutors throughout Germany. The data reveal that German speakers identify this way of speaking as significant in their own and others' lives. It is also a way of speaking that is deemed meaningful and impactful by German media sources, so much so that an advertising campaign was developed whose goal was to counter *Jammern*—as a negative and passive way of speaking—by moving Germans toward a more positive outlook in regard to their own lives and the future of their country. In the final section of this chapter I have two main goals: (1) to apply existing theory to *Jammern* as a cultural

way of speaking in order to contextualize its significance within a larger body of work, and (2) to briefly discuss the implications of the study of *Jammern* as a cultural way of speaking within a German academic context.

Philipsen et al.'s (1992, 1997) Speech Codes Theory provides a framework for "formulating local codes of interpretation and conduct" (Philipsen, Coutu, & Covarrubias, 2005, p. 57). It is an avenue for the ethnographer of communication to move from locating and formulating a cultural way of speaking toward interpreting its uses and interpretations by speakers within the larger context of a local speech code. Formulating a speech code is a lofty endeavor, and it is not within the scope of this study to accomplish such a task. However, by moving beyond *Jammern* as a way of speaking with an eye toward theorizing what type of speech code may underlie its uses and interpretations, I am heeding the call Hymes (1962) made to move the study of locally managed systems of meaning and interpretation toward the formulation of larger metatheories of communication.

In examining the characteristics, components, and interpretations of *Jammern*, one may ask what system of symbols, meanings, premises, and rules concerning communicative conduct within Germany underlies this cultural way of speaking. In thinking through these elements, there appears to be what one might call a 'speech code of despondency' ("*Niedergeschlangenheit*") underlying the uses and interpretations of *Jammern*. Let us turn, for example, to Proposition 3 of Speech Codes Theory, which states, "a speech code implicates a culturally distinctive psychology, sociology and rhetoric"—hence, a speech code's elements point to specific cultural understandings about "human nature (psychology), social relations (sociology) and strategic conduct (rhetoric)" (Philipsen, Coutu, & Covarrubias, 2005, p. 61).

In regard to human nature or "discourses of personhood and communication" (Carbaugh, 2007), there is a contrast between Israeli griping and German whining that juxtaposes the internal and external realities speakers emphasize in their interactions. In Israeli griping (Katriel, 1990), individuals focus outward toward the external, i.e., a societal problem within the public domain in need of a solution. In contrast, however, *Jammern* is understood by German speakers to be focused inward on one's own unfortunate plight. An individual who engages in *Jammern* may be downtrodden and pessimistic and may only focus on that which is not going well. Many interviewees, as well as the German media, pointed to the destructive nature of such a way of speaking, deeming the whining individual as uncreative, unproductive, and stagnating. Thus, Germans' interpretations of how humans should or should not think and act are available in the data concerning *Jammern*—and these findings may be extrapolated to infer more general understandings of human nature in that society and the speech codes infused by these understandings.

Because "speech is both an act of and a resource for 'membering'" (Philipsen, 1992, p. 14), in any speech code, a particular view of social relations is also evident. Hence, the data of this study reveal a particular view of which social relations are more or less appropriate among Germans. For example, most interviewees clearly identified the isolating function of *Jammern*, i.e., the speaker focuses inward on herself or himself and often aggravates fellow speakers. The ability for listeners to show empathy and/or sympathy becomes difficult with those speakers who fall into *Jammern* too frequently, as such an individual is viewed as selfish or even self-centered. Clearly, if one wishes to build and nurture mutually engaging and fulfilling social relationships, *Jammern* is not a preferred way of speaking, even though some speakers did see *Jammern* in a positive light in that it can sometimes promote solidarity, mutual understanding, and connectedness with others when accomplished interactionally in a group.

Finally, a speech code points to particular strategic conduct, and in the present study, the data show that a specific rhetoric or certain persuasive appeals are more or less valued in German society. Rooted in a cultural understanding of national identity that has been highly contested and problematic, the "*Du bist Deutschland*" campaign was set in motion with the sole purpose of

counteringthe "*Jammerkultur*" ("culture of whining") that had taken over the country at the time. The campaign's central focus was to convince Germans that whining and complaining about their nation was no longer an option and the text of the ad plainly argued that this type of communication was no longer persuasive: "*Just treat your country like a good friend. Don't complain about her—offer her your help. Do the best that you're capable of doing. And when you're finished, go beyond your own expectations.*" The "*Du bist Deutschland*" campaign—with its messages of pride and patriotism—was clearly counter to a speech code of despondency—which highlighted a national discourse of self-deprecation, guilt, and shame.

