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Humour is serious: Minority group members' use of humour in their encounters with majority
group members

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This paper adds to the social psychological literature on how minority group members seek to manage their interactions with majority group members. Specifically it focuses on minority group members' use of humour in interactions where they anticipate or actually experience prejudice. The data on which our analysis is based originate from interviews conducted with Roma in Hungary ($N = 30$). Asked about their interactions with majority group members, interviewees reported using humour as a means to i. manage embarrassment; ii., gather information about the other's inter-group attitudes; and iii., subvert taken-for-granted understandings of social relations. The humour involved was diverse. Sometimes it entailed the telling of (Roma-related) jokes. Sometimes it involved the exaggerated performance of roles and identities that ironized majority-minority social relations. The significance of humour as tool for minority group members to exert some control over their interactions with majority group members is discussed.

Prejudice and discrimination are not funny. Yet ‘jokes’ denigrating minority groups abound and are socially consequential. We contribute to the literature on intergroup humour through considering how minority group members may themselves use humour in their encounters with majority group members. Below, we consider minority group members’ experiences of prejudicial intergroup encounters and their interaction management strategies. We then consider research on intergroup humour before reporting interview data originating from a minority group subject to much everyday discrimination and disparagement: Hungarian Roma. In particular, we explore how minority group members report using humour so as to allow themselves a degree of control over their interactions with majority group members. In so doing, we contribute to the literature on minority group members’ interaction management strategies.

Intergroup encounters

Intergroup interactions are often characterised by anxiety (MacInnis & Page-Gould, 2015) and risks of miscommunication (Pearson et al., 2008; Richeson & Shelton, 2007). Moreover, they are routinely experienced differently by majority and minority group members. For example, research exploring the potential for contact to improve intergroup attitudes shows weaker effects on the inter-group attitudes of minorities than majorities (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005). One reason is that although both parties have concerns relating to the interaction, minority partners often anticipate being targets of prejudice (Trawalter, Richeson, & Shelton, 2009) and are particularly concerned with being respected in intergroup interaction (Bergsieker, Shelton, & Richeson, 2010). These concerns colour the whole interactional experience.

Minority group members have good cause for such concerns: In everyday interaction they experience all manner of ‘micro-aggressions’ (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007). These

include derogatory comments, epithets, and ‘jokes’ which have the potential to invalidate their thoughts, feelings and experience. As they may be indirect, low in intensity, and lawful, minority group members may experience ambiguity as to what exactly is meant, and this itself adds to the burden of interacting with majority group members (Salvatore & Shelton, 2007). Over time, the cumulative impact of such micro-aggressions is substantial. For example, Smith, Allen and Danley (2007) draw on the concept of combat stress (developed in the context of understanding the effects of being in a hostile environment) to capture the scope and scale of Black US college students’ negative experience on campus. Indeed, they use the term ‘racial battle fatigue’ to describe the psychological cost of the heightened vigilance that minority group members evidence in monitoring and interpreting their treatment.

Power differentials add to such concerns. Although both parties have beliefs about how they are seen by the other (so-called ‘meta-perceptions’: Vorauer, Main, & O’Connell, 1998; Vorauer, 2006), minority group members often pay greater attention to what they believe the other thinks about their group (Lammers, Gordijn, & Otten, 2008). In part, this is because majority group members are judged to have the power to act on their beliefs and so make them count for the minority. A key ingredient in these experiences is the sense of formal and informal surveillance minorities experience when using public space. For example, the phrase ‘Shopping while Black’ (Pittman, 2017) has entered the lexicon to describe the aversive experience of surveillance reported by Black Americans when undertaking that most everyday activity – shopping (Feagin, 1991). In similar vein, the phrase ‘Flying while Muslim’ has emerged to capture the humiliating hyper-surveillance Muslim passengers now receive (Blackwood, Hopkins & Reicher, 2013, 2015; Mythen, Walklate, & Khan, 2013). As such labels play on real crimes (e.g., ‘Driving whilst intoxicated’), they highlight the ways in which minority group

members are judged a problematic presence. Again, this everyday surveillance (whether formal or informal) contributes to minority group members' meta-stereotype awareness.

Managing interactions

The discrepancy between how one sees oneself and how one believes one is seen by others can be painful (Hopkins, 2011; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011) and motivates diverse interaction management strategies (Goffman, 1963; Hyers, & Swim, 1998; Miller & Meyer, 2001). These include 'passing' (Renfrow, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), ingratiation (Romero-Canyas, et al., 2010), and the presentation of positive or counter-stereotypic behaviours (Klein & Azzi, 2001; Rudman, 1998). It also results in minority group members tailoring the performance of their identities in the light of others' expectations. For example, British Muslim women may make particular efforts to signal their Britishness to avoid being categorised as 'other' (Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013). So too, middle-class Black Americans may self-consciously dress to display their social class to show they belong in high-class shops (Feagin, 1991). More generally, minority group members may feel under considerable pressure to explain their group culture to others so as to change others' misperceptions. Although such a role can bring a sense of pleasure, it can be burdensome (Harris & Hussein, 2018; Hopkins, Greenwood, & Birchall, 2007).

Minority group members may also adopt more confrontational strategies. These can entail appeals to formal authority (as when Black American customers complain formally about their treatment: Feagin, 1991). However, informal strategies are also possible. These include actively confirming threatening stereotypes (e.g., of criminality: Kamans, Gordijn, Oldenhuis, & Otten, 2009) as a means to assert some control over the situation (Hopkins, 2011; Hopkins, Greenwood, & Birchall, 2007). More generally, informal resistance can take the form of the

“foot-dragging, dissimulations, false compliance, feigned ignorance, desertion, pilfering, smuggling, poaching, arson, slander” that Scott (1989, p. 34) observed in peasant resistance to landlord control (and which he labelled ‘weapons of the weak’: Scott, 1985: see too Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016; Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013).

In our research, we consider how Hungarian Roma report seeking to manage their interactions with the non-Roma majority in Hungary. Specifically, we consider how humour was reported to feature in the serious business of managing interactions where minority group members anticipated prejudice from majority group members.

