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The Visual Worlds of Social Network Sites

Images and image-based communication on Facebook and Co.

Nomos
Edition Reinhard Fischer

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Acknowledgements

Windows to Ourselves or the Visual Worlds of Social Network Sites – Introduction

ULLA P. AUTENRIETH, KLAUS NEUMANN-BRAUN

Online interaction and communication currently takes place primarily on Social Network Sites (sns), such as StudiVZ, SchülerVZ[1], MySpace, Facebook, and Tilllate, which are frequently used by the vast majority of adolescents in Western countries. Facebook, which is the market leader at the moment, currently combines more than 700 million users under its roof. The research on the phenomenon of social network sites has hitherto focused mainly on the quantitative utilization of the sites or on its overall significance for the communicative behavior of its mainly adolescent users. The emphasis of the research so far has rather been put on the text-based functions and its meaning for the private and social development of adolescents and young adults. However, in addition to language, visual practices of self-expression are crucial for identity development and relationship building on these websites, that is, the use and communication of images is of equally great importance.

In order to make clear how images on social network sites are, one just needs to look at the following numbers: at the end of 2010 approximately 60 billion images had been uploaded on Facebook. Every month some six billion new images are added, which means that by summer 2011 approximately 100 billion images will be posted online. Facebook is, therefore, the biggest picture library on the Web. By means of comparison, one can say that other photo-sharing online platforms that are specialized on showing and distributing pictures possess only a fraction of the contents displayed on Facebook – Photobucket has eight billion photos, Picasa seven billion, and Flickr has five billion. Images are, therefore, the »Killer-App« on the online platforms, that is, one of the most used functions on the social network sites. Apart from showing and viewing pictures for pleasure, they are used for all sorts of communication. For example, one can link pictures to friends, post comments, or rate them.

In the present book, we will be analyzing some aspects of the use of images and the communication and interaction through images on social network sites. We will be looking, on the one hand, at the product level of communication: at the patterns, traditions, and strategies of graphic self-display, as well as at the recep-

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1   Popular social network sites in German-speaking countries according to *Facebook*.

tion level with its various utility models and functions of its mainly adolescent users. All of the results presented here have been collected during the research project »Images of Youth in the Internet«.

1. The research project »Images of Youth in the Internet«

The research project »Images of Youth in the Internet. Visual representation of adolescents in the tension between competing photographical frames« (time span: 01/01/2008 – 30/06/2011, lead: Prof. Dr. Klaus Neumann-Braun, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation) deals with visual self-expressions and image-based communication of adolescents and young adults on social network sites. In the process, photographs of adolescents are analyzed as a media-based contribution to identity work and relationship building that would not be imaginable without the influence of media communication.

While traditional mass media is commonly considered relevant in terms of so-cialization because of its exemplary unidirectional communication from produ-cer to consumer, there are other topics to be raised when it comes to social net-work sites. As yet unacknowledged questions concerning the forms and social functions of mutual identity, negotiations among adolescent peers within public communication gain importance for research efforts in media and social science.

Within the social exchange processes on social network sites, the personal self-expressions in terms of photographs are of the utmost concern. The overlay of private communication addressed to an informal circle by public communica-tion addressed to a dispersed mass audience causes a hybrid space of self-expression, where strategies of public and private, formal and informal as well as global and local communication entangle.

Against this background and on the methodical basis of a comprehensive In-ternet ethnography, the study investigates how adolescents arrange these diffe-rent elements in their photographs and if and to what extent they draw on tradi-tional patterns of photographic design.

Therefore, a variety of empirical surveys was conducted. This included repre-sentative telephone interviews with 650 Swiss teenagers and young adults at the age of 12 to 24 years, 50 semi-structured interviews and 12 focus group discus-sions, as well as network analyses and online ethnographical studies.

On the basis of extensive exemplary case analyses, it is imperative to appraise in what way the adolescents' »self-images« are in fact created autonomously and how strongly the necessities of the new medium (the Internet) as well as the in-fluences of old media (photography, TV) impact the production of photographs. The aim of the current project is to analyze the different photographic self-expression strategies that are used by adolescents in web applications and to con-

trast them with the traditional patterns of design used in classical private photography as well as those used in public (commercial) photography in printed media.

Furthermore, we try to draw conclusions concerning the meaning of various competing »worlds of images« for the structuring of interpretative patterns (by adolescents and adults, respectively) on adolescence and youth cultures as well as finding valuable clues to the question of if and to what extent youth discourses are reflected in competitive, image-bound communication specific to media, especially social network sites. For more information about the research project please see www.netzbilder.net.

2. About the structure of the book

The book presents an overview of some of the results collected during the research project »Images of Youth in the Internet«. The main focus has been placed on nightlife portals, such as Tilllate as well as friendship platforms, such as Facebook. Every chapter will be summarized in short abstracts in order to make it easier for the reader to gain an understanding of the subject matter.

2.1 JÖRG ASTHEIMER, KLAUS NEUMANN-BRAUN, AXEL SCHMIDT
MyFace: Portrait Photography on the Social Web

In their contribution »MyFace. Portrait Photography on the Social Web« Jörg Astheimer, Klaus Neumann-Braun and Axel Schmidt examine the portraits of adolescents on social network sites. The portrait, seen as a means to expose a human being, belongs to the most important social aspects of image usage. We use it in order to show ourselves and others who we are or who we would like to be. In that way, iconic displays of ourselves and of other people around us influence the ideas/images that we form of each other. The same rules apply to the social media on the Web. The users of social network sites display pictures on their profiles in order to present themselves/introduce themselves to other users. These portraits are called profile pictures and they are essential for the users' self-representation. They function as representatives of the users in the virtual world of the social network sites. Facing these communicative undercurrents of the user profiles, the authors pursue the question of how adolescents portray themselves through their user profiles. In order to be able to do this, they introduce a typology of profile pictures, which has been designed using social-scientific and hermeneutic image analyses. The typology makes clear that the

traditions of portraiture definitely does not disappear but rather re-appears in a digital guise.

2.2 ULLA P. AUTENRIETH
MySelf. MyFriends. MyLife. MyWorld. Photo Albums on Social Network Sites and Their Communicative Functions for Adolescents and Young Adults

An essential part of the activities on social network sites has to do with images, done as an own photographic production as well as by using images from the mass media. Beyond the simple viewing of pictures, a series of communicative negotiations take place facilitated by the various possibilities for interaction offered on the portals. This contribution will focus on online albums, which can be created on most social network sites. The flood of images is not random, however, but can be divided into 10 types, which are located along three main subject areas centered on: »persons«, »occasions«, and »objects«. The scale and design of the albums can vary considerably, depending on the users' age. The results presented in this text predominantly deal with findings from an extensive study of image production and reception on social network sites by teenagers and young adults aged 12-24. Against the opinion often voiced in the (mass) media, those images are not used for exhibitionist self-display of its owners, but rather offer multifaceted possibilities of »impression management« and, beyond that, have further important functions for the adolescents and their extended peer groups. In particular, some kinds of identity and relationship management are performed on social network sites in a partly public, peer-reviewed process. Moreover, in the paper, the author will deal with the overall social importance of digital face work and the maintenance of »weak ties« in the context of online communications.

2.3 JÖRG ASTHEIMER
Personal Glam Worlds on the Social Web – Photo-documented Facework and Its Performance on Nightlife Platforms

The research into the structures and dynamics of photo usage on social network sites is followed by an analysis of the images on Nightlife Portals in chapter 3: What do we find in them and what kind of aesthetic are they following? The analyses show that nightlife photography is playing to the tradition of portrait and glamorous star photography, varying these slightly as it incorporates them. The codes of the global star system, propelled by cultural-industrial considerations,

are used as guidelines and partygoers showcase themselves before the eyes of the spectators on site at the party for the (mass) public before their computer screens all around the world as an imitation of the originals. The pressure of mediatization and commercialization is applied to activities such as downtime and partying. The reward for »getting dolled up« and posing lies in the achievement of being the most attractive, of being at the top of the ranking lists – maybe not the »Next Topmodel« but at least the queen of the online list or local party.

2.4   ROBERTO BRUNAZZI, MICHAEL RAAB, MORITZ WILLENEGGER
       Bravo Gala! Users and Their Private Pictures on the Horizon of
       International Star Culture

Chapter 4 adds the angle of the photos taken by the users themselves to the analysis. Thereby, the emphasis is placed on the one type of images to be considered as typical of the amateurs' efforts: imitation of the beloved star and posing before the cameras like they do. Embedded in a continuative discussion of stardom terminology, the authors investigate as to what extent the global star system, propelled by cultural-industrial considerations, has arrived at the point where users have their decisive say in the creation and upkeep of stars. The participation of consumers may go as far as to experiment with the character of a DIY star: partygoers modulate star estheticisms and radicalize their aesthetics with the firm intention to attract attention within the Display Culture – at any cost.

MyFace:
Portrait Photography on the Social Web

JÖRG ASTHEIMER, KLAUS NEUMANN-BRAUN, AXEL SCHMIDT

1. Introduction

Pictures are nearly obligatory on social network sites. A free minute, a cell phone with a built-in camera, and an Internet connection are all that is required for a private snapshot to adorn a profile page on a friendship-oriented social networking site like Facebook, Netlog, or MySpace. There is no doubt about the function of the profile picture: The user is a visible actor on the Web. This visibility is one of the preconditions of social network sites, which are based on the articulation of their members' personal information like almost nothing else on the Internet. This applies to self-descriptions as well as to profile pictures. Due to the pictorial mode of representation, photographic portraits communicate more precisely the image of a person than nicknames or graphic icons. The portrait image removes anonymity and pseudonymity and the picture functions as a (self-)representation of the actor. But what motif does a user choose? And, most importantly: How does a user present himself or herself? What are the rules, perhaps even the role models, that people follow when creating a profile picture?

In choosing his or her image, those who do not want to leave anything to chance can now have their first pictorially conveyed impression assessed and evaluated by consulting firms (see Welt Online 2008). These »image checks« plan the use of pictures on professional (e.g. Xing) or dating (e.g. Parship) exchanges with the intention of helping the person find the right job or partner. However, whether such streamlining or standardization of self-representation on the Web will bring the desired results is questionable. Who are adolescents trying to impress with their profile picture? What is the orientation of their motif selection with respect to the logic of impression management? These questions arise because current research on the use of social network sites suggests that most young people employ the popular products first and foremost to maintain private contacts and cultivate relationships. Other types of actions, such as idealized self-depiction or play with identity, are only relevant for a minority of young people (see Paus-Hasebrink et al. 2009: 153; OFCOM Study 2008: 28ff.; Pfeffer/Neumann-Braun/Wirz 2010; Waechter/Triebwetter/Jäger 2010). Instead, the networks are primarily used to communicate within existing social circles. This means that school-, friendship-, and acquaintance-based relationships are among the most important social relationships that are cultivated on the portals. Networking along the lines of youth scenes is therefore less relevant because it

pertains to networked groups and not »experience groups« (»Erlebnisgruppen«, Schulze 1992). As a result, the suspicion arises that social stylistics in friendship networks only play a minimal role in social integration. It can be assumed that, if adolescents stylize themselves in a particular way on social network sites, this happens according to the rules of communitarization under conditions of delocalized communication.

In the following research, the focus is on the question of *»Why profile pictures?«* From a hermeneutic and Web-ethnographic perspective, this entails the task of reconstructing the screen on which the users' images are organized. How do young people create their self-representation within a media context characterized by friend relationships? What is the grammar that structures this image world? Based on these questions, the following essay investigates how young people introduce themselves as communicators in social network sites through their profile pictures, i.e. how they use them to position and draw attention to themselves[2].

2   The present text is based on the results of an online-ethnographic product analysis of social network sites in the German-speaking area of Switzerland within the framework of the research project »Images of Youth in the Internet« (for more information about the research project see www.netzbilder.net). A total of 20 different German-language Internet friendship networks and communities were investigated: facebook.com, myspace.com, netlog.com, schüler-/studiVZ.net, jetzt.de, utopia.de, lokalisten.de, tilllate.com, festzeit.ch, lautundspitz.ch, party-zeiger.de, kra.ch, heavy metal communities, neu.de, parship.ch, mytrash.tv, youtube.com, and myvideo.de. All communicative and interactive functions of these portals were descriptively collected in an initial step, which was based on online-ethnographic principals (Marotzki 2003). This assumes membership in the portals, the creation of individual profiles, and interaction with other users. Along with this general (portal) description of the online products on a macro level, the focus of the investigation applies to the users' image communication. We asked what role portrait photography plays in communication by young people on social network sites. Facebook, as the most popular product among Swiss young people, was investigated in this regard as an example for the use of profile pictures. Initially, the object of the analysis was the communicative context in which the profile pictures are embedded. It is obvious that profile pictures are not used in the same way on market-leader Facebook's site as they are on other portals. However, a comparative view of competing products makes it clear that there are fundamental similarities with respect to image use. For example, user profiles and profile pictures are used to represent the identities of the users. Along with images' use contexts, the images themselves were also the object of the investigation. The micro level of the analysis applied to the hermeneutic interpretation of profile pictures that came from users on the social network sites facebook.com, myspace.com, netlog.com, festzeit.ch, and schülervz.net. A total of 327 profile pictures and (in so far as this was possible) their associated profile pages belonging to adolescents and young adults between the ages of 12 and 25 years were selected. The data were collected and evaluated based on the principals of grounded theory (Glaser/Strauss 1998). The images were analyzed based on the methods of hermeneutics of the image (see Astheimer 2010; Neumann-Braun/Astheimer 2010b).

2. Structure of the Profile Picture as a Communication Act

2.1   Communication-Theoretical Classification of the Profile Picture in the
      Interlacing Relationship of Online and Offline Interactions

The profile picture is one of many forms of online communicative expression in
the context of social network sites. These sites represent an interactive online
media offering that enables multi-directional and multi-modal individual com-
munication in lieu of one-sided mass communication (transmitter/receiver). The
portals are therefore used for synchronous (e.g. chat) and asynchronous (e.g.
messages) communication among the members, who are usually friends with
each another. The framework within which communicative activities, such as
(voice) messages, content, friending, evaluations, etc. are portrayed is the users'
profile pages (including individual users' pages, fan pages, and group pages) that
are distinguished by their »private public« status. An analysis of the employed
symbolic means shows that online communication occurs through speech, image,
film, and sound. So it is possible to have private text communication through
messages, chat, wall posts, and comments and image communication through
profile and album images, headers, and background pictures. Wall entries and
applications allow the use of image, text, sound media, and film media.

   What *function* does the profile image have for the individual actor, as well as
the close-knit group of friends, as a specific element within this online commu-
nication? As the results of the portal analysis show (see Chapter 2.2), an actor
who is represented by the profile picture is necessary for this online interaction.
From the perspective of communication theory, the profile picture can be defined
as a communicative act. It is the representation of (potential) »presence« in the
media space. In addition, a user introduces himself or herself through the profile
picture. The gesture of the display with which the user does not reference any-
thing (see Barthes 1989) other than rather himself or herself is specific to the
user. This identifies the person using the image as the profile owner. It »says«:
»This is me!« or »This is how I am available within this communicative sphere«
(identification of a personal entity/self-representation); moreover, it »speaks« in
that it shows: »This is who you are dealing with« (surrogate for presence); and
finally, it creates a link between a specific communicative sphere or correspond-
ing channel of communication (individual user's profile page) and an individual
person, which makes what is communicated personally attributable (»speaker«
identification) and creates a communicative territory (paraphrased: »What is
communicated here should be attributed to this one«).

What are the structural and functional characteristics of profile pictures in on-line communication and how can they be characterized, particularly in comparison with (non-mediatized) face-to-face interaction? A neuralgic point of elementary interaction is the human body as a sign of presence and a supporting medium for personal appearance, gesture, or speech (see Geser 1990). In elementary interaction, a person cannot communicate non-corporeally. Sociological action theory points to the body's relevance in the constitution of sociality (see Gugutzer 2004; Meuser 2002). Goffman has shown that the body represents the activity resource of elementary interactions (Goffman 1963: 35). Compared with elementary interaction, the body is absent in online communication. However, an inferential characterization of computer-mediated network interactions as disembodied is insufficient: In online communication, a social world is constituted that can be investigated for aspects of social interaction and corporeality in a technically generated interaction sphere. Social network sites are distinct from non-mediatized everyday life in that the body of the interaction participant is not physically present and people cannot interact with one another as bodies. Only substitutes for interaction participants are available, including assorted symbolic forms (such as profile pictures). But these substitutes also refer to interactions. For all intents and purposes, they are frozen interactions (between photographs and the photographed) that can be investigated as to the extent in which they reflect offline interaction in their visual interaction elements (see Reichertz 1992; Denzin 2007).

In an elementary interaction, a person is looked at, spoken to, or touched and a bodily reaction is requested. Image communication on the web is different from elementary interaction because the production and reception contexts are disjunctive and gestures cannot be reciprocated. Nonetheless, we understand that the observer is addressed through the corporeal forms of expression shown in the image in view of the fact that this also always implies the representation of an elemental interaction and relationship. In addition to the image representing the depicted person in a specific position and role, this applies to the observer as well. This is because the viewer is fictively placed in the position of a partner, friend, acquaintance, customer, etc., depending on how the portrayed person represents himself or herself. Even if we do not identify with the role in which we are addressed, we still comprehend the message of the addressing because articulating and understanding the social meanings of images arises from the non-verbal communication of social meanings in elementary interactions (see Kress/van Leeuwen 1996: 120f.)[3].

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3   Production and reception situations of images have these factors in common: the image, the knowledge regarding the communicative resources, and the knowledge

»The articulation and understanding of social meanings in images derives from the visual articulation of social meanings in face-to-face interaction, the spatial positions allocated to different kinds of social actors in interaction […]. In this sense the interactive dimension of images is the ›writing‹ of what is usually called ›non-verbal communication‹, a ›language‹ shared by producers and viewers alike«. (Ibid.: 121)

Although visually communicated elements of non-verbal expression or derivative forms of elementary interactions within Web or image communication play an important role, there are significant differences. The particular transformations that elementary interactions experience when they are transposed into the medium of photography or the Internet must be examined in this respect. In online communication, what elements of elementary interaction are substituted by visual representations and which are substituted by other channels of communication in the special case of social network sites?

The elementary interaction »comprises the totality of all social relationships that touch on the objective ancillary conditions of a *simultaneous corporeal presence of multiple human persons in the same place*« (emphasis by the author) (Geser 1990: 207). It represents the fundamental sphere of human sociality and is comprised of the structural composition principles of presence, personal appearance, gesture, and speech, which differentiate and individualize in other contexts, but in a diffuse way are mutually imbued in the elementary interaction (see ibid.: 207f.). These four corporeal modes of expression offer the co-present participants as »communicative media of expression that are simultaneously available and have a hierarchical relationship to each another« (ibid.: 228), which can be differentiated with respect to their structural and functional characteristics (see ibid.). On the Web, users find either the same forms of expression as in the elementary interaction or substitutes for them. However, the interaction among the four levels of expression in elementary interaction is impossible on the Web: Presence, personal appearance, gesture, and speech are not mutually imbued but rather differentiated and individualized.

A fundamental precondition for elementary interaction is shared *presence* in one place (see ibid.: 207). By contrast, a specific characteristic of Web communication is that it occurs without any type of physical and joint presence. The participant's body is absent. Since this is a condition of corporeal expression, the possibility of interaction through physical appearance, gesture and – to a certain extent – speech is lacking as well. While presence in non-mediatized reality represents a scarce commodity and requires real »presence management«

about the encoding of social interactions and relations in images (see Kress/van Leeuwen 1996: 121).

(ibid.: 201), the actors can be present virtually in multiple interactive spaces on the Web at the same time.

The physical presence of an elementary interaction is symbolically substituted with »virtual presence« (Merten 1998: 224) on the Web. This takes place through a number of symbol forms. A person exists as a participant by registering in the portal (potential presence); this presence is symbolized by an individual profile page, a user name, and possibly an image of the profile owner. However, the actor becomes actively present in the virtual space through his or her activities and activity products, which are represented by writing text reports, uploading images and videos, and entering into friendship and fan relationships: All of these activities and activity products are visible to others and reflect the user's actions within social network sites. So the News Feed page is primarily the place where activities and activity products are represented symbolically. These are displayed as automatically generated reports (»Marie and Louise are now friends«) or as status reports that can include text, image, film, or sound content. This is how online activities constitute virtual presence. Physical presence is additionally symbolized by an illustration of the absent body in the image. The profile picture, which is automatically attached to every online activity and conveys the characteristics of personal appearance and gesture, functions as the actor's representation in online interaction.

In elementary interaction, we are not only jointly present but also communicate through our personal appearance and gestures. The characteristics associated with physical appearance (including skin color, gender, facial features, posture, hairstyle, clothing, and makeup), which convey a »simultaneous image of the personality« (Geser 1990: 208), are what is understood as *personal appearance*. The personal appearance in photographs substitutes for the personal appearance in elementary interactions.

On the other hand, *gesture* indicates the intended and unintended behaviors that function as signs expressing internal emotional states, motivations, abilities, or intentions (see ibid.). Photographs can be examined to this effect as frozen interactions that reflect elements of offline interactions. In the photographs, facial expression, posture/orientation, and significant gestures are among the typical poses of elementary interaction that are reflected in modulated form. Compared with elementary interactions, the gesture in photography is hyper-stylized for the purpose of communication. This is why the person photographed assumes a particular posture. Consequently, body poses are specific forms of pictorially conveyed gestures. Photographs are objects formed by human action (artifacts) that are intended for representation. They are two-dimensional rather than three-dimensional and represent a momentary snapshot in lieu of a stream of perceptual impressions. Personal appearance and gesture (with reservations) are performed through the profile picture.

In elementary interaction, *speech* is defined as the »totality of acoustic expressions that are encoded within the medium of a conventional code of articulation, word formation, and sentence formation« (ibid.). Linguistic expressions appear on various levels in online communication, e.g. in status updates, private messages, or chat messages. On social network sites, speech expressions differ from elementary interaction in that the former are not at all associated with the body or produced orally; instead, they are recorded in written form but still personally attributable through the communicative framework outlined above (profile page, profile pictures, user names, and status updates).

2.2   Profile Pictures' Communicative Contexts in the Example of facebook.com

Although initially identifiable as individual images, the examined profile pictures should always be understood as part of a communication process that they cannot represent in its entirety (see Cohnen 2008: 122). With regard to the image-semiotic context (i.e., the respective visual configuration of the representation containing the image within a website on a screen), they appear either isolated, together with other images, or in combination with other primarily linguistic forms of communication. The latter refers to communicative and interactional processes in particular. This image communication is specifically pre-structured by profile pictures and therefore through the respective image-semiotic embedding, as well as from reconstructible use contexts (in total: communication contexts) in social network sites. Hjorth points to these with regard to photography on the Web: »Context as content, once the mantra of the minimalism, has taken on new dimensions within Web 2.0 social media« (2009: 157). Against such a backdrop, these questions arise: How are profile pictures integrated into a given site and what functional contribution does the profile picture make within the framework of communication in social network sites? The answer can be found by using the facebook.com website as an example.

What are the communicative contexts in which profile pictures are used on facebook.com? The profile picture is apparently the central and most frequently used image type on social network sites due to its repeated representation in different communicative contexts. If a user looks carefully at his or her own profile page and those of others, he or she will find profile pictures in the form of a large display on the profile page, as a thumbnail in the picture galleries, and in notifications, as well as in the profile picture album. The impression of the profile picture as the primary image type on social network sites is confirmed by a descriptive entry of the various communication contexts in which the profile picture is used. This once again confirms its function as a surrogate for presence.

When a user adds a profile picture to his or her own page, an image is loaded onto the Facebook server and automatically saved in the *Profile Pictures album* – a photo album that contains all of the user's profile pictures that have been used and saved to date. If a profile picture already exists, the new profile picture automatically replaces the old one. If the old images are not deleted, the Profile Pictures album displays a chronological collection of the previous profile pictures. The result is an album of profile pictures that usually shows the image of the profile owner in various attitudes[4]. The layout of a so-called »Me album« (see Autenrieth 2011 in this volume) is therefore structurally preset by the software. Users can arrange the image format freely because there is no specification as to a length/width ratio for the profile picture. The basic functions of picture albums are available for interactive adaptation of the album: The profile picture can be provided with a caption, commented upon by third parties, or linked with other Facebook users by a name tag – software functions that make interactive use of the profile picture possible. As an option, the profile picture can also be displayed as News through the Share function, causing it to appear as a current entry in the profile's Wall tab[5]. The image saved in the Profile Pictures album is the primary image for the profile picture displayed in the profile and the thumbnail[6].

When a profile picture has been set, it is automatically displayed in a central location in the user profile. This displayed profile picture (in short: *display image*) is a standard, software-generated element of the profile page. The display image is identical to the profile picture in the album of the same name and it appears when the Wall or Info tab in the upper left corner of the profile page is selected. The user's name appears to the right of the display image, which is why the profile picture and user name represent a single communicative unit. Both are obligatory design elements of the user profile and are also found on almost every other social networking site, such as MySpace, Netlog, etc., within this structural context.

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4   The creation of such an album, which occurs when the user adds new pictures, is the norm. The visibility of the Profile Picture album can be individually configured like any other profile information via the Privacy Settings menu.

5   Facebook profiles are subdivided into tabs. In the standard setup, a Facebook profile contains the three index elements of Wall, Info, and Photos as sub-pages.

6   The same image is displayed for all areas of the profile page, either as the complete image (display image) or as a partial view (thumbnail). It is not possible to differentiate. Likewise, all other Facebook users see the same profile photo. Here as well, no differentiation is possible.

Figure 1: Display Image as side element

Figure 2: Thumbnail as an Element of Messages and Photo Galleries

A distinction should be made between the *thumbnail*, which shows a section of the profile picture, and the displayed profile picture itself as design elements of the profile page. The small-format variant of the profile picture is square and the length of its sides is pre-defined. The user must select the section of the picture, which usually includes the head and face area. While use of the profile picture is restricted to that of a side element and album image, the thumbnail is automatically displayed in various contexts: It is used either as part of picture galleries or notifications, such as messages and inquiries (private messages, friend requests, and event and group invitations), news feed, and wall entries. The thumbnail is saved at a lower resolution than the display image or album picture and is therefore not as sharp (see fig. 2).

