

**1 Creating a Self-Image<sup>1</sup>****2 Face-Work and Identity Construction Online***3 Saskia Kersten & Netaya Lotze***4 1 Introduction: Creating a Self-Image online**

5 When discussing self-representation in online spaces, the  
6 predominant focus is often on the detrimental effects of a  
7 distorted reality that is created by presenting a polished,  
8 positive version of oneself only (Turtle 2012; Bedijs, Held &  
9 Maaß 2014: 10). From a linguistic point of view, however,  
10 there is a lack of systematic investigation and comprehensive  
11 analytic and theoretical framework for identity construction  
12 online. In this article, we discuss studies that have addressed  
13 the topic either explicitly or implicitly and aim to  
14 demonstrate that identity construction is skilfully and  
15 consciously employed by people engaging in online  
16 communication.

17 When investigating identity construction online, it is not  
18 only important to consider “Who says what in which channel  
19 to whom with which effect?” (Lasswell 1948) but also “with  
20 which code?” (Androutsopoulos 2003: 1), code being the  
21 linguistic layer of a mediated message. We address these  
22 questions and investigate in what way and to what extent  
23 social, technical, platform-specific and pragmatic affordances  
24 shape online identity construction by analysing the stylistic  
25 variation of different user communities, thus leading to a

---

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented as part of the Smartphone-basierte Interaktion im Spannungsfeld von Anonymität, Öffentlichkeit und Privatheit panel at the GAL Conference 2018 in Essen, Germany. We would like to thank all participants and the panel conveners for their valuable feedback.

comprehensive study of the strategies involved: how users stylistically align with an online community, for example Twitter, using self-naming strategies.

Identity construction online can be viewed as a form of face-work in Goffmanian sense (Fröhlich 2014) and manifests in a wide-ranging set of practices, e. g. the choice of username (also referred to as screennames or nicknames, cf. Aleksiejuk 2016b), form and content of online profiles and status messages, which contribute to the linguistic positioning of users. The alignment that “speaker and hearers take toward each other and toward the content of their talk” (Goffman 1981: 128) is ever-shifting and are linguistically signalled by the interlocutors (see also Graham 2015).

According to Bedijs, Held & Maaß (2014) as well as our own work on username onomastics (Kersten & Lotze 2018, Lotze & Kersten in press), the face-work strategies employed by users on social media are influenced by a desire to connect with other users and an increasing need to preserve privacy and, at least up to a point, anonymity. These conflicting goals of wanting to be recognised as an authentic member of an in-group while retaining a degree of anonymity are, for example, observable in the choice of username (i. e. incorporation of elements of ‘real’ names, the level of opacity with which this is done and the use of common nouns or other parts of speech communicating specific interests or group memberships). Therefore, usernames are a key factor to consider and analyse in the light of the dilemmas faced when doing face-work online:

- the social positioning between private and public discourse (Bedijs, Held & Maaß 2014);
- the collapse of contexts online (boyd & Marwick 2011), i. e. the possibility for de- and re-contextualisation of online postings, resulting in the fact that “the exact composition of the audience for any one post is therefore unknowable” (Seargeant & Tagg 2014: 8);
- the transformation of all traditional forms of audience design into a new form of face-work online, which is sensitive to the problems of ‘privacy vs. authenticity’ and ‘context collapse’.

65 In this article we discuss self-naming as a conscious choice of  
66 a username (or usernames) and a form of face-work. We  
67 understand online self-naming as a key practice in the debate  
68 on face-work on social media platforms, because names and  
69 naming strategies can be studied more readily than broader  
70 and more complex aspects, such as stylistic variation or text-  
71 image interdependence, while at the same time forming part  
72 of these.

### 73 1.1 Public Discourse on Authenticity, Transparency and Narcissism 74 in the Digital Age

75 The ‘digital revolution’ – which has been described as the  
76 fourth major media revolution (Schlobinski 2012: 18) – has  
77 not only freed global and mobile communication from most  
78 of its physical constraints, it has also given permanence to  
79 what had hitherto been mostly ephemeral communication.  
80 The increased reach of any form of communication and  
81 seemingly limitless storage capacity have resulted in entirely  
82 new interactional contexts. It has also put the users’ privacy  
83 at risk in two ways: first, from a (semi-)public audience who  
84 can read what was once considered to be private  
85 communication and, second, from large-scale data storage  
86 and analysis by Silicon Valley companies.

87 This blurring of private and public spheres poses a  
88 dilemma for the users: They wish to engage in social  
89 interaction on the one hand and they desire to protect one’s  
90 privacy on the other. The result is a type of face-work  
91 (Goffman 1955): how do you communicate when you know  
92 that a considerable number of people may be reading along?

93 This question is currently the focus of public debate and is  
94 framed either in terms of a compulsion to be authentic in an  
95 “Age of Transparency” (Sifry 2011), excessive self-  
96 presentation in an “Age of Narcissism” (Durvasula 2016) or as  
97 the symptom of a “Narcissism Epidemic” (Twenge &  
98 Campbell 2009). Are these new forms of interaction really  
99 the driving factor behind the predicament described above or  
100 are they actually just all-too familiar human behaviour, albeit  
101 in slightly snazzier clothing? In other words, is this new and  
102 potentially narcissistic form of face-work really a  
103 phenomenon that can be attributed to the rise in social media  
104 use?

Without wanting to succumb entirely to cultural pessimism, it is important to remember that, from a media studies perspective, social media use can be both a filter and a driver for new ideas and trends. Friend-based social networks and hashtag communities can result in echo chambers and filter bubbles (Hegelich & Shahrezaye 2015) leading to an acceleration of stylistic variation and differentiation. Individuals can become style icons to millions almost overnight and thus gain a tremendous amount of influence, an aspect of which is for example the choice of username.

This possibility in turn seems to appeal to certain individuals more than others. A recent comprehensive psychological study by the Hans Bredow Institute using standard narcissism questionnaires (Hölig 2018) found that Twitter users who tweet both frequently and regularly exhibit pronounced narcissistic traits. Hölig (2018) found that only ten percent of Twitter subscribers produce 90 percent of the content and that these particularly active users also score high on the standardised narcissism scale. This begs the question whether the differences between heavy users (i. e. the minority who produces the majority of the content) and the less vocal majority (i. e. those who are predominantly consumers rather than content creators) also manifests in linguistic features (e. g. choice of username, profile data, profile pictures, self-description, pronoun use etc.)

Researchers have proposed various criteria for interpreting users' styles. boyd and Marwick (2011), for example, investigated teenagers' online privacy practices and established what could be termed exclusivity by using "in-jokes" and group-specific lexis and positivity by avoiding sad or controversial topics, thus creating a polished, retouched, curated image of themselves (see also Turkle 2012).