By delving into Proposition 3 of Speech Codes Theory and briefly examining how the present study's data display some German speakers' understandings of human nature, social relationships, and persuasive conduct, a first step toward theorizing beyond a local way of speaking toward a more general speech code has been taken. Based on the analyzed data, a 'code of despondency' may refer to this type of symbolic system rooted in widespread deep dejection among the German public arising from a conviction of the uselessness of further effort.

Throughout their article, Philipsen, Coutu, and Covarrubias (2005) speak directly to the importance of Speech Codes Theory to scholars, teachers, and practitioners of communication. Indeed, the study of cultural ways of speaking within a speech community—as well as the underlying speech codes that inform them—would be a beneficial addition to any academic curriculum with a focus on intercultural and/or cross-cultural communication. Within Germany, ethnography of communication continues to be a relatively underrepresented area of study at universities. For example, its study may be included in such academic disciplines as *Sprechwissenschaft* (speech communication), *Interkulturelle Kommunikation* (intercultural communication), and *Soziolinguistik* (sociolinguistics), which is often a part of the more common *Sprachwissenschaft* (linguistics) departments and majors.

The addition of ethnography of communication to the curricula of any of these academic programs would offer a unique approach and perspective to German scholars who are interested in studying local forms of communication that are meaningful and distinctive to German speech communities. Further, it is an approach that would be helpful to those interested in national discourses as a means to understanding national identities. It is an area of study that uses naturalistic methods, e.g., ethnographic fieldwork, to understand the "means of speech [. . .] and their meanings to those who use them" (Hymes, 1972, p. 2). Non-native researchers bring distinct advantages to the study of cultural ways of speaking and speech codes—even when working in foreign languages (see Winchatz, 2006, 2010). However, German scholars and teachers would benefit from the study of German ways of speaking and their supporting speech codes from a native perspective. With such an approach, the mundane, taken-for-granted ways that Germans interact with one another may be cast in a new light, whereby everyday talk becomes a pathway to uncovering the profoundly meaningful, socially impactful, and radically cultural ways communication shapes present-day Germany.

## NOTE

1. The following is an English translation of the "*Du bist Deutschland*" ad campaign. The campaign highlighted many well-known German personalities in sports, television, theater, and movies. In the video advertisement, speakers recited one to two phrases of the text while performing an activity connected to their profession in front of various backgrounds and scenes from throughout Germany:

   *You are the miracle of Germany.*
   *A butterfly can start a typhoon.*

*The air that is pushed away by its wings*
*can uproot trees miles away*
*Just like a gentle breeze can develop into a storm . . .*
*so can your actions.*
*You say it's unrealistic?*
*So why do you cheer for your team if you're so unimportant?*
*And why do you wave your flags when you watch Schumacher race?*
*You know the answer.*
*Because if you wave your flag, others will join you.*
*Your voice will become a choir of many*
*You are a part of everything.*
*And everything is a part of you.*

**You are Germany!**
*Your desire can set the wheels in motion.*
*It makes your favorite player run faster . . .*
*and it makes Schumi drive faster.*
*It doesn't matter where you work or what kind of job you have.*
*You are the one keeping us in business.*
*You are the business.*

**You are Germany!**
*Our time is not all fun and games.*
*That's not what we're trying to say.*
*You might be backed into a corner . . .*
*. . . or hit your head against a wall.*
*But together we've torn down a wall once before.*
*Germany has enough hands . . .*
*. . . to reach out to one another and start working.*
*We are 82 million*
*Let's get our hands dirty!*
*You are the hand—you are 82 million.*

**You are Germany!**
*So how about cheering yourself on for a change?*
*Don't just step on the gas when you're on the Autobahn.*
*Get off the brake!*
*There is no speed limit on the "Germanybahn."*
*Don't ask what others are doing for you.*
*You are the others.*

**You are Germany!**
*Just treat your country like a good friend.*
*Don't complain about her—offer her your help.*
*Do the best that you're capable of doing.*
*And when you're finished, go beyond your own expectations.*
*Flap your wings . . . and move mountains!*
*You are the wings!*
*You are the mountain!*

**You are Germany.**

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