Humour

Humour has often been treated as peripheral to issues of real social concern (Billig, 2001, 2005; Carty & Musharbash, 2008). In part, this is because laughter seems frivolous. Yet, laughter can serve many social functions, e.g., showing affiliation (see Platow, Haslam, Both, Chew, Cuddon, et al., 2005), managing potent emotions (Aragón, Clark, Dyer, & Bargh, 2015), and communicating social status (see Oveis, Spectre, Smith, Liu, & Keltner, 2016). Moreover, if there is laughter it may well be asymmetrical, drawing boundaries between those sharing the joke and others. Given the significance of such boundaries, laughter can, as Carty & Musharbash (2008, p. 214) observe, be “dangerous” rather than frivolous.

In similar vein, the social practice of humour (which is not always associated with laughter) can serve different functions. On the one hand, humour can ease interactional difficulties associated with embarrassing social *faux pas* through ‘framing’ (Goffman, 1974) the interaction in alternative (less serious) terms. On the other, the ridicule involved in some forms

of humour can create (rather than resolve) embarrassment (Billig 2001, 2005) and so function to disturb the smooth flow of interaction. That is, humour has a darker side.

The various functions of humour can be analysed at different levels. Some researchers distinguish between individuals' styles of humour (e.g., affiliative, aggressive, self-enhancing, or self-defeating) and investigate their associations with interpersonal functioning and individual well-being (Martin & Lefcourt, 1983; Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003). Others explore how humour serves group interests. Accordingly much research explores how humour reflects and serves group status and power. Research shows that disparaging humour about minorities reproduces ethnic and sexist stereotypes (Hobden & Olson, 1994; Woodzicka & Ford, 2010). Indeed, sexist humour has been shown to be consequential for women's treatment (Ford, 2000; Ford et al., 2008; Ford, Woodzicka, Triplett, & Kochersberger, 2013; Woodzicka & Ford, 2010) because it releases existing prejudice (Ford, Boxer, Armstrong, & Edel, 2008; Ford, Woodzicka, Triplett, Kochersberger, & Holden, 2014; Ford, Richardson and Petit, 2015). In part this is because passing comment in the form of a 'joke' helps individuals manage the interactional complexities of expressing prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). That is, such humour makes disparagement acceptable (Ford, 2000; Hodson & MacInnis, 2016; Hodson, Rush & MacInnes, 2010). In turn, such humour functions to discipline others and maintain hierarchy (e.g., gender hierarchy: Abedinifard, 2016).

However, the intergroup usage of humour is not one-way: Humour can also be used by those with less social power. Rappoport (2005) uses the metaphor of the 'sword' and the 'shield' to describe how humour can be used to attack and diminish another's worth but also as a defence against attack. Accordingly, researchers have considered how minorities may use humour to shield themselves from hurt. For example, illustrating the 'shield'-like use of humour, some have

considered how minorities subject to racial humour may re-appropriate jokes which challenge their self-worth in ways that are empowering (Boskin & Dorinson, 1985; Saucier, O’Dea & Strain, 2016). In similar vein, researchers have noted that although so-called rape ‘jokes’ may increase men’s tolerance of rape and amplify victim-blaming (Thomae & Viki, 2013; Thomae & Afroditi, 2015), they can be contested and re-appropriated to shield those affected by rape culture (Strain, Martens & Saucier, 2016). Needless to say, such work also makes the point that any re-appropriation of racist or sexist jokes may back-fire if people fail to appreciate the meta-communicative messaging that communicates subversive intent.

Other research considering the subversive use of humour by the marginalised has considered how humour features in protest movements (Hart, 2007; Morva, 2016). For example, the Gezi Park protestors in Istanbul employed humour to mock the powerful and undermine the perceived legitimacy of the established hierarchy (Kaptan, 2016; Tekinalp, 2016). This humour involved re-appropriating the derogatory labels employed by their detractors so as to take the sting out of their derogation (Galinsky et al., 2013; Saucier, et al., 2016). Thus, protestors humorously adopted Erdoğan’s derogatory labelling of the protestors as ‘*çapulcu*’ (or ‘riffraff’) to build ingroup identity and mobilise resistance (graffiti read: ‘Everyday I’m *Chapulling*’ where it meant fighting for social and political rights: Dağtas, 2013). Here, humour was used to re-work the opposition’s characterisation of the protest so as to create and assert an empowered politicised ingroup consciousness. Again such research highlights how alternative meanings may be derived from the humorous re-appropriation of majority group derogation.

Humour and interaction management

Analyses of minority group members' subversive usage of humour tend to be conducted at a broad societal level (e.g., using examples from stand-up comedy or graffiti) where it is possible to observe the potential for contestation over the cultural products typically used to dominate (e.g., the rape 'jokes' that discipline women or the mocking of protest movements). Whilst such research has much to say about the importance of cultural contestation, it has less to say on how minority group members use humour in specific interactions. Indeed, research addressing minority group humour in day-to-day intergroup interactions is limited. Griffiths (1998) reports how in community mental health teams, lower-status professionals (e.g., nurses) used humour to negotiate the power of higher-status professionals (e.g., psychiatrists) in deciding on clients' treatment plans. In similar vein, Teng-Calleja, Montiel and Baquiano (2015) explore how labour union activists attempted to use humour to subvert their employer's authority in wage negotiations. However, there is little that addresses minority group members' use of humour to negotiate interaction with majority group members and thus manage their exposure to prejudice. This is what we focus on.

The use of humour in such everyday encounters differs from scenarios where a stand-up comedian addresses a sympathetic audience, or protest activists collectively re-appropriate the derogatory labels of the powerful. Face-to-face encounters bring pressing interactional concerns: questions about what the other really thinks or means, concerns about social norms and politeness, fears concerning one's vulnerability to public humiliation, etc. Moreover, using humour in face-to-face interaction is complicated: For humour to work in such interactions, meta-communicative signalling (Tannen, 1993) which communicates that what is said or done should not be interpreted seriously or literally but as 'play', is key (Bateson, 1954; Goffman, 1974; Tannen, 1993). Such signalling allows difficult issues to be raised whilst avoiding explicit

confrontation (and retribution). However, it is through such complexities that humour has potential to function as a ‘weapon of the weak’ (Scott, 1985). Indeed, Teng-Calleja, Montiel and Baquiano (2015, p. 16) argue that humour may be “a discursive means of expressing opposition, protest, defiance, dissatisfaction, and recalcitrant and outrageous ideas in a non-threatening way” and that such “uses of humour can be construed as the less dominant’s version of doing power in conversations”.