Other studies found that users create subjectivity and emotionality through conventionalised emoji usage and formulaic group-specific phraseology, often hyperbolic in nature (e. g. *allerallerbeste Freundin* 'absolute best friend ever' or *ich verlass dich nie* 'I'll never leave you'). In a case study of a group of adolescent girls on the now defunct German social media platform SchülerVZ, Voigt (2015a) describes how this group presents themselves as particularly cute and popular by using a specific style (emoticons,

iteration of letters, relationship phrases and intensified) and deduces in a general fashion (see Voigt 2015b) that “school girls [sic]” use a new variety of communication online. We would argue that it is impossible to make any general claims based on a single case study and that what is described is, from a sociolinguistic perspective, if anything, a style rather than a variety. This study nevertheless highlights that there is a need for further, more comprehensive and generalizable studies of face-work online which, instead of perpetuating stereotypes, need to be methodologically sound and sufficiently detailed and broad in equal measure.

To this end, self-naming can be investigated in regard to the extent with which users conform to a Community of Practice (CoP, Lave & Wenger 1991) and the implicit norms associated with this CoP or, alternatively, how they try to distance themselves from them. As part of a contrastive study (Schlobinski & T. Siever 2018, for a detailed discussion see below) of usernames we compared usernames and self-naming strategies and found such functional similarities, while the structural means to establish a sociolinguistic function differ (Kersten & Lotze 2018), for example in terms of the degree of privacy retained by anonymising usernames or by alignment with a particular group through judicious username choice.

## 1.2 Online Styles

This section outlines the current discourse on narcissistic self-presentation online and the state of the art in style analysis, face-work and identity.

Both German and English language digitally mediated interaction (DMI) can look back on more than 20 years of academic debate of the linguistic behaviour of users. Despite this, it is still not fully understood which platform-related and socio-pragmatic variables influence the communicative behaviour of users and their engagement in online communities. This may partly be due to the fact that theory generation takes time and is often outpaced by technological change. For the younger generation, a life without social media is inconceivable; even though social media have only become a part of our lives very recently. It is all the more important to work on a more accurate definition of these new

social spheres and their communicative agents (to borrow Habermas' [1993] terminology).

Following a phase that mainly focused on describing the early internet and its affordances by comparing it to other forms of written communication (English: Herring 1996, German: Runkehl & Schlobinski 1998), researchers began investigating whether the internet gave rise to a new register, the so-called "Netspeak" (Crystal 2001, 2010). The idea of a homogenous online register or style was quickly refuted in light of the diversity of communicative contexts and the heterogeneity of the user groups themselves. Today, the linguistic and multimodal stylistic variants that are present in DMI are viewed as community-specific and as diverse as these communities and their participants.

Nevertheless, synchronous written communication can result in the emergence and conventionalisation of certain features, such as the use of emoticons/emojis and morphological or syntactic abbreviations, which in turn are often seen as typical for DMI (see e. g. Baron 2008, Beißwenger 2007, Szurawitzki 2010). The conceptional orality of this type of communication has taken on a prominent role in this context (see e. g. Dürscheid 2007 with reference to Koch & Oesterreicher 1985). Texting or text-speak as a form of synchronous written communication is no longer regarded to be merely a result of the affordances and restrictions imposed by the medium; instead it is regarded to be a reflection of the user's underlying cognitive processes (see e. g. Dürscheid 2016 for an in-depth discussion). The focus of inquiry consequently shifts to the user's experience of online communication in real time and therefore the language of immediacy (as opposed to distance). Consequently, studies of DMI no longer focus only on the medium but also the cognitive dimension of the user experience.

The problem with this approach is that communication in the digital age has been defined with recourse to traditional concepts of orality and literacy, which fail to adequately capture this new form of literacy (cf. Androutsopoulos 2007), in particular its multimodality. Consequently, there is a lack of comprehensive definitions of linguistic practices used in the vast variety of online contexts, communities and networks.



We argue that any investigation in this field has to be able to adequately capture the fundamental sociological and psychological principles of human action and identity construction (Erikson 1974, Keupp et al. 2002), self-presentation (i. e. face-work, Goffman 1967) and group behaviour within a Community of Practice. Taking into account the basic principles of human interaction and social community is in our view instrumental in uncovering variables that have hitherto not been widely studied and to identify which communicative strategies are simply “old wine in new wineskins” (Dürscheid 2007) and which ones are pivotal and genuinely novel (see also Herring et al. 2013).

The first step to do this is to conduct further analyses of identity construction online by investigating the degree to which online identities are constructed by ‘writing oneself into being’ (through the choice of usernames, profile data and profile pictures) and the effect which this newly crafted existence has on all subsequent communication.

The second compounding factor is the loss of clear boundaries between the private and the public (Bedijs, Held & Maaß 2014). Everyone who engages with others online is confronted with the desire for social connection which in turn necessitates at least a degree of authenticity and identifiability on the one hand and the conflicting desire to protect one’s privacy by disclosing as little as possible on the other. As a result, there is a broad spectrum of self-naming strategies ranging from utterly opaque usernames, those that consist of common nouns or other parts of speech to the use of one’s real names as well as everything in between (Kersten & Lotze 2018, Lotze & Kersten in press). This is just one of numerous examples of the stylistic variation in communicative strategies which have evolved alongside the phenomenon of private communication in a public space.

The third factor is the communities the individual does or wants to belong to. Many aspects of face-work and group effects (e. g. filter bubbles and echo chambers) can be linked to the positioning of oneself in relation to other groups. Research has found evidence of adaptation processes in the form of interactive alignment in online communities at both the lexical and syntactic level (for face-to-face dialogues see Pickering & Garrod 2004, for DMI see Lotze 2016). In the case study discussed above, Voigt (2015b) discusses stylistic

accommodation among adolescents by shared use of relationship phrases or via emulated prosody (Haase et al. 1997), which is represented by the iteration of letters (T. Siever 2006) and emoticon usage. On a functional level, boyd and Marwick (2011) observed a tendency among adolescents to engage in linguistic positivity and emotionality as a reaction to the possibility of any communication on social media potentially being read by others who are not the intended audience. There is also evidence of adaptation strategies in choosing usernames within different Communities of Practice (e. g. Twitter and Flickr: Kersten & Lotze 2018, Facebook and online gaming: Kaziaba 2016, more generally: Aleksiejuk 2017). Alignment with an “in-group” (Tajfel and Turner 1986) can be found at all levels of interaction. With regard to political linguistics/discourse analysis (Twitter: Hegelich & Shahrezaye 2015) and research on linguistic cyberbullying (Marx 2017), there is evidence that valorisation of the in-group can go hand-in-hand with a devalorisation of an out-group in the form of othering and scapegoating (see also Pörksen 2005).

The guiding questions are thus the following: How do people ‘do naming’ when choosing a username to participate in online communication, to what extent is this platform-dependent or motivated by a desire to align with a particular group of users, which strategies are employed to preserve privacy and how do users cope with the conflicting desire to preserve privacy (and therefore anonymity) on the one hand and disclose enough information about themselves to be recognisable (and therefore make themselves partially or fully identifiable)?