The way that the thumbnail is used in *photo galleries* pictorially summarizes a specific group of people. The profile owner's friends are concentrated into a group on the Info and Wall tabs and their thumbnails are organized into a gallery. This Friends list is not the only picture gallery generated by the software. The thumbnail of anyone who joins a group, becomes a celebrity's fan, receives an event invitation, logs onto a gaming application, or is simply online is likewise displayed with others in a corresponding picture gallery. Galleries represent groups of people whose participants are distinguished by specific common ele-

ments – which may be a single friend in common, a membership, or simply shared activities. This also occurs in a different way for a second group of picture galleries that are generated by algorithms, such as the group of suggested friends. These provide the user with a picture gallery that displays potential aspirants to a friend or fan relationship under the rubric of Suggestions. The Facebook system determines the suggested persons based on information, such as friends in common, school, employer, or interests. Searching by email addresses, which are registered on Facebook, also leads to the searched person being displayed to the searcher as a friend suggestion (see Balduzzi et al. 2010: 11).
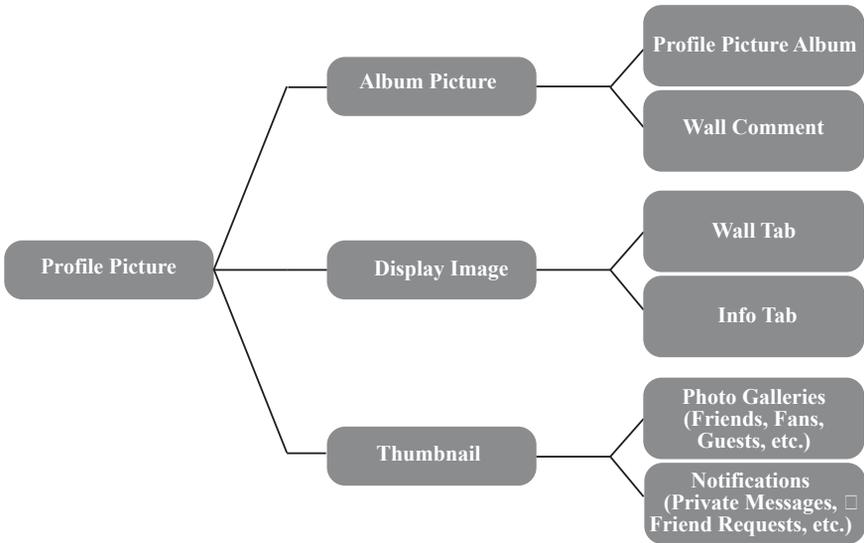
Figure 3: Communication-Contexts Profile Pictures

Another usage context for thumbnails on Facebook is *Notifications*. The portal offers users various options for communication and interaction in the form of explicit notifications. On one hand, these include various forms of *messages and inquiries,* such as private messages, friend requests, event and group invitations, etc. Here as well, the name and image are structurally linked to each another[7] in as much as the thumbnail is positioned next to the sender's text message and identifies the sender. The second category of notifications is displayed in the

7   The construction of each update corresponds (relationship of picture, name of profile owner, and content) to the construction of the register frame of a profile page.

News Feed field. This includes status updates (»What's on your mind?« and »Posting«), as well as portal activities (e.g. establishing friendships, writing comments, joining groups, etc.). Within this context, the thumbnail identifies activities among the users who are linked by friendship, fan status, and group membership. Because messages are sent to the News Feed field from various users (comparable with a news ticker), the small-format picture enables immediate identification of the actors and produces an overview of who said or did what and when. Thumbnails are distinguished by the same usage forms and functions in *status updates*: Whenever someone writes something on his or her own wall (»What's on your mind?«) or someone else's wall (»Write something...«), this is always displayed by thumbnail.

The usage forms of the profile picture and its particular graphic and communicative design are nothing new; instead, they are oriented toward known codes of graphic design and corresponding media or means of communication (see Walser 2010).

2.3   Social Functions of Portraits

In the medial representation of the person, portraits assume an eminently important role. Like any other image, they are embodied in different media. Their medial form requires that portraits are also always used as commodity, which is particularly true in a number of functions ranging from the personal to the social and legal to the commercial. Typical means of using portraits in many social contexts are practiced here. It can be used as an esthetic object, as well as a substitute for the individuals who they represent. Or they may convey an aura of power, values, beauty, or other abstract meanings (see West 2004: 43)[8]. So we use pictures of friends, for example, to awaken memories of them. Consequently, the social reality of the portrait is not in its images (its subjects and motifs), but in its functions (see Sontag 1980: 29). Studies regarding this topic are based on the question of »Why pictures?« (see Bourdieu et al. 1981) and therefore move

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[8]   The question of the relationship between public and private also comes into play here. Traditionally, private and public pictures were kept strictly separate from each other in terms of their function (see Reichertz/Marth 2004) – a distinction (see especially Goffman 1981: 49) that can scarcely be maintained in the dispersion of the social web. Many portraits are decidedly produced for public use, such as in churches, public plazas, or newspapers. But portraits that have a primarily private function are also produced to be seen and noticed more by a group of individuals than by one individual (see West 2004:43).

the portrait to the foreground as a document, representative, and visual testimony to a person's biography and individuality.

Portraits are used based on their *documentary* function. This documentary nature lies in the representation of a person in a particular time-space structure – no matter whether people or activity scenes are in the foreground. Claims of documentary authenticity in portraiture certainly have their limits, which arise through imaginations and interpretations. »Portraits can appear to provide documentation or authentication of a person's appearance, age, status, or even biological identity. But the imaginative and interpretative aspects of all portraiture make it resistant to documentary reductionism« (West 2004: 59). Typical characteristics of photographic portraits are formalized and stereotyping forms of the person's representation (see Bourdieu et al. 1981). The claim of a documentary nature exists in tension with dramatical moments of representation (»poses«), which is primarily illustrated in the context of occasion-specific portraits (party, vacation, etc.) (see Neumann-Braun/Astheimer 2010a).

The claim of documentation is also linked to that of *identification*. The possibility of technical reproduction in the 19th century turned photography into the medium for identifying persons (see Daval 1983: 55). Above all, the claim of faithfulness to reality – which was already asserted with respect to the painted portrait of the Renaissance – is potentiated in the photographic portrait (see Cohnen 2008: 125). Accounted for solely by its identifying function, the prototypical portrait category is the police identification and passport photo. Identifying recognition therefore assumes physical similarity of the portrait to the person it portrays.

Portraits have always been used to bring to mind someone or something that is absent – a person, animal, or artifact. For human beings, the portrait takes the place of a present actor: The picture replaces the absent body and functions as its *representative*. This function of the image as a substitute or surrogate for an absent person is at the center of Roland Barthes' analysis of photography in *Camera Lucida* (1989). For the observer, the portrait appears as a magical substitute for the individual to be represented while bringing past moments of that person's life into the present (see West 2004: 59). However, the realization of absent persons occurs under different circumstances within the context of private and public photographs (see Kautt 2008: 61): In private portraits, the photographic image can be related to a role model and this is where the picture's appeal in invoking the absent individual lies. The portrait's function is to represent a particular person, which can be meant both superficially and internally if the portrait is also used as a representation of attitude (see Soussloff 2006: 8). However, this definitely cannot be said about public pictures, such as images in the news or advertising: These are not ordinarily connected with an authentic model. An identifi-

cation of the object (e.g. a politician or teen idol) only occurs through the publicly distributed manifestations – through the »*images*« (Kautt 2008).

As a form of presenting the person, the portrait also functions as part of a *biographical* documentation. It represents a particular period of the person's life. Portraits and written biographies apparently have many things in common. The relationship between the image and text types reached its peak in the 18th and 19th centuries whereby the modes of image and speech supported different functions. The fixing of a particular moment and the paradoxical impression of a timeless, iconic image are disconcerting with respect to the development aspect of characters and actions, which is an attribute of biographical writing (see West 2004: 50). As a fixed image, the portrait is therefore not in a position to demonstrate individual acting or behavior (see Bohnsack 2001; Reichertz 1994). However, there are other differences besides the mode of representation because the portrait only shows a snapshot. If it represents the appearance of an individual at a specific point in time, it can only allude to other aspects of the person's life as a result. Max Kozloff characterizes this micro-description of a person through portraiture as follows: »Portraits, after all, are traditionally confined to the description of individuals during only a microsecond of their lives« (2009: 271). Any portrait can only reflect the basic elements of a biography, whereas the biography does not go as far as the immediate presence of an individual (see West 2004: 52). It is worth distinguishing the practice of photogra-phic portraiture from painted portraits. Sontag points out the difference between these two types of portraits in that »Photographic images are pieces of evidence in an ongoing biography or history. And one photograph, unlike one individual painting, implies that there will be others« (Sontag 1980: 159).

As biographical documentation, portraits link the attention to the time of creation – the appearance of an individual at the moment that the image is produced. Hans-Georg Gadamer describes this characteristic as the *occasionality* of the portrait and refers to the fact that the »content of its meaning is continually determined by the occasion on which it is intended such that it contains more than without this occasion. So (the portrait) includes a relationship to the person represented into which it is not only moved, but is explicitly intended in the representation and characterizes it as a portrait« (1990: 149). Regarded in semiotic terms, the occasional significance of the portrait arises in connection with its creation or within the context of its production (see Schütz 1974: 173f.). Therefore, the occasional significance is not something peripheral but much more essential to the portrait image. Occasionality is part of the »core significance content« (Gadamer 1990: 149) of the portrait, which is apparent in that an unfamiliar observer still recognizes a portrait as such.

The occasional significance is directly connected to the question regarding *evidence of individuality*. According to Gadamer (see ibid.), it is the occasionali-

ty of the portrait that fulfills the social function to bring out a person's individuality in lieu of the typology (see Cohnen 2008: 124). The portrait is tied to the personality, which conveys the particular characteristics of an individual. It is characterized by a »personal sense« (ibid.: 125), i.e., »that the person portrayed depicts himself or herself in a portrait and represents himself or herself with a portrait« (ibid.: 151). It is therefore different from a picture that represents a person as a character image or subject. In this respect, the main emphasis of a portrait's message says less about who the represented person is and much more »that it is a particular person (and not a type)« (ibid.: 150).

Contemporary everyday life is characterized by the omnipresence of portraits testifying to individuality in the private and public space. Galle (2000: 47) writes that the portrait »takes over an essential share of contemporary identity attribution, as well as confirmation«. The demands that are linked to the portrait today (primarily that of testifying to individuality) are products of modernity. At its core, the art of portraiture in the medium of (portrait) painting since the 17th century and the medium of (portrait) photography since the 19th century is based on granting individuality and autonomy to the person represented. Gottfried Boehm (1988: 21) shows the peculiarity of the traditionally realized portrait, which established itself over the course of the Renaissance. With it, the person is no longer pictured »ex se«: He or she is not shown as a »proxy for a class, for a spiritual or worldly (sovereign) function but – increasingly – as a bearer of his or her own individuality« (Galle 2000: 47).

The photographic portrait arose under particular initial socio-cultural circumstances, causing it to be molded in specific ways. Primarily as a representative portrait, it enabled a broad swath of the bourgeoisie to gain access to an individual representation in the 19th century. Historically regarded, the portrait photo was *the* »medium for constituting bourgeois individuality« (Vogt 1992: 167) in this period. Even today, a representative form is identified with the portrait photo in private photography. Its individual characteristics usually represent people who are known to us (extremely functionalized in the mug shot). While the painted portrait was traditionally the privilege of the aristocracy and prosperous classes of society, the introduction of photography caused the image medium to become democratized. From the beginning, photography was linked to the ways of displaying of portrait painting, bringing the methods and procedures of aristocratic glorification to the bourgeoisie with it (see Lavani 1996: 44) and developing an internal coherence in portrait art from the Renaissance into the 19th century (see Galle 2000: 48). Consequently, the competition kindled by the bourgeoisie for aristocratic representation privileges became a central process of modernity in the form of expanding an individualized self-conception.

2.4 Methods of Production and Use of Portrait Images

The portrait as a small-format commodity image has a long tradition of social *image use*; as explained above, the origins of this use are in the Renaissance. Early portrait types, which already showed characteristics of the representative function, were miniatures and pastel portraits that were already used between the 16th and 18th centuries. The former were small-format portrait images, held in the hand or kept in medallions, and only showed a person's face. The image had the function of strengthening the relationship with the portrayed person[9]. The pastel portraits that were customary in the 18th century were characterized by a similar intimacy. For both portrait styles, the similarity to the person displayed was equally eminent in its importance. The allure of the use was found in the fact that the persons were shown realistic and tangibly, which is why the portraits had erotic and fetishistic qualities ascribed to them and became the objects of obsessive collecting fervor (see West 2004: 59f.; Böhme 1999: 79)[10].

Both portrait styles were objects of utility, which meant that they were also objects of social exchange. The types of actions carried out through the image encompassed both caring for relationships and initiating them. The experience of the small-format portrait was particularly popular among young adults. Portrait miniatures and pastel portraits were used within the context of marriage initiation and functioned as proof of the age, attractiveness, and health of the person represented (see West 2004: 60). Within this utility form, they were instruments of identification and, in turn, it was necessary to appear identical to this (ideal) self-image (see Böhme 2004: 79). Likewise, typical forms of caring for relationships, such as collection and exchange practices, became common activities: Since portraits were used as representatives, they were also exchanged as gifts. In the 15th and 16th centuries, portraits were primarily exchanged among young men to confirm their friendship. It was customary at British colleges to collect miniatures of graduating students (see West 2004: 61).

Miniature formats were available to the populace in the form of carte de visite portraits. In 1854, the French photographer Disderí invented a process that reduced a negative to a series of images in a 9 x 6 format and allowed the portrait to reach an initial peak as a photographic mass product in the second half of the

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9   Miniatures are still an important part of image consumption by young people and are collected and exchanged as collective images (sports or pop stars) or private friendship photos (photo-booth photos) (see Walser 2010).

10   With the invention of photography in the 19th century, the practice of the portrait as a daily companion did not diminish. Small-format images, now called wallet photos, are stored in *wallets* and show the face of a friend or relative as a passport photo or picture details from a larger photograph.

19th century[11]. The pictures were taken enthusiastically because the public enjoyed the associated duplication and possibility of selecting images (see Daval 1983: 54). The currently customary forms of use and canon of motifs in private photography were predetermined by the practices of exchanging and distributing carte de visite portraits (see Guschker 2002: 126). In the second half of the 20th century, photo-booth photos from vending machines for passport photos assumed the same function as earlier portrait types for young people. As a result, the photo-booth portrait became the most important medium of friendship photography (see Mathys 2006; Pilarczyk/Mietzner 2005).

A look at present-day methods of image production by young people reveals that many portraits seem to be produced »by their own direction«. The image culture of the Internet is characterized by the independent performance of photographic production techniques, which is a do-it-yourself (D.I.Y) expression. Such a photo practice would have been utterly impossible in the past. Since the Renaissance, the privileged social classes had engaged professional portraitists – first painters and then photographers. This led to individual interpretations by the portraitists, who realized an external view of the represented subject. In the early days of photography, the treatment of portraiture was initially also just reserved for professional photographers. However, their monopoly came to an end with the introduction of camera technologies that contributed to a privatization of the photographic medium and made it possible for amateur photographers (see Neumann-Braun/Astheimer 2010b) to produce pictures outside of professional photo studios. One of the preconditions for this occurrence was the standardization of film development, which was introduced with the Kodak systems in 1888. The complete photo apparatus was brought into a studio for film processing (see Gautrand 1998: 238). Photography achieved the mobility that we know today through the invention of portable photo equipment, which took over the photo market in the 1890s. The Kodak Folding Pocket from 1897, which became the prototype for later small formats and was specifically oriented toward amateurs and snapshooters (see ibid.: 240), deserves particular attention here. The company took over the new medium in the form of mobile, easy-to-use equipment. Standardization of film development and simplification of camera technology made specialized (professional) knowledge obsolete.

The broader history of analog photography shows a progressive refinement of camera technology and the automation of its functions. In the field of compact cameras, this was accompanied by a systematic reduction of the technical op-

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11   Between 300 and 400 million cartes de visite portraits were produced annually in England between 1861 and 1867 (see Daval 1983: 54).

tions and operational decisions that was realized through the standardization of camera settings (see King 2003: 206), for example. Another step in the automation of private image production was carried out through the invention of instant cameras with integral print film (e.g. the Polaroid SX-70) and automated cameras (photo booth). The integration of film development is characteristic of both procedures, which makes the immediate use of photographs possible. With photo booth, an additional step from picture-taking by third parties (professional or amateur) led to self-production and the creation of self-portraits. The history of photographic media technology therefore can be seen as a process of the portrait's democratization and privatization. The previous camera technology developments have been bundled together in the digital mode. At the same time, the digital camera equally serves image production and examination and is equivalent to the classic instant picture apparatuses. In the form of mobile media (such as a mobile phone), photographic technology is available at any time and portraiture has become routinized.

The self-portrait is the main form of creating portrait images for today's young people. Based on the simple execution of digital image production, it is not necessary to have a portraying actor in digital photography. The person portrayed assumes the activity in which the subject photographs himself or herself and interactive creation is relinquished. The interpreting actor, with his or her own ideas and (professional or amateur) expectations about portraiture, disappears from the photographic situation. The photographic act occurs in a non-interactive, self-determined, and self-controlled way in the self-portrait. In this constellation, the ego can no longer directly orient itself upon the other; yet, this still occurs through processes of role adoption. This means that the digital image culture of young people is a culture of self-creation and do-it-yourself (D.I.Y.), which occurs from image production (creation and display control) up to image editing and distribution to the hands of other young people (also see Brunazzi/Willenegger/Raab in this volume).

3. Classification of Profile Pictures

As explained above, an actor is necessary for online interaction on social network sites. The first impression of the opponent is visual: This occurs through the profile picture, primarily in the form of the large-format, prominently placed display image. But this is not all. With every additional act of communication, the actors are represented by the profile picture and volunteer themselves as specific communicators. On social network sites, countless different forms of self-representation are possible by profile pictures; however, only specific, recurring models exist within them.
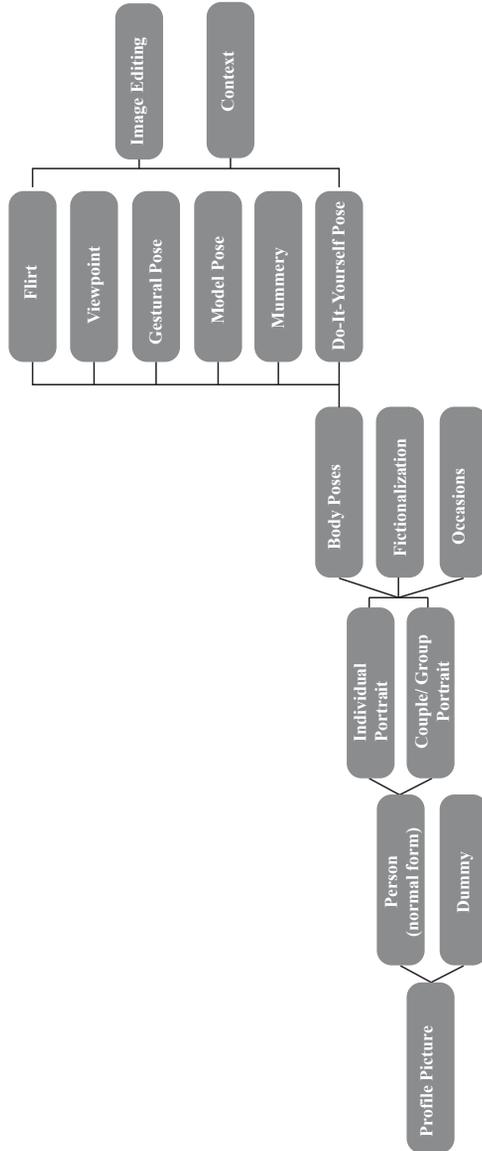
Figure 4: Types of Profile Pictures

What structural organizational models can be detected in such self-representation as a communicator? How are these organizational models applied to different image types? On one hand, the distinguishing criteria of the different image types are the activity in front of the camera as a particular form of subject or motif (see Reichertz 1994)[12]; on the other hand, this involves how the camera is used (see Peters 1980; Opl 1990)[13].

The purpose of the following image classification is to determine different types of actions (in the sense of motifs and esthetics) based on the profile pictures. Such identification occurs initially on the level of descriptive image characteristics (content/form). At the same time, the characteristic combinations that constitute particular (photographic) types of profile pictures are investigated. If we focus on the product of the profile picture as the interplay of specific actions in the picture and specific ways of handling a camera, then the concept of the pose becomes relevant because it is frequently present; in addition, it represents an intermediate scenario form because it is addressed in the image (action in front of the camera), as well as for the image (use of the camera). However, not all poses are alike: For example, a rigid (formal) portrait pose is different from a friendly hug or a posed love scene. Particularly in the case of portrait poses, representation goes through a process of condensation because not only do the model (body) and subject (person/personality) coincide here (the body that is represented shows the person who is represented), but the action in the picture (the pose) is simultaneously a photographic act of representation that shows how it »looks« corporeally when I »see« myself through the eyes of other people. The *types of action* that distinguish the photographs are introduced in the following section:

About the System: What are the expectations of normality for the profile picture? One basic rule of portrait pictures is that they should show a person. The typical form for a formal, photographically realized representation of a person is

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12 For more on the narrowing of activity in the image and subject, see Reichertz (1994) on the example of the Pietà motif.

13 The descriptive recording and classification of activities and scenes in the image (action in front of the camera) and uses of the camera for a particular and central image type (namely, profile pictures) is the first and decisive step toward determining the central means of presenting instances for communication/persons (MyFace) within the communication framework that is not mediated by the body. When focused on an application that is central due to its technical inevitability (namely, display images), the communicative use of the pictures is initially removed (and only reinstated for reasons that the image subject suggests). This step will be reviewed/supplemented in the course of the research – through analysis of the use contexts outlined above (image-semiotic [website] and interactional [messages, galleries, status updates, etc.]) with regard to the communicative processes.

the passport photo. We expect that the body's styling and movement in it will just be enhanced with a low level of lifestyle codes. So the passport photo or identification motif represents a typical profile picture variant on online networks. However, it is not the only motif that falls within the usual framework for profile pictures. An additional form is that of the dummy – a cate- gory that does not show the actual person and whose function it is to mark his or her identity through deviation from the usual form (passport photo).

Apart from the normality of the passport photo motif and the dummy counter-motif, other profile picture types are distinguished by differences in their form and content. These are stylization variants that modify the format of the passport photo through interactive poses, the number of people, or image editing. »Relationship« pictures represent an initial class of such stylistic variants in young people's profile pictures: This image is no longer just the lone individual but also his or her friendship or love relationship represented by the profile picture.

Different forms of strongly »gestural« poses represent another class. In comparison with the passport photo action and attitude, these are interactively and symbolically connoted to a high degree. Information about the frequency of these individual forms can be found in Chapter 4.

Another stylization variant is »fictionalization«, in which the do-it-yourself principle is at the core of the image editing. Images of this type are individual productions or »self-constructions« by young people. Pictures can be edited or raw with respect to image technology; in addition, they may be classified as photographed internally (privately) or externally (publicly) with respect to the context represented. The significant photographic occasions will be distinguished in one final step.

a) *Identification/Passport Photo*

The passport photo shows an identity linked to a head and a face. As such, it is most similar to the image of an identification card – i.e. a portrait type that is functionally structured for identification. From a formal perspective, the passport photo motif is primarily characterized by its specific setting size and perspective: It shows a close-up of the subject's head, face, and upper body (»head and shoulder close-up«)[14]. The shot ordinarily presents a frontal view from eye level, which is why the entire face can be seen in the picture.

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14   See Hickethier (1996: 58ff.) for classification of the size of frame.
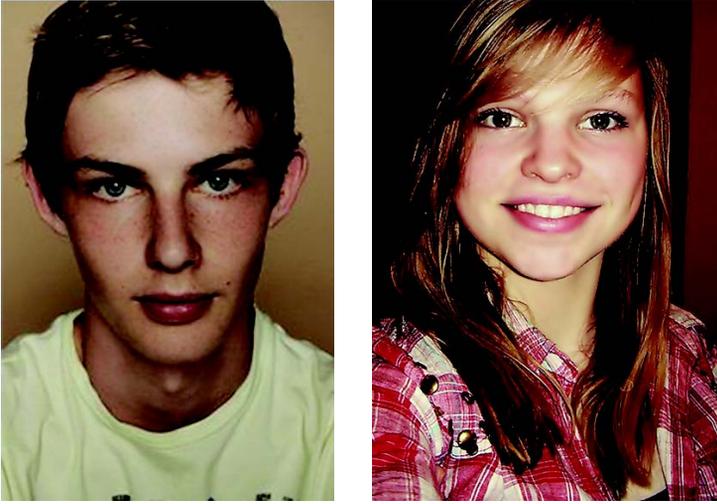
Figure 5 to 6: Identification/Passport Photo

Based on its basic formal characteristics, the person shown in the passport photo can be more accurately identified due to the facial features and expression than in any other size of frame and perspective.

No (portrait) image is the same as any other in the way that a person is represented. However, there are certain esthetic image modalities that make recognition and identification of a person's picture easier or more difficult. For example, color and black-and-white shots are different in the precision of their representation. Passport photo motifs are primarily color representations, which means that they are distinguished by greater realism. In terms of the camera settings, the lighting conditions, as well as the focus and depth of field, contribute to the realistic or naturalistic representation of the picture (see Harper 2000; Kress/van Leuewen 1996). There is a clear separation between background and body, the picture is sharp and high-contrast, the lighting is even, and the skin tones are represented naturally – esthetic image characteristics that are the customary conditions of formal ID cards. In this respect, particular value is placed on the impression of documentary authenticity. In addition, the objectivity and formal precision of the image design can be identified as a structural characteristic of the image esthetic. This applies to the setting size and perspective, as well as to the selection of the camera settings.