Attending to minority group members’ interactional strategies also alerts us to the breadth of the category ‘humour’. A key feature of much humour is that it involves “a play upon form” which communicates “that an accepted pattern has no necessity” (Douglas, 1968, p. 365). Such “play” can include jokes (complete with a punch line and laughter). However, it also includes tongue-in-cheek identity performances that mischievously play with established conventions and assumptions. Such humour (incorporating irony, parody, satire, and sarcasm) can be used in diverse ways. In some contexts it may entail a degree of self-deprecation and communicate the actor’s ‘role-distance’ (Goffman, 1961). In other contexts such mischievous identity performances may turn the familiar upside down. Indeed, as these forms of humour often involve a complex shifting between two different framings (the expected framing of social reality and an alternative), they can create new meanings (Ritchie, 2005) and increase creativity (Huang, Gino & Galinsky, 2015). Again this hints at the serious side to humour and the significance of Orwell’s (1945) observation that “every joke is a tiny revolution”.

With regards to minority group members’ interaction strategies, all this implies a need to look beyond ‘jokes’ with their punch lines to consider how identity performances can mischievously play with established conventions and ridicule the (normally) powerful. Indeed, we can begin to see the potential for humour to ridicule the assumptions that underlie the

established order. In the analysis that follows, we explore the ways in which a sample of Hungarian Roma report their use of humour in their interactions with non-Roma. We consider the variety to this humour and pay particular attention to how it may be used to protect minority group members in intergroup interactions.

Roma

For those interested in minority group members' everyday experiences of prejudice there are good reasons to focus on Roma. The Roma population in Central and Eastern Europe is approximately four million and Roma constitute significant minorities in many countries (e.g., they constitute between 4-7 % of the Hungarian population: Kertesi & Kézdi, 2011). Historically, Roma existed on the margins of society with limited land and property, and were routinely depicted as aliens who threatened the nation. This construction involved the essentialisation and racialisation of difference which was most clearly manifested in the genocide known as the *Porajamos* or Roma Holocaust. (1939-1945). In the post-war Communist era, despite the living conditions of Eastern Europe's Roma improving somewhat, Roma communities remained stigmatised and were subject to policies of assimilation. Following political change in Eastern Europe, the essentialisation and racialisation of Roma identity has continued with anti-Roma attitudes remaining strong (Csepeli, Orkeny, & Szekelyi, 2000). Anti-Roma attitudes are normative (Kende, Hadarics, & Lášticová, 2017) and maintained by de-humanising and animalistic imagery (Kteily, Bruneau, Waytz, & Cotterill, 2015, study 4; Pérez, Moscovici, & Chulvi, 2007). Roma remain stereotyped as lacking intelligence, lazy, and prone to crime (Csepeli & Simon, 2004; Strobl, 2014). So too they continue to be depicted as an alien and problematic presence (Tileaga, 2006) and as threatening Europe's civilised order (Loveland &

Popescu, 2016). Indeed, such is the historical persistence of this othering of Roma communities that many analysts maintain it has a distinctive dynamic and force (Ljujic, Vedder, Dekker, & Van Geel, 2012). Recent political events (e.g., right-wing populism) have contributed to the acceptability of public disparagement of Roma (for analyses of these processes in Hungary, see: Tremlett & Messing, 2015; Vidra & Fox, 2014) and the normative acceptance of anti-Roma sentiment (even in apparently liberal media) has resulted in what van Baar (2014) terms ‘reasonable anti-Gypsyism’.

The social consequences of such racialized othering and stereotyping impact education (Kertesi & Kézdi, 2013), employment (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014), and health (Masseria, Mladovsky, & Hernández-Quevedo, 2010). With regard to interaction, informal segregation is common (Ives, Alama, Oikonomidou, & Obenchain, 2016) and in-keeping with previous findings (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005), when intergroup contact does take place the effects appear greater for the non-Roma interaction partners than the Roma partners (Kamberi, Martinovic, & Verkuyten, 2017). Presumably, this is because Roma participants continue to be on their guard against displays of prejudice. The manifestations of this prejudice range from discriminatory punishment by formal authorities (e.g., the police: Hera, 2017) through to the everyday jokes reproduced in informal interaction (e.g., one starts with the question, “Laco, Dežo and Jožo are traveling in a car. Who’s driving?” in which the punch-line is “The police”: Druker, 2011).

Given this context, it is likely that Roma routinely anticipate encountering prejudice. Some may seek to manage this vulnerability through dis-identification and passing (Bigazzi & Csertó, 2016). However, others may seek to manage the interaction in ways that reduce the degree to which they are vulnerable to others’ prejudice, and we consider how minority group

members may use humour in this regard. Using qualitative data obtained through interviews with Hungarian Roma, we explore how humour is reported as featuring in their interactions with majority group members. These data reveal something of the range to humour. Sometimes humour was a means to manage embarrassment (sometimes the interviewees' own, sometimes the non-Roma other's) and so smooth the interaction with majority group members. However, interviewees also reported using humour to manage their exposure to prejudice. This could involve using humour to test the interaction partner's intergroup attitudes and so provide information relevant to the conduct of the interaction. More strikingly, some reported performing identities and roles that were incongruent with (and mocked) taken-for-granted assumptions about the interactional order. Here, parody, irony and sarcasm were key in disrupting majority group members' abilities to act on their prejudices.

Method

The study of live interaction is difficult (practically and ethically). In contexts such as work-related meetings it might be possible to record interaction (Griffiths, 1998; Teng-Calleja et al., 2015). This is harder when the interactions are spontaneous, occur in everyday contexts (e.g., supermarkets, public transport), and entail significant power asymmetries (as when minorities interact with police officers, security guards, etc.). However, interview research can offer an alternative. Interviews can provide insight concerning (minority) group members' experiences and strategies (Blackwood et al., 2013, 2015; Hopkins, 1994; Feagin, 1991; Stott, Hutchison, & Drury, 2001). Indeed, interviews concerning such interactions have the advantage of allowing participants to report their perceptions and meta-perceptions, their interactional concerns, and the

different ways in which they use humour to manage their inter-group encounters. Accordingly, we report interview data in which Roma describe their use of humour in their interactions.