In the following, we provide an overview of the theoretical concepts of onomastics and digitally-mediated communication research that are relevant for the discussion at hand, focussing in particular on face-work, and relate these to our findings of an analysis of 500 English usernames (Kersten & Lotze 2018) as well as more generally the findings of the a project analysing usernames across 14 languages our data analysis formed part of (Schlobinski & Siever 2018).



## 309 2 Naming and Identity Construction

310 The topics of naming, face-work and stance are closely  
311 related to the philosophical topic of the identity of the  
312 individual, which in turn is linked to the very essence of  
313 human existence. Therefore, the academic discourse on  
314 human identity goes back to the beginnings of philosophy  
315 and shares links with several other disciplines, such as the  
316 psychology of the individual (as well as developmental  
317 psychology), social psychology, sociology and linguistics. The  
318 following section outlines the theoretical frameworks of  
319 identity construction in Western philosophy, sociology and  
320 linguistics as well as the relevance of every aspect of these  
321 theoretical approaches for onomastics.

322 In Western philosophy, the individual is defined as the  
323 very entity which cannot be divided, as discussed in Plato's  
324 Cratylus dialogue with reference to the pre-Socratic  
325 philosopher Heraclitus. The individual is in union with  
326 herself (Latin: *idem* = 'the same'), i. e. in spite of dynamic  
327 development, the individual must recognize herself everyday  
328 as one indivisible entity (both qualitatively and numerically).  
329 This indivisible being is referred to by a name which is (at  
330 least ideally) mono-referential, i. e. has one unique referent  
331 (cf. Nübling et al. 2015, Hansack 2004). The being is able to  
332 reflect on their inner identity via their consciousness, which  
333 is what John Locke calls the 'self' (Locke, Essay: II, 27, 8). It is  
334 this capacity of critical self-reflection that makes the  
335 individual a rational agent in the Kantian sense who is  
336 ethically responsible for their actions (Kant, MdS VI 223).  
337 This in turn can be related back to onomastics, because an  
338 official name typically refers to an authentic person with  
339 rights and duties (see e. g. Lettmaier 2015 on the legal aspects  
340 of names in the UK, Lawson 2016, Nübling et al. 2015).

341 In more recent times, the constructivist school shifted the  
342 focus from the individual's inner conscious experience of  
343 identity to the inter-personal construction of identity. While  
344 a radical form of constructivism could be criticized as being  
345 relativistic, the idea of identity as a process rather than a  
346 product has proven to be fruitful in a wide range of  
347 disciplines. Following this line of reasoning, identity is subject  
348 to interactional negotiation and is therefore a social

construct, which in turn is symbolically transmitted (Mead 1978).

In post-modern approaches identity is seen as a ‘patchwork’ of partial identities that are relevant for different aspects of one’s life (e. g. me as an academic, me as a singer). In onomastics, this is then linked to the idea that a person can have more than one name (e. g. a family name, one or more given names, pet names, pseudonyms, usernames etc.; see e. g. Hansack 2004).

As discussed above, the concept of social identity construction is closely related to Goffman’s (1967) notion of face-work, because we do not necessarily show each other our true, authentic, inner-most selves, but rather a more polished version, a mask for social interaction, which Goffman refers to as the social “face”. Using empirical methods, we can only ever really tap into a speaker’s face-work, not their identity and we argue that self-naming practices online are a form of such face-work.

Face as a person’s social value can also be negotiated linguistically. This negotiation process can be interpreted with Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) “principle of emergence” as “doing identity”. In onomastics, online naming is also seen as a negotiated process (“doing naming”, see Aldrin 2011).

Following Bucholtz & Hall (2005), this can be viewed as the positioning of the individual in relation to an online community, which in turn is a CoP. The username can indicate whether the individual is part of an in-group (Tajfel & Turner 1986) of insiders with regards to a specific topic, a fandom etc. while at the same time excluding outsiders by referencing a topic, a fandom etc. which only the initiated would be able to recognize (“principle of positionality”, “principle of indexicality”).

Consequently, in our analysis of online identity construction we adopt the post-modern view of identity as a patchwork of partial identities which are negotiated in relation to a CoP and the basic principles of linguistic construction of identity as defined by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) “emergence”, “positionality”, “indexicality”, “relationality” and “partialness”:

- Emergence: Identity is understood to be the result of an interactive negotiation process and can thus be

- 390 interpreted in the context of an interactive doing  
391 (doing gender, doing identity) approach.
- 392 • Positionality: Identity is constituted as a function of  
393 spatial and temporal variables as studied by traditional  
394 ethnography (diatopic and diachronic variation).
  - 395 • Indexicality: The process of identity construction is  
396 indexical, which means that identity is constituted in  
397 relation to social groups to which one refers with  
398 certain culturally grown linguistic means (labels, style  
399 characteristics).
  - 400 • Relationality: Identity is replaced by concrete semantic  
401 relations such as similarity, difference, naturalness vs.  
402 artificiality or power vs. impotence constituted, e. g.  
403 through by self-staging as authoritative.
  - 404 • Partialness: Because identity is intersubjectively  
405 constituted, it is always only partially experienceable,  
406 interpretable etc. and therefore agentivity is  
407 fundamentally collaborative.

408 Name choice can also be interpreted as a partial aspect of the  
409 identity constitution of an individual. As a sociolinguistically  
410 relevant practice, name choice could be understood to be an  
411 interactive negotiation process ('doing naming', see also  
412 Aldrin 2011). Furthermore, name choice often includes a  
413 temporal or spatial positioning relative to a group  
414 (fashionable names, regional names). Names refer indexically  
415 to social groups (see Nübling 2017: Charlotte vs. Chantal).  
416 Even self-naming practices can be interpreted semantically in  
417 relation to certain relevant topoi (e. g. self-representation as  
418 authentic by using one's real name on social media); name  
419 choice is thus a genuinely collaborative, only partially  
420 controllable process that involves choices between names  
421 that have been bestowed on ones ('real' names, nicknames)  
422 and self-naming (nicknames, pseudonyms).

423 To break down the concepts mentioned above and to  
424 systematise the explanation of empirical data on self-naming  
425 online we posit four main principles of onomastic identity  
426 construction as a useful framework of interpretation. These  
427 are:

- 428 • the use of names to establish mono-referentiality to a  
429 unique referent (Nübling et al. 2015)

- 430 • names as a means to model the human consciousness  
431 (following Locke)
- 432 • names as a device to authenticate oneself as a rational  
433 agent with a concept of ethical responsibility (following  
434 Kant)
- 435 • the use of names to position the individual in relation  
436 to social groups (Bucholtz & Hall 2005)

437 In the following section, we discuss our own research findings  
438 on online self-naming as well as those of others. This is  
439 mainly done in the light of these main principles of onomastic  
440 identity construction following the broader concepts of  
441 online face-work with its restrictions and affordances (see  
442 Bedijs, Held & Maaß 2014, Tagg 2015) and identity  
443 construction as “doing identity” following Bucholtz and Hall  
444 (2005) in relation to Communities of Practice (Lave &  
445 Wenger 1991).