How do young people present their bodies in the motifs of the passport picture? In the person's physical representation in the mode of the passport picture, a distinction should be made between two structurally different areas of corporeal signification. First, a field of body presentation is structured for identifica-

tion of continual corporeal characteristics. In this case, the physiognomy of the person serves as his or her identification for recognizing typical corporeal patterns. His or her identity can be formally examined qua rule comparison in which a *pattern recognition* is carried out by facial recognition. Prototypical photographic media, which are fundamentally structured for such a mode of identification, are police identification photos and passport pictures for official identification. A known physical pattern is therefore identified because – as a habitual body of identity – the body bears signs of gender, age, ethnicity, attractiveness, illness, and lifestyle (see Willems 1998: 44). In general, the face is the person's identifying body part in both its non-mediatized and mediatized manifestation and we recognize other people based on their body type, eye color, or body hair. This identification of continued styles is oriented upon the person in his or her »fundamental continuity« (Goffman 1977: 319) and restricted to a minimum of social meanings.

Secondly, apart from such an identification of constant personality characteristics, self-representation of the identification card type is aimed at (self-)stylization of a *social identity* in its aspects, i.e. individual and personal characteristics[15]. Based on the »inevitability of self-dramatization« (Hitzler 1998: 98), the arrangement of the body should also fundamentally be understood as (indicating) communication (see Schmidt/Neumann-Braun 2004: 15) regardless of whether this occurs intentionally or unintentionally. Body movement (here: facial expression) and body styling belong to the class of symbolic forms of expression. The passport portrait presents the effort expended to stylize the head, face, and upper body in visual terms. This allows the determination of whether this type of motif represents a strong form of individuality, which arises on the level of symbolic expression through the interplay of physiognomy, facial expression, and body composition (grooming, makeup, jewelry, hairstyle, etc.). Therefore, the face always permits equal recognition of the individual personality and the social identity (see Goffman 1969; Gombrich 1984)[16].

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15 Such willful self-stylization occurs in a »relationship of co-existence« (Willems/Kautt 2003: 25) with habitual unconscious styles.

16 The neutral expression of the face shows the (socially mediated) individual physiognomy as a symbolic expression of life history and therefore the individuality of the individual (see Gugutzer 2004: 32). It also shows socially acceptable forms of facial expression (the position of the head, the gaze, and the smile) and the body composition. Every portrait transmits the illusion of seeing the face behind a mask (see Gombrich 1984: 132f.). According to Simmel, the face causes »the person to be understood through the first impression of his or her look instead of just the respective actions« (Simmel 1992: 725).

The impression of documentary authenticity remains systematically restricted to the presentation of the head and face in that neither the action context nor the picture context present. No particular moment (of action) is represented, but a particular period of a life is signified by the picture[17]. With respect to the *proxy* function, it is therefore not a particular mode of action that is typical of the person but the individuality that is recalled. Support is provided for such symbolization because the image's interactive dimension in a passport photo is characterized to the least degree (and it remains systematically restricted to the field of facial expression and head posture). In terms of the proxy function, it should also be mentioned that the close-up suggests a personal relationship to the person who is represented (see Kress/van Leeuwen 1996; Hall 1966).

What expressive power does the representation mode of the passport motif have? What does a person project of himself or herself into the ring of web communication? The passport portrait exists in a factual and a stylized variant: In its factual form, the depiction is restricted to the presentation of the physical characteristics necessary for identification qua pattern recognition. The stylized variation shows an interactant who is presented in a socially expected way. The concrete example (see fig. 7) illustrates the impression of a cultivated normality and open-mindeness. Essentially nothing is predetermined for particular role, relationship, or life patterns. At best, the cultural origin is clearly based on (self-) stylization[18]. Instead, a high level of normativity and simultaneously an openness to contact is indicated. A person presents himself or herself as attractive and distinctive (idealization, »all done up«).

b) *Dummy*

A person who would like to remain unrecognized uses a picture in which he or she cannot be seen. If a user does not select his or her own motif, then a type of placeholder is displayed by the portal. On Facebook and the german SchülerVZ, these are graphics that represent a shadow image or a person with a mask (see fig. 7).

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17 There are usually no professionals at work on the social network sites but young ama-
    teurs who orient themselves upon professional standards. However, typical forms of
    expression in snapshot photography, such as out of square or blurred images, can also
    be found there.

18 Since the entire body is not shown due to the size of frame and a frontal perspective
    is chosen, passport portraits do not produce depictions of stereotypical poses.

Figure 7 to 9: Dummy

In lieu of the placeholder that is standard for the portal, many young people select their own motif and use images that are available on the Web (see fig. 8-9) or that they have made themselves. The life is portrayed *with* a quotation and *behind* a quotation. Placeholders and quotations are distinguished by their masking function. At the same time, the selection of the motif also shows the quotation behind which a user conceals himself or herself. In lieu of identifying with the person, the identification is with something else. Although the objects of identification are versatile, they arise from symbolic orders that are typical for young people.

On the one hand, living creatures are depicted. People, animals, and plants are frequently among the motivic repertoire of young people. Where human beings are represented, it is primarily public persons – especially media stars – who are among their typical image repertoire. Young people use the images of their role models (such as stars of sports, music, gaming, entertainment, etc.) and position themselves through them within the system of the media market. Animals, which are employed by users in their function as »transitional objects« (Winnicott 2006), prove to be a motif that is no less well-liked. Objects from inanimate nature include flower and beach motifs, which are quite popular in online networks. Real or fictional living creatures can be symbolized; in the fictional mode, this primarily means cartoons.

No less common are motifs from the world of *artifacts*, which primarily reflect favorite consumer goods, such as technical artifacts or fashion/sports items. For instance, there are automotive objects (motorcycles, cars) that function as objects of power or fashion artifacts that function as cult objects. Here, navigation offers the young people a consumer product market whose brands (or branded articles) pass on an extensive repertoire of *logos and lettering*. This brand symbolism functions as a sign that shows the interactant that a person is »in«.

c) *Relationships (Friendships and Romances)*

Many depictions of the young profile owners break out of the narrow confines of the (individual) portrait in that they show not only the individual subject (the profile owner) but pairs or groups. Any portrait that shows more than one person within the image portrays social relations in addition to the individual. Such profile pictures are therefore always also *relationship portraits*, which illustrate partner, family, acquaintance, and (primarily) friendship relationships. Their central pictorial object is the (symbolic) interaction between the persons represented in the image (as an example, figure 12 shows an interaction between two friends).

  In relationship portraits as well, the expression of body language is the most important bearer of meaningful and signifying content in the portrait. We are accustomed to transmitting relationship qualities in images through physical closeness and distance, as well as the sameness and difference of the corporeal expression. We value the depiction of a personal or intimate social relationship and express this by representing the ritualized corporeal proximity (see Goffman 1981). The depiction of bodily intimacy is in the foreground of most relationship motif. In group representations, participants often pay attention to the symmetry of the representation. Boys who pose as buddies assemble themselves non-hierarchically, keep some distance from each another, and embrace. The »cheek-to-cheek« motif, which is primarily used by close female friends to symbolically emphasize their relationship, is characterized by greater intimacy (see fig. 12). The kiss motif, which most clearly expresses the intimacy of the relationship, is very popular among couples (see fig. 10). As the examples show, stereotyped poses are used to represent various relationships qualities. If we raise the question of representational traditions, subjects and motifs from the canon of analogous private photography would provide excellent role models (see Bourdieu 1981; Chalfen 1987).

Figure 10 to 12: Relationship

With respect to the practice of creating images, photobooth photography by young people also serves as a reference value. Since relationship images show not only the profile owner but other persons as well, identification occurs through the friendships and romantic relationships. The relationship to others is more important than the depiction of personal individuality. In lieu of elevating the subject, there is a stronger emphasis on the depicted relationship and the relationship picture becomes the symbol and means of social integration (see Bourdieu 1981). At the same time, this means that friendship and closeness are elevated as symbolic values for the representation of the individual person. From a biographical perspective, the picture reflects a particular moment in life: It represents a specific, sometimes brief segment of time in adolescence during which the other person(s) in the picture play(s) a central role. This is because the selection of a particular subject always documents personal relevance. Among the many »friends« in the online network, individuals are distinguished as signifycant for the user.

d) *Body Poses*

Flirt – With the Flirt and the Viewpoint types (see below), the common sense use of the portrait is maintained with respect to social distance. The close-up is constitutive for both portrait types. However, they are distinct, from the passport picture in that the body's posture and orientation are different. The term »flirt« represents an erotically motivated encounter between two persons: the observer and his or her object. The pictorial representation of this type of action also conveys the symbolic expression of eroticism mediatized by body language and proximity. The Flirt portrait is supported by the following formal image characteristics: Comparable to the passport portrait, the close-up is selected as a setting size (the head and upper body are visible as a rule) so that the represented distance between the depicted person and the observer is rated as ranging from personal to even intimate, which symbolizes a personal/intimate social relationship. The camera is positioned at or higher than eye level (subject is viewed slightly from above). The camera position generates a side view, which causes the imagined interaction between the represented person and the observer to occur literally side-by-side.

The depiction shows a body in motion. Movements of the head and face are immediately related to the observer and promote interaction in this regard. The head is turned toward the observer and the facial expression – conveyed by the eyes and mouth – is also oriented in this way. As a result, the motif shows a face that is interacting. Not the personality at rest (i.e. passport photo image type), but social interaction is in the foreground – which is why the picture documents a performed situation.

Figure 13 to 16: Flirt

If we observe this type from the perspective or an (imagined) interaction partici-
pant, the actor's pose reads as an act of paying attention to or encountering the
observer[19]. This also means that the attention is directed at the observer, who is
addressed as a parasocial interaction participant[20]. The action represented can
therefore also be identified as typical role play (see Goffman 1981): the role of
the actor, which is conveyed through the expressive action of the upper body,
head, and face, is oriented toward the values of openness and broad-mindedness.
Likewise, part of this role is an orientation toward the ideal of physical attrac-
tiveness. Stereotyped forms of body composition correspond to posture through
makeup, hair style, clothing, and jewelry. The overall body-language expression
of the pose is oriented toward social ideals and identifies the actor as attentive,
open-minded, and attractive. What additional observer role is anticipated within
the context of profile picture communication? The Flirt pose is not clearly ad-
dressed to existing or new acquaintances; instead, both types of relationships are
represented through it.

   The action depicted only achieves its full significance in conjunction with the
context of its creation. Most of the pictures that are seen are professional but
amateur shots that are frequently taken in a home environment. From a picture
design perspective, the environment is ordinarily only referenced but still plays
an important role in that it highlights the personal-to-intimate staging mode of
the Flirt motif.

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19   See Kress/van Leeuwen (1996: 47) on the interpersonal function of portraits.
20   The intensity of the attention is increased or decreased by the expression of the eyes in
     that they are visible and wide open or hidden behind strands of hair.

Viewpoint – The profile aspect represents a classic portrait (body) posture in which the person in the picture is typically shown in profile (90 degrees) or half-profile (45 degrees). Indicative characteristics of body performance are head posture and facial expression. Based on how the head is held and the perspective, the face of the person shown is not seen in its entirety. Its shape is only seen from one side – a partial view of the person that becomes the person's representative. Moreover, the body is turned away from the observer, and this is conveyed by the way that the head is held. The gaze is also not directed at the observer but at a point outside of the frame and does not address an observer. No personal proximity to the observer arises on the basis of the gaze or perspective. Consequently, the representative in the picture only shows a partial view of the familiar person, which is further stylized through a black-and-white modality (see fig. 17)[21]. For many black-and-white motifs of this portrait type, the represented pose conveys less an individual person than that person's idealization[22]. Such pictures have a less realistic effect based on the color modality: Their coloring deviates from the »natural« visual perception and has a symbolizing effect (see Goffman 1981: 81ff.).

Figure 17 to 19: Viewpoint

A comparison with the flirt type on the level of expression and symbolic meaning appears to be worthwhile: While the flirt motif is based on a corporeally manifested close contact and a naturalistic representation, corporeal avoidance and

21 The larger the setting size, the more it seems like the gaze is turned away from the observer.
22 With respect to the depiction of individuality, black-and-white pictures are different from color pictures in that color shots primarily allow a greater degree of individuality to be detected. By contrast, black-and-white images are subject-oriented because they emphasize the universal more strongly than the special qualities of a person (see Goffman 1981: 55ff.).

(black and white) stylization are typical forms of expression in the viewpoint type. A person who is flirting gives his or her attention to the observer. By contrast, a person who is shown in profile is not represented as attentive, but rather as lost in thought. So the emphasis for the Flirt is on the le-vel of the physical, but the mental for the Viewpoint. The latter are bodily poses that symbolize thoughtfulness and (should) create an aura, such as the »Thinker« pose – which is a common variant in which the chin is held in the hand.

Mummery – The term *mummery* means a presentation that serves to prevent the establishment of an identity. The object of mummery is the face, which is entirely or partially hidden to ensure anonymity in public situations. The mummery motif is the antipode of the passport picture. A person who chooses the passport motif as a profile picture literally shows his or her face, whereas users who choose the mummery motif remain »faceless«. Such a polarity on the level of expression likewise corresponds to opposite portrait functions because the purpose of mummery is precisely the non-identification of the individual. The tension between self-exposure and self-hiding is constitutive for this type. Due to a hidden presentation, the view of the subject is not revealed. Although it is visible, it cannot be identified[23].

Figure 20 to 23: Mummery

Typical forms of expression are concealment of the eyes (sunglasses or black censor bars), as well as fashionable stylistic mummery with baseball caps, bandanas, and hoodies. Masking represents a fictionalized form of mummery.

The Mummery type clearly shows that young people use individual, generation-specific symbolic forms of expression in profile pictures. In many cases, the

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23 The usual context would provoke an asymmetry between the actor in the image (mummery), who cannot be identified, and the observer, who can be identified (non-mummery). Moreover, as a particular form of self-disguise, mummery refers to contexts of political protests and subcultural resistance (keyword: ban on wearing face coverings).

chosen form of presentation can be seen in relation to commonplace action contexts. Standard presentations by hooligans, graffiti artists, or protestors, for example, function as exemplary models of non-mediatized action contexts. These arise from situations in which the young people withhold their view from others[24].

The Mummery and Dummy motifs apparently share the same function: They are intended to preserve anonymity. However, since these approaches reveal different things with respect to the profile owner, they differ from each another regarding the question of visibility: While the masked person is visible, the individual hiding behind a dummy is invisible. Apart from this, mummery represents a symbolically stylized presentation of anonymity in that the people involved are often still recognizable on the basis of their name and manage a publicly accessible profile. It is therefore a stylized anonymization, the symbolic content of which is occasionally aimed at a self-stigmatization of an illegal lifestyle (see above).

Model Pose – Model poses are structurally different from the previously described postures that are assumed when a person allows his or her photograph to be taken. Their style is typically distinguished by exaggerated representation actions. Behavioral styles based on non-mediatized interactions are assumed and theatrically exaggerated (see Goffman 1981). Examples include touching one's own body, tilted head angles, kissing lips, and dramatic eyes – stylized elements of bodily expression that indicate specific moods or interactive rituals of seduction, playfulness, coolness, or melancholy[25]. The body is used as a medium of expression and remains in a stereotyped pose that indicates an interactive scene of seduction, for example.

Unlike the previously introduced motifs, these are characterized by the showing of the body. Professional advertising photography, whose motifs and body presentation can be traced back to Renaissance painting (see Berger et al. 1974), exerts the primary role-model function here. The Model pose differs from the usual form of the passport picture through its size of frame.

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24 As a historically traditional pose, this refers to the corporeal presentation in the American western films that show cowboys hiding their head and face with a hat and bandana.

25 Goffman (1981: 120ff.) summarizes typical female forms of expression.

Figure 24 to 27: Model Pose

If the close-up is typical for the passport picture, then the medium and long shots are standard for the model pose. This means that the observer position is designed for a certain distance. Due to such a camera setting, the details of the face are hardly recognizable and the gaze is often not directed at the camera. As a result, the observer is presented as a distance observer (see Crary 1992) and the image of the person as impersonal.

What cultural models of individuality are symbolized by the Model poses? The body language of the pose is connected with stereotyped normative role models of femininity and masculinity. The posed nature of the depiction shifts the personality of the young person in the image into the background. Consequently, the content of the depiction is less the person in his or her individual characteristics (as ideally conveyed through the motif of the passport picture) than the person as a de-subjectivized player of a role (see Goffman 1969; Reichertz 1992). When considering the relationship of the situation and *biography*, we notice that the quality of the self-representation with regard to the autobiography is minimal. The motif of the Model pose is not suited for the idiosyncratic representation of a person's life. This is because playing a role implies that other personality aspects are currently or have been/will be hidden.

The Model pose image is the documentation of a performance. It documents a specific photographic situation in which the actors step out of their real lives – the shoot. This can occur within real life contexts or under studio-like conditions in which real-world performing within one's own four walls is typical for social network sites and a particular tension between theatrical enactment and documented personal life background is conveyed. The question of the person's identification based on constant physical characteristics is shifted to the background in comparison with the role play of the pose and the masquerade. Young people present themselves as fashion models in their profile pictures and therefore become re-presentatives of a particular fashionable lifestyle. As a result, the body's composition and posture are also systematically related to each other in the

Model poses: The posed nature on the level of body use corresponds with the fashion-conscious stylization on the level of body styling. A subject not only moves like a model, but also flaunts the corresponding cosmetic and clothing styles as elements for expressing a (media-based) lifestyle (as for example conveyed by »America's Next Top Model«). And it is precisely this lifestyle that becomes the object of identification. The visible masks and poses that are publicly worn for show can be identified (in extreme cases, identification moves in the direction of a specific fashion brand when names and/or logos of (fashion) labels are included in the pictures or even in the nickname, for example). Therefore, a young person who poses on social network sites and »dresses« ensures a piece of personal identity and privacy for himself or herself. This is because non-identification as protection against autonomy and authenticity (which is the primary effect when using the pose in a self-reflexive manner) is an important function of Model poses (see Reichertz 1992: 163).

Gestural Pose – Gestural poses refer to an explicit communication with the observer. They include gestures that are not merely evidential but symbolic and therefore have a more clearly outlined meaning (see Schütz/Luckmann 2003). In comparison with the passport picture setting, in which bodily expression is restricted to facial expression, the Gesture-Oriented pose motif breaks out of this picture frame and shows the entire body in a gestural expression. The interplay of upper body, arms, and hands forms a significant gesture by which gestures made with fingers (hand signs) are particularly common.

Figure 28 to 30: Gestural Pose

These gestures are rooted either in the understanding of the youth culture or the culture at large or they are emblematic, (youth) scene-specific symbols (see Soeffner 2004). Typical examples of significant gestures are greetings (peace sign), blown kisses, drinking gestures, threatening gestures, and vulgar provocations (middle finger), scene symbols (gang signs, devil horns, and »think-about-it«), shooting gestures, or pointing gestures.

The person to whom the gesture is addressed is an imaginary observer. By assuming such a pose and gesture, a position is taken opposite this observer. The pragmatic meaning of the signs range from an invitation (blown kiss) to acceptance (greeting) to provocation (grimace), and rejection (vulgar gestures). The motif therefore also documents a performed act of (gestural) communication. As such, the relationship of non-mediatized representation to mediatized representation proves to be significant in that the photographically manifested gestures immediately refer to non-mediatized everyday life. In (non-mediatized) everyday life, we also greet other people by using hand signs, blow them a kiss, or »flip them off«.

The common sense use of these signs – which are public and assume a certain spatial distance between the participants in the in-teraction – is conspicuous. This is no different in their photographic (re-)enactment. It reflects the socio-spatial circumstances of the action and, unlike the previously described motifs in close-up, represents a certain spatial distance between the camera and the action in front of the camera. Gestural poses therefore occur in the mode of distant body-language communication.

One of the most frequently used gestures is the greeting gesture, which is carried out in the form of a so-called peace sign. One hand is stretched forward with the arm held horizontally and the index and middle fingers spread (see fig. 31)[26].

Figure 31 to 33: Gestural Pose

The resulting gesture is *the* standard gesture on social network sites: It is youth-specific and not used by adults. What are media models can be found for it? The gestural communication by means of hand signs exists at the intersection of professional celebrity photography and snapshot photography. »Making a sign« has always been relevant in snapshot photography. That is how the victory sign of earlier times came to be used synonymously as the peace gesture in friendship

26 Reversal of the symbol around the vertical orientation of the sign: In this form, the sign is used synonymously with the middle finger in the United Kingdom.

photography[27]. However, the peace sign used today is oriented toward mass-media models (namely, American hip-hop artists) who made the gesture popular (primarily within the scope of public presentations). Due to its universal proliferation, the gesture can be understood by most young people today.

Against the background of the portrait's social functions, this form of self-representation can be interpreted as follows: The greeting sign is addressed directly at the interactant. Compared with the fundamentally ambiguous and implicit communication of physical expression, this is an act of explicit communication. The direct, appellative demand serves to gain the attention of the observer, calling to mind functionally similar gestures, such as pointing at the observer (»I want you«). Someone who wants to draw more attention to the relationship represented than to himself or herself would use the peace sign. This depicts a standard greeting among persons of equal status and illustrates their encounter at an equal eye-to-eye level. While other gestures indicate rejection or provocation, the greeting gesture creates a marking of equality and commonality. The peace sign as a representative symbol for the user illustrates a relationship of like-minded people – others are not encountered as strangers but as »brothers in spirit« with the desire to be remembered in this form (i.e. as a buddy). Therefore, a general attitude and commonality with the observer is *identified* through the gesture rather than a personal characteristic.

Do-It-Yourself Pose – Self-portraits also display a typical gesture by young amateur photographers that distinguishes their photographic activity from that of adults. Many young people create their own portraits, but not every self-portrait is recognizable as such. There are two different forms of portrait images that are identifiable as self-portraits: One shows a young person with an outstretched arm (fig. 34) and the other shows a young person in front of a mirror (figs. 35-36). Both are recognizable self-portraits because the way that the camera is used becomes part of the action in front of the camera. Mirror portraits illustrate the self-representation of young people in all possible domestic contexts in which a mirror is available (such as in bathrooms or hallways). In comparison, self-portraits with outstretched arms occur both inside and outside of enclosed spaces. Only these two motivic variations should be understood below as of the Do-It-Yourself type because both of them pictorially represent the photographic act of the self-portraying individual, which then becomes an essential part of the image content (see Dubois 1998).

27   Earlier generations of private snapshots also used the same or similar gestures.

Figure 34 to 36: Do-It-Yourself Pose

Through self-portrayal, people document themselves (in the act of portrayal) and thereby intentionally assimilate themselves not only in a way with which they would like to be identified, but rather in a way that actually shows the action process as a motif. The photographic illusion of the person's image is broken by the double role (photographer/photographed) that is represented in the picture because the individual is seen not only as a person but also while portraying themselves. In brief: The person who is seen reveals the process through which he or she is seen. This places the gesture of the self-portraying person in the foreground, and generally further expressions of the body through gestures and poses are not performed (as in the above-mentioned Gestural poses, for example). The parasocial relationship initiation through portrait images that is typical for social network sites (such as in the Flirt motif) moves to the background because the process of the creating the image is the focal point.

In the motifs of the Do-It-Yourself pose, the question of individuality is explained in such a way that the photographic act of self-portrayal emphasizes the autonomy (of action) of the person portrayed. On one hand, additional control options are gained through self-portraiture because the young people are actors, directors, and photographers all in one person and perform each action in the production process independently. On the other hand, this gain in autonomy is counteracted by a loss of external vision, which is ordinarily produced by the (camera) eye of another. This means that the standard message of the profile picture – self-definition – is intensified by the act of self-portraiture. Analogous to the written self-description through the Info tab (see Chapter 2.2), the Do-It-Yourself motif represents a pictorial self-description. Self-portraiture has its own role models. Apart from self-portraiture in painting, media prototypes can be seen in both art photography and private photography; above all, the act of pho-

tobooth photography primarily represents (or represented) one of the most popular forms of analogous self-portraiture from the field of private photography among young people (see Mathys 2006; Walser 2010).

e) *Fictionalization/Artification*

With respect to their profile pictures, many of the (post-)adolescent actors on social network sites do not allow the results produced by their digital camera to remain as they are; instead, they specifically create an additional scene around them through creative acts of picture editing that we call »fictionalization«. This means forms of self-representation that mix fiction and reality together based on the mode of representation (see Pietrass 2002: 48). These include not only pictures in which the photographed subject is modulated (such as through changes to color or contrast), but new meanings are constructed. Among the common forms of expression are cross-faded, montaged, or collaged personal portrayals utilizing digital editing techniques that are made possible through image editing software (e.g. Photoshop) and online applications (e.g. picnik.com).

Fictionalization-type images deconstruct the clearly recognizable relationship to reality and show the individual in an alienated form as a result. The actors and their actions are obscured through the dissolution of a recognizable space and/or discernable figurations through which a representable reality is displaced and fictionalized. The act of picture design is the main carrier of the meaning. This represents a creative process of reconstruction (bricolage) through which the real person is only recognizable as a model (in the sense of a material resource) behind the subject, which is central (see Goffman 1981).

Figure 37 to 39: Fictionalization/Artification

In this respect, such pictures are actually documents of a construction. The person shown is therefore less authentic with respect to his or her documentary dimension than to his or her creative manner. The self is »shown« and simulta-

neously exaggerated (hyper-individualization) in and through the creative act. In additionally, the act of picture editing is moved to the foreground with respect to the act of being portrayed in the symbolic meaning of the image.

The photographed actor plays a role within a fictional action context. The depiction refers not to the moment of production but rather to a specific zeitgeist in that the style creates a specific time reference. Young people allow contemporary symbols and esthetics to influence their images. Media cultural models originate in art photography and graphic design. Above all, popular culture offers a frequently cited referential frame with models from pop art, fashion design, or comics. Typical approaches to design are picked up from them and »recreated« by the simple means of picture editing. Fictionalized self-representations show artistically ambitious bricoleurs who create their self-images according to the principles of D.I.Y. (do-it-yourself). They are not professionals but amateurs who take charge by editing their own pictures.

f) *Occasions*

Social occasions form an important shared background for profile pictures. Travel, day trips, parties, sports, and entertainment events represent typical autobiographical occasions for young people's photographs. With this emphasis on leisure events, the digital images on the Internet are linked to traditional photographic practices and access familiar iconographies of analog photography.