Participants

30 Roma (18 = male, 12 = female; age = 20 to 65) were interviewed. 28 participants were contacted through Roma associations, two through personal acquaintance. 23 were students or had a university degree. 15 were actors/writers, journalists, or political activists. Five had professions performing traditional Roma music/dance (one of whom was also an activist). Others worked helping disadvantaged Roma children etc. Clearly, this sample is not representative of Hungarian Roma. Nor was it intended to be: It was selected because we wished to explore the insights and experiences of those who had the social capital required to celebrate Roma identity and address anti-Roma prejudice. Accordingly, it is not our intention to make empirical generalisations about the frequency of humour's usage amongst Roma. Rather, purposeful sampling can generate theoretical insight into particular processes which other researchers may then seek to transfer elsewhere (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Interviews

The interviews (semi-structured) took place in offices, public places, and participants' homes. On average the interviews lasted 64 minutes (range 14 to 100 minutes). The interview schedule focused on participants' understandings of Roma identity and the intergroup relations that Hungarian Roma experience. It included questions concerning various stereotypes of Roma (e.g., concerning criminality, musical ability, etc.), the costs and benefits of being seen as a representative of the group, strategies of 'passing' and of contesting prejudiced treatment. The schedule included questions such as: "Can you recall any personal experience when you felt being the target of prejudice as a Roma? How did you feel? What did you do? Would you act

differently if it happened to you now?” Initially, questions about humour were not included. However, as humour was introduced by some of the interviewees, this issue was more explicitly addressed by the interviewer. The interviews were conducted by the first author (a non-Roma, Hungarian woman). Although being a fellow Roma could be advantageous, this is not necessarily so (one could be assumed to have certain knowledge or to subscribe to particular versions of Roma identity that impact one’s ability to ask questions: Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). This research received approval from the University of XXXXXX’s Research Ethics Committee. As interview data may allow interviewees to be identified, our data are not publically available. However, interested parties may contact the authors to discuss our analyses in more detail.

Analytic approach

All data were entered into *Nvivo*. As our interest in the potential significance of humour in managing interactions with majority group members developed, we subjected our data to a more focused reading. This entailed identifying extracts that described intergroup encounters featuring humour. These extracts were then read in detail to identify the different ways in which humour was reported to function in the interaction. This involved comparing extracts against each other in an iterative process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) resulting in an inductive form of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

We identified different ways in which humour functioned. In some instances it was used to ease embarrassment and smooth interactions. In others, it was to test others’ attitudes. In still others, it was reported to be a means to problematize the terms on which interactions are conducted (and this is where irony, parody and sarcasm have such potential). Sometimes these uses of humour served to protect minority group members from exposure to prejudice (e.g., through eliciting diagnostic information concerning the interaction partners’ intergroup attitudes

such that one can decide whether to invest in the relationship). Sometimes they were used to mock and thereby constrain majority group members' ability to act on the basis of their taken-for-granted prejudices.

Throughout our analysis we note the ways in which humour was relevant to the course of the interaction. However, our analysis is inevitably shaped by what the interviewee chose to emphasise. Accordingly, whereas some extracts shed light on the minority group member's subjective experience (e.g., the experience of tension release associated with easing embarrassment), others provide more insight into the rhetorical organisation and function of humour. This is particularly apparent in extracts describing the irony, parody and sarcasm involved in the playful performance of identities that ridicule the taken-for-granted interaction assumptions that underlie majority group members' power.

Given the non-representative nature of our sample, our analysis does not seek to make empirical claims about the degree to which humour routinely features in the interaction management strategies adopted by Hungarian Roma. Nor do we wish to make claims about the relative frequency with which our sample reported using different forms of humour in their interactions with non-Roma. Rather, our aim is to illustrate the diverse ways in which humour was reported to feature in inter-group interaction. Moreover, given our interest in how minority group members may seek to manage their vulnerability to majority group members' prejudicial behaviour, we have paid particular attention to interviewees' reports of how they used humour to challenge majority group members' ability to act on the basis of their prejudices. Accordingly, it would be a mistake to read our data as showing that majority group members' power is routinely challenged. Following Elliott, Fischer, and Rennie's (1999) advice on how to ensure quality in qualitative research, our analysis is grounded in multiple examples. When reporting these data,

open brackets – [] – mark text that has been excluded for reasons of space, and text appearing inside such brackets is to aid comprehension.

Analysis

Humour as easing interaction

Several participants reported using humour to ease interaction with non-Roma. For example, one (interviewee 30, female, university student) explained that at work:

Extract 1

When it turns out that I'm Gypsy they become totally tense and don't dare to say anything. And then humour is the only one tool you can reach out for immediately. And in one and a half to two minutes I ask them: "Do you like jokes?" – "Of course." [] And then I tell my favourite Gypsy joke, everybody is laughing, and they already dare to talk. So I think humour is the only one tool that helps a Gypsy person not to get crazy, because after a while you, yourself find it funny too, seriously. Obviously, there are situations which are so serious that humour can't help either.

Quite why the telling of such jokes works to improve interaction is unclear. It might convey the message that the joke-teller is 'relaxed' about the group's predicament or identifies with the non-Roma majority. What is clearer is that the shared humour (and in this case, laughter) breaks the tension with others who "don't dare to say anything" and takes pressure off the joke teller (helping "a Gypsy person not to get crazy") thereby making the interaction easier. Yet this may come at a cost: Despite being instrumental in relieving

tension and allowing interaction, such humour may reproduce (rather than question) the stereotypes that maintain the status quo.

Similar themes arise in extract 2 where the interviewee (interviewee 23, female, officer worker) describes an interaction with a police officer. Specifically, she described being in a large public square with her daughter's boyfriend and being asked to show her identity papers by a police officer:

Extract 2

We were waiting at *Lehel* square with the son of one of my friends, I haven't been asked for identity check for 18 years, and they came. And I told them: "I haven't been checked for identity for 18 years", and the officers were laughing too, and they were like: "What? It was just due then." "Well, – I said – thanks." [] It was great.

We were the two Roma in the big white crowd, and bang! And we were just laughing with that boy, like we couldn't believe that it just happened to us, but it was great.

[The daughter's boyfriend said] "So, after 18 years you get identity checked, and it happens just beside me." It was great. The officer was also laughing: "It was just due".

Here, the officer's laughing comment that an identity check was due after 18 years ("What? It was just due then") functions to soften the act of police surveillance: It naturalises the intrusion of surveillance through presenting it as something that should happen every now and again. Although initiated by the police officer, the humour in this interaction is something of a joint accomplishment: The interviewee reports participating in (rather than resisting) the joke that she should undergo an identity check (she reports saying 'thanks' and

joining in the laughter). She also reports that the boyfriend participated. Such participation is not because identity checks are accepted as neutral: The interviewee emphasises how she and the boyfriend were singled out for police surveillance (“We were the two Roma in the big white crowd, and bang!”). Rather, we have an example of how humour may be a vehicle through which what could be a somewhat tense and confrontational encounter is represented by both the officer and participants in a manner that makes it lighter and more manageable.