### 446 **3 Self-Naming Online as Face-Work**

#### 447 **3.1 New Parameters for Face-Work Online**

448 It can be argued that people have always striven to put the  
449 best foot forward and to present themselves in the most  
450 positive light possible. Radford et al. (2011: 447), for example,  
451 discuss the way in which users “actively create and maintain  
452 face” in Live Chat Reference Interactions, even though it is a  
453 very goal-directed form of interaction. They also note that,  
454 although some have argued that digitally-mediated  
455 communication (DMI) is inherently levelling and democratic,  
456 since all clues about ethnicity, gender etc. are supposedly  
457 absent, this is not actually the case since cues are derived  
458 from e. g. email addresses and other types of username  
459 (Radford et al. 2011).

460 As discussed above, the digital revolution has led to a  
461 blurring of the boundaries between private and public  
462 spheres, which in turn leads to the conundrum the users of  
463 social media find themselves in, namely that between  
464 authenticity and anonymity. These are conflicting goals, in  
465 particular the desire to remain anonymous and the fact that  
466 users cannot be sure who is reading their contributions,

which make it difficult to identify the audiences (Graham 2015) on the one hand, and the need to provide important identity cues to the co-participants on the other. Graham (2015) also notes that as interlocutors grow more comfortable with each other they may disclose more about themselves, thus reducing their anonymity and privacy. She also argues that the degree of control who the audience is is intricately linked to how users choose to present themselves. One strategy to potentially retain a level of control is to compromise in terms of self-naming by combining parts of one's 'real' name with other group- or platform-specific lexis, since a username, "as the first interaction a person has with a platform, sets the tone for how communication and content flows through platforms" (Van der Nagel 2018: 312).

While it has been argued that the online sphere could be described as the stage in the Goffmanian sense and the offline life as backstage (see e. g. Bullingham & Vasconcelos 2013), this differentiation may not be feasible in the light of blurred boundaries between online and offline communication. On the other hand, the strategies described above alone may not be enough to be perceived to be an authentic person: Angouri (2015) discusses an example in which one of the participants in a forum dispute makes a clear distinction between a 'username' and a 'real' person, stating that "besides I am addressing a username [nickname in the Greek original] not someone I personally know, we are kept apart by the interface! :)" (Angouri 2015: unpaginated ebook). The user in question may potentially feel this way because the other user did not disclose enough information about themselves through their username.

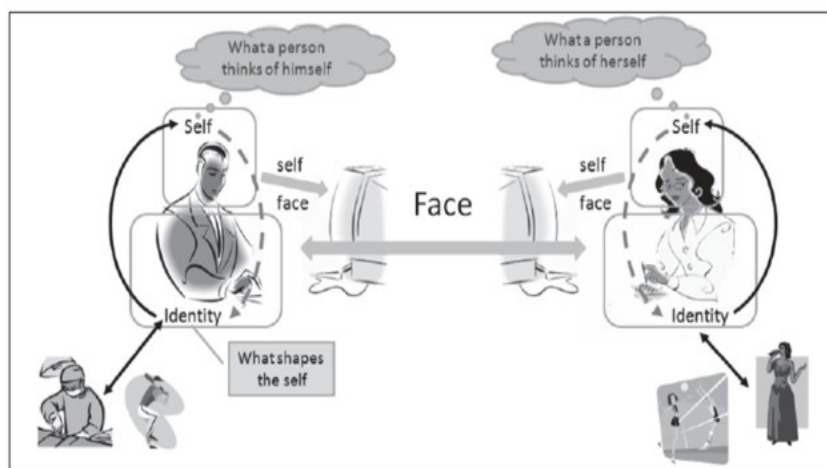
In the context of data protection during ethnographic studies, Varis (2015) goes so far as to argue that usernames and avatars should not be regarded as not being real names, since they are used to present oneself online and should therefore be protected just like any other kind of personal data. Furthermore, Varis (2015) posits that the distinction between usernames and 'real' names is rooted in the notion that the internet is somehow less 'real' than the offline world. Users often perceive others they communicate with online as friends and, as discussed above, the lines between on- and offline worlds become increasingly blurred. There is evidence of careful management of usernames (e. g. Thomas 2007,

Gatson 2011, Hagström 2012), the days in which usernames were regarded to be mostly ad hoc creations without much meaning are long gone (Bechar-Israeli 1995, Kaziaba 2013).

Many users use the same or similar usernames across different platforms and contexts (Varis 2015), leading to conscious use of the affordances and constraints of the platforms used, meaning that “people are better able to strategically self-present through the platforms they choose” (Van der Nagel 2017: 314) and make informed choices on how much they disclose when, where and to which perceived audience, which Van der Nagel (2017: 326) likens to “what in a professional arena would be an audience segmentation strategy”, which could be interpreted to be a strategy to counteract context collapse. The important point here is that the technical affordances are “possibilities of action” (Van der Nagel 2017: 314), even if some encourage the use of ‘real’ names, which users are also known to circumvent, for example in the data from the study discussed in more detail below (Kersten & Lotze 2018), people filled in the box requiring them to disclose their location with anywhere or not telling. Users therefore seem to strive for at least a modicum of control over context collapse and one way in which they address this is the choice of username.

A study of usernames in an online dating context (Bullingham & Vasconcelos 2013: 18) found that usernames “can, in Goffman’s terms, act as a personal front” creating a reaction in other users, for example when asked to rate the attractiveness of users based on their usernames. Similarly, if a username exhibits a trait that is not desirable in a particular communicative context (e. g. a username suggestive of masculinity in a chatroom frequented by and meant for lesbians), the users may face rejection (Del-Tesio-Craviotto 2008).





**Figure 1:** Notions of identity, self and face in DMI (Fröhlich 2014: 117)

As outlined above, we differentiate between the identity of a person as a unit in a patchwork of partial identities, the self as a self-reflexive component in the form of a self-aware being, and the social face which is presented in interaction (cf. Fröhlich 2014).

### 3.2 Empirical Studies: The International Nickname Project

To illustrate our argument that username choice does indeed constitute a form of face-work and that names are negotiated, we will refer to results of our empirical study on usernames which combined a quantitative corpus study on the lexis, syntax and morphology of online names with a qualitative questionnaire on the motivation of name choices. As part of this study, we adopted an onomastic approach by investigating whether users tend to give their actual, i. e. 'real', names (as in anthroponyms) on a platform or rather opt for other naming strategies, such as non-transparent appellatives, short forms of their names or childhood nicknames.