Figure 40 to 42: Occasions

For example, these include the travel portrait in front of a historical backdrop, the party portrait, or the sports portrait – which may either show the person in action or with sports equipment. The images usually show the person in a long shot and thereby ensure insight into the larger setting and context of the action.

In occasion photography, the person's likeness is used to document highlights in his or her life. Instead of the mundane, it recalls moments that have a special

biographical significance (see Goffman 1981: 46f.). The individual is therefore identified (more strongly than in the other categories) with particular, occasion-specific events. With the event, the person's actions are brought to the fore and the individual (physical) stylization, as well as the characteristic facial expression, move to the background. In occasion photography, individuality is linked to an act that primarily represents a question of emphasized leisure activities among young people. Through stylized or real activity situations loaded with social symbolism, they express their individuality as successful and skilled athletes, globe-trotting travelers, or gregarious party guests.

The enactment gains plausibility in that it is linked to an event and the image represents the documentation of an act – even if it is staged. The occasion-specific profile picture is therefore always an advertisement of personal interests and preferences. Users expose something about themselves with these acts and offer others the opportunity to identify with or disassociate from them.

4. Summary

Although it appears to be complex and chaotic at first glance, the motivic repertoire on social network sites proves to be orderly and structured. As the previous explanations show, a canonization of profile-picture types has occurred in the image world of young people on the Web. Dominant and less dominant style types can be distinguished within the scope of this order, which is why a concluding look at the *frequency* of the image types presented is warranted. This process will also include a comparison of the different approaches to *self-positioning* through the various profile-picture types, i.e. how the actors on social network sites represent themselves as communicators.

The classic formal photo portrait, the *Passport Photo*, is only minimally accepted by the members of the online networks. Professional or even amateur staging of passport image photography is only rarely found on the social network sites that we investigated. When they exist at all, then only in stylized rather than objective variants. Minimal positioning with a formal portrait and showing a presence as a communicator while remaining nondescript obviously does not represent a relevant option for most young people. The passport photo motif tends to leave them looking like a »blank page«, which is not the case for the *Dummy* type. For a surprisingly large number of young people, concealment behind a pictorial image quotation is an attractive alternative for revealing themselves to the online community. This allows them to not position themselves through their own appearance, but instead join in the conversation by means of a quote that presents an object or topic (with which they usually identify or would like to be identified). According to our observations, about ten percent of the

members select an anonymous image mode through which they reveal nothing personal and remain nondescript as actors. Many users employ the mask of a stranger in order to acquire their first experiences on social network sites under the protection of visual anonymity. This is because a particularly large number of newly registered and/or adolescent members – who change to a personal-portrait motif at a later time – are among the young people who use the dummy category.

»Strike a pose«, the dictum of theatrically performed portrait photography, is the guide to action for the majority of profile pictures that we analyzed. This is because many young people prefer stylized variants that are dominated by the code of *posing*. They orient themselves upon youth-specific *and* role-creating personality typing, which they perform through specific (body) poses. Masking the personality is a standardized process in which the actor appears in a particular role. With each pose (a term that literally means »posture«), the actors position themselves. The Self-Portrait pose – which is highly accepted by both genders and used with corresponding frequency – is the most common. Due to its strong prevalence on social network sites, this is the prototypical form of contemporary (Web-)portraiture and reflects the relevance of cell phones as a medium of personal image production. However, the message of the self-portrait is also important because young people manifest their own perspective (of themselves) through the photographic act of the self-portrait. In so doing, they show how they see themselves. Unlike the poses that follow, they do not present themselves as an interactive actor through the Self-Portrait pose.

In second place among pose-oriented forms of self-representation are the Flirt, the Model, the Thinker, or Greeting poses (see Flirt, Model Pose, Viewpoint, and Gestural Pose). With these poses, both genders oriented themselves toward a heteronormative basic order in which girls present themselves more in Flirt or Model poses and boys more in Thinker or Greeting poses. These typify the actor as open, broad-minded, and/or friendly which – in light of the relationship communication that occurs on social network sites – represents a plausible form of self-representation. The stereotyped models that are shown correspond to familiar models of celebrity and advertising communication. The similarity to advertising subjects can be seen in that the actors on the Web represent themselves in the mode of self-idealization and pursue self-promotion (Neumann-Braun 2002). Self-positioning also occurs in the mode of self-marketing.

In third place and therefore less frequent, but still within the framework of the normative canon, are poses of concealment, rejection, and provocation. A person is shown masked or rejects the interactant with vulgar gestures (see Mummery and Gestural Pose). These are more frequently used by young males than females. All of these poses also have the effect that they always represent a typecasting of social relationships. The pose not only conveys an attitude toward oneself but also toward others; the body language expresses concepts of relation-

ships, circumstances of closeness/distance, acceptance, and rejection. They are based on interactive action situations.

The *Fictionalization* type constitutes about ten percent of the profile pictures and is used more by young females than males. The self is represented as alienated: The subjects appear more fictional than real. The self is always brought into the conversation, but in an alienated or artificial variant. Unlike the Dummy, the representation is still linked to the actor. And unlike the body pose, a fictional self-image does not determine the pictured person on a specific role. Fictionalizations therefore also represent leeway for the identity.

Young people break out of the individual portrait's narrow framework with the *relationship representation*. However, the relationship representation is among the standard forms of profile pictures even though our observations show that it is less common and has a frequency of about five percent. These show same- or mixed-gender couple and group portraits in which the depiction of two persons dominates. Through the relationship representation, a person is identified with other persons or represents himself or herself as integrated into a friendship relationship.

Due to the sheer vastness of the picture volume on the Web, a complexity-reducing method was chosen for the present essay: We focused on profile pictures in the form of display images as structural (placement within the profile) and functional (pictorial identification of the profile owner) guidelines of the corresponding Web platforms (social network sites). We were able to show that these guidelines are reinterpreted, subverted, and played with for the purpose of demonstrating individuality. So the mode of the simple identity card (conveyed in co-presence via one's personal appearance and face) already becomes a basic design option for one's own person based on the structural and pictorial constitution of the interactive space; personal appearance becomes the image in the truest sense of the word. Consequently, what is primarily relevant is not a person's appearance but how he or she handles the predetermined appearance option: Whether to use it functionally (Passport Photo) or (visibly) dysfunctionally (Dummy); whether to simply reveal one's identity, cover up (Mummery), or prepare for relationships (Flirt). In the second place, the motifs and aesthetics described above play a role in providing evidence that the actual function – which is specifically the same as for the Passport Photo – is broken through its implementation: As shown above, the identity card slot is used (or exploited) for the purpose of differentiated identity presentations. This demonstrates that self-representation has already begun in a certain sense before a person has proved himself or herself as an identifiable self. On this level (namely, self-stylization within the structural framework of a simple identity card), the image products of young people became manageable and are »canonized«. The chosen forms of self-representation (displayed by the various image types) prove to be youth-

specific in that their communication is oriented toward or refers to the symbolic codes of the market, youth, and consumer culture, the advertising and celebrity systems, and the peer-group environment.

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MySelf. MyFriends. MyLife. MyWorld.
Photo Albums on Social Network Sites and Their Communicative Functions for Adolescents and Young Adults

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1. Introduction

The communicative activities of adolescents and young adults on social network sites (sns) have been a very popular topic for media reportage since their inception. This popularity has even intensified since the impressive success of the online platforms. An especially frequent topic are the users' photographic practices, which entails both the quantity and the content of the mostly private photographic self-productions that are displayed. With the aid of headlines that verge on the sensational – such as *Nackt unter Freunden* (Naked Among Friends, see Blech et al. 2009 in *Spiegel*) or *Ausziehen 2.0* (Undressing 2.0, see Kutter 2008 in *Zeit Campus*) – a picture is drawn of a generation that has apparently lost any need for private lives. An equally gloomy future scenario through the supposed »end of privacy« (see von Bredow et al. 2010) has been projected as a result.

Depending on their perspective, diverse scholarly publications on the phenomenon of social network sites and their users – see ARD/ZDF 2009; Autenrieth et al. 2010, in this volume; Busemann/Gscheidle 2009; Lenhart/Madden 2007; MPFS 2009; Ofcom 2008; Prommer et al. 2009; Schmidt/Paus-Hasebrink/Hasebrink 2009; Waechter/Triebwetter/Jäger 2010; Wagner/Brüggen/Gebel 2009) – have now labeled them as the Net Generation (Tapscott 2008), Digital Natives (Palvrey/Gasser 2008; Prensky 2001), or the Millennials (Taylor/Keeter 2010). However, these publications mostly concentrate on the general use of the platforms. Up to now, a first step toward examining the aspect of the users' photographic practices in this specific media environment has been taken on the one hand by looking at nightlife photography (see Neumann-Braun/Astheimer 2010), as well as with respect to their potential for social structuring (see Pfeffer/Neumann-Braun/Wirz 2010). The present essay is intended as the next step in this direction. Its objective is to gain further objectifying insights into the photographic activity by adolescents and young adults in online photo albums on sns.

The results presented here are part of the research project »Images of Youth in the Internet. Visual representation of adolescents in the tension between competing photographical frames« (for more information about the research project see www.netzbilder.net), funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, in which a total of approx. 200 adolescents and young people between the ages of 12 and

24 were consulted in focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and peer group analyses as to their use of self-produced photographs on sns[28]. Some of their online photo albums will now be analyzed as examples.

For this purpose, the two primarily relevant photographic types on sns – the profile picture and album pictures – will be initially compared with each another. This is followed by a description of the communication situation, as well as an analysis of the themes and functions of photo albums, in the lives of young people. In conclusion, a connection will be made between photographic activity on sns and sociological analyses of developmental tendencies in contemporary society.

2. Photo Albums on SNS: Functional Structure and Communicative Framework

2.1 Profile Picture vs. Photo Album

As a standard, almost all social network sites offer users some type of option of making pictures and photographs available online for their social environment. The most obvious variant of this option at first glance is the profile picture, which is usually placed on the upper left edge of the respective profile as a type of identification photo. It functions as a kind of visual representative for the respective user in the various communicative interactions on sns. The content of profile pictures usually shows the profile owner in various poses and scenarios (see Astheimer/Neumann-Braun/Schmidt 2011 in this volume). The use of a profile picture is not actually obligatory for the operation of a corresponding online profile; however, it is practiced by most users. Most portraits that are used for this purpose lend a face to one's own website profile and therefore aid other users in recognizability and authentication.

Through this striking positioning as a solitary individual photo, the profile picture largely dominates a profile page overall impression and places the user's image at the center of attention. Moreover, this is particularly interesting based on the fact that a miniature version (thumbnail) is always included next to the text content in many communicative activities, such as wall comments or messages. As a result, it continually represents the user and is usually visible for every user because profile pictures often cannot be hidden. This is why users must carefully select a suitable photograph.

In addition to the profile picture with its diverse functions as a unique attribute, recognizable representation, and identification document, complete col-

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28   For a detailed description of the methodological approach see Autenrieth 2011.

lections of pictures with an almost unlimited scope can be placed online on sns in the form of photo albums and presented to the interested contact network as a result. This makes it is possible to visually depict larger narrative contexts within which the profile owners can present themselves and their environment in various contexts in a multifaceted way.

The albums are usually not directly on the profile page but are linked to the profile as a sub-page through a button. Consequently, it is only visible after a second look at the detailed view of the profile. Depending on the platform used, access to photo albums can be regulated through corresponding security and privacy settings so that – unlike the profile picture – they are often only accessible to a limited audience and can be presented within a protected environment[29].

While the profile picture is usually very specific in terms of theme and function (with the majority of them showing the profile owner), photo albums are more broadly oriented in their function and are more diverse in their themes. Aside from depictions of the actual person, profile owners frequently document the broader context of their lives here.

The degree to which this occurs underscores that a profile picture as a sole visual representative sign is experienced as insufficient by a majority of users: About 2.5 billion images are uploaded by users onto their respective profiles every month just on market-leader Facebook (see Facebook 2010). As a result, broad segments of the users make an affirmative decision with regard to presenting additional photographic works.

A narrative potential for the visual representation of events and life contexts develops with the presentation of pictures in the form of complete photo albums. Follow-up communication and participation between album owners and album recipients is made possible by the multitude of communication variants in connection with the pictures, such as comment functions and links. This simultaneously represents a kind of interactive reverse channel because the audience reactions to the content displayed are transmitted directly to the album owners. For the user, photographic depictions on sns and the on-site discursive negotiations are therefore also always a peer-reviewed system of symbols for discussing the communicative significance of the pictures.

This fact supports and requires a certain strategic calculation in the creation of photo albums because the image of an individual can – and must – always be created through the presentation of personal photographs.

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29   But glitches happen on a recurring basis (see Spiegel 2010). This situation was aggravated by Facebook's new default settings (see Kirkpatrick 2010).

The concrete options that users have for using pictures on their own profiles will be analyzed in the following section. This question will be investigated by employing Facebook as an example to explain which variants and options for creating photo albums exist on sns, as well as the ways in which communication can occur with and within photo albums.

2.2   Creating an Individual Photo Album

Facebook generally offers two options for placing photographs online: On one hand, images can be loaded from a PC onto the personal profile; on the other hand, they can be sent to the profile by email through a cell phone. Both variants have their own distinct implications. When users create an album directly on a PC, they are presented with a large number of design options. In the Photos tab on their own profile (which is standard on all profiles), users find the Create an Album button at the top. Clicking on it opens a form that allows them to enter various details for creating a new album. It is first necessary to enter a name for the new album since it is not possible to create an album without this obligatory information. Moreover, a Location can be entered (for albums with vacation photos, this may be the travel destination) as well as a Description for explaining and more precisely defining the pictures that are shown. Finally, the sns contacts with permission to gain access to the album's content can be added in the Privacy field. The current standard (default) setting for this is Friends Only[30]. If this is not changed, the result is that only personal contacts that have been confirmed online can access the images. However, these settings can be restricted even more by granting individually defined users access authorization. They can also be opened further, such as to Friends of Friends, the user's own network[31], or

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30   An intensive discussion has broken out about Facebook and its default settings. Many consumer advocates, politicians, and scholars have a very critical view of Facebook's treatment of its users' data. The lack of clarity concerning the privacy settings and the comparatively open default settings have been criticized. After changes to the Terms and Conditions in the winter of 2009/10, the default setting for albums was still Friends of Friends. With an average of 130 contacts on Facebook, this could quickly mean 15,000 people.

31   The Network is understood here to mean larger sets, such as high schools or companies/employers, with which users can associate themselves. However, each user is only allowed to be a member of one network. If a user grants access rights to his or her entire personal network, everyone who is a member of that network can see the pictures.

Everyone. In this case, Everyone means all interested Internet users including those who do not have their own Facebook profile[32].

In order to be able to create an album via cell phone, a user must first assign a personalized upload email address to his or her profile. This makes it possible to post status updates, photos, and videos directly from a mobile telephone to a personal profile. The respective reference of the email is used as a caption without requiring any further effort whenever it contains a photo or video. If this is not the case, then the reference automatically appears online as a status update. However, it should be noted that the default setting Everyone is activated as a standard feature with this variant. This actually makes these pictures visible to everyone for the first moment. Changes to this setting can only be made afterwards with a new visit to the profile. The images loaded onto Facebook via cell phone are automatically collected into an album called Mobile Uploads.

In general, two photo album variants can be distinguished: On one hand, those that are created manually by users at a PC and for which all settings can be adjusted directly; on the other hand, albums through which the users post individual pictures to their profiles. These pictures are then automatically generated to albums by Facebook and can only be fine-tuned by the profile owner afterward. Aside from the previously described Mobile Uploads, there is another series of automatically generated photo albums. For example, all profile pictures uploaded by a user are saved in the Profile Pictures album. Correspondingly, pictures that are posted to one's own wall are collected in a Wall Photos album. Moreover, use-oriented albums are created from the online games[33] that exist on Facebook, for example and can be collected through screenshots of game play. In addition, all pictures in which the user has been linked are collected under Photos of … (first name of the user). This not only includes the pictures that were placed online by the involved user, but all images to which his or her profile has been linked. The following explanations refer primarily to online photo albums that are created directly by the users themselves on PCs.

As mentioned above, once an album has been created, it is possible to change or revise it. By clicking on the Edit Album button, the user is directed to a subpage with five different tabs through which various changes can be made.

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32 »When you publish content or information using the ›everyone‹ setting, it means that you are allowing everyone, including people off of Facebook, to access that information and to use it and to associate it with you (i.e., your name and profile picture).« (Facebook Terms and Conditions, URL: http://www.facebook.com /photos.php?id=1142305100#!/terms.php?ref=pf; date of last revision: May 27, 2010).

33 The best-known example is Farmville.

On the first Edit Photos page, all of the pictures in an album are displayed with several editing options. In the Caption field, the users have the opportunity to describe individual pictures more precisely and as a result, beyond the general description of the album, the individual images are more precisely explained to the observers. Moreover, an album cover for the respective album can be selected or individual pictures can be deleted or moved to other albums.

On the next tab with the label of Add Photos, the respective album can be expanded with additional pictures. Under the Sort column, it is possible to reorganize the images in an album or to reverse the order in which they are displayed. On the Edit Info tab, it is also possible to change the details that were entered when the album was created (album name, location, description, and privacy settings). On the last tab, the entire album can be deleted at once and therefore removed from the personal profile completely.

2.3   Communicating with and through Pictures

The communicative discussions as to the meaning of the events, persons, and objects depicted can begin at the moment that a photo album is created. Users have various communicative tools available for this purpose; in turn, carry various implications with them.

For both the album producers and the album recipients, it is possible to post information about a particular album in a user's profile and thereby create a link between the profile and the photo album. This action on the user's part results in all of the respective contacts receiving information about the photo album on their own Facebook profile. So this is a simple way to make a more or less large circle of people – depending on the number of one's own contacts – aware of an album with relatively little effort.

On the other hand, if a user just wants to inform one particular person about an album or a single picture, the album or photo can be shared, which means that a specific is sent a message, the content of which refers to the corresponding picture medium. This means that only one individual person is addressed directly.

In order to make clear that a person likes a particular picture or an entire album, Facebook has what is known as the Like button. This allows the individual to express appreciation with a simple click that produces a note in the profile and timeline.

If someone would like to remark about a picture or album in greater detail, this can be done in the form of a Comment. A special comment function for this is available beneath each album and individual picture. If something is entered in the field provided, this text is displayed directly under the album or picture along with the name and a thumbnail of the author's profile picture. Complete dialogs

between various users, album producers, and album viewers can develop as a result.

Furthermore, it is possible to create a link between a user and a picture. What is known as a Tag can be generated for this purpose. If a user has been tagged (or has tagged himself or herself), then the corresponding picture is displayed in his or her own profile in the automatically generated Photos of … (first name of the user) album. As a result, it is possible to create a direct reference between a user and a picture for reasons such as documenting that the user is depicted in the photo, participated in an event, or is in some other way related to that picture. Tags are visible through markings on the corresponding pictures in the form of a squared frame. Along with the name of the tagged person, they become visible by using the computer's mouse to touch them with the pointer.

Moreover, there are various functions for receiving an overview of all tags and comments of a particular picture or an entire album: A complete list-like overview of all previously posted comments can be created on the album level through the View All Comments function. In addition, Everyone in This Album can be listed when an album is displayed. This is where thumbnails of the profile pictures can be seen along with user names followed by their respective number of tags in the corresponding album in parentheses.

An initial analysis of the photo album content presented on sns reveals that there are three key thematic points for organizing the albums (see fig. 1), which can be separated into person-centered, occasion-centered, and object-centered.
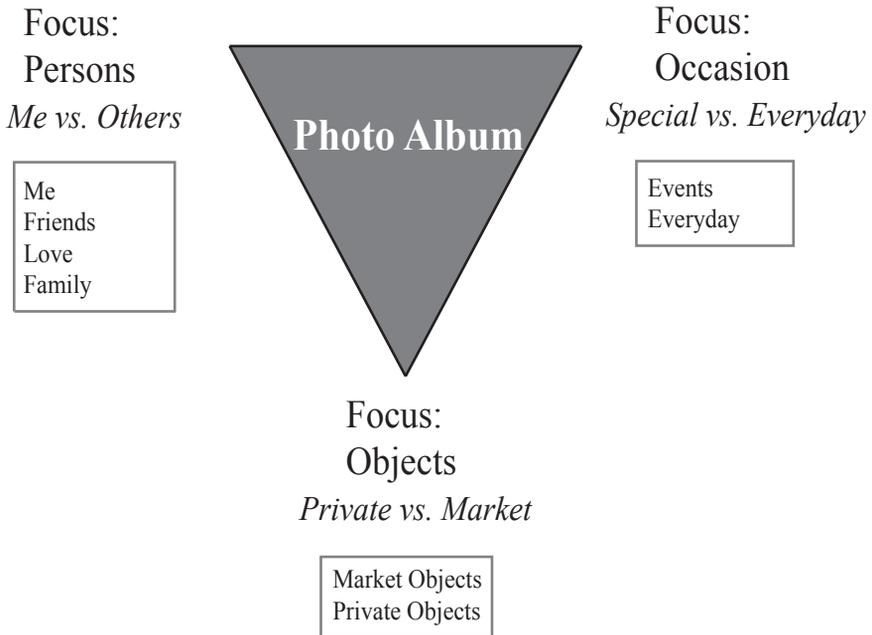

Figure 1: Thematic Structure of Photo Albums on SNS

The structure of the content and the thematic design of the photo albums is examined more closely below and with that, we will attempt to create an analytic typology. For the detailed description of the design model for the content, we tried to find the most ideal typed examples for the different album variants. In fact, some albums can be associated with more than one type or diverse themes can be combined with one another within an album.

a) *Person-Centered Albums (Me vs. Others)*

People are the focus of the image. On one hand, this identifies the content of the pictures; however, it is most clearly shown in the album's title or description, which might say something like My Friends and I. Two variants can be distinguished in this category: On one hand are what are known as Me albums in

which the profile owner primarily presents himself or herself; on the other hand, there are photo albums in which other people – usually the user's friends, i.e. the peer group – are represented.

Me Albums (fig. 2): Self-Representation – The central object of this album type is often clear from the titles of the albums, which are often simply Me. The content of the pictures shown here predominantly documents the respective profile owner. The entire photo series presents pictures that show the individual person in various contexts. However, the focus is often on the face or the facial expression. It is often clearly visible that the pictures are self-portraits created with the help of a cell phone, digital camera, or a camera that is part of a personal computer. This often displays a conflict in young people's self-depiction between the need to represent oneself in the most authentic way possible (»This is who I am«) on one hand; on the other hand, in the most idealized way possible (»This is how I look good«). It appears to be feasible to show various facets of one's own personality in the form of the pictures that are used, which emphasizes the diversity of the individual's character. These are usually clearly staged pictures that employ familiar poses, which means no spontaneous snapshots.

Figure 2: Me Albums (festzeit.ch)

The significance of control over one's own image is expressed in two ways: On the one hand, through the homemade production of the picture; on the other hand, in the control over the expressions of one's own body. In the poses that are assumed, both young females and males orient themselves strongly upon the heteronormative models that are seen in the media and advertising (see Brunazzi/Raab/Willenegger 2011, in this volume, following Goffman 1981). The intention here is frequently receiving an acknowledgment from the social environment about one's own image and person. The communication functions of the tags and the comments are of central importance here. Friends and contacts are linked to one's own pictures (even if they do not seem to be involved in the action shown in the picture), which amounts to a request for a comment. The persons who are contacted this way articulate their (decidedly positive) opinions of the given picture in these comments. As a result, tags and comments can be perceived as discursive elements supporting a peer-reviewed self-image that is negotiated between album owners and commenting contact networks.

Friend Albums (fig. 3): Friends/Acquaintances/Personal Environment – A profile owner's closer friends are primarily what is shown in Friend albums. Sometimes these are listed individually with portrait photos and the relationship to them described in detail with additional information (e.g. name, ranking in the Friend portfolio such as »best friend«) or they can be snapshot-style pictures showing the significant others in a joint activity. If multiple people are portrayed in the pictures, their bodies are often very close – i.e. an intimate relationship is demonstrated by the mutual poses. In these albums, the particular emphasis of the friendship is critical. This is often clearly expressed in the title of the album: A typical example of this is My Best Friends, which announces the closeness of the friendship bond. The corresponding persons and the connection to them are shown to be something special through their representation in an album. This makes it clear that the term »friend« is still very distinct from »Facebook friend« for young people. Although the reciprocal contact confirmation on sns gives evidence that the participating persons are »friends«, this is nonetheless understood as a simple relationship between two nodal points because this does not take the emotional depth of the relationship into consideration (see boyd/Ellison 2007). This form of identification that is made available by the provider is strongly differentiated in the form of the Friend album or the concept of friendship is recontextualized on the part of young users themselves. While young people have an average of about 130 »friends«, in the sense of contacts on their profiles (see Facebook 2010b; Autenrieth et al. 2010; Schmidt/Paus-Hasebrink/Hasebrink 2009), usually a maximum of about ten people in the special Friend albums represent the closest or best friends in the eyes of young people (see Alisch/Wagner 2006).

Figure 3: Friend Albums (festzeit.ch)

A certain reciprocity or positive feedback on the part of those depicted is critical in these albums. Since they are also part of the online network in the great majority of cases, they have the opportunity (and simultaneously the implicit responsibility) to react to the depictions and therefore the public dissemination of the friendship (see boyd 2008)[34] in a similar way. The owner of a corresponding album often links to the people depicted in it so that they are immediately informed by the given platform about their presence in the album. Ordinarily, a gesture of gratitude for the link is made in the form of a comment on the picture and a corresponding counter-depiction in one's own album of best friends. As a result, the mutual close friendship is confirmed and therefore validated through the mutual depictions, comments, and links.

Family Albums (fig. 4): Parents/Siblings/Relatives (Family of Origin) – In the style of the classic (i.e. analog) family photo album, young people also have pic-

34   danah boyd (2008) talks about »Public Displays of Connection«.

ture albums in which their families of origin (see Burkart 2008) are presented on social network sites. These show people whose roles in the family environment are often clearly attributed in the form of captions. The connection with the user's own family is represented, which simultaneously serves as a closer self-description in the sense of »This is where I come from«. However, the relatives who correspond to the same age cohort and are also on the online platform are often primarily depicted. Only infrequently are parents and older relatives presented. Siblings and cousins are therefore mainly depicted online. At the same time, these relatives are part of one's own peer group and contribute – due to the articulated family relationship – to a greater authentication of the profile owner's identity because family is considered stronger than friendship as a constant component of the individual biography.