These examples suggest how humour may be used to manage embarrassment and ease social interaction. They also suggest how humour may contribute to the reproduction of stereotypes and social relations. Although this latter is a familiar theme in humour research, these extracts make the point that minority group members may be complicit in this process as they seek to manage some of the interactional difficulties associated with being stereotyped.

In the remainder of our analysis we explore how humour may be employed by minority group members to rather different effect. As a first step, we consider reports of humour being used to provide information about others’ intergroup attitudes, and where appropriate, overcome prejudiced assumptions that hinder the development of trust.

Humour as testing intergroup attitudes

One interviewee (interviewee 5, male, journalist) explained that they routinely advertised their Roma identity in order to gauge others’ inter-group attitudes and that humour could be used in this regard:

Extract 3

Interviewee 5: Many people laugh that I am often banging on my chest. Or I'm not really banging, in fact, it's just provoking. So at many places I intentionally say that I'm Gypsy, because I'm watching how others react to that. But really I'm not banging on my chest because I want to show off that I'm Gypsy, but because I'm curious about how others react to that, the people around me.

Interviewer: And how does this look, could you describe a situation?

Interviewee 5: I don't know, I go to McDonald's and I wink and ask for a tripe stew, "but make it well in a Roma style". Or wherever I go on abroad, first thing I tell, that I'm Gypsy. I'm curious what that means to them. I've worked in England for two years, I came back recently, one and a half month ago, and there as well, everybody knew that at my workplace. Of course, I'm listening to Gypsy music. [] I'm just curious about how people react. Sometimes it ends with laughing, and there are people who, usually people are just surprised. They can't handle it, they are like "What?"

The interviewee describes several ways of advertising their identity to others (e.g., through listening to Roma music) and describes using humour to do so - requesting tripe stew (a popular Roma dish) in McDonalds (the Americanised fast-food outlet). This request plays on the stereotype that Roma are backward and do not know how to behave in the modern world. For the joke to be understood as a joke, the other must recognise the exaggerated nature of this identity performance and the absurdity of stereotypes about Roma. What is particularly interesting here is the implication that others' responses to such a

playful performance of a Roma-related stereotype can be read as diagnostic of the degree to which they hold anti-Roma attitudes and beliefs.

Another interviewee (interviewee 25, male university student), also spoke of using humour to investigate others' attitudes, adding that humour allowed sensitive issues to be raised in such a way that the interaction partners could overcome anxieties and talk in a free, relaxed and open manner:

Extract 4

There are those Gypsy jokes, many people can't handle those. But I think this is rather a kind of 'sensitizing' [tool]. I'm trying to point out, that we don't have to be afraid of this 'Gypsy' issue, we don't have to be afraid of that. You know this kind of tactfulness, you know this kind of 'I don't want to harm him', and this can create such a barrier between two people. This is why one tries to dissolve this. This is why I usually do this [joking]. On the other hand, it turns out by these little jokes whether the other is really racist or not. I'm sorry to say this, but it very quickly becomes obvious from one's reactions. So on the one hand it is 'sensitizing' whether one really has that barrier inside that has to be broken down or one is just simply prejudiced against you really. And I rather choose to find it out by a little joke at the beginning than later on the go.

As before, the interviewee explains that others' responses to the telling of "those Gypsy jokes" can be diagnostic of their intergroup attitudes ("it turns out by these little jokes whether the other is really racist or not"). Moreover, he explains that once a relationship has been established, the pain of discovering the other to be prejudiced was such that the

interviewee would “rather choose to find it out by a little joke at the beginning than later on”. That is, humour featuring Roma stereotypes can do the serious work of testing the other’s inter-group attitudes (such that the interviewee can act so as protect themselves from future hurt). In addition, the interviewee notes humour can serve another function: It can be a way for him to signal that “we don’t have to be afraid of this ‘Gypsy’ issue”. Put another way, the ‘joking’ invocation of Roma stereotypes allows issues to be addressed that could otherwise remain taboo. What is particularly interesting here is the way in which such taboos are construed as impeding the development of genuinely authentic relationships. For example, the interviewee hints at the anxieties that the non-Roma other may have about appearing to be prejudiced and how anxiety inhibits the development of easy-going discussion of issues that both interaction partners would anticipate being on the other’s minds. This was expanded on by the same interviewee (interviewee 25) as follows:

Extract 5

For example, I offer you a piece of chocolate, and you don’t take it, and I usually make a joke like, “you don’t take it because I’m a Gypsy?”, and you know then he becomes embarrassed, and you slowly make him realise that you were just joking, and then he realises, and then you can start something together to overcome these inhibitions, which is created by the majority society. These are created barriers, and everybody has these inside, and this is very difficult, because, one doesn’t want to harm you, and obviously you don’t want to harm one either, and obviously there will be a point during your conversation, when it comes up, and you have to talk about the Gypsy-Hungarian situation, you cannot avoid that. And I think it’s better to discuss this at the beginning.

Once again, this interviewee describes anticipating issues that will eventually feature as interactional topics (“the Gypsy-Hungarian situation, you cannot avoid that”) and explains “it’s better to discuss this at the beginning”. Again the implication is that not only can humour function as a diagnostic tool to differentiate between the prejudiced and the non-prejudiced (extract 3), it can also communicate to the latter that open dialogue is possible.

As the interviewee above observes, the embarrassment-easing function of humour depends on the interaction partner recognising that “you were just joking”. Several interviewees noted that this was not at all guaranteed. For example, one (interviewee 11, male, artist) explained:

Extract 6

So, I can tell a stereotype as a joke, a Roma stereotype, let’s say “Be careful don’t put your phone here, because there are Roma here” or something like that. I can say this to a Roma. It can be said to a non-Roma too, but you need to be careful if he understands.

The wider point here is that joking is an accomplishment. In order to work, humour needs meta-communicative messaging cues to indicate that what is said is not to be taken at face value. Evidence of this is apparent in extract 3 where the interviewee reports their request for tripe stew was accompanied with a (meta-communicative) ‘wink’. Yet, even so there is no guarantee of how what is said will be received. For the interviewee in extract 6, this was a cause for concern. However, for others (extract 3) this is exactly the point: The joke is meant to test and so be diagnostic of the other’s inter-group attitudes such that one

could decide whether to pursue or terminate the relationship (and thereby exert some control over one's exposure to prejudice).