#### 3.2.1 Quantitative Analysis of Usernames

**Research design:** For the corpus study on the structure of usernames, we collected 500 usernames from predominantly British online platforms. This was done as part of a larger project analysing self-naming practices across 14 different languages and cultures (Schlobinski & T. Siever 2018), among which are German, Italian, Swedish, Japanese and Chinese. All project teams used a common tag-set of those categories

that were comparable across languages (onomastic categories, lexical-semantic categories). During tagging, language-specific or other additional criteria could be added. This shared tagset approach was used because specific software for automatic analyses and contrastive comparison was developed specifically for the project to ensure a level of comparability across languages (for more detailed information, including a discussion of the tagset, see Schlobinski & Siever 2018).

The British usernames were collected from a variety of different social media sites (Twitter, Flickr, two types of below-the-line comments, one on current TV programmes in a broadsheet, the other on political articles in the yellow press, and forum threads from a tech forum; 100 names from each) to gain insights into self-naming strategies used in a predominantly UK context (for a detailed discussion of how this was achieved, see Kersten & Lotze 2018). To facilitate comparability, the other language corpora were built from the same sources where possible. If certain platforms were unavailable in specific countries, another service with similar functions and popularity was chosen in its stead (e. g. Chinese: Weibo in place of Twitter).

**Results:** In the following paragraphs real names are anonymised with the asterisk sign (\*) due to the conventions of the international nickname project.

57.4% of all British usernames in the corpus are what was classed as transparent pseudonyms; i. e. they either don't contain any 'real' name (*mooncarrot*), they clearly are not the user's real name (*Gregor Samsa*), they contain company, product or group names in addition to anthroponyms (pattern: *FN LN Photography* on Flickr) or consist of language play based on anthroponyms (*mariolensa*, a combination of the name the singer and 1940/50s film star Mario Lanza and the appellative *lens*). The other names were full or short versions of personal names. 55% of all names are compounds following Nübling et al.'s (2015) categorisation of the combination of first name and last name as compounding. For example, *Saskia Kersten* would be analysed as a compound (on the morphologic level) not as a noun phrase in form of an apposition (syntactic level). 11.6% contain word play (e. g. mimicking anthroponyms: *BillyGoat75*, *A Breeze* or exploiting homophony: *eye pad*, *SereniTEA*). 73% of all

usernames exhibit unconventional orthography (omission of spaces / use of delimiter [*@Favstar\_Bot*] or a deliberate use of capitals [*CrazyWitchLady*], which can be readily explained by the technical constraints of the platforms that e. g. do not allow spaces to be incorporated in usernames, forcing the users to resort to other strategies of indicating word boundaries instead. 33% of all usernames make use of graphostylistics, i. e. numbers or other strategies often regarded to be ‘typical’ of DMI (> 1%, *Fruit Bat* /\ 0/\).

### 3.2.2 Qualitative Analysis of Self-Naming Practices

In spring/summer 2017, we collected qualitative data on self-naming practices using a questionnaire<sup>2</sup>, in order to better understand the motives behind choosing a nickname and to tap into username choice in the light of different communities of practice. 71 participants were asked about their self-naming practices and the motivation behind their choice of username, the nature of which informants could disclose as vaguely or specifically as they wished to retain their privacy. Informants could also ask for their actual usernames not to be included in any publications; the examples below are therefore ones that informants gave permission to be used. Most of them were students based in the UK (78.9% female, 74.6% male) with an age between 19 and 23 years.

As part of this study, 121 usernames with explanations of how and why these were chosen were collected in total in an open questionnaire design, which was part of the international nickname project. The students were able to fill in more than one name, if they used different ones on different platforms.

We clustered the usernames together with their motivations of name choice along three continua: a) Authenticity and Anonymity, b) Individualisation and Group Convergence, and c) Phonic and Graphic Aesthetics. The interpretation of self-naming practices on these continua was driven by the insight that users see the decision between personal authenticity or anonymity on the web not as a dichotomous choice between incorporating their full name or a completely opaque username but rather came up with interesting compromises.

<sup>2</sup> UH Ethics protocol no. EDU/SF/UH/02698

The continuum in this model is solely based on the cognitive level of name choice. Users do not decide between two categories, but choose from a range of different variants between two poles. We understand the choices themselves as fluid. At the morphological and syntactic level of the names chosen, these choices manifest in concrete word forms or constructions that may contain more or fewer elements of the sematic domains of the two decision poles (full name, nickname from childhood, nickname from childhood + real age, real first name + appellative addend, etc.). User choices can be very creative, therefore the view that this is a continuum, not a scale with discrete increments.

**Authenticity-Anonymity Continuum:** 59% of usernames appear to be (at least in part) real names. 27% of usernames do not contain any element of their real name (*giraffesocks*) with a typical explanation being “don’t give my full name on a large platform”. The affordances of the platforms for which the username is created seem to lead to different strategies of name choice, since the users face the authenticity/privacy dilemma and context collapse. 14% of usernames can be interpreted to reflect strategies of compromise, because they contain initials, middle names or childhood nicknames that are only transparent to an in-group.

**Individualisation-Group Convergence Continuum:** Most of the participants mentioned some form of identity work in relation to the online community in question (see Seargeant & Tagg 2014). *DARK\_eXtreme* chose this name for a gaming platform “to indicate I was part of a group”. And *PrincessMonoko* wants to show that they are part of a manga fandom and thus attract other fans because “we share similar info and content”. Consequently, in this case the name itself is seen as aiding in creating a group similar to hashtag communities (see *fluid community*, Seargeant & Tagg 2014), that constitute around hashtags because users are attracted by the hashtag (other than e. g. “node communities”, that built around a user, who befriends the others). This name choice can be interpreted as a practice of authentication to an in-group and, therefore, as face-work.

**Phonic-Graphic Aesthetics Continuum:** Another important criterion in choosing a username is the perceived aesthetics of a name with regard to its sound or typeface (cf.

Aldrin 2011). Which structural characteristics of a name are judged to be aesthetically pleasing depends largely on social factors (Nübling 2017), although personal preference may also play a role (see e. g. Silva & Topolinski 2018). Against the background of the discourse on conceptual orality in the written medium of the internet, two poles for the aesthetic design of nicknames seem to emerge: a phonic and a graphic one, which in turn is intertwined with the other continua, particularly the Authenticity-Anonymity continuum.

For example, some users see online communication as conceptually oral (see Dürscheid 2003), which is also evident in their choice of nickname. The user named *silkdrivers*, for example, describes their nickname as “a combination of euphonic sounding words”.

By contrast, others focus on the visual aesthetics of the typeface and use features of this new form of literacy (see Androutsopoulos 2007). The Twitter user named *@m\*\*\*\*l\*\*\*\*xo* attaches the xo-emoticon to her first and middle name and explains: “'xo' looks nice”.