Figure 4: Family Albums (festzeit.ch)

Love Albums (fig. 5): Relationship/Expressions of Love/Own Children/(Potential) Own Family) – Heterosexual love[35] and relationships are also photo-album themes. Couples are essentially seen in very different contexts and poses, but the couple constellation is always strongly emphasized in order to clarify the situation to the viewer. On the one hand, this is done through the corporeal proximity of the protagonists in the form of clearly connoted gestures such as kissing and embracing. On the other hand, the viewer is usually explicitly informed of the relationship situation through both the album title and the captions (e.g. »My sweetie and me«). On the whole, a strong emphasis is placed on the emotional bond. Moreover, the photographs often esthetically and romantically emphasize the day-to-day elements of the relationship.

Figure 5: Love Albums (festzeit.ch)

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35   The pictures on sns are strongly oriented toward heteronormative models and moral concepts. Young people with a homosexual orientation meet on special platforms, such as www.gayromeo.com.

This may be done with symbols such as hearts and roses, which are added through digital post-production. This can be used as an explanation for why only albums of the current relationship and partner are documented under this theme, i.e. in contrast to the tendency to otherwise archive pictures on social network sites. Online photo albums with ex-boyfriends/ex-girlfriends are rarely found because they would point out the fragility of relationships. This would be a reminder of the possibly limited nature and impermanence of the depicted romantic relationship ideal, suggesting the potentially finite nature of one's current happiness.

b) *Occasion-Centered (Everyday vs. Event)*

With this variant, the focus is on the occasions for which the photo albums were created. Information about the thematic focus is frequently found right in the album titles, such as »My Birthday Party« or »Summer Vacation 2009«. A more distinct difference can be seen between everyday occurrences, such as school attendance or sports practice, and clearly special events, such as attending a party or traveling.

Everyday Albums (fig. 6): School/Hobby – The content of the everyday albums is pictorial documentation of experiences that are hardly extraordinary but still provide insight into the ritualized routines of everyday life. For example, these may be pictures in a school setting, professional activity, illustrations of pursuing a hobby, or simply »chilling at home with friends«. The personal private environment, one's own inclinations and interests, and routinized activities that occur on a regular basis are documented here. This illustrates additional facets of the user's personality and further authenticates the individual profile as a result.

   A strong connection between the image viewer and the image producer arises through these relatively private glimpses into the album owner's world. At the same time, the presentation and publication of these pictures once again testifies to the great value that the album's owner attaches to his or her own person and the individual living environment.

Figure 6: Everyday Albums (festzeit.ch)

Event Albums (fig. 7): Occasions (Party)/Locations (Travel) – In the classical sense, i.e. similar to their analogous predecessors, online photo albums are also created for particular events. These can be extraordinary experiences, such as vacation travel, or social occasions, such as parties (see Autenrieth 2010; Neumann-Braun/Astheimer 2010). However, the focus here is always on the non-typical nature of the event, which is shown through its spatial or social distance from the ordinary. Although people, scenarios, and artifacts are represented, the event is the main point of interest. This means that the primary purpose is not to show person X, but rather to show person X in this particular context or this particular place. This is clear from the album titles, which often unambiguously identify the event. Examples of this might be Summer Vacation in Croatia or My 21st Birthday. Links tend to be more exclusively to participating persons who are usually also depicted in the images or at least have participated in the corresponding event in one way or another. By comparison, the quality of the photography is highly valued, i.e. »beautiful« photographs (in the sense of esthetic composition) such as landscapes or vacation destinations are attempted to the best of the user's ability.

Figure 7: Event Albums (facebook.com)

These are then combined in the albums with more candid, snapshot-style photos that serve as reminders of the event. The individual network is granted access to personal experiences through the presentation of these photos, creating contact opportunities for further communicative activity as a result. The recipients of these pictures and albums can react to what is displayed with comments and positive assessments and then (somewhat) publicly demonstrate further interests and friendship ties.

c) *Object-Centered Albums (Private vs. Market)*

Along with people and occasions, objects play a central role in the online photo albums of adolescents and young adults, particularly for younger users. On the one hand, they present artifacts from the personal environment, such as pets or favorite articles of clothing. On the other hand, market images – i.e. illustrations of brand logos, products, and film and music celebrities – have a strong presence in the albums.

Private Object Albums (fig. 8): Objects from the Personal/Private Environment: Favorite Objects, Pets, etc. – Unlike Market albums, the user's personal possessions and everyday objects are more commonly found in Private Object albums. Therefore, the pictures are mostly self-produced and the focus is more on the significance of the objects for the individual person than on prestige value. Examples of this might be pictures of pets, favorite articles of clothing (but with an emphasis on the personal value and not on the brand logo), or objects that reference one's own interests, such as an amateur photographer's camera or the person's bicycle. As a result, the personality of the album owner is more precisely characterized by the depiction of private objects and their strong connection to the user's everyday world.
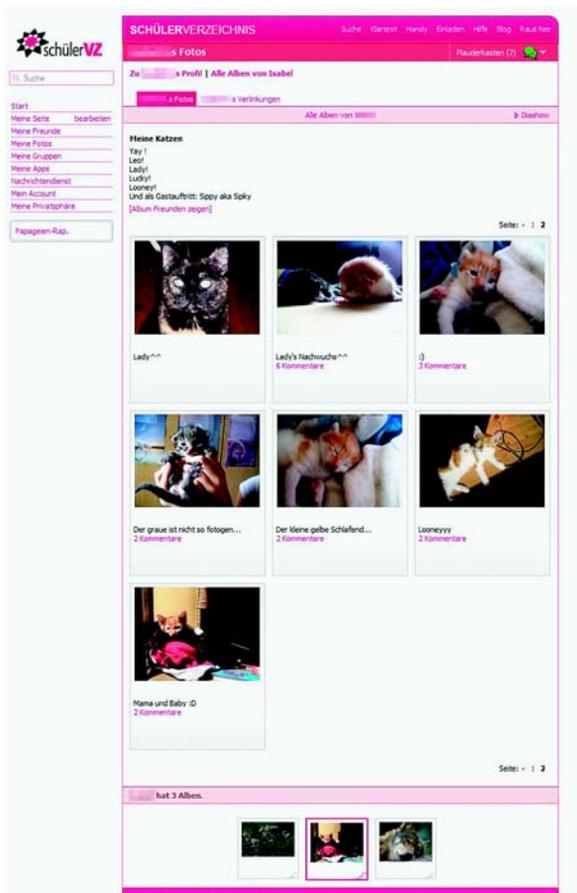

Figure 8: Private Object Albums (schuelerVZ.de)

Market-Object Albums (fig. 9): Media/Products/Brands/Celebrities – Market albums show pictures of brand labels, products, and celebrities from the world of media, music, and sports. However, the majority of illustrations depicted in these albums are not private, self-photographed pictures but rather market icons that usually come from the Web and are copied from it into the user's profile. Entire picture series of individual brands and products are often created with a structure reflecting the layout of a sales catalog. Above all, the products presented are predominantly items that represent desired objects, i.e. they are not already in the album owner's one's personal possession but reveal his or her desires. Moreover, this documents a fan relationship with the brand logos and celebrities. This is often shown again on the basis of group memberships and profile entries, such as the fan pages on Facebook or group memberships on StudiVZ[36].

Figure 9: Market-Object Albums (festzeit.ch)

36   The sns Netlog offers users direct brand, product, and celebrity pictures that can be transferred into their own profile.

The pictures of prominent persons, as well as brand symbols, represent membership in the corresponding symbol communities. Evidence of membership in specific youth scenes and style communities is shown by depicting specific objects and brands within one's own profile. At the same time, these pictures offer opportunities for follow-up communication with sns contacts who have similar preferences so they can link themselves to or comment on the pictures in order to proclaim their preference for the same products or celebrities. The market symbols that are represented simultaneously have the corresponding potential to develop the user's image through their respective brand images (see Paus-Hasebrink et al. 2004). The attributed characteristics of brands, products, and celebrities therefore also become online pieces of the puzzle for a young person's identity development.

4. Photo Albums on SNS as Visually Documented Socialization Experience and Age-Dependent Identity Development

The relationship between a user's age and the content of photographic representations on sns is investigated in the following section. The central themes in the lives of adolescents and young adults are reflected in the described album categories. In this manner, the albums document their everyday lives and socialization experiences.

From the perspective of socialization theory, the essential development work that young people must cope with is based upon their age. The central development work for young people is detachment from their parental home and development of their own coherent identity (see Abels 2006; Hurrelmann 2007; Schäfers/Scherr 2005; Keupp et al. 2008). With the onset of puberty, adolescents become psychologically detached from their families of origin (see Papastefanou 2006) and their parents' influence loses significance; at the same time, the moral concepts and opinions of the peer group increasingly take over and the social environment is intensively examined. On the one hand, this leads to a clear dissociation from the ideals of the adult world; on the other hand, integration into new peer group-based communities such as friend cliques and youth subcultures takes place. This is where individual moral concepts and social norms that are relatively independent of the adult world are developed (see Hurrelmann 2007: 132).

In addition, mothers and fathers also lose their superior orientation functions from an emotional and intimate perspective. They are replaced by self-selected relationship partners (see Hurrelmann 2007: 118), to whom closer ties are progressively developed with increasing age (see Neubauer 1990). Young people also free themselves from their families of origin on a cultural level during this development, i.e. they develop their own esthetic preferences in connection with

a lifestyle that is often different from that of their parents (see Hurrelmann 2007: 118; for early examinations of the media role in the process of adolescents detaching from their biological families see Charlton/Neumann 1986; Neumann-Braun 1991).

The central tasks of this developmental phase involve the questions: »Who am I?«, »What position do I have in my social environment?«, and »Where do I stand in the world?«. The contents of young people's online photo albums reflect their search for the answers to these important questions. They show a clear relationship to the respective environment and stage of development in which users find themselves. The important themes in the respective period of life turn up again in the pictures by adolescents and young adults. As a result, the search for an individual identity in the form of representations of personal individuality is documented in the Me Albums. This means an examination of one's own appearance and personal image within the peer group. The growing development of extra-familial friendship and love relationships – represented by the simultaneous dissociation from the family of origin and development of relationships with new significant others, which is also linked with increasing attention to the various youth scenes (see Hurrelmann 2007: 132f.) – is revealed within the scope of the Love and Friends albums. Last but not least, the development of one's own individual taste and the association with or dissociation from style communities is clearly displayed on the basis of Market albums that represent objects and symbols belonging to a particular scene, which accomplishes an association with one's own person.

Accordingly, the various album types are not found equally divided among all of the users; instead, there is primarily an age-dependent involvement with the individual themes and their translation into photography.

In order to better assess the frequency with which the various themes appear in the albums, a total of 692 photo albums from 232 Facebook and SchülerVZ users between the ages of 12 and 25 were analyzed[37]. The results (see fig. 10) clearly show the extensive differences in the distribution of the content themes. By a large margin, the most common overall themes are events and experiences in particular, which comprise nearly 40% of all of the included albums. At 22.5%, the friends theme was clearly reduced and Me albums have a 15% share.

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37   Some of the albums came from participants in systematic surveys by the author (see Autenrieth 2011); other albums were selected from publicly accessible profiles of both networks (according to different age, gender, and education groups). The assessment makes no claim to be representative, but shows empirical trends and developmental tendencies.
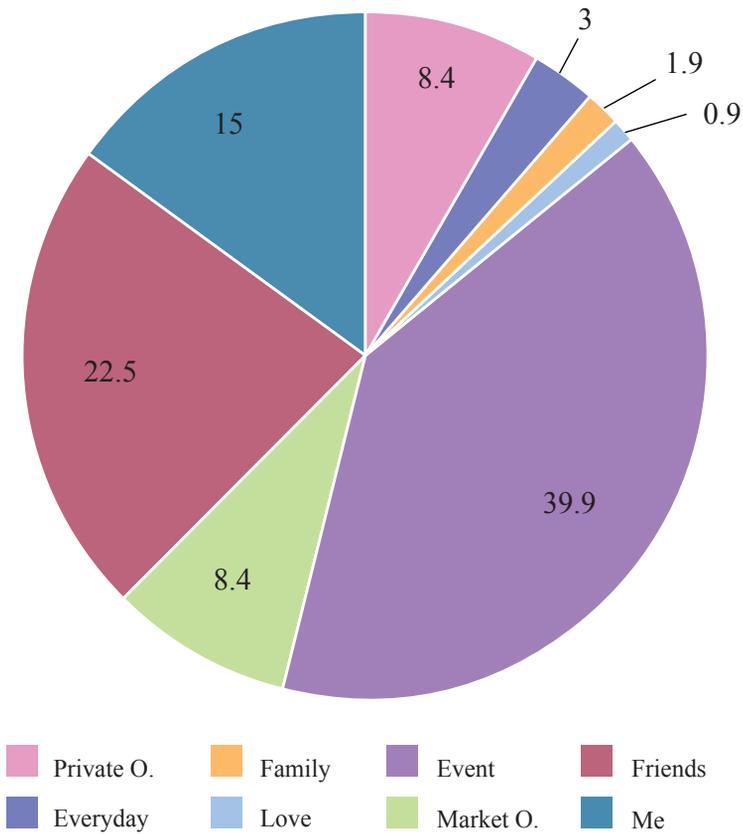
Figure 10: Differences in the distribution of the themes in % (N=692)

By contrast, picture albums of the market and artifacts from the personal environment had only an 8.4% share each. With values between 0.9 and 3%, the themes of love, family, and everyday life appeared only marginally.

However, this distribution is not the same for all user groups. Major differences with respect to the content depicted appear primarily between the youngest and oldest of the examined user groups (see fig. 11).

Figure 11: Differences in the distribution of the themes according to age groups in %
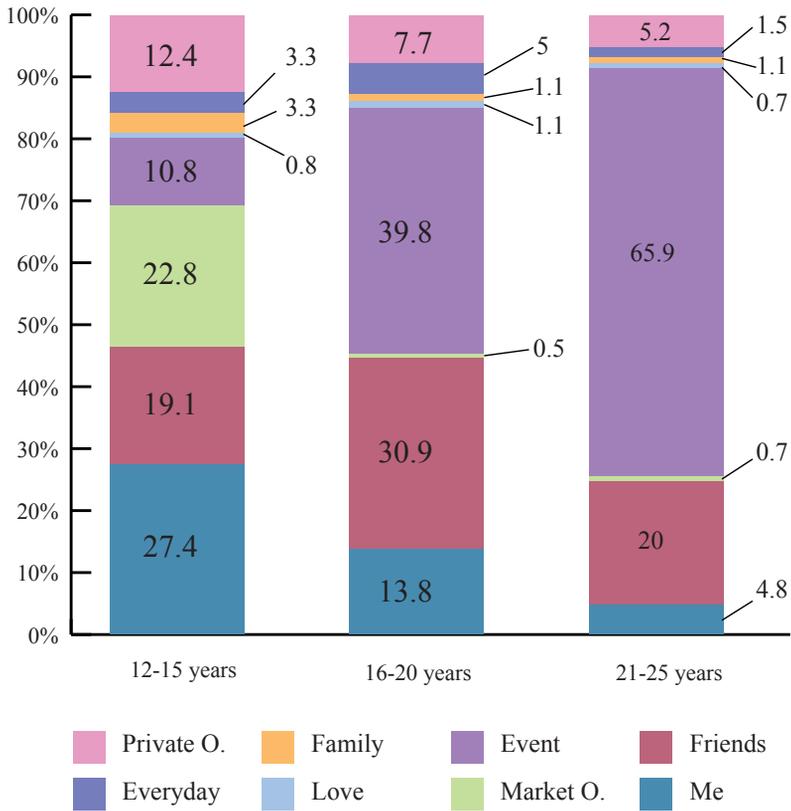(N=692)

When the investigated users were subdivided into three age groups, the different preferences were clearly apparent – particularly regarding the 12-15 year olds vs. the 21-25 year olds: At 27.4%, photo albums of the individual person (Me albums) made up the largest portion among the youngest users; however, they only constituted 4.8% among the oldest group considered here. The results were similar with Market Object albums, which at 22.8% were most favored among the young users but had only marginal representation later at about 0.5%. The ratios among the Event albums were just as clearly differentiated: They comprise only 10.8% of the albums among the youngest users while clearly dominating by a large margin and a ratio of almost two thirds of all of the albums shown in the 21-25 group. Photo albums in which a person's friends are predominantly shown appeared at a comparable consistency. They each made up about 20% of the albums in the youngest and oldest groups, and represented almost 31% among the

16-20 year-olds. Depictions of private objects (Private Object albums) are comparably popular at 12.4% among the youngest; however, this value drops significantly in both of the other age groups and only represents a ratio of 5.2% of the albums among the oldest. In all three age groups, the three themes of everyday, love, and family had similarly low standing in the one-figure area between 0.7 and 5% each.
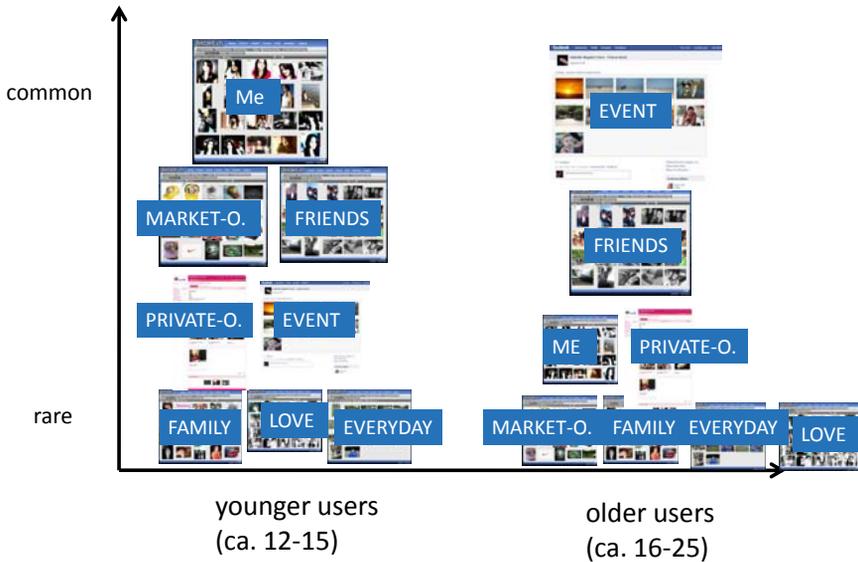

Figure 12: Overview distribution of the themes according to age groups in % (N=692)

Even if the numbers are not representative, they allow for an initial assessment of the fields with the thesis that a relatively clear tendency toward differentiating thematic preferences between age categories can be identified.

A clearly more significant level of self-reference is apparent among the younger users: An examination of or search for one's own individuality is documented by Me albums as the dominant album theme (see fig. 12). This occurs in a kind of digitalized peer-review process through the subsequent (partially) public communicative discussion of these pictures in the form of comments and links. Equally incisive for this age group is the search for an individual style and the accompanying association with specific youth culture scenes, which is documented in Market albums. The explicit, visualized representation of friendship relationships based on Friend albums is a theme that has a central value in both age groups; yet, it is clearly more strongly represented among those older than 16 to the extent that it is the second-most common album theme in this group.

The strong focus on a person's »self«, as well as links to depictions of market products, clearly plays a less significant role in this age group. Identity development moves away from an ego- and object-centered perspective to a predominantly social positioning process in which the peer group takes a more dominant role.

The personal action radius of young people increases with age. With growing legal and financial opportunities, the attention turns more to occasion-oriented themes (primarily evening excursions and travel with friends) that take up much more space for the 16-25 group.

On the whole, it is apparent that themes such as family and romantic relationships appear rather rarely. Pictorial representations of objects from the private environment, as well as intimate views into one's everyday personal life, are presented with comparable infrequency. Some of the reasons for this may be found in the lack of attractiveness when depicting everyday life. However, the lack of attention shown primarily to the themes of love and family is noteworthy. The reasons for this are presumably found less in the lack of attractiveness by the people who are potentially represented; instead, these areas are often seen by users as comparably private and worth protecting so that they are rarely placed online for this reason, as illustrated by this quote from an interview with a user: »I just don't include my family at all«[38].

The represented photographic content of picture albums on sns is therefore differentiated with relative clarity depending on the age of the users. While younger users frequently present their own person and pictures of the market, older users predominantly show events that document the positive aspects of their personal lives (parties and travel) and their own crowd of friends.

d) *Comparing Examples of Me Albums: Older User vs. Younger User*

Apart from the frequency with which the different album themes are picked up by adolescents and young adults in their online albums, there are also differences in the use of the displayed content. The respective variations in stylistic design will be described based on just two examples of the Me albums.

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38   The author conducted numerous interviews with adolescents and young adults about their approach to private photographs on sns. A detailed analysis can be found in Autenrieth 2011.
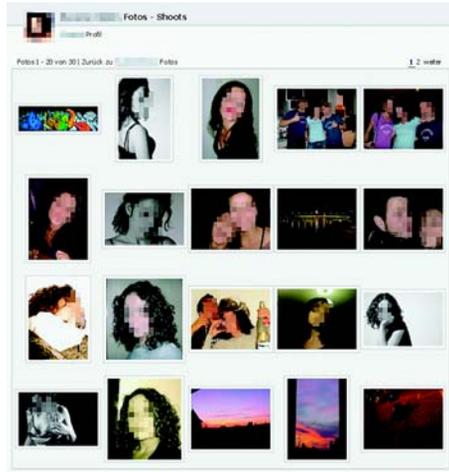
Figure 13: Me Album Younger User   Figure 14: Me Album Older User

Figure 13 comes from the SchülerVZ profile of a female student who is about 14 years old. It contains a total of eleven photographs in which the profile owner is apparently always depicted. In one of the pictures, she is seen with another girl of the same age. A central theme of the pictures in the photo album is therefore the album owner herself, which is again insistently emphasized by the profile owner herself in the album title of Me. In each of the pictures, she is obviously at the center of the activity. The perspective in which the photos were taken gives rise to the suspicion that most of them pictures were taken by the album owner herself with a cell phone or a PC camera. The quality of the pictures – with their rather unprofessional lighting, low resolution, and image details and background – also suggests this technical framework. In almost all of the pictures, the profile owner's head or the face is at the center of the photographic depiction.

By comparison, the Me album in figure 14 is suited to an approx. 24 year-old female Facebook user. It contains a total of 30 photographs with the album owner personally appearing in 23 of them. She is also sometimes with other people, but she is always at the center of the picture activity here as well. On the whole, the pictures show a comparably broad spectrum of her person: The social circle and picture environment vary greatly, as well as the selected details and quality of the pictures. While some of the pictures in this album were evidently photographed by the owner herself, others were apparently shot by a professional. The title of her Shoots album further strengthens this supposition.

Comparing the self-representation of the two album protagonists results in some typical depiction patterns: The thematic boundaries weaken somewhat with increasing age, the profile owner's life becomes more multifaceted, and this is

ultimately documented in her pictures. On the one hand, the people and places displayed become more diverse; yet, at the same time, a certain form of standardization appears in the consistently repeating album styles, which is reflected in the album themes and their design. Moreover, professionalization can now be observed from a two-fold perspective: First, a certain increase in the quality of the pictures themselves becomes apparent, i.e. the setting and editing of the photos ultimately shows improved craftsmanship in the production and editing of the photos. Second, the self-representation competence of the actors increases. Flattering poses, facial expressions, and gestures are assumed more specifically and with more control. As a result, they have a more practiced effect on the observer, as is made clear through the comparison of the two sample albums above. The older user displays almost professional model poses with somewhat extravagant styling and makeup, but in the example of the younger user – although likewise revealing a certain effort – the implementation still turns out to be comparatively unsophisticated. A development from amateur photographer to experienced photo or media professional is documented, which is already discernible in the album title here. This is accompanied by the improved personal resources: Economic capital (material and financial means for good photographs), as well as cultural capital (ability to carry out poses well, see Bourdieu 1983) noticeably increase. So the photo albums on sns illustrate not only the age-specific development tasks of their owners, but also their increasing competency and resources.

5. *Functions of Albums on SNS*

Up to this point, content and age-related facets of photo albums on sns have been examined. Now the various functions that photo albums fulfill for young users will be analyzed more closely. The social network site as an online medium and its role in peer communication against a backdrop of the increasing interconnectivity of society is particularly significant in this regard.

Sns and the photo albums found here have a number of entirely different functions for users (see fig. 15). However, five main functions for the use of photo albums on sns can be distinguished[39] as: the management of identity, relationships, information, content, and mood (in the sense of entertainment).

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39   In his book *Das neue Netz* (The New Web), Jan Schmidt describes three functions of social web practices (Schmidt 2009: 71ff.).
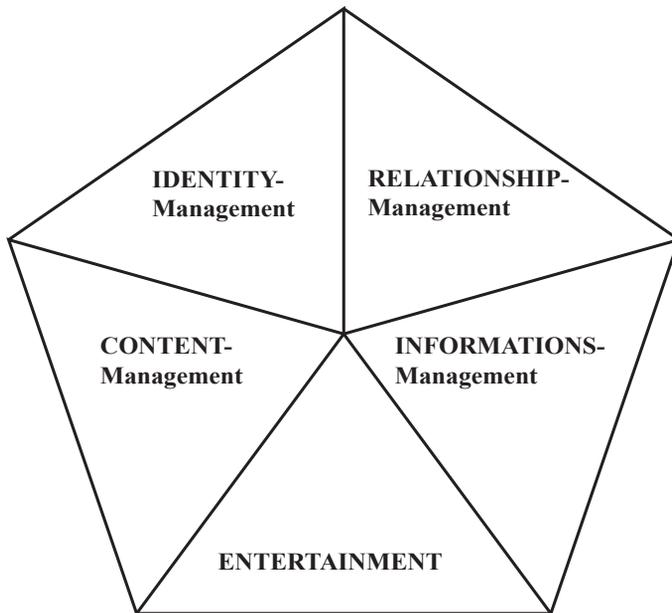
Figure 15: Functions of Albums on SNS

Although the individual usage modes frequently overlap in reality, they are nonetheless distinguishable from each other in the models below and described individually in greater detail, as well as illustrated by quotes from interviews with users.