In the next section, we continue to explore how humour was used as a vehicle to bring issues concerning intergroup relations out into the open. However, as we will see, the purpose of bringing these issues into the open was less to do with building meaningful relationships and more to do with challenging the ability of others to act in a prejudiced manner.

Subverting taken-for-granted assumptions and the operation of power

Roma often report interactions with others to be based on the presumption that Roma are involved in crime (Csepeli & Simon, 2004). This also featured in our interviews. Many reported being stopped by the police (see extract 2) and being subject to disproportionate levels of surveillance when travelling (at airports, on busses), shopping, or using public facilities (such as bars and clubs). Here, we consider interviewees' reports of their use of humour to manage the unequal (and intrusive) power dynamics in such interactions. We identified three ways in which interviewees reported using humour to problematize the taken-for-granted assumptions that facilitated the ability of others (e.g., shop assistants, security staff) to act on the basis of their prejudices. A key element to this humour was the exaggerated performance of a particular role or identity which was geared to re-framing the interaction such that it was harder for the non-Roma other to act on their taken-for-granted assumptions about Roma.

The performance of compliance. Our first example comes from an interviewee (interviewee 15, male, activist) who described his experience of surveillance at airports and

his resentment at the level of intrusiveness that he perceived as accompanying the associated security checks. He described his response in these terms:

Extract 7

So I expressed my displeasure, and while he was searching my bag I started to search it too, like: “Here you go. Have a look at here too, make sure you don’t miss out on something”. And then I said “thank you”, closed my luggage and left.

A second example comes from an interviewee (interviewee 26, male, activist) who described their experiences of accessing public facilities:

Extract 8

I wasn’t let in bars. On the bus the driver didn’t ask anyone but me for the student card. Many people got on the bus in front of me, he asked only me. I told him: “Do you also want my bank account number?” I don’t like such things.

In these two extracts, we see a particular style of humour: The exaggerated performance of co-operation with the authority figure. Thus, in extract 7, the interviewee reports starting to search the bag (“make sure you don’t miss out on something”) and in extract 8 the interviewee reports volunteering obviously highly personal information (“Do you also want my bank account number?”). At one level, these interviewees exhibit compliance with authority. However, there is also an element of parody in such compliance that frames the authority’s actions as ridiculous and illegitimate.

Such exaggerated performances of compliance are unlikely to change the course of the interaction. Nor are they likely to result in laughter (shared or otherwise). However, such

parody may afford the individual some sense of being able to communicate to the non-Roma other a sense of the absurdity of the situation. Moreover, it is important to note that the potential costs of such absurdly exaggerated performances of compliance are much less than outright resistance.

Next, we consider attempts to more fully change the dynamics to interactions with non-Roma others (especially when shopping). Again, we focus on the way in which interviewees reported using exaggerated performances of identity to construe the dominant framing of the interaction as absurd.

The performance of being a customer. Describing their experience of surveillance when shopping, one interviewee (interviewee 26, male, activist) explained:

Extract 9

Interviewee 26: For example, when I am followed by a security guard, I follow him too, and ask him how much this chocolate costs, if he follows me so much. But not when I'm alone, I only do this when I'm with friends. I like making a joke of it, and I can't really be pissed off by that.

Interviewer: Could you explain it a little more how it looks? You ask how much the chocolate costs, and then?

Interviewee 26: For example, this is an everyday story. We are going for shopping with my friends. And then we are like: "Ah, the security is following us again". And then we bring him the chocolate, and ask how much it costs, and he is surprised by that. And then he becomes embarrassed. And we like that situation. When he is the one who becomes embarrassed.

Interviewer: And why do you think he becomes embarrassed?

Interviewee 26: Because we notice what he is doing. Because he wants to do it in a very secret way.

Here, the interviewee describes a response to surveillance that involved the exaggerated performance of being a customer. Three features are of particular interest. First, adopting the role of a customer wanting information (the price of chocolate) provides a warrant to approach and interact with someone (the guard) whose role requires them to be part of the background context. That is, there is a reversal of agency in the interaction: Rather than the interviewee being the person who is followed, it is the guard (“I follow him too, and ask him how much this chocolate costs”). Approaching the guard in this manner positions the latter on terms that are not their own. Indeed, the guard is positioned as a service assistant with the implication that they should interact with the interviewee and his friends, not as suspects, but with the polite help normally accorded customers. Second, this approach involves a performance that all (including the guard) know to be a fiction (in the sense of not being motivated by a genuine desire to purchase chocolate). Indeed, it is this knowledge that helps explain the guard’s self-consciousness and embarrassment: The guard is only too aware that their presence has been noted, made socially visible, and mocked. Third, the interviewee describes the pleasure to be had in taking this role when in the company of his friends (“I only do this when I’m with friends. I like making a joke of it”) who form a ‘knowing’ audience. Indeed, it is likely that part of the power of this strategy in creating embarrassment resides in the guard knowing that their real identity as a guard is being mocked before a wider audience.

In similar vein, another (interviewee 29, female, university student) reported a friend's attempt to embarrass a guard through inviting them to help carry their shopping basket:

Extract 10

Interviewee 29: I think every parent tells the children not to touch [products] but just have a look at them, and if you need something show me and we can take it off from the shelf. But with me it's like even when I was only looking at it, I was told not to look at it. I mean by these security guards, or I don't know who they are. Drugstores are my favourites. They love us there. They literally are following us in the rows. One of my friends told them "Would you like to bring my basket? Just because you are always behind me anyways." You can do it like that. It's good when one can handle these with humour, but you can't always do so.

Once again, the interviewee describes an attempt to make the guard aware that their role in surveillance is well-understood and is experienced as unwanted. Again, this is described as involving a form of humour in which the taken-for-granted characterisation of the situation and interaction is mocked. Specifically, the interviewee reports a feigned lack of understanding of the guard's real role in surveillance. Indeed, the friend's joking invitation ("Would you like to bring my basket?") and feigned puzzlement as to the guard's presence ("Just because you are always behind me") can be seen as involving the performance of being a (normal) customer and the positioning of the guard as being a potential assistant. This not only highlights the guard's presence but thoroughly ridicules their real role and authority.