We believe that analysing linguistic strategies on the basis of decision continua which are shaped by the affordances and restrictions of the respective medium and the communicative needs of the users would be extremely fruitful for future studies. Aside from usernames, this can serve as a stepping stone for systematising other aspects of online face-work in relation to the medium or channel. These decision continua represent an important starting point for interpreting the usernames.

### 3.2.3 Self-Naming Practices in Other Language Contexts

As part of the international nickname project, a comparable (as far as context allowed) questionnaire studies were carried out for seven languages in addition to English: German, Swedish, Luxembourgish, Croatian, Japanese, Chinese and (Moroccan) Arabic (see Schlobinski & Siever 2018). The results of these are similar in many aspects, but also show clear differences relevant for the interpretation of self-naming as a sociolinguistic practice. In particular, regarding the inclusion of ‘real’ names in usernames, i. e. decision making along the continuum of authentication and anonymization, clear trends and differences emerge.



Whether (parts of) the users' actual names are included differs greatly depending on the cultural context: Arabic (Tahiri 2018, see chapter 1 in Schlobinski & Siever 2018), Swedish (Siebold 2018, chapter 13), Luxembourgish (Conrad 2018, chapter 9) and Croatian (Mathias & Pavić Pintarić 2018, chapter 8) users' choices are very similar to those of English user, as their usernames contain authentic anthroponyms in 59% of usernames. In the German study, only 40% of usernames contained anthroponyms. In the Japanese study (Oberwinkler 2018, chapter 6) 20% of the usernames contained anthroponyms, of which only 11.7% are (most likely) surnames. And the analysis of the Chinese platform Weibo (Zhu & Zhang 2018, chapter 2) found that only 12.4% of usernames contain anthroponyms, 8% of which appear to be surnames.

How much information (i. e. how many clues as to what the real name of a user is) is given therefore differs greatly across different cultural contexts. For example, Oberwinkler (2018: 166), who analysed the Japanese usernames, discuss a study by Orita and Miuri: "In Japan, it is often avoided to specify your own proper name on the internet. One can speak of a widespread resentment (see Orita & Miuri 2011, Orita 2009)". Positive identity work in Japan is potentially more about anonymization than about authentication and thus favours one end of the Authenticity-Anonymity continuum. Here, as is so often the case, cultural differences are important for the interpretation of the data (Spencer-Oatey 2005). The fact that only very few authentic names are used on the Weibo platform in China has to be interpreted in the context of the political climate as a potential reaction to the policing of digital spaces.

### 3.3 Self-naming Practices Online

As argued above, the analysis of self-naming practices on social media strongly suggests that they are a form of face-work. However, for a better understanding of the complex sociolinguistic practices that accompany face-work, we need to include the restrictions and affordances of the respective platform in the interpretation: the dilemma of authenticity and anonymity (Bedijs, Held & Maaß 2014), the collapse of concrete and shared contexts (boyd & Marwick 2011, Wesch



2008 ) and the users' ability to de-contextualise and re-contextualise. The following section outlines how the Four Principles of Onomastic Identity Construction can be transferred to the study of naming practices in online environments.

### *3.3.1 The Four Principles of Online Naming*

#### *3.3.1.1 Mono-Referentiality*

Names differ from common nouns in that they ideally have only one referent in a particular context, while common nouns can have many referents. In onomastics, mono-referentiality is not necessarily absolute, because two or more people can share the same name.

However, technical restrictions of a particular platform can lead to a need to create a unique, truly mono-referential username. Twitter, for example, has a specific help page addressing, among other things, what to do when a username is already taken; they recommend the use of an underscore, which is one of a number of strategies that users apply – in particular if the username contains the users' real name (components) (see e. g. Hämäläinen 2013). In these cases, numbers or special characters are often found as additions to the anthroponymic components, as is variation of spelling or the combination of the name with other lexis. If this username uniqueness is generated by adding numbers, age or the year of birth is often preferred over consecutive numbering. Nübling et al. (2015) discusses the de-humanising nature of numbering in humans against the background of the common practice of numbering livestock. In livestock as well as in scientific laboratory animals name uniqueness is generated by assigning numbers, because the context demands maximum individualization – similar to the technology of the online platform that enforces name uniqueness. But in contrast to livestock, users choose their numbers freely. There is tentative evidence that the inclusion of numbers does not, for example, influence the “in-out effect” (Silva & Topolinski 2018), but how exactly numbers in usernames are perceived by other users outside marketing and psychological research has to our knowledge not been studied extensively.

### 3.3.1.2 Self-Representation

In older publications the potential to be able to perform a certain partial identity through a screenname is often regarded to be a driving factor (e. g. Bechar-Israeli 1995, Kaziaba 2013) with the username thus being a vehicle of (emotional) self-expression. This aspect may become less relevant in Web 2.0, not least because the boundaries between online and offline are becoming increasingly blurred. In online gaming, however, there are numerous examples of usernames being used for the expression of partial identities (see Bainbridge 2010).

What is important to many users, however, is that they like the online name themselves. They consciously or subconsciously follow an aesthetic principle, which in turn is also a form of self-expression.

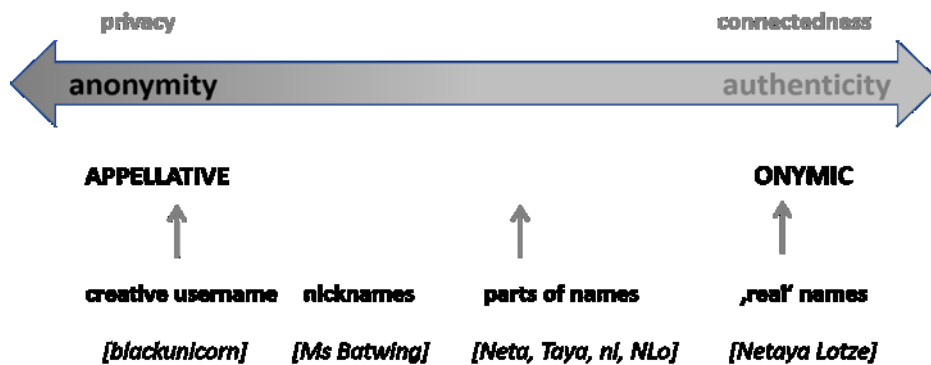
One motivation behind a name choice of users who choose a creative name incorporating e. g. appellatives is thus to follow an aesthetic principle. What is perceived as aesthetic is highly subjective, trends within a given CoP and the cognitive concept of graphic or phonic aesthetics. In order to devise a creative name in written media, test subjects are often influenced by an orality-oriented concept of communication (see Dürscheid 2003). For example, *melancholypeach* explained their choice of name by stating “I like the flow of it”, although the name is likely to be written and read more often than spoken out loud.