During the process of individualization in modern societies, individuals are subject to the increasing demands of constructing their own coherent identity (see Schroer 2006: 49). For the individual actors, their position in society is no longer automatically indicated qua birth; instead, they must develop it through constant distinction of their position for positioning the self in the social environment. Within this context, working on one's own self is understood as the identity management through which an individual position can and must be developed within society. Users gain a multifaceted stage for multi-modal negotiation of their identity in the form of photo albums on sns. In the sense of Erving Goffman, each individual receives multifaceted tools for »image cultivation« (1986) and »impression management« (2003 [1959]), through which a (positive) impression of one's own person can be actively conveyed to the personal environment by means of the intentional (somewhat) public presentation of one's own person, the circle of friends, and the respective life situation. In particular, pictorial representations enable users to specifically control their respective ex-

ternal impression and thereby to shape a personal image (in the most literal meaning of the term):

>I only ever really put pictures of myself online if I look alright in them. I'm very vain.«

>Well, you want to put yourself somewhere, you always want to show yourself somewhat. It's just kind of partly public. And, of course, I wouldn't upload a picture of myself if the photo was taken normally. Then I wouldn't use it without all the soft focusing. I certainly wouldn't upload it. Because I'd just have rings under my eyes like crazy and stress pimples and all of that and without any makeup. I probably wouldn't put it online. Because you just want to somehow kind of – yeah, um – look good, however you define that.«

Pictures on sns are just as important for the user's relationship management in the initiation of and, above all, maintenance of contacts. A user's social ties are further solidified through photographic documentation of shared experiences and the subsequent (somewhat) public communicative discussion of the pictures' meaning through comments and links. This becomes particularly clear in photo albums with programmatic titles such as My Friends, in which the people who are depicted can be clearly classified – even by outsiders – as having close relationships:

>Then we usually laugh. Or we come back to how fun it was. Or that we had so much fun or how drunk we were or what we won't ever do again under any circumstances. Or what we will repeat at some point or something like that. Yeah. Really different.«

>I think it's cool now that S. was just in England right here a couple of weeks ago and he had all these experiences in England, so he posted them. I think it's cool if I somehow see this because we see each other quite often and like each other and then he's suddenly somewhere in England or something like that. And then you see what he did there. I like that. I mean, just whenever someone is away. So I don't necessarily need party photos right now if someone had a good party on the weekend or something like that, but if someone just went to another country or if my best friend goes around the world now and into the world, and if she puts up photos from the trip – I think that's cool when I can see them then, when she's in South America again or in Thailand or something like that, then I definitely look at them.«

Another important function of pictures on sns is forwarding news that is relevant for one's own social environment and therefore allowing others to experience it; for example, documentation of important events such as a wedding, the birth of a child, or moving into a new apartment. Through this form of visualized information transmission, especially existing contacts that are not very close or are separated by great distances can be kept up to date and maintained:

>The area where I sometimes show a little of whatever is happening to me is my work. That's really all. A lot of people thought it was really cool, for instance, to see our newly renovated building. Or special occasions like weddings or parties or that kind of thing. If I go on some kind of trip on the weekend or something like that and it is something really nice. So vacations, weekend trips, and, of course, birthday parties... actually vacations, shopping trips, and various other things. Yes, and vacation, yes, vacation, yes.«

»I posted it there for people to simply see that I was here while on vacation. I don't feel like stopping by to see everyone with a laptop and I don't think that many people want to see 400 pictures. If you start showing pictures, then you remember yourself in each separate picture that they weren't in and they probably think that's totally boring. So anyone can see them on their own. After six months, it's enough and then they can be removed again.«

»I think that it's practical that you can also share them whenever you want, but I obviously also have some [pictures] on my computer that I don't post. I don't upload them all, definitely not. And what that means to other people, I don't think it's really relevant. If they weren't there, then they weren't there. But I think it's a little of what makes it so appealing is possibly seeing how someone develops or how someone lives or how someone looks in the meantime, for instance.«

Moreover, photo albums on sns are important for managing and distributing pictures, i.e. content management. For example, pictures are placed online to make them available to others for personal download so that they can save them in their own albums or on their own PC. Users' own online albums become a distribution and management medium for the shared body of pictures within a circle of friends. Apart from their distribution function, picture albums are also used on sns as a form of photo archive. Pictures can be conveniently saved online and kept available – with the convenience that ubiquitous access is possible from any computer:

»But now it's kind of like you have seen the photos and then you can see for yourself. What I mean is that there are certain photos by S. (name of friend) that I'm in where I say, ›Yeah, that was a nice evening and we also look good there‹, or ›That's a really nice memory‹. So I downloaded it to my computer.«

»I think that if they look like that on Facebook, I honestly don't know for sure if anyone has viewed the photos. I believe that the pictures are important to me because I think it's really nice when I know where I was maybe or if I somehow have photos of me. And – right now the party pics brought this up – you can always download them, so I also have folders at home where I just stick them in. I just have a couple of photos of myself because I don't have a camera of my own, so I don't actually take pictures myself. Anyway, I also wouldn't even go somewhere and think, ›Oh, I should take my camera equipment with me so that I can take photos and show how great we look‹. I wouldn't do that now. But just recently, for example, I was with my sister in Hamburg and we took some photos there. Then she also put them on Facebook.«

Yet, this free access to one's own photographic works (depending on the album owner's privacy settings) is still problematic at the same time. Since the pictures are often accessible to a large number of other users, it is practically impossible to maintain complete control over their distribution. Photographs can be copied, transferred, and received without the owner's knowledge or consent. These risks can have particularly negative results for the owners of the albums (see Eck 2008) and therefore repeatedly lead to critical discussions about the use of photo albums on sns.

Surfing the Web, and particularly sns, also has great entertainment and leisure value – especially for young people. In many cases, looking at online photo albums (both alone and with others) serves to improve the mood in the form of an amusing pastime:

> »It's actually great, just for parties and so cool, to take pictures or download and put them on any party portal. That's really cool because we like looking at the photo albums, especially those of my close friends, and we like to look at each other's pictures. We like to look at a lot of pictures, even together.«

6. Photo Albums on SNS – The Communication Situation in the Reflection of Modern Societies

The unparalleled success of sns, their use, and particularly the photo functions will now be placed in a larger social context. Friendships or contacts on sns are usually already familiar people in the real world and are therefore often cultivated through other communication channels, particularly through direct face-to-face communication (see Autenrieth et al. 2010; Neumann-Braun/Wirz 2009; Schmidt/Paus-Hasebrink/Hasebrink 2009). This implies interactions between the online and offline spheres because what happens in the real world is depicted online and photos that have been placed on the Web are further discussed in offline communication. Strict boundaries between virtual and real spaces can therefore no longer be maintained with respect to sns. False (in the sense of inauthentic) self-depictions are quickly exposed and have repercussions in offline life. Yet, it is important to keep in mind the general implications of online communication, such as persistence or the capacity to save, copy, and search and their far-reaching consequences (see boyd 2007). Successful identity and relationship management places high demands on the individual and requires elaborate abilities. Becker (see Becker 2004: 419) defines four requirements as essential preconditions for implementation of a practical everyday esthetic. First is the fundamental esthetic design and use of the culturally available repertoire for signs of self-staging – those corresponding to the use of media platforms such as sns and local, image-based representation options.

The modification of self-depiction depending on the interaction partner's reactions is also significant: The picture comments and links to photo albums on sns give the users feedback on their activities and allow adjustment of the photographic content, where applicable, within the scope of a peer-reviewed discussion process. Moreover, the ability to bind attentiveness within the contact network through the selection of correspondingly effective modes of depiction is pivotal, particularly against the backdrop of a fast-moving flow of information. Finally, the ability to be reflexive as a kind of running self-reference is also significant.

Overall high demands are made on the individual for communication in online environments, the non-fulfillment of which results in far-reaching risks and consequences. The question therefore arises about the users' intention or the expected added value from their online presence.

In modern societies, traditional ties such as family, church, and political parties are increasingly losing their significance. The individual actor is therefore more free in his or her life decisions, although simultaneously more socially isolated as an individual. The emotional gap that is left due to the declining social ties of traditional societies is compensated through the growing importance in new forms of relationships. Individuals experience such a reconnection and positioning in the social sphere through self-selected friendship and acquaintance relationships.

The number of potential and actual contacts is growing for the individual due to increasing globalization and improved mobility. In order to maintain them, people depend on efficient methods of relationship maintenance. In particular, the importance of so-called weak ties for the modern individual has already been explained by Granovetter (1973). Informal networks with a large number of weak ties have positive effects. Even in times of great social challenges, such as in the form of high unemployment rates, it can be assumed that their significance will tend to increase. Due to their structure, social network sites are a virtually ideal medium for adequately maintaining these weaker contacts. Due to their large number of communicative and interactive possibilities, they create great potential for both direct exchange within a close social environment (strong ties), as well as maintaining less intensive contacts (weak ties) and additional ensuring flexible transitions:

> »And I think it's also interesting from vacation or whenever someone is studying a language abroad. And then there are always new photos. I knew someone who was in Australia, and then someone else, and it's really cool when I saw her time and again and how things were going for her.«

> »So I think I also posted my apartment, but not to show that ›hey, we have this fabulous apartment‹, but just as a kind of explanation since Jenny lives really far away from here.«

It is not necessary to explicitly contact individual persons of reference; instead, they can be kept up to date »passively«, such as in the form of general comments on the wall and, above all, photographs. At the same time, it is possible to differentiate relationships communicatively into categories such as close friends and good acquaintances who are directly connected in interactions, e.g. in the form of links and picture comments. This strengthens them in their friendship position.

Moreover, sociological temporal diagnoses establish a »successive marketization« (Bode/Brose 1999: 179) of all social spheres in modern societies. This describes the development into a success-oriented society (see Neckel 2008). While achievement is mostly based on realization in a concrete field, success is under-

stood by contrast as realization in a social context or as an act of »self-assertion« (Mannheim 1964: 634f.) vis-à-vis others. Consequently, Sighard Neckel no longer bases the earning of social status on achievement but on success (2008: 49). This is predominantly measured on the basis of material success and is transferred in turn into the most important resource: the social capital of »knowing others and being acknowledged« (Bourdieu 1983: 190). This can be seen in the social prestige of successful actors. If this logic is followed, one's own friendship network is understood as social capital that is on public display and the work on one's own image that is accomplished there as a contribution to its maintenance and expansion.

In such a society, the »impression management« described by Erving Goffman (2003 [1959]) represents the central key qualification and task in order to lead a life that is perceived as successful since »to a large extent, the markets of this catwalk economy establish revenue and employment while waiving achievement categories because individual characteristics and ascribed attributes are more important than acquired qualifications« (Neckel 2008: 59). Particularly in the media, status is assigned primarily through the function mechanisms of prominence and attention (see Neckel 2008: 60). In lieu of an economy of achievement, an "economy of attention" arises (Franck 1998), illustrated in the phenomenon of the »casting society« (Pörksen/Krischke 2010).

In turn, such a society requires implementation of the so-called »marketing character« (Fromm 1980: 47ff.), which is understood as an expert in an immaterial economy that is aimed at generating external influences, internal atmosphere, and the attribution of positive characteristics. An individual's own personality is perceived as a commodity and the self as the seller (see Fromm 1980: 49):

> »And I think that no one deliberately shows their worst side if they have a profile. Everyone probably wants present themselves in the best possible light and show how great they are.«

The demands on the modern individual require continuous work on one's self and therefore the attendant increase in personal employability in order to maintain one's own chances on an increasingly constricted, globalized labor market. The work on a person's own profile (the production of so-called unique selling points) is therefore particularly part of the "Internship Generation" (Stolz 2005), which makes up the main sns user group, already in the repertoire of everyday life (or survival) activity. Phenomena such as optimizing one's personality profile, targeted self-marketing through production of positive personality characteristics, and a positive representation of one's own life (or CV) are not new developments due to the emergence of social network sites. The latter have only given users a function-applicable medium to integrate corresponding tendencies of modern societies into their everyday activity. So in the form of online profiles,

and primarily in the photo albums presented there, the users have gained a structuring field that allows them to continually sharpen their own profile. Esthetic preferences can be tested in the form of feedback from the virtualized social environment, directly evaluated and, where applicable, revised. For this purpose, the pictures on sns especially serve the act of self-depiction and the construction – as well as conveyance – of an image for one's own person as a brand.

Communication tools such as comments, links, and Like buttons on Facebook assume the function of direct feedback channels that immediately make the work on the »self« subject to positive, as well as negative, assessment or sanctions. In the course of an attention economy, the non-appearance of reactions is therefore equivalent to negative sanctions. A link to an unflattering photo or ill-considered comment is equally risky because the image that is created through hard work is fragile and worth protecting. The laborious »facework« (see Goffman 1986) is quickly damaged or enduringly endangered through the implications of the Internet as a medium (persistence, visibility, and ability to be copied, saved, and distributed). The individual actor must anticipate the consequences: in the circle of friends due to negative reactions and a loss of credibility or in the professional environment through damage to his or her employability (see Eck 2008). For example, exhortations warning against the consequences of party and beach photos for one's life and career opportunities have now become commonplace (see Bleck et al. 2009; Hutt 2009).

Although drastic isolated cases in which users become victims of abuse due to their more or less freely available representation have been repeatedly publicized, the overall tendency is the appearance of moderate pictorial content that hardly corresponds to the frequently invoked preconception of omnipresent nudity and excessive alcohol consumption (see Pscheida/Trültzsch 2010). Many users have recognized the signs of the times: Although publicly effective self-portrayal and self-visualization in the sense of personal PR may be advantageous, users must be careful not to damage or destroy a reputation that is created in this way through imprudent activity. This is why primarily favorable aspects of their lives are represented: experiences, vacation travel, parties, a large circle of friends, as well as media and market products with an associated image that will have a positive effect on the user's prestige:

> »What I'm linked to is important. So it's clear that this shouldn't be an unflattering picture. You actually always just see my face because my hands are always out of the picture. If I am holding something to drink in my hands, it gets cut from the photo because I don't want it to just potentially show up somewhere. Even a glass of Prosecco or something like that because people will still see in any case that it's simply alcohol. No, I just don't want this. Period.«

7. Conclusion – Photo Albums on SNS as a Balancing Act between Self-Promotion and Self-Protection

The phenomenon of photo albums on sns is complex and multifaceted. Today's adolescents and young adults have obtained an ideal platform for their communicative needs in the form of sns. Although friendship networks – particularly Facebook – are not photo communities in the narrow sense (like Flickr, as a comparative example), the involvement with homemade photographic productions of the personal social environment is a central element of the interactions that occur there.

However, the esthetic and artistic form of the photographs is less relevant in this context: Their relationship to the personal network is much more important. Consequently, photo albums on sns tend to be communicative space for the expanded peer group instead of exhibition spaces for high-quality homemade productions with claims of artistry.

A picture does not necessarily get noticed if it is rated as successful from an esthetic perspective; instead, the communicative significance and connectivity within the circle of friends are much more important. Within this context, connectivity is understood as meaning that other users pay attention to the picture in the form of links and comments. A picture's relevance is therefore revealed primarily in its communicative framework. Consequently, photographs that do not meet with resonance are essentially worthless to the album owner.

Yet, the motivation is not attention at any price or just receiving large amounts of feedback, but rather facework and impression management (see Goffman 1986). This is desired in the sense of a positive representation of one's own person with the primary purpose of being perceived by one's social environment as »real«, i.e. authentic, and to correspondingly receive positive feedback. Particularly for adolescents and young adults, this results in the possibility of testing their self-image and negotiating it together with their expanded peer group in a low-threshold way.

The greatest challenge is the continuous balancing act between the desire to gain attention, receive reactions from friends and acquaintances, and stay in the communicative flow while simultaneously protecting one's private life and personal environment. This occurs in ongoing communicative negotiation processes. The photo albums on sns are therefore much more than the self-portrayal and party excesses often decried as quasi-pornographic in the media: They are places for young people to negotiate their identity and communicate with friends.

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Personal Glam Worlds on the Social Web – Photo-documented Facework and Its Performance on Nightlife Platforms

JÖRG ASTHEIMER

Make eye contact, pose, and click: Just a few steps are required and the *nightlife portrait* is done. This is followed by a quick examination of the display, a nod of approval from the guest, and the image can appear the next day in one of the photo galleries of the swiss nightlife portals tilllate.com, partyguide.ch, laut-undspitz.ch, or festzeit.ch. This is where it can be viewed, commented, and evaluated[40].

With their appearance on the Internet during the last decade, the nightlife portals entered virgin territory because the business with free pictures on the Internet has existed for just a de-cade and was previously unknown. New social situations demand an adaptation of our own time-tested patterns of thoughts and actions, as well as those of   others. Photographing and being photographed is learned from an early age. »Taking pictures« is an everyday action and what people do not know from [their] own experience can be learned through mass media, which also demonstrates how the social elites, media stars, or models perform themselves. The practices of private and public photographs provide orientation through a requisite of patterns for self-presentation.

Against this backdrop, the question must be asked: Which orientation patterns and conventions do the photographers and the photographed use in their mutual staging at parties and on the Internet? Who are the role models that the actors emulate when taking pictures and how is this implemented in concrete actions? Which cultural guidelines are picked up, processed, and communicated by the actors of the nightlife portals?

Those who rely on an implementation of the »me« ideals orient themselves to the models and templates of the star system. The type of photograph that has characterized the star image since the start of modern times is the glamour picture. What makes the portrait special and where it distinguishes itself from other photographs – even within the scope of nightlife photography – are the *codes of glamour*. A glance at the picture charts – the »Hall of Fame« – on the portals is enough to answer this question. The photographs shown there are distinct from the mass of party pictures in that they do not show everyday people; instead, they display those who radiate beauty, vitality, affluence, and sexuality. Beauty ap-

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40   The following analysis of nightlife portraits is a part of the exploration of swiss night-life communities on the web, which was published in Neumann-Braun/Astheimer (eds.) (2010a).

pears here as a nuance closer to perfection, affluence is celebrated as an expression of social distinction, and sexuality is performed within the scope of seduction. Anyone seen here projects a theatrical pose, shows more – but not too much – naked skin and wears exclusive fashions. The more these qualities are united in one picture, the greater the picture's potential will be to excite because more than any other portal type, party portals carry a specific principle to extremes: *Videor ergo sum – I'm seen, therefore I am.*

1. *Picture Frames of Nightlife Portraits*

The objects of the investigation are photographic pictures of public events produced and distributed by nightlife portals. This includes public parties in clubs and discotheques, concerts, and open-air events such as the Street Parade in Zurich. The photographs are produced exclusively for the specific occasion and show the actors and the scenes of nightlife. If they are understood as nightlife portraits, then two genre-specific characteristics are implied: First, the term »nightlife« refers to the specific context of its creation because it involves photographs that arise from the occasion of events that are public or at least partially public and not private. Second, the photographs involve portraits. Nightlife portraits have become what they are due to their social use[41].

a) *Medium of Visual Perception and Knowledge*

Like every other medium, photography has its own unique presentation form. Photography is illustrative in comparison with linguistic or acoustic media. It allows complex contexts to be transmitted in a simple manner. Looking at a picture possibly conveys more than hearing or reading a thousand words. The photographic apparatus produces a relationship between the picture and the depicted person. Its special characteristics are found in the visual perception since the photograph can generate the impression of immediacy when it is shown. At the same time, the perception has a particular quality: Whatever a person simultaneously understands with one glance through photography is comprehended directly and with the senses. As a medium, photography is visual and sensual and *iconic* as a result.

Nightlife photographs are media of knowledge. Until now, public parties were an area that could be called *terra incognita* in the landscape of public perception.

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41   On the theory of the usage of the photographic image, see primarily Mitchell (1987), Scholz (2004) and Böhme (1999)

The nocturnal side of life normally has strong emotional component, which is indicated by the terms »nightlife« or »*vie nocturne*«. However, it remains largely ignored by the coverage of the press or TV. No reporter from an interregional print or TV magazine would seriously report on the happening of a local party. Instead, knowledge about the environment of revelers is conveyed through particular types of publications: City guidebooks and magazines list the most important meeting places and occasions of the metropolises, contemporary (pop) literature indicates the subjective experiences of the actors, and magazine formats on TV and in the print media report on nightlife as a cultural phenomenon. However, the general occurrences – actions and incidents – in clubs, bars, and discotheques have been too trivial to become the hook for a story and awaken public interest. Until now, anyone who wanted to know something about parties had to be phy-sically present to have the immediate experiences or at least hear about them through the verbal accounts of others. Nightlife experts gather their own information and that of others through face-to-face interactions. They know which club and events are hip and are familiar with the Who's Who of the party guests.

The Internet changed this situation from the verbal to the written and pictorial: Pictures on the nightlife portals now communicate knowledge about an (everyday) area, detached and independent of the immediate experiences (see. Sontag 1980: 148f.). The phenomenon of the nightlife portals and their pictures should be classified as the visualization of everyday life and is part of the media's communication of realities that has been accelerated by digital technology and the Internet – primarily through picture portals like FlickR. Unlike general picture portals, nightlife portals are specialized in one segment of everyday life. People who are not familiar with these areas of everyday life from their own experience or through friends and acquaintances can get an idea of them here, even if this is limited in its scope. Party pictures produce (everyday) knowledge and are an excellent example for the »social construction of reality« (Berger/Luckmann) through pictorial media.

b) *Portrait Photography*

The festzeit.ch community provides anyone who is interested in the development of nightlife portals and their forms of staging a broad collection of pictorial materials. This site makes it possible to view pictures from the beginning of 2003 to the present. It is worthwhile to look at the start of the very early portals in order to understand the special characteristics of the current pictures. At that time, the founder of Festzeit accompanied his clique to document their participation at public parties. He put the pictures on the Internet. The picture galleries show unknown party guests and friends. The Festzeit photographer does not differentiate between strangers and friends when photographing. His camera shows the party

events as action – young people dancing, drinking, flirting, and kissing. The authenticity of the moment and the depicted actions is the guideline for the approach to the camera. In the early days of the nightlife portals, it appeared obvious that the photography primarily represented an unsparingly open recording of the party events, i.e. recorded scenes of a party. The camera subjectively followed the events. The intrinsic element of early party photography was *snapshots* and *candid pictures*. Events became frozen in time, making things visible that would not have been perceived otherwise. If the photographs were put in a sequence, a story in pictures was created – the visual narration of a long party night.

Almost nothing from the appearance of the early days can be found today at Festzeit, Tilllate, Partyguide, and other portals. The (picture) frenzy of the pioneer phase is over. The party photographs act neither as buddies nor paparazzi; instead, they remain at a distance to the events« and ensure that the party guests have some leeway that is not depicted. Organized party photography has become staged photography. Distorted faces, glassy eyes, and awkwardly twisted bodies – the manifestations of »derailed photography« – are part of the past and do not have a place in the picture galleries of the commercialized portals. The standards of the photography are determined by the upper management of the portal operators. According to Tilllates' business rules, too much naked skin and alcohol are taboo. The photographers have already internalized the standards of the nightlife photography. As a result, Tilllate photographer N. behaves with the care of an older brother and deletes the portraits of a photographed person when he becomes aware of his or her drug consumption. Everything that would expose the party guests disappears from the camera's chip.

The photographic genre that ensures this is the *performed portrait*, which has emerged as the central code for the visualization of nightlife. The action in front of the camera, with the actors at a distance to the events and the camera itself, is the *pose*[42]. Self-stylization, which is the act of representing oneself as a particular individual, occurs through the posing. How people stylize themselves is the decision of the person who is portrayed: For example, posed as the buddy, the crazy party animals, or the sexualized party kitten. The self-presentation becomes an intentional representation through the pose, which receives its approval afterward in discussion with the photographer. The appeal of the photograph no longer exists in the obtrusive perception of a participating viewer, but in the distanced perception of idealized self-portrayals.

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42 The pose is the dominant self-representation activity in nightlife photography. On the pose, see Goffman (1981: 60ff.), Bourdieu (1981: 92ff.), Barthes (1989: 19) and Holschbach (2006).

c) *Production Conditions*

Getting started as a party photographer is simple. It is not necessary to be an experienced professional and have had a qualified education in order to photograph on behalf of one of the nightlife portals. The work is carried out by *amateurs*, who perform this (leisure) activity free of charge, educate themselves and refine and improve their photographic technique during the work process. If they succeed at the photography, then they achieve a semi-professional level. However, they generally remain stuck at the amateur level. They act independently and do their own thing. The finished results are published directly on the Internet without any editorial selection by the portal operators. The photographers do not work in studio, but on site in real-life conditions.

Party photographs act at night, mostly after midnight. The result is many pictures in a short time. They work under time pressure. After only one to two hours, they capture about 100 photographs of revelers, which are published in a picture gallery on the Internet. Speed and practicability are the important issues for making the photographs available on the Internet immediately afterward. Often, less than a minute passes between making contact and the finished photo – not much time for a successful shot. The photographers must have communicative qualities and be able to break the ice with the guests and animate them. They are professionals at this.

For the users, party photography is a picture culture of the *instant image*. In the tradition of the instant camera, it permits correction of the depiction if the shot does not satisfy through the display control and immediate use of the photograph on the following day. For the participants, the photography has the function of a »trophy« (Goffman 1981: 51) as a result. The photographed people can see themselves together with their partner, an old friend, or a new acquaintance. It is an illustrated and permanent representation of relationships.

Party photography is a *contractual activity*, a fact that is normally executed tacitly by the participants. The photographers' potential for decision-making is limited. In fact, they take the shot but do not make the selection. That is left to those who are photographed, who invariably pay attention to how they are represented in the picture. The picture background – setting, supporting cast, and secondary storyline – does not matter in the selection of the photograph. Consequently, the photographs are not a realization of the photographer's planned ideas but compromise solutions in which the client's taste has more weight than that of the photographer.

2. Glamour

a) *The Culture of Glamour*

Specific codes of self-staging characterize public photography. In the modern mass media of moving and still pictures, as well as the consumer culture associated with them, particular representative conventions have emerged beyond the limitations of time and space. One of these conventions is glamour.

