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

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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-

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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.

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.
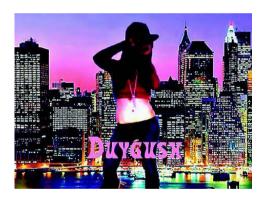

Figure 7: Do-It-Yourself Star

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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

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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 »starlessness«.

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 skateboarders), 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 newcomers.

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.

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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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