### 3.3.1.3 Authentication vs. Anonymisation

The use of real names can be considered as a special kind of authentication practice that emphasizes the offline self (see Jacobson 1996, Lindholm 2013), so that the users thus identify themselves as persons with rights and obligations and in order to express closeness.

The information on strategies employed when choosing usernames provided by the informants of our survey of students based in the UK show that it is a multi-layered and multi-dimensional decision-making process. The informants consistently stated that this strategy is used to make their account easier to find for friends and family. Others expressed the view that a higher degree of transparency (i. e. offering at least the potential of being able to relate it back to a real person in an offline context) when choosing names is a

sign of openness and authenticity. Many users settle on a compromise between others being able to recognise them through a higher degree of ‘onymicity’ and the protection of privacy through the choice of more opaque appellatives.



**Figure 2:** Decision continuum between anonymity and authenticity when choosing usernames.

In cases where users decide to adopt a different gender or ethnicity in an online environment such as *Second Life*, this has been described as a utilization of the “potential for anonymity” and “identity tourism” (Bullingham & Vasconcelos 2013: 103). Anonymity through adopting a pseudonym that bears no relation to the offline self has also been described as a driving force for users who write under difficult political circumstances or on topics generally regarded to be taboo (Aleksiejuk 2016a, 2016b). In a survey by Swennen (2001, cited in Aleksiejuk 2016b: 452) more than half of the participants stated that the driving factor behind choosing a pseudonym, i. e. a non-transparent username, was preservation of anonymity. Similarly, in a study by Hämäläinen (2013) where participants were asked to rate usernames, a majority rated nontransparent, mysterious usernames as ‘good’ usernames.

In many contexts, however, an opaque username that preserves anonymity may be perceived as suspicious (Hagström 2012, Heisler & Crabill 2006) with the absence of authenticating cues being interpreted as suspicious and potentially fraudulent.

### 3.3.1.4 Individualisation vs. Group Convergence

Identity work in online communities is inherently relevant to users’ sociolinguistic practices in online environments (see

e. g. Seargeant & Tagg 2014 on identity and community online) and group effects such as adaptation and differentiation play an important role in this context (see theories on social identity, Tajfel & Turner 1986). Choosing an appropriate username, e. g. on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or online gaming platforms, is a form of self-presentation and a means of authenticating oneself as a member of a CoP. The goals of self-presentation vary according to the group and individual. For example, Kaziaba (2016: 24-25) finds in the ego-shooter *Counterstrike* particularly frequent names related to the game content (*Feuerengel* 'fire angel', *Terminator*) as well as their persiflage from a satirical distance (*Affe mit Waffe* 'monkey with a weapon', *Stirb!* 'Die!'). Evidence for this was provided by our own study on usernames and the stylistics of youth languages and group-related slang (Lotze, Sprengel & Zimmer 2015). For the Gothic forum *nachtwelten.de* we find 'mystical' names with (also partly ironic) references to Gothic subculture (*mindshaper*, *Spooky*, *carpe\_noctem*). Feature clusters can also be found in Stommel's (2007) study of nicknames in forums about eating disorders: users prefer e. g. usernames that connote lightness, small size or childishness. In a similar vein, Lindholm (2013) analysed usernames of two forums, one on parenthood and one on photography and found that many usernames in the parenting forum emphasize motherhood and femininity (with over a third of usernames in the data explicitly relating to the parenting theme), whereas in the photography forum there were also usernames that index masculinity and less than 10% of usernames were explicitly photography related.

The four principles of online naming are not mutually exclusive, but rather go hand in hand, since they essentially describe human identity work on different levels: unity with oneself and a mono-referential name, self-expression of partial identities, authentication as a rational agent, and group behaviour.

We argue that all of the above is face-work and that there appear to be discernible strategies that are perpetuated in certain CoPs or by specific individuals and potentially depend on the technical affordances of the respective platforms which warrant further investigation. Users "actively negotiate the material features, or boxes, buttons, and menus, of

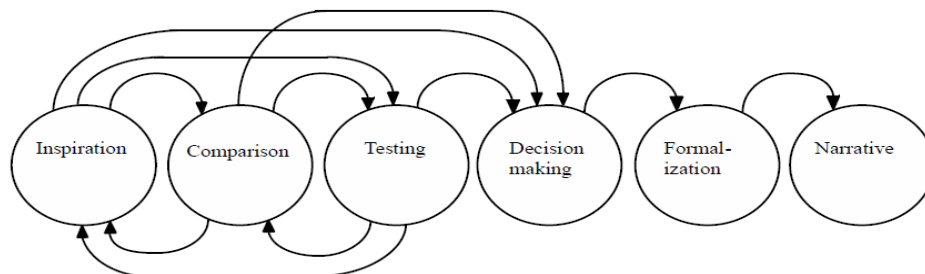
platforms” (Van der Nagel 2017: 326). This means that there has to be media competence to negotiate the complex terrain of social media which is also worthy of further analysis.

#### 4 Conclusion

We understand online self-naming as a complex and dynamic socio-linguistic practice of authentication or anonymisation, which can be understood as face-work in Goffman’s sense.

If screennames are interpreted as the positioning of the individual to the community with respect to a shared semantic inventory, they cannot be denied a communicative character. But how interactive is linguistic identity work online (principle of emergence, see Bucholtz & Hall 2005)? The social face was often interpreted as a subject of negotiation in the context of relationship work (see Locher & Watts 2005). But how are names negotiated in online communities? Androutsopoulos (2006: 525) defines screennames as “acts of self-presentation that are designed and presented to, rather than negotiated with, an audience”. More recently, naming is viewed more like a dynamic than a static concept in onomastics. Evidence comes from studies on name choice in parents (Aldrin 2011) and the transgender community (Schmidt-Jüngst 2018), where names are discussed, tested and altered when transitioning from one gender to another.

When parents name their child, this is usually a dynamic, interactive and highly recursive process in which different possible names are discussed (compare Aldrin 2011).



**Figure 3:** The process of personal naming (Aldrin 2011: 394)

So, to which degree is self-naming online and self-naming in general a negotiated practice? There is evidence for communities in which the name choice is commented on and

discussed by the group, which sometimes leads to a change of name (Bechar-Israeli 1995, Gatson 2011, Lindholm 2013; for gaming: see Bainbridge 2010, Kaziaba 2013, 2018). And in our survey, the vast majority of participants points to some form of name negotiation or change of username in analogy to Aldrin (2011) and Schmidt-Jüngst (2018). This suggests that the principle of emergence after Bucholtz & Hall (2005) applies to online naming, too. However, studies that closely analyse the interactive nature of identity work through usernames are still missing; something that we hope will be remedied soon, not least because Goffman's notions of *face* and *face-work* are ideally suited to illuminate this area of DMI.