In the next extract, we see another exaggerated performance of being a (normal) ‘customer’. However, what is distinctive about this performance is that it entails explicit reference to the stereotype of Roma as thieves. Specifically, the interviewee reports presenting themselves to the guards as being fearful of Roma criminality. The interviewee (interviewee 30, female, university student) explained the scenario as follows:

Extract 11

Interviewee 30: I tell you a more concrete example, it usually happens in shops. For example, in [name of shop] it’s an incredible place. You enter [name of shop] and from then on at least four pairs of eyes are pointed at you. It’s incredible, the shop is full, busy, but they are following you.

Interviewer: The security guard?

Interviewee 30: The security guard is following me, yes. But so conspicuously, he doesn’t even bother to pretend like he didn’t. And then obviously it depends on my mood, but I usually play on this thing. Although at other times I really just need a deodorant, I just buy it and let’s leave each other alone. It has also happened sometimes that I said, I don’t know, like “Thank you very much for looking after my personal security, I have seen a couple of Gypsies around.” And then obviously, he can’t say anything, he’s totally shocked like “What? Oh my god!”

This interviewee describes the pain and hurt associated with conspicuous surveillance. So too, they describe how they mischievously play on the stereotype of Roma criminality and position the guard as someone responsible for their personal safety (“Thank you very much for looking after my personal security, I have seen a couple of Gypsies

around”). This (mocking) performance of gratitude makes the existence of anti-Roma prejudice explicit. Moreover, it implies the guard subscribes to such prejudice. Needless to say, the humour here entails a parody of taken-for-granted assumptions in that what is said about Roma and the guard’s reassuring role in protecting the interviewee is not to be taken at face value. Rather, the expression of gratitude for behaviour premised on anti-Roma stereotypes mocks those stereotypes and the interviewee reports that this message was clearly understood by the guard. Such humour did not result in laughter but shock (“he’s totally shocked like “What? Oh my god!”). Yet, this is exactly what the playful identity performance was designed to accomplish. Again, we are alerted to the serious function of the ridicule entailed in this form of humour.

The performance of being Roma. Other interviewees interacting with authority figures reported adopting playfully exaggerated performances of Roma-related stereotypes. Such performances have already been mentioned when we considered how one interviewee reported playfully ordering Roma-style “tripe stew” in McDonalds (see extract 3). Here, we consider how such playful performances of Roma-related stereotypes were used to more fundamentally manage interactions with authority figures so that the power of the latter is diminished.

One interviewee (interviewee 26, male, activist) explained that when they approached the cash-desk in shops and saw the security guard “we know that he will search us” and that to forestall such a search they asked for *kocsonya* - a homemade, salty, jelly-like product made from pork:

Extract 12

Interviewee 26: we ask whether we can buy *kocsonya* or things like that. We try to do it in a funny way. And they recognise the form of the mocking, and they don't want to search us anymore.

Interviewer: Why *kocsonya*?

Interviewee 26: Nothing special, just because this comes to our minds. Just for fun. And obviously we know that they don't have it, and this is why. We want to appear Gypsies, but in this way show that we aren't.

Asking for such a stereotypical homemade foodstuff in the supermarket plays on the popular image of Roma as being backward and uncivilised (see also extract 3). Indeed, it constitutes the purposeful performance of the Roma stereotype (as the interviewee explains, he and his friends choose to ask for *kocsonya* because “obviously we know that they don't have it”). The result is that the security staff are confronted with an image of Roma that is so caricatured and parodied as to be unbelievable. Or, as the interviewee explains, he and his friends undertake this performance because “We want to appear Gypsies, but in this way show that we aren't.” The wider logic to this performance is that he and his friends are parodying how they think the shop staff see Roma. Moreover, it seems that the ridicule involved in this performance is such as to make it all but impossible for the staff to search them because to do so would be seen as exemplifying such stereotypical perceptions. Indeed, the interviewee claims that such a mocking of intergroup perceptions inhibits staff from acting on their prejudices (“And they recognise the form of the mocking, and they don't want to search us anymore”).

Similar themes emerge in this same interviewee's description of another interaction in which they report making explicit reference to the stereotype of Roma criminality and aggression. The interviewee reported travelling on a bus with a Roma friend who was about to be fined by the Ticket Controller for a minor offence and continued that they (the interviewee) brandished a large wrench in front of the Ticker Controller:

Extract 13

Interviewee 26: and I started to show it off to the Controller, but just as a joke, I wanted to show that I am a Gypsy, and to see what he thinks. Well, in fact he didn't dare to look at me after that, and he didn't fine my friend either. It would have been unfair though. And we just wanted to make a joke, we were laughing at it, but no one else laughed on the bus, because we presented the Gypsy stereotypes.

Interviewer: Such as aggression?

Interviewee 26: Yes, like we were about to punch him, but obviously we wouldn't have punched him, nothing like that. And I approached a guy, and asked him to pretend that I was threatening him, and it was funny. And when we got off the bus, immediately 3-4 people surrounded the guy, and asked what we did to him, whether we wanted to punch him. But these are rather jokes for ourselves.

Interviewer: It's also to relieve the tension?

Interviewee 26: Yes, this is how we relieve the tension, with joking. [] Yes, it's somewhat natural that you pick up that role [the stereotypical Rom].

Interviewer: Do you have such experiences?

Interviewee 26: Yes, that I pick up the role that they want to force on me. But I only pretend it like I did so.

Interviewer: Why?

Interviewee 26: I haven't really thought about that. I just want to make that person uncomfortable, who treats me like that.

Once again, there is an exaggerated performance of a Roma-related stereotype. Specifically, the interviewee described using the wrench to imply Roma aggressiveness and then engaging another to “pretend that I was threatening him”. Initially the performance was to test reactions (in a manner similar to that discussed in relation to extracts 3 – 5) and had the potential to end in joint laughter. However, as no one responded in this manner (“we were laughing at it, but no one else laughed”) there is a sense in which the joke developed to become one “for ourselves”. Needless to say, this identity performance orients to the non-Roma other's assumptions and fears (“I pick up the role that they want to force on me”) and there is a sense in which the pleasure of the joke is bound up with the fact that targets of the humour are (because of their beliefs) such willing accomplices in their own discomfort.