Magical beauty presented in an enchanting way is called »*glamour*«. The English noun »*allure*« summarizes what glamour represents: seduction, appeal, and fascination. Any material thing can be glamorous. But in a narrow sense, people are presented in a glamorous way. Glamour shows off their physical attractiveness through tantalizing staging. As a result, this is not just a question of content but also of the form (of staging). Simple objects, actions, and persons are exaggerated and beautified through glamour, which enhances their fascination and attraction (Grundle 2008: 6). Glamour is connected with the emergence of the consumer society and arose as the opposing force to the values of 19th century bourgeois society. Debauchery and excess in place of traditional bourgeois values like moderation and reserve are what distinguish it. The message of glamour is always conveyed anew by its protagonists: actors, dancers, models, and the like. It is the promise that each person can be transformed into a better, more attractive and more prosperous version of themselves (see idid.: 7ff.). Glamour is among the dreams and fantasies of modern societies and is simultaneously the motor and mainspring of consumer-oriented, individualized lifestyles.

As the phenomenon of glamour is familiar to us from the mass media, it gains its power of attraction through various qualities: Glamour as a lifestyle is based on external beauty that is blended with values of the consumer society like fashion consciousness, costliness, and fame. Since each person can be beautiful, glamour is not reserved for the upper crust of society. Glamour and beauty promise social advancement for the lower social classes. They are expressions of social upward mobility. Glamour does not show off in intimate contexts, but only in public. It is associated with the body, which habitually has social information »ascribed« to it. Physical beauty on its own is not a quality of glamour. Glamorous bodily staging combines consumer goods with eroticism and sexuality. Glamour should be differentiated from fashion, which solely represents an average form of the current taste. In addition, movement and mobility is typical of glamour. In social milieus like the so-called jet-set, movement and mobility correlates with fame, prominence, and the appeal of the new (ibid.: 11ff.).

b) *Glamour Photography as a Photographic Genre*

The mass media made a decisive contribution to the prominence of glamour. They disconnected glamour from its original context of the social elite since the 19th century and made it into a general experience parallel to everyday life (ibid.: 13). Photography is the distinguished medium of glamour. Simple reproduction techniques and the opportunity for the idealization of reality allowed the photographic picture to become *the* medium of glamour. Photographs of *Vogue* magazine are typical current examples. However, glamour photography is not a new discovery. As early as the late 19th century, professional photographers and their models understood it and allowed their portraits to become glamorous stagings.

Glamour portraits first appeared toward the end of the 19th century through illustrated magazines and through the *Carte de Visite* (collector's cards) of theater and variety actors. Glamour photography reached its highpoint due to the publicity photographs of Hollywood film stars from the Twenties and Thirties who were captured in enchanting presentations on celluloid. Actresses like Joan Crawford, Marlene Dietrich, or Kay Francis were admired by their fans and considered as style icons based on how they influenced fashion trends. As mass consumerism and the star system emerged, glamour photographs of the leading actors gave a particular face to film productions of the large Hollywood studios.

Envy is a powerful emotion. Photographs do not show the things themselves, but instead create a relationship between the picture and the world, between the picture and the viewer. Appealing to the desires and longing of the public and generating a feeling of envy is typical for glamour photography. »The state of being envied«, Berger wrote (1972: 131), »is what constitutes glamour«. Glamour does not promise pleasure, but happiness and idealized qualities that are envied by others (ibid.). The glamour photography in the illustrated magazines takes advantage of the collective fantasies about a life in affluence and prominence. It stimulates the desires and longings to escape one's own social position (upward mobility) (see Grundle 2008: 5). Consequently, the *Vogue* photographs of Eduard Steichen or Cecil Beaton from the Twenties show portraits of prominent and privileged members of the upper class to the readership situated in the middle class. Their lifestyle is presented in its eccentric and exalted variants, dramatically exaggerating the social inequality in the process. The populace's envy in relation to the life of the upper class is the downside of the fascinating radiance of glamour portraits (see ibid.: 158).

Particular styles have become established for the photographic representation of glamour. The predominant form of glamour portraits are therefore also defined as the »posed and retouched publicity photo« (Kawin 2002: 373). Glamour photography breaks with the tradition of portrait photography, which simultaneously shows the portrayed persons in their particular individuality (»faces«)

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and social roles (»masks«), for which the body assumes a pose. Instead, it encounters the photographed person at a distance and creates solely social roles (see Gombrich 1972: 9ff.). These are limited to a small area. Glamour staging contains a repertoire of social types transmitted through posing and artifacts. Body poses and cultural symbols underscore affluence, beauty, and mythological charisma (see Bordwell 1987: 5). It is class staging that transmits the values and ideas of the upper class.

Like other photographic genres, the glamour portrait is distinguished by a specific *image esthetic*. It benefits from photography's general property of conveying a pictorial mode of reality. The discovered reality is not merely reflected. The art of the glamour portrait consists of exaggerating the discovered reality through the use of camera, lighting and editing. The perception of the viewer is addressed through contour, textures, and colors, which gives the picture vitality. Glamour photography intensifies the impression of visualizability through the *visual effects* that are generated by fashion designers, make-up, photographers and photo finishing (re-touching). Above all, the photo studios of Hollywood developed the styles that distinguish the body language and iconography of glamour to the present day. Extreme softening of the facial features and enhancing the surface textures of clothing and jewelry are typical effects (ibid.).

Classic glamour photography does not show stars in photo studios instead of real actions contexts. Just a few stars were selected to lend a face to a film. The depiction conventions have been differentiated and the circle of actors expanded since then. In contrast to the Hollywood star system of the Twenties and Thirties, the modern star system no longer promotes just a small group of superstars. It is capitalized and consists of many different stars (see Neumann-Braun 2010 and Brunazzi/Raab/Willenegger in this volume). New forms of staging for glamour photographs and the corresponding media were introduced. Contemporary glamour staging ranges from studio glamour that can be planned and controlled to the glamour of normal life to onsite glamour from events. The private daily lives of stars became the object of glamour photography with the establishment of the paparazzi. Paparazzi shots and reports on the private lives of stars convey a participation in normal life that is exploited for glamour photography[43]. Event photography also shows stars within the framework of public events (premiere parties, galas, etc.) and in front of the public. Such an on-site glamour presents stars during public exhibition on stages, red carpets, catwalks or in front of photo

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43   Glamour photography's penetration into the private lives of celebrities is not without
      consequences for the private lives of non-celebrities given that it is also increasingly
      used.

walls. The new concept of glamour leaves the earlier restriction of studio photographs behind and lives from the differentiation of the creation context.

3. *Personal Glam Worlds: The Glamour Codes of Nightlife Photography*

a) *Nightlife Photography and Personal Glam Worlds*

The nightlife photography of party portals is distinguished by a particular presentation form, which we call »Personal Glam Worlds«. This term represents a mixture of event documentation and exaggeration of the individuals as stars. Personal Glam World portraits document the presence of the actors and supporting cast in the real action context and simultaneously represent the individuals as enviable, beautiful and successful. The criteria of the Personal Glam Worlds are authenticity and documentation as well as performing, enchantment and beauty. The specific interlacing of all that as Personal Glam Worlds represents the typical performing form of nightlife photography.

The interaction of primary actors and performing context (supporting cast, settings, lighting conditions, etc.) creates a form of staging that does not merely represent a fictional world. Personal Glam Worlds are committed to a particular measure of reality and shows something that exists not only for the glamour performance, but exhibits a certain reality that is independent of photography. A bond with reality beyond the photograph is maintained since the setting of nightlife photography is not created artificially. The results and actions occur independent of the photograph.

The mixture of documentation and glamour leads to typical performing forms such as the frozen poses of the primary actor in the picture foreground and the motion of the supporting cast's actions and gestures in the picture background[44]. Adolescents and young adults represent their ideal »me« while the flow of the party events can be seen in the picture background. This results in the specific interlacing between the context of the person's own local life and the orientation toward something extrinsic – the poses of professional glamour photography. This occurs in two variants: On the one hand, the portrayed adolescents and young adults orient themselves toward physical beauty. This is expressed in the

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44   Personal Glam Worlds are therefore related to that contemporary conception of glamour that is removed from any claim to unblemished beauty. It shows the pure along with the impure. The pose and accessories can be glamorous and also shot in an environment that is dirty or »trashy« (Poschardt 2002: 29). Personal Glam Worlds present a »lascivious hegemony of the glamorous core of the image via the unglamorous that is also shown in the image« (ibid.: 29).

picture by the body (physiognomy), body composition (fashion and styling) and usage (posing). On the other hand, they orient themselves towards social success, which is expressed by accessories (watches, cigars, drinks, etc.) and impressive gestures.

The following typology for the Personal Glam Worlds of nightlife photography raises the questions of which classic types are quoted and which are created new[45]. For example, what distinguishes the classic form of the »playboy« and how is this represented on the Internet? Are the originals of mass media copied or modulated (Goffman)? Does this involve bad copies of the originals or successful exaggerations of them[46]?

b) *Personal Glam Worlds – A Typology*

Shot 1: Diva – The Tilllate user G., in her mid-twenties, leans against the bar of a Zurich pub. The picture commentators lavish the portrayed woman with compliments. She is called »beautiful«, »irresistible«, »hot«, »delicate«, »divine«, »world class«, or »the Beauty«. Anyone viewing the photo perceives the portrayed woman from a close proximity. She occupies the real space and the picture space so that other people and objects in the environment lose their importance. Two additional persons and a bar can barely be recognized in a dim and blurry manner. On the other hand, G. is perceived. Her facial features are relaxed. Even her body does not reveal any signs of tension. She is standing upright, supporting herself with her lower arm on the bar and allows her hand to fall loosely. Her clothing complements the portrayal with an additional facet of meaning. So her dress can be seen as a sign of extravagance. Black, thin material covers her body and reveals the bareness of her shoulders, décolleté und hips.

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45   The images were analyzed based on the methods of hermeneutic of the image (see Neumann-Braun/Astheimer 2010b)

46   The results of production and product analyses were methodically correlated. The photographs were selected through a search by key frames in the portal charts and the picture galleries of the events. The analysis was performed according to the procedure of culture- and knowledge-sociological image hermeneutics under the specific evaluation of Goffman's frame analysis (1981).
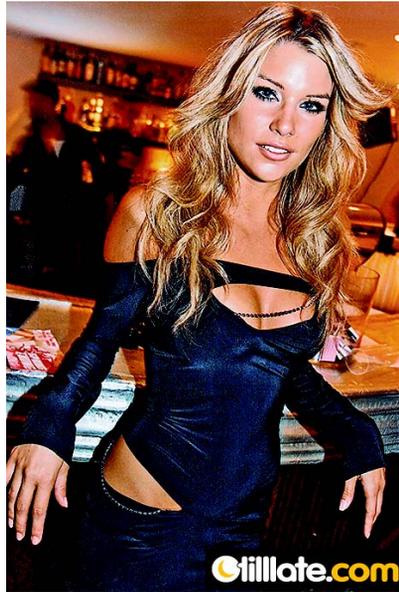
Figure 1: Diva

The sexual dimensions of glamour are represented in this way. The mimicked expression does not allow any closeness but produces a distance to the viewer. Anyone who tries to meet this actor's gaze is disappointed, because her eyes look beyond the viewers and do not notice them, despite their immediate presence. Instead, G. seems engrossed and no longer a part of this world – the party activities of the East2Zürich party series.

When compared with the performance of the role models, common elements with stars such as the actress Farrah Fawcett (»Charlie's Angels«) or musician Britney Spears can be found. Like many other female stars, the latter maintains changing identities to remain popular. Her many roles include the diva, which we see in the picture. Feminine glamour that is unapproachable, removed and distanced is performed in the picture. Up to this point of the analysis, the performance corresponds with professional glamour photography. The clichés and stereotypes of the role models, the (Hollywood) diva, are copied. The codes of glamour are imitated in the portrayal of the person. And the (re-)staging of the role of the diva is successful. However, should the overall photograph be considered just as successful? The performance of the person seems masked and – in view of the action – excessive and overly stylized. There is a discrepancy between the body staging (styled and posed as a diva) and picture environment. In no way does the setting look like international or luxurious scene because it is

just a simple, local pub. The nightlife portal's amateur photographer remains bound by the conditions of the location. The tension between the glamour ideal of the portrayed pose and the simple, local setting identifies the picture. The glamour pattern of a luxurious interior is not realized; instead, it shows a simple setting in the night world of young adults.

Shot 2: Flapper – The photographer M., who visited the Bypass discotheque in Geneva on behalf of Tilllate in July of 2009, shows the likenesses of teens and twens in a well-attended discotheque in his pictures. The bodies of the photographed stand out significantly from the other party activities, which are bathed in a diffused blue and violet light in all of the portraits. This allows the two women to appear like they are among the party guests, yet simultaneously separate from them. They assume a vis-à-vis pose that represents a frequent performance of female party participants.

Figure 2: Flapper

The two protagonists stand »breast to breast«. Frequent variants of this are »back to back« or »cheek to cheek«, the latter is very familiar from Hollywood photography. As seen from the perspective of the viewer, the actress on the left is bending forward and the one on the right backward as they play with each other. The play between the two continues in the performed »flirting« with the ca-mera through their gaze and facial expression. They are not kissing each other, but orient their head and eyes toward the camera and intimate a kiss addressed to the viewer. These puckered lips are a typical gesture (of seduction) performed by those who are photographed. Similar to the previous figures the women are shown in poses with bare shoulders. Fancy necklaces and sequins decorate the protagonists' upper bodies. In the language of early Hollywood glamour photography of the Twenties, two flappers (perky girls) are represented here. Fun and pleasure characterize the message of the picture. The distance to the viewer is dissolved and the puckered lips become a demand. The picture is distinguished

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by motion and dynamic. Clothing, hair style and lighting allow the glamour of the disco era, such as the nightlife of Studio 54 in New York, to be recognized. The singers of the Monrose, a german pop group, can be understood as typical role models.

Shot 3: It Girl – B. is someone who can be called a star of the Swiss Tilllate community. Her pictures are the center of attention and are found – as with the preceding first example – in the swiss »All-Time Charts« of the portal. She is the community member who is most frequently represented in there. It Girls[47] such as Paris Hilton can be seen as role models.

Figure 3: It Girl

The photographs show the actress either alone or together with a Swiss DJ. A customary characteristic is her stereotypical way of posing for the camera: B. stands in »supporting leg/free-leg poses«, tilts her head to the left, smiles, and directs her gaze upward to the camera, which photographs her from above. The intensive smile, the direct gaze into the camera, and the wide-open eyes are

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47   A female celebrity who attracts attention through sex appeal and permanent media presence that is in no way related to her personal achievements is identified as an It-girl. The term was first applied to Clara Bow, who starred in the film »It« (USA, 1927).

noteworthy about her facial features. Body composition and facial features give the performance demand character – an invitation to the viewer. Compared with the Diva (Fig. 1), the actor is not a seductress but someone who is being seduced. Touching herself is also part of her pose. B. grips her belt with her left hand and holds it, which should be interpreted as a gesture of fumbling with it, and contributes to the sexual appeal of the performance. Furthermore, when this representation is considered from the interactive perspective, it can be evaluated as ritualized staging of subordination (see Goffman 1981: 165). The actor subordinates herself to the viewer(s) and offers herself instead of being enchanting or beguiling (see Fig. 2). The pose is also lacking the moment of envy (see Fig. 1).

The portrayed person can be seen in the same posture in each photograph. Looking at other actors of the All-Time Charts (Switzerland), her pose is typical and not just an individual case. Many other examples of female actors viewed from above can be found there. It is the dominant form of sexualized self-presentation on Tilllate. The proliferation of extreme views from above is a phenomenon of amateur and hobby photography, which was increased by the introduction of cell-phone camera technology. This example shows a typical glamour performance, which has moved away from the classic studio glamour. A pose specific to the situation of nightlife is shown, which emulates the act of »being observed« from a private proximity.

Shot 4: New Rich – Two young men enjoy drawing on cigars together. This picture from the Lautundspitz portal was taken during the after-show party for the 2008 Mister Switzerland Election and shows Raphael Stocker (left), one the candidates for the national beauty competition. He and the second protagonist are standing close together, tilting their heads toward each other and gazing directly at the viewers from a heightened position. This positioning allows the actors to appear enviable. Their clothing indicates elegance and points to the particular framework of the event.

The active pose is typical for male self-presentation in nightlife photography. The action in the picture shows them drawing on cigars as an emblematic gesture that emulates the classic glamorous subject of Hollywood glamour photography. The clothing and the gesture are symbols of a luxurious lifestyle. The British heir to the throne, Prince Harry, can be distinguished as possible model.

Figure 4: New Rich

However, if the overall picture composition is considered, the performed gla-
mour symbolism is unsuccessful since the picture elements do not unite into a
coherent impression of the image. The actors are holding simple party drinks – a
bottle of beer and a can of energy drink – in their hands. The glamorous gesture
of smok-ing is undermined because the bands have not been removed from the
cigars. Seen from the perspective of the viewer, the actor on the right is in the act
of smoking and this gives his facial features a distorted expression. The picture
shows an act of self-presentation at the edge of a party. The space is brightly lit
and the right side of the picture is also bathed in red disco lighting. A shadow in
the picture indicates a stage pole. The glamorous pose of the actors is under-
mined by the weak lighting. The lighting design makes the parts of the body like
nature instead of idealized: We see the actors as they are. Based on the breaks
between the individual semantic elements of the picture, it can be rated as a flat
variant of the more glamo-rous role models.

Shot 5: Young Rebels – The Base Club in Basel is the scene of the action in this
photograph of March 2005. The photographer of the nightlife portal Festzeit,
which is located in Basel, took the picture of two young men. Here as well, the
pose is noteworthy: The actors each put an arm around each other's shoulders,
place their heads together, and simultaneously look outward. The free hand is
synchronously held upward and stretched out toward the viewers.

Figure 5: Young Rebels

The actor on the left from the viewers' perspective uses the gesture communicatively and shows a so-called »devil's sign« (typical for young people) as a greeting. The actor on the right is holding a cigarette for show, which can be seen in the glamour photographs of James Dean in the Fifties, for example. Both actors are hiding their eyes behind sunglasses and turning their faces in two different directions. The actors perform themselves as objects of observation through the va- rious directions of their gaze. Similar to the setting of official photo shoots of pop culture – such as those at premiere parties – the actors look in every direction for potential photographers and viewers, making a spectacle of themselves in the process. The actors' bodies are styled: In addition to the sunglasses, both of them wear silver jewelry; their hair has been shaped with gel and their hands are adorned with bicycle gloves and sweat bands. Stitched logos decorate the jacket of the actor on the right and additional lettering emerges under the open jacket. The style elements of the staging can be seen as bricolage from the youthful rebellion typical of America and current fashion styles.

The posing and body composition in no way involves the staging of glamour as the classic affluence symbolism. Instead, it portrays another aspect of glamour that is sometimes represented by male music, film or sports stars. Men use this pose to act sexy, desirable, and prominent. They present themselves as best buddies, such as the staging by the professional german soccer players Schweinsteiger and Podolski during the Soccer World Cup of 2006. In the background, the wall's colored paint provides garish illumination; a wood frame and an advertising picture suggest the atmosphere of a local youth club. Nothing here indicates an elegant setting. The significant contrast between serious self-expression and a simple picture environment makes the glamour poses appear exaggerated. Overall, the success semantics of glamour do not work. Neither the type of the rebel

nor the envy staging live up to the expectations, which is why the picture remains inconsistent.

Shot 6: Playboy – A man and two women pose as a group in August of 2009 at Club Q in Zurich. The image background is black and just a few party guests and lights can be seen. The relationship between the performance of the people and the background is coherent and confirms with the compositions of glamorous mo-dels. The positioning of the man in the middle as he embraces the two women at his side indicate the motif of the Playboy. Hugh Hefner – the founder of Playboy magazine who is always surrounded by so-called Bunnies – popularized the motif, which is now copied on the nightlife portals. However, the illustrated example significantly distances itself from the ease and offhandedness that distinguished the original. The Tilllate photograph shows a serious protagonist with a creased forehead who looks directly at the viewer. He is surrounded by two supporting actresses with expressionless facial features. The pose of the embrace becomes a cramped act of determination, which causes the protagonist to ball his right hand into a fist. His rigid gaze into the camera seems scary and intimidating. The supporting actresses look at the camera with reserve and skepticism or sadly past it. The staging, which appears glamorous at first glance, loses its glamour through the actual performance of the pose. The picture is a prime example of photographs in which particular poses that rely on glamour role models are assumed by the guests but do not succeed.

Figure 6: Playboy

4. Summary and Discussion

Every context offers different possibilities for people to express themselves through their own (individual) views or those of others (standardized views). This also applies to the self-expression of young people on the Internet – night-

life communities in this case. At first glance, the photographs provide the nightlife portals with the opportunity of creating their own self-image. Unlike the publicity photos of the advertising and entertainment industries, they are not subject to any planning, control, or exploitation interests. Unconventional portraits are actually possible at any time, even within the context of nightlife. This has been demonstrated by other portals. However, another conclusion can be drawn from the portals that we investigated: The portal photographs are similar to the well-known motifs from magazines and illustrated magazine. Through the interplay of posing and photographing, the actors orient themselves toward the self-images of the market (pictures of others) that are embodied by the role mo-dels (stars/models) and assume these as their own self-images (pictures of oneself). The result is pictures of others instead of self-images. The photographs of young people are adapted to industrially launched media pictures that reflect the standards and values of society. The cultural guideline is that of glamour. It characterizes the actions of the actors, which are oriented toward the code of professional glamour photography. People imitate the action patterns – the poses – of the media stars and make themselves into a spectacle of collective observation, just like role models such as Paris Hilton or Claudia Schiffer.

The originals of the mass media and the copies of the nightlife portals correspond to the same symbolic order of glamour. They are similar in their implementation, but not the same. The copies seldom compare the original in every facet. The explanation for this is obvious: The production conditions of the film or advertising industries are very different from those of the nightlife portals. Based on the fact that professional conditions are not available to actors on the Internet, it is very difficult to achieve the glamour of the role models.

Many facets of nightlife portraits are not exactly the same as the originals of the mass media; instead, they *modulate* them in a typical way that we call *Personal Glam Worlds*. While professional glamour photography designs the physical esthetics, settings, and relationships between light and shadow, as well as retouching the pictures to perfection, only simple techniques are available to amateurs on the Internet. In contrast with professional photography, the following modulation is characteristic: An amateur picture esthetic is created in everyday contexts. The causes are the conditions for the creation of the photographs. Party photography is inexpensive contract work that is created quickly in a context that just does not provide the same glamorous setting as the world of stars and models. Instead of star photographs, these are taken of everyday people and by amateur photographers. The poses of the primary actors in the picture foreground are performed, but the overall photography, including the settings and the supporting cast, are not. The picture esthetic and composition are too controlled by the moment of chance since the light relationships, settings, and supporting cast at parties can only be controlled to a minor degree.

Successful copies have the following characteristics: The poses – the body composition, gestures, and facial expressions – of the portrayed people are *identical* with the models. The positioning of the camera that creates a particular view of things – the pose in this case – is also identical. An imaginary relationship between the actors and the viewers is produced from both facets. Each pose approximates a particular form of being observed. Both are necessary conditions for the realization of glamour.

The situation is different for photographs in which the glamour ideal is *not realized*. This is the case when breaks between the individual semantic elements of the pictures can be determined. For example, this occurs when poses and settings deviate too much from each other and the pose appears exaggerated or when the facial features and gestures of the pose do not harmonize with each other.

The Internet and photography have developed into *the* medium of youthful self-expression within the briefest amount of time. Despite the situation that is still new, the patterns of order that refer back to existing symbolic orders – glamour in this case – can be detected. However, the analysis of youthful self-images on the Internet is still in the beginning stages. It is apparent that the picture production framework (of the party evening) and distribution (of the nightlife portals) characterize the visual culture. Picture portals and social network sites have contributed to a significant transformation: The public picture (image) of young people will not only be characterized by professional actors of the advertising and entertainment industries in the future, but also by the pictures of young people on the Internet that emulate the photos of the professionals and modulate them according to their own options. Although the circle of actors and the contexts has become larger due to the social network sites, the ideas have remained the same.

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Bravo Gala!
Users and Their Private Pictures on the Horizon of International Star Culture

Roberto Brunazzi, Michael Raab, Moritz Willenegger

When young people want to experience an exhilarating night, local parties offer them a public stage similar to the MTV Music Awards for the international superstars. Astheimer's study on the orientation of the (semi-)professional party-picture photographer in the genre of glamour photography shows that nightlife portals like Tilllate attempt to orient themselves on the radiance of the international star culture. This opportunity to participate in the aura of the fashion cult and showbiz meets with much approval from the partygoers. That the users' self-staging strategies are oriented on those of the stars is therefore self-evident and confirmed by the following explanations. The photos shot with private digital cameras and placed on the Internet resemble the star portraits that can be found in fashion, music, and film magazines (see Neumann-Braun 2010). What the pre-digital young learned from magazines like *Bravo* and *Gala* about stardom is reproduced in the digital shoals of the Anyone Can Feel Famous age at Tilllate und Co.

The subject of the following investigation is the photographs by registered users (members) of the Swiss party portals Lautundspitz and Festzeit. The pictures do not come from photo reports on the parties and events, but from the individual pages (profiles) of the party portal members. They can only be viewed by other members and not by the general public of Internet users. Within the profile pages, the investigated photographs are used as profile (or display images) or album pictures.

The »flood of amateur pictures 2.0« on the party portals can be initially divided into those that orient themselves on the stars in their poses, clothing, and staging and the pictures that do not contain such references. Within the first group, we further differentiate between two types of star orientation. Those users whose profile pictures assume individual aspects of known star iconography fall into the category of *star-oriented*. The designation of *Do-It-Yourself Star* (D. I. Y. Star) is applied to users who employ techniques of bricolage for their self-staging. The latter forms of staging are not primarily oriented upon one (classic personalized) star image. Instead, users combine a group of pop-culture artifacts in their self-staging. This stylized particularity of Do-It-Yourself (D. I. Y.) can be increasingly observed in the virtual extension of the party scene and the Do-It-Yourself star is therefore treated like a special type. Users whose self-staging does not indicate any characteristics of star orientation are called *Ajos* in German

(Schmidt/Neumann-Braun 2003), which means Generally Oriented Toward Youth Culture. They can be assigned to the second group (no star orientation).