Discussion

Much of the research into minority group members' subversive use of humour is conducted at a broad societal level and explores how cultural products such as racist and sexist jokes are re-worked (e.g., by stand-up comedians and protest activists) to mock the absurdity of racism and sexism (Boskin & Dorinson, 1985; Saucier, O'Dea & Strain, 2016; Strain, Martens & Saucier, 2016) or the derogatory censure of protest (Dağtas, 2013; Kaptan, 2016; Tekinalp, 2016). In contrast, our own work focuses on how ordinary people report using humour in their everyday interactions. This humour is diverse. Sometimes, it involved the telling of a Roma joke,

sometimes it took the form of an interactional performance that parodied the taken-for-granted assumptions associated with anti-Roma prejudice. Sometimes it involved participation in the jokes told by the powerful, sometimes it involved the mocking of the powerful. Sometimes it functioned to ease the interaction, sometimes to disrupt the interaction.

We are particularly interested in the subversive use of humour in interaction. In this regard two features of our data warrant particular attention. The first concerns the ‘shield’-like (Rappoport, 2005) functions of humour. As we saw humour was sometimes reported to be used as a tool to test the other’s intergroup attitudes with a view to managing one’s exposure to prejudice in the future (extracts 3 – 6). This extends our understanding of the way humour protects the minority beyond the emphasis on considering how ethnic jokes (Boskin & Dorinson, 1985; Saucier, O’Dea & Strain, 2016) and sexist jokes (Strain, Martens & Saucier, 2016) are re-appropriated by their target to build ingroup solidarity. Specifically, we show how humour can be a vehicle for gauging the risk of encountering prejudice in everyday interaction so that one can take avoidant action (e.g., not pursuing the relationship).

The second feature of note concerns how humour could be used to constrain the other’s ability to act on the basis of their prejudices (see especially extracts 9 – 12). Here, humour had ‘sword’-like qualities (Rappoport, 2005) in that it was used proactively to ridicule and thus disarm the other. With regards to interaction management this illustrates the potential for humour to function as a ‘weapon of the weak’ (Scott, 1985, 1989) in intergroup encounters.

Our work also highlights the breadth to the category ‘humour’. Attending to participants’ accounts of their interaction management strategies underlines the observation that there is more to humour than the telling of jokes (Warren & McGraw, 2016). Irony, parody, satire and sarcasm are also important (see extracts 7 -13) and featured in various guises - especially the performance

of roles and identities in ways that violated expectations (e.g., the performance of being a customer when the guard assumes one to be a thief; the exaggerated performance of a Roma-related stereotype, etc.). Often, there was a sense of incongruity (a key feature in many theories of humour: Warren & McGraw, 2016). Where the violation of expectations is judged benign, joint laughing is possible (Warren & McGraw, 2016). However, where this violation is threatening entailing ridicule, joint laughter is unlikely. Yet, the absence of laughter does not mean that the majority group member fails to ‘get’ the joke. The meta-communicative signalling (Tannen, 1993) in such performances makes it plain to all that established assumptions are being knowingly ridiculed. The recipients recognise that they are the butt of a joke. And, this recognition is key to their humiliation.

With regards to our data it is important to re-emphasise that our sample is not representative of Hungarian Roma and we do not wish to make claims about the frequency with which humour is routinely employed by Roma in the interactions with non-Roma. It is likely that reports of humour being used to subvert non-Roma others’ power would be reduced amongst those with less social capital than that enjoyed by our participants. Moreover, even with regards to our own sample, we would not wish to make any claims about the relative frequencies of particular forms of humour. Our selection of quotes is designed to illustrate diversity in the use of humour, and, more particularly, to foreground the ways in which humour can be employed by minority group members to exert a degree of control over their vulnerability to others’ prejudicial behaviour. It is also important to note that our data comprise reports of humour usage rather than observed humour usage. Yet, interviews concerning such interactions have the advantage of allowing participants to report their perceptions, their meta-perceptions, and their interactional concerns. Inevitably, this requires considerable reflexivity on the interviewees’

behalf and we cannot discount the possibility that some of what is said is driven by the impression management concerns associated with the interview itself. For example, it is possible that interviewees may have felt under some pressure to report scenarios where they felt they had used humour over majority group members. Obviously, any research that wishes to accurately enumerate the relative frequency of the various forms of humour employed by any group should be particularly alert to how this may bias self-report data.

Inevitably, many questions remain as to the frequency, type and outcomes of minority group members' humour. Individuals differ in their sense of humour (Martin, et al., 2003) and group members may only consider humour an option in certain circumstances (e.g., in the presence of fellow ingroup members) or when they have a certain social capital. Future research should address such contextual factors shaping the use of humour. It should also address the interactional outcomes to minority group members' use of humour. These cannot be assumed. As anyone who has tried joking with airport security about the bomb they are carrying will testify, jokes can fail (see too Saucier, et al., 2016). Sometimes this is because the powerful may misunderstand the 'play frame' and so fail to 'get' the joke. However, there will also be occasions when they 'get' the joke and feel the ridicule, but rather than being disarmed and retreat, they may respond with punitive affirmations of status and power. Needless to say, future research would ideally include observational data concerning minority group members' use of humour in everyday exchanges and its reception (as opposed to their reports of such issues).

Yet, although our data are self-reported and our sample small and non-representative, some transferability of theoretical insight in relation to humour is possible. Humour, far from being frivolous, can perform serious business (Billig, 2001, 2005; Carty & Musharbash, 2008). With regards to minority group members' interaction strategies, humour may help manage

embarrassment and smooth interaction, allow sensitive issues to be explored, test relationship potential, and even undermine the taken-for-granted assumptions that sustain hierarchy and power relations. This requires researchers to be sensitive to the situational usage of humour. Investigating this usage requires attention to minority group member's subjective experience (as when humour is reported as functioning to release tension and defuse embarrassment: e.g., extracts 1 and 2). However, it also requires attention to the rhetorical organisation of humour. This latter is especially important if we are to understand minorities' 'sword-like' deployment of ironic and sarcastic humour to advance alternative (subversive) versions of reality and contest power (e.g., extract 9 on the performance of being a customer, and extract 12 on the performance of being Roma). Here we have much to learn about how humour can ridicule taken-for-granted assumptions about hierarchy and power so as to circumscribe other's power to act on the basis of their prejudices.

More generally, and in the light of the ways in which humour may subvert established understandings of social relations, social psychologists interested in the social process whereby the 'cognitive alternatives' necessary for social change (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) are articulated and disseminated could gain much from looking at minority group members uses of humour. Indeed, Critchley (2002) notes that humour's ability to create a sense of contingency (and thus make the familiar unfamiliar) "can change the situation in which we find ourselves, and can even have a *critical* function with respect to society" (2002, p. 10, original emphasis).

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