This classification can be determined by using the following exemplary picture analyses of individual criteria like pose, clothing, illuminated artifacts, and other staging techniques. In the case of star orientation, corresponding reference pictures from the mass media have been included for the purpose of comparison.

The first step involves defining the term »star« in order to differentiate it in a following section. As Neumann-Braun (2010) explains, the pictorial and iconic elements are determining factors for idols and stars. Their fixation in pictures includes a specific stylization of themselves as persons to be admired. Stars live from and through the admiration of their fans and »worshippers«. The core of this circular acceptance relationship is the stars' specific dual character: on the one hand, the personification of a particular epoch's values are expressed in a specific self-picture or image; on the other hand, a type of audience ideal that sees the star as an expression of its conscious guiding ideas, partially conscious identification desires, or even unconscious fantasies. The media system acted upon this public need for orientation-providing individuals in the media and long since established a differentiated, cross-media star system based on the industry of culture. The interdependent relationship between the mainstream and subculture is also ultimately relevant here (see Jacke 2004): In the development of their identities, young people want to position themselves in the socio-cultural system of the »subtle distinction« (Bourdieu) and differentiate from each other (identity through difference). The market follows this need and knowingly maintains a system of charts that are intended to filter out the few factors that are relevant for social communication (consumer perspective) from the multitude and what is plannable and cost-effective (producer perspective) for the economic cycle so that the recipients and producers can continue to concentrate on them. Binary coding such as in/out or mainstream/subcultures should be understood as such order symbolism. Young people are happy to act upon them and make them into guiding categories for their (nightlife) actions. This relationship of mainstream and subcultures is illuminated more closely in the following section since has a special significance for the type of the D. I. Y. star in particular.

1. *Star Pictures, Pictures of Young People*

a) *Stars and Pseudo-Stars 2.0*

It is no coincidence that »mega- and giga-stars« (Faulstich 2000: 201ff.) are current topics of discussions. With connotations borrowed from information technology, the term signals the arrival in the digital age and therefore the global di-

mension within which modern stars now move. Within the context of globalization and cultural change, as well as the relativism of the associated value system, Werner Faulstich speaks about an apparent transformation of stars into a »*supra-cultural phenomenon*« (ibid.: 210 [emphasis by the author]). As a consequence of cultural globalization, Faulstich prognosticates a tendency toward »worldwide d*ominance of Western American stars*« (ibid. [emphasis by the author]) instead of a proportional cultural mix with corresponding stars.

One example of such a megastar is Paris Hilton. We could say that she celebrates the advantages of capitalism and connects the Western value system with stardom through the slogan of »money is great«, which is always inherent to her staging. She presents this as a personalized success and herself as a stereotypical winner of the system. Money and luxury are therefore synonyms for success and prestige, but the origin of money does not play a role here. Precisely the luxury brands that she admires cultivate the illusion of affluence and prominence. The star is the manifestation of the utopian. There is no doubt that stars have a consoling function since they embody the dreams and desires of their fans, who are more interested in appearances than reality because the reality can include disappointment: »We would rather have the image than what lies beneath it«. (ibid.: 208).

Especially in times of social change and irritating structures, stars have an increased power of identification. As Ludes (2003) writes, they provide »symbolic surfaces of projection that overlay or conceal deeper inequalities and conflicts in the media« (ibid.: 167).

Tilllate and company insert themselves into this world and this value horizon – at the local, partially« public level but not that of the international public. Stars function as attention-getters for the media and the media provides marketing platforms for the stars. By the same token, party portals and their websites are available to the users as a specific, dual-function medium: The user is simultaneously the content producer and the advertising consumer. The party site – as an extended stage, as a duplication of reality, as hyper-reality with Photoshop tuning and the visual euphemisms that this implies – provides the users with the underlying requirements for stardom in the first place: a media platform for obtaining (partly) public attention.

The attention achieved becomes currency. Paris Hilton is not an artist. Instead, her »art« consists of staging herself as a star without any exceptional capabilities and still breaking through these average qualities. The designation of It Girl[48],

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48   Looking at the origin of Paris Hilton's celebrity, it becomes clear that It-girl status is attributable to a mass-media construction of evidence and arises less from artistic talent than from effective self-marketing.

which Paris Hilton enjoys in her gossip-show resonance, is a message with great potential for imitation by the users: She is not just anyone – she is *It*. She is *in* and *famous* and a star for precisely those reasons. Paris Hilton is the successful, long-term version of a *pseudo star*[49] (Faulstich 2000: 209 [emphasis by the author]). Insofar as these types of stars stage themselves, this also puts the focus on the relationship with the distribution mechanism: Above all, the active nature of the media circus – which, incidentally, is similar to the *traffic* in the ranking lists of the social network sites – is what counts.

The It Girl message according to the pattern of someone like Paris Hilton is very attractive to a large number of nightlife portal users. For someone who would like to stage themselves within the scope of party photography as a Party Pseudo-Star 2.0, such star role models are fascinating since they show how a person »like you and me« can only succeed publicly through excessive consumption and debauched partying. The star »next door« awakens the hope of also being close to the promise of success with the »upward« leap in one's own life. The portals provide the (average) users with the promised space for self-aestheticization and iconization according to the star pattern(s). Pseudo-stars – such as those who are familiar from reality TV programs or casting shows – offer a direct appeal to self-stylization in the fact of their stardom, which is characterized by public proximity and glorification of the average. The illusion of becoming a star is awakened. The »compensation and concealment function« (Ludes 2003: 164 [emphasis in original]), which stars also gain in the present moment, is reflected in the readiness of the users to reproduce this illusion publicly in their own image.

b) *Modus Operandi: Characteristics of Staging*

This brief clarification of the terms »star« and »stardom« is now followed by an analysis of how young people express their orientation toward stars with their own self-representation on Web 2.0 with the help of (symbolic) actions and artifacts.

The action in the picture (self-representation) will be referenced in response to this question. This includes the poses assumed by the users, which are realized through body composition, gesture, and facial expression (body usage). The repertoire of poses can vary greatly in principle and extends from classic forms of self-staging such as the supporting-leg/free-leg posture and the head slightly lowered or tilted to the side that can primarily be found in shots of women, as well

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49 Faulstich (2000: 209) characterizes pseudo-stars according to their small interactive sphere with reference to worldview, mediality, and geography.

as pictures of men viewed from below or group shots in which the individual people document their friendship or belonging to clique through physical proximity up to the point of the outlandish poses and staging that can be seen in professional advertising and publicity shots of stars (see the article by Astheimer in this volume).

Particular *artifacts* also belong to the means of self-representation in photographs for the purpose of communicating certain meanings; these may range from cars, clothing, jewelry, and other accessories to complex scenarios and shooting locations (action context). Insofar as they are used more or less obviously as means of self-representation, all of these artifacts indicate the intention of generating a particular presentation of the person depicted. The main significant factor within this context is the body styling (body composition).

Finally, the *creation context* and the *production circumstances* of the pictures must be considered. In which situation were the pictures shot? How do the protagonists present themselves on the respective stage? Who can also be seen in the pictures? How do the various persons interact with each other? Are these pictures staged, professional studio shots that have been extensively retouched or are they spontaneous snapshots? Were high-quality cameras or cell phones used for production? Do the pictures indicate a trained photographer or were they taken by the subject?

The fact that the pictures discussed in this article were found on publicly accessible Internet platforms and uploaded by the users themselves to their profiles should be taken into consideration for the following picture analyses, which are intended to create an initial classification for the types of user-produced, photographic self-staging on party portals. We assume that the users have provided selected the photos on their own and that this selection of photos consequently expresses the (preferred) self-perception or the desired perception by others.

2. Picture Interpretations

a) Generally Oriented Toward Youth Culture

The *Ajo* (Generally Oriented Toward Youth Culture, see above) category is intended to include self-representations that do not include any particular references to a specific star culture, lifestyle, or other complexes of meaning associated with stars that have been imparted by the media.

This profile picture of a Web 2.0 user (festzeit.ch) should serve as an example of this. The section of the picture is based on the classic photo portrait. The head and the upper body are visible to just below the shoulders. The right shoulder is pulled back slightly, the chin lowered, and the gaze is directed to the camera.

The mouth remains closed but forms a broad smile. Pose, clothing, and facial features appear feminine and connote femininity, yet there is no tendency towards sexualization. The background indicates that this shot was taken in a residence. No special attention was paid to lighting or staging. It also appears that nothing has been retouched. For these reasons, this shot can be categorized as amateur. There are no intentionally placed artifacts that indicate a particular subculture or stratified affiliation with a milieu. Shots of this type essentially serve to »provide a face« for the personal profile page. Additional stylistic distinctions are not intended.

Figure 1: Generally Oriented Toward Youth Culture

But the fact that this person has a profile on a party portal in dicates a certain need for self-representation in the media. However, this form of self-staging differentiates itself significantly from the other (star-oriented) users, as the following examples will illustrate.

b) *Star-Oriented Users*

In the advertising shot by a well-know fashion label (see Fig. 2), David Beckham is posing for underwear. Based on the lighting conditions, the background, and the overall staging, we can assume that the photo was taken in a professional studio. Aside from the undergarments to be advertised, Beckham only wears a white shirt. He is supporting himself on his elbows, which creates a certain body tension.

Figure 2: David Beckham

The dynamic created by this pose is further highlighted on the one hand by the slightly aggressive gaze directed into the camera and by the light composition, which covers half of his face and upper body in shadows, on the other hand. These lighting conditions, supported by the black-and-white shot, suggest a certain aura according to the pattern of a protagonist's concealed dark side. Furthermore, Beckham's well-trained body conveys content such as masculinity, strength, determination, and a modern male ideal of beauty. Overall, the pose creates the impression that Beckham is just about to get up in the direction of the viewers, which draws them into the picture to a certain extent and makes them part of the scene.

The product to be marketed is primarily presented at the level of the advertising message or communication in that it intends to evoke associations with fame. However, it conveys the image of a successful, very fit, and famous man at the level of star communication. Even if there are no explicit artifacts in this special picture, a complex of meanings with regard to success, fame, and lifestyle is conveyed solely by the person – the star Beckham. He symbolizes a soccer hero who is additionally promoted as the style icon of a metro-sexual lifestyle. The combination of successful athlete, symbol of a new male self-image, and member of international high society creates a modern legend related to Beckham as a person.

This role-model function at the intersection of sports/style have turned him and his form of self-staging into an important orientation aid for male self-portrayal, even with regard to a socially established representation of male sexuality. The extreme lack of references at the level of artifacts in the scene as typical staging instruments of high society simply underscores Beckham's star quali-

Figure 3: Star-Oriented User

ties in connection with the body[50]. He personifies stardom and this is why he does not need artifacts indicating his popularity. This staging of the individualized body supplies a frame of reference for self-presentation that should not be underestimated, as will be depicted in the following picture.

Fig. 3 shows an album photo of a user from festzeit.ch. The beach could be understood as a reference to a lighthearted, leisure-oriented lifestyle. Even if the person is clearly assuming a pose, the production context should be categorized as amateurish or semi-professional at best. At first glance, significant parallels in the staging between this picture and the one just introduced are apparent. The body composition assumed by the user allows the photo to look like a copy of the advertising photo. Even the poses range from similar to identical in the following aspects: The entire body is turned slightly in the direction of the camera and the upper body is slightly raised and supported by the elbows (creating a certain dynamic and body tension). In both cases, the gaze is directed straight into the camera and just the direction of the gaze is slightly different, even the slight side tilt of the head is found in both shots. On the whole, the poses should be categorized as almost identical at the level of body staging. The body of the young person appears well-groomed. He sports a relatively dark suntan. The eyebrows

50   At this point, we will not delve further into the obvious. Advertising photography clearly includes reference to pictorial representations of art, such as the reclining female nude. With the figure of Beckham, however, the classical motif is restaged and modulated as a male semi-nude. In Beckham, one sees *the* representative of the metrosexual lifestyle and the advertising motif that is presented can therefore be viewed as one of the key images that form the basis of the image of the metrosexual celebrity.

are plucked and the upper body is shaven, which indicates a metro-sexual – if not androgynous – self-image.

Overall, this pose is oriented upon the advertising shot or photographs in glossy magazines. Even if the intention of producing this special profile photo to precisely imitate the analyzed advertising shot obviously cannot be proven, we can assume that there have been associative and interpretive processes on the user's part that are oriented upon a social discourse about legitimate and effective staging forms of stars and prominent people, based on the clear similarities represented above. This reference to star-staging can be evaluated as an attempt to stylize oneself as a star figure. This is reinforced by the self-staging in the beach context. It functions as a symbol for a lifestyle that can be situated between lighthearted leisure and a certain measure of affluence.

The use of this photograph as a means for self-staging in the context of a Web 2.0 portal underscores the pressure towards (partially) public »for show« positioning of one's own person. The need to present one's self to a broadest possible public and thereby awaken specific associations of specialness, stardom, and individuality through the assumption of particular poses distinguishes this star-oriented type of self-staging.

However, we should remember that the difference between a star and a user often becomes particularly clear through the imitation of such poses: This is because the pose refers to meanings that the user cannot believably embody. In the current case, the photo makes references to associations like masculinity, strength, and sexuality. However, the protagonist – who still appears childlike in his stature – is not capable of uniting and conveying these contents into an actual coherent picture. The user does not embody self-confident male sexuality, as in the case of Beckham, but instead stylizes himself as an passive object of desire through the autoerotic gesture (positioning of the hands).

Figure 4 shows Paris Hilton while shooting for a fashion magazine. She maintains the image of a lifestyle icon by wearing and presenting designer clothing, as well as through her appearance in scene clubs throughout the world or participation in numerous events of the film and music industries (the Oscars, Grammies, etc). Her media presence extends from her own reality shows to advertising contracts and illustrations on various magazine covers. All of these aspects make her a prime example of a star staging herself in public. Attributes such as femininity, a casual approach to sexuality, as well as an excessive party life and a certain measure of hedonism, are associated with her. Through her physical appearance and her presence in public, she reproduces a social concept of an upper-class party and scandal girl (see the above explanations regarding the It Girl type).

Figure 4: Paris Hilton

In the photo, Paris Hilton is wearing a black leather jacket and a black-and-white checkered panty as she leans against a white background. Her head is tilted to the side with the gaze directed into the camera. The photograph clearly connotes sexuality. On the one hand, this is clear due to the short clothing; on the other hand, it is illustrated by the pose assumed in the picture. The hips are slightly bent, and the left hand is in the act of moving strands of hair out of her face. Even the head tilted slightly backwards symbolizes sensuality and eroticism. In connection with her public image, this is the staging of a tactile seduction scene that represents Paris Hilton in the conventions of Lolita eroticism. Similar to the advertising photo of Beckham, artifacts that would indicate stardom or wealth are avoided as much possible. It is the photograph for a fashion magazine itself that indicates at least some prominence. This makes any additional artifacts or references to a particular lifestyle obsolete.

Figure 5 shows a member's profile photo on the party portal lautundspitz.ch. This photo was obviously taken in a professional environment. The female person is depicted in a black environment and spotlighted. She is clothed in a torn top, tight hot pants, and high boots, showing herself in a feminine pose. The hips are bent as in the figure of Hilton, but more distinctly than in the previous example. The hands lying on the hips fulfill the same symbolic purpose as Hilton's hands placed in her hair and embody sensuality and eroticism.

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Figure 5: Star-Oriented User

However, the distinct sexual connotation of the female pelvic area intensifies this symbolism. The selected clothing also contributes decisively to the sexual charge of the picture. The drawn-back shoulders and the arched back emphasize the bosom that is turned in the direction of her gaze, which is not looking at the camera. Here as well, there are no particular references to prominence at the level of artifacts.

When recipients orient themselves to star iconography when designing their photographic self-staging as in this photo, they normally imitate the corresponding typical medial star poses. When private persons stage themselves like a star, in the broadest sense this means posing as a star and making these pictures accessible to a (partial) public (in this case, the party portal) in a self-determined manner. This frequently also comes from semi-professional to professional context of creation. In this example, the situation of the photo shooting and the subsequent self-staging on the Internet fulfill the task of attracting attention. As with the role-model Paris Hilton, the scene clearly has sexual connotations, which represents a typical strategy at a party portal for generating attention and (in chart lists: Most Wanted galleries) becoming prominent (see original interview in this volume). What is clear here is the recognizable tendency of assuming poses for self-staging as they are familiar from star and advertising photography. This reference to self-representation of stars does not just refer to individual persons, but also to their expressed values and orientation (lifestyle). In this comparison, the users refer to those value concepts and maxims of action for which Paris Hilton also stands: An exclusive lifestyle of the jet set, outlandish parties, and casual sexuality.

c) *Do-It-Yourself Stars*

Figure 6: Do-It-Yourself Star

Fig. 6 shows a young man of about 18 years who has uploaded the selected pho-to as an album photo to his festzeit.ch profile. The picture is a *self-portrait*. It can clearly be characterized as an *amateur shot*, since it was taken in a residential environment (probably in the protagonist's bathroom) and with unprofessional means (cell-phone camera, photographed in the mirror). The gaze of the user is not directed toward the viewer, but rather to the cell phone display, in which he observes himself and can thereby control the pose, picture section, perspective, and lighting. In the photograph that focuses on his upper body, he is wearing a bright neon orange Adidas training jacket open to the breast bone with a dark T-shirt that has an unrecognizable imprint under it. The sleeves of the training jacket are rolled up. The collar is erect. Aside from the glittering earring in the young man's left ear, the hair that has been carefully styled with great effort and care attracts the viewer's eye. The young man is not assuming a typical pose, but his left hand – which is holding the zipper of the training jacket at heart level and appears to be prepared to open it further – seems to have been consciously placed at this position for the photo. Apart from this, the body composition that is slightly turned to the right seen from the viewer's perspective, through which the left half of the face is completely covered in connection with the upheld cell phone, does not appear to have been randomly selected. A look at the other pic-tures on the user's profile page shows that he has frequently selected this pose for

self-portraits: The right half of his body could be interpreted at the perceived »best side«[51].

This rather untypical pose in connection with strained facial feature and the unprofessional photo production environment allows the photograph to appear as if it were a snap shot at first glance. But the »fading« of the photograph used at the picture borders, as well as the »RooMaaN« lettering that can be recognized at the bottom picture edge show that it was retouched and indicate a consciously selected pose and image.

In addition to other types of retouching, this can also be clearly recognized in Fig. 7. Although the person's face cannot actually be seen within the context of the party portal profile, it is apparent that it involves a woman who is about 17 years old. She wears tight black pants, a close-cropped red sweater that leaves the abdomen uncovered[52], and a pink pearl necklace that extends to just above the belly button, as well as a trucker cap as accessories. The pose makes the initially impression of a classic supporting-leg/free-leg pose, which is primarily intended to stage the feminine attributes as well as possible. At second glance, a typical figure of the hip-hip or street dancing can be detected from the position of the arms guiding the head to the right and angled away in association with the slight hint of bending at the knees.

Figure 7: Do-It-Yourself Star

51 This phenomenon can generally be observed in online community platforms. The user selects a pose and uses it frequently as a photographic standard for the photos on his or her profile.

52 Recalls the female pop singers of the 1990s, such as Britney Spears, the Spice Girls etc.

As already indicated, this picture was also subsequently retouched. The original background was exchanged for the night-lit skyline of New York. The user was added to this romantic, urban scenery by means of montage. The contrast between the inserted young woman and the picture background has been reduced, presumably by using various filter functions. The face shows extreme shadows, which no longer allows her facial features to be recognized. This phenomenon of »making oneself unrecognizable« is also frequently encountered on the online profile pages. In the process, young people pursue a strategy of »mystification« (Goffman) of the identity; a form of hiding, which contrasts against the intimate self-exposure of the star-oriented users that have been presented.

The second photograph of the user (see Fig. 8) was also marked by subsequently added lettering. This *branding* – with which young people turn themselves into their own brands – and the processing of their own photographs, as well as the bricolage shown from various youth cultural stylistics, are representative of a youth culture that no longer looks for the star on television, in the movies, or in lifestyle magazines, but discovers it within themselves. *Me as the star* is becoming the (life) maxim of a generation of young people who have emancipated themselves from the classic role distribution of the »star as a point of identification« in relationship to the »self-orienting recipients«. This attitude is supported by the casting TV formats like *Deutschland sucht den Superstar* (German equivalent to American Idol), which convey the idea that anyone can become the star.

A self-image is the built on this star-image, which – to put it bluntly – is based on a devaluation of the formerly unachievable status of fame. People no longer become stars through many years of achievement and consequent image cultivation. Basically anyone can now be shaped into a star within the briefest period of time. At least this message is conveyed through an entire series of TV formats for young people. Based on the two photographs described in the introduction (Fig. 6 and 7), the way in which a modern youth culture can celebrate »me as a star« can now be shown as examples thanks to Tilllate and company.

Based on their style and outfits, the two young people in the photographs (Fig. 6 – 9a/b) can be associated with a youth scene that has the common denominator of a dance form called Techtonic. These people dance to electronic music – either House or Electro – which is why the Electro scene will be discussed in the following section. Without a long discussion of its origin at this point, the scene can be traced back to urban regions (most likely Paris) at the beginning of the 21st century. Thanks to Web 2.0 portals like YouTube, quick emulators throughout Europe found the clips uploaded by the dancers. In contrast to other music and dance styles, the representatives of this scene do not orient themselves on the

Figure 8 to 9a/b: Do-It-Yourself Star

stars (who were not present[53]), but have rather discovered their own style. This should be understood as a combination of elements, a bricolage of various already widely established or previous youth cultures[54].

The significant factors for the Do-It-Yourself star outfit is a self-created mixture of youth-culture stylistics from the past few decades that has not been presented in this form by a star on the one hand[55] and allowing innumerable variations and facets through the high possibility of combinations on the other hand. Anyone can design their own, supposedly unique style: Like a »real« star, anyone can become their own brand.

This assumption is supported by the picture retouching by the young people. There is a high probability that the lettering shows the names of the two depicted

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53   Celebrity abstinence is not an atypical phenomenon for electronic music scenes. The techno scene of the 1990s, for example, was also characterized at the start by »star-lessness«.

54   The neon-colored sports jacket, recalling the rap scene of the 1980s, stands out for the young man in figure 6. The »bling-bling« stud earring, which only became socially acceptable for men through celebrities from hip-hop and rap, is taken from the same scene (but about ten years later). The hair is a hybrid of the mullet hairstyle of the 1980s and a metrosexual hair fetish of the early 2000s. Additional typical style elements that are used by the electro scene are the trucker cap for young women or the aviator glasses on the youth in the pictures that follow. The trucker cap is borrowed from the skater scene of the 1980s (incidentally, the pattern recalls the Vans brand which, in the 1960s, produced the first shoes conceived specifically for skate-boarders), the aviator sunglasses were an additional characteristic of the German Popper scene of the early 80s (the sweater knotted over the shoulder also points in this direction).

55   Which will change, however, with the appearance of Lady Gaga and other new-comers.

persons[56]. The addition of their own names, the »branding« of the photographs and resulting the personalization of the style and poses, combined with the (rudimentary) retouching of the photographs is reminiscent of the star posters that have decorated the walls of teenagers for decades. Apart from this, the consciousness of individual uniqueness is underscored. In addition, the added lettering like »100% Original« emphasizes the incomparability of the styles that they have created on their own for show, which are worth protecting against imitation. This is indicated by the ® symbol for »registered« and © for »copyright« (Fig. 9a). The fact that this personal, 100% original and protected style can be found hundreds of times on the party portals is also generously ignored in this process, just like the fact that a person can be promoted to the status of a pseudo-star or »disposable« star through the Web 2.0 portals in the best case. In the worst case, he or she will become a joke. The stylization of the constructed »me as a star« is completed by the sense of revealing picture captions (subscriptio), which precisely describe this youth scene with its hedonistic tendencies. Although the star section previously said »I love the Backstreet Boys« or the like, the focus is now on the narcissistic formula of »I love me« (see Fig. 9b).

3. Summary

The topic of this study has been the orientation of young people toward star iconography for their photographic self-portrayal on the Web 2.0 portals. This is why the first step was to explain what determines a star and the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of stardom (Faulstich). The available elements of photographic self-staging (pose, illuminated artifacts, contexts of creation and production, etc.) were described preceding the analysis of profile pictures as examples within the context of the star orientation.

The selection of the present photographs occurred with the intention of presenting user pictures that proved as much evident star orientation as possible. Evidence was provided to show that many pictures on Web 2.0 portals orient themselves directly on a mass-communicated discourse through star iconography. (The pictures of the non-star oriented users, the *Ajos*, were obviously not forgotten in this process).

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56   With Web 2.0 and its many platforms as well as with diverse, easy-to-use hardware and software (mobile telephones with integrated cameras and photo processing features, for example), a great many tools are available that support the creation of do-it-yourself celebrities, even if they are not essential.

After intensive research and extensive comparison of numerous user pictures, it became obvious that apparent, elaborately reconstructed copies of *specific* media-processed star photographs are rather seldom. Insofar as it is present, the star orientation generally occurs in excerpts. This predominantly means that there was not one obvious, fully comparable original such as those from advertising or the boulevard; however, various stereotypes of star-staging strategies were found repeatedly in the user pictures. These were in the form of specific poses, individual artifacts, facial features, gestures, professional production circumstances or – in the special case of the Do-It-Yourself stars – in the form of »self-branding« as described in Chapter 2c.

In summary, the idea that a structural connection exists between the users' self-portrayal on the Internet and the star iconography communicated through the mainstream mass media – whether these are »models« now found in advertisement, pop culture, or on the boulevard – reinforces this thesis. This result is supported by the fact that uploading photos represents an active action process by the users, who connect a subjective sense with the shots for that reason and pursue a specific purpose: Looking to see what is »in«, as well as presenting and asserting themselves in the mirror of peer review.

The moment of participation in Web 2.0 appears to be especially meaningful: Users stage themselves as »stars« by imitating stars, but they also stage themselves as D. I. Y. stars in a way that pleases them and their peers (self-iconization, celebrification). As a result, their staging strategies tend to be idiosyncratic because their style does not have a role model in the star communication system and also does not have a direct personalized representative. These young people construct their own star existence as hedonistic and self-referring, and brazenly pluck the stars from the skies just as like music and films from the Internet.

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