## References

- Aldrin, Emilia (2011): Choosing a Name = Choosing Identity? Towards a Theoretical Framework. In: Generalitat de Catalunya (eds.): *Proceedings "Els noms en la vida quotidiana: Actes del XXIV Congrés Internacional d'ICOS sobre Ciències Onomàstiques"*. Biblioteca tècnica de política lingüística onomàstica, 11. Barcelona. 392-401.
- Aleksiejuk, Katarzyna (2016a): Internet Personal Naming Practices and Trends in Scholarly Approaches. In: Puzey, Guy/Kostanski, Laura (eds.): *Names and Naming: People, Places, Perceptions and Power*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 5-17.
- Aleksiejuk, Katarzyna (2016b): Pseudonyms. In: Hough, Carole (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*. Oxford: OUP, 438-452.
- Aleksiejuk, Katarzyna (2017): Names on the Internet: Towards Electronic Socio-onom@stics. Edinburgh. [Dissertation University of Edinburgh, <http://hdl.haaldrinndle.net/1842/23441>].
- Androutsopoulos, Jannis (2003): Medienlinguistik. Beitrag für den Deutschen Fachjournalisten-Verband e. V. Online: <https://jannisandroutsopoulos.files.wordpress.com/2009/09/medienlinguistik.pdf>
- Androutsopoulos, Jannis (2006): Multilingualism, diaspora, and the Internet: Codes and identities on German-based diaspora websites. In: *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 10, 520-547.



- 995 Androutsopoulos, Jannis (2007): Neue Medien – neue  
 996 Schriftlichkeit? In: *Mitteilungen des Deutschen*  
 997 *Germanistenverbandes* 54(1), 72–97.
- 998 Androutsopoulos, Jannis (2012): English 'on top': discourse  
 999 function of English resources in the German landscape. In:  
 1000 *Sociolinguistic Studies*, 6(2), 209–238.
- 1001 Angouri, Jo (2015): Online communities and communities of  
 1002 practice. In: Georgakopoulou, Alexandra/Spilioti, Tereza  
 1003 (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Digital*  
 1004 *Communication*. London: Routledge, 323–338.
- 1005 Autenrieth, Ulla (2011): *Die Bilderwelten der Social Network*  
 1006 *Sites*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- 1007 Bainbridge, William Sims (2010): *The Warcraft Civilization:*  
 1008 *Social Science in a virtual World*. Cambridge, Mass: The  
 1009 MIT Press.
- 1010 Baron, Naomi S. (2008): *Always On: Language in an Online*  
 1011 *and Mobile World*. Oxford: OUP.
- 1012 Bechar-Israeli, Haya (1995): From <Bonehead> to  
 1013 <cLoNehEAd>: Nicknames, play, and Identity on Internet  
 1014 Relay Chat. In: *Journal of Computer-Mediated*  
 1015 *Communication* 1–2. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.1995.tb00325.x)  
 1016 [6101.1995.tb00325.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.1995.tb00325.x).
- 1017 Bedijs, Kristina/Held, Gudrun/Maaß, Christiane (2014):  
 1018 Introduction: Face Work and Social Media. In: Bedijs,  
 1019 Kristina/Held, Gudrun/Maaß, Christiane (Eds.): *Face Work*  
 1020 *and Social Media*. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 9–28.
- 1021 Beißwenger, Michael (2007): *Sprachhandlungskoordination*  
 1022 *in der Chat-Kommunikation*. Berlin/New York: De  
 1023 Gruyter.
- 1024 boyd, danah/Marwick, Alice (2011): *Social privacy in*  
 1025 *networked publics: teens' attitudes, practices and*  
 1026 *strategies*. Presentation at Decade in Internet Time:  
 1027 Symposium on the Dynamics of the Internet and Society,  
 1028 September 2011,  
 1029 [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=19251](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1925128)  
 1030 [28](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1925128)
- 1031 Bucholtz, Mary/Hall, Kira (2005): Identity and interaction: a  
 1032 sociocultural linguistic approach. In: *Discourse Studies*,  
 1033 7(4–5), 585–614.
- 1034 Bullingham, Liam / Vasconcelos, Ana C. (2013): 'The  
 1035 presentation of self in the online world': Goffman and the

- study of online identities. In: *Journal of Information Science* 39(1), 101–112.
- Crystal, David (2001, new edition 2010): *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Del-Teso-Craviotto, Marisol (2008): Gender and sexual identity authentication in language use: the case of chat rooms. In: *Discourse Studies* 10, 251–27.
- Dürscheid, Christa (2016): Nähe, Distanz und neue Medien. In: Feilke, Helmuth/Hennig, Mathilde. *Zur Karriere von ‚Nähe und Distanz‘. Rezeption und Diskussion des Koch-Oesterreicher-Modells*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 357–385.
- Dürscheid, Christa (2007): Private, nicht öffentliche und öffentliche Kommunikation im Internet. In: *Neue Beiträge zur Germanistik* 6(4), 22–41.
- Dürscheid, Christa (2003): Medienkommunikation im Kontinuum von Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit. Theoretische und empirische Probleme. In: *Zeitschrift für Angewandte Linguistik* 38, 37–56.
- Durvasula, Ramani (2016): *We live in the age of #narcissism*. Podcast:  
<https://twitter.com/doctorramani/status/741274446460112910>
- Erikson, Erik H. (1974): *Identität und Lebenszyklus: Drei Aufsätze*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Fröhlich, Uta (2014): Reflections on the psychological terms self and identity in relation to the concept of face for the analysis of online forum communication. In: Bedijs, Kristina/Held, Gudrun/Maaß, Christiane (Eds.): *Face Work and Social Media*. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 105–128.
- Gatson, Sarah N. (2011): Self-Naming Practices on the Internet: Identity, Authenticity, and Community. *Cultural Studies* <->. In: *Critical Methodologies* 11, 224–235.
- Goffman, Erving (1981): *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Goffman, Erving (1967): *Interaction Ritual: Essay on Face-to-Face Behaviour*. New York: Anchor Books: Anchor Books.
- Graham, Sage (2015): Relationality, friendship, and identity in digital communication. In Georgakopoulou, Alexandra/Spilioti, Tereza (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Digital Communication*. London: Routledge, 305–320.

- 1077 Haase, Martin/Huber, Martin/Krumeich, Alexander/Rehm,  
1078 Georg (1997): *Internetkommunikation und Sprachwandel*.  
1079 Available online: <http://georg-re.hm/pdf/Haase-et-al.pdf>,  
1080 [11.02.2019].
- 1081 Hagström, Charlotte (2012): Naming Me, Naming You.  
1082 Personal names, online signatures and cultural meaning. In:  
1083 Helleland, Botolv/Ore, Christian-Emil/Wilkstrøm, Solveig  
1084 (eds.): *Names and Identities, Oslo Studies in Language* 4,  
1085 81–93.
- 1086 Hämäläinen, Lasse (2013): User Names in the online gaming  
1087 forum Playforia. In: Sjöblom, Paula/Ainiala, Terhi / Hakala,  
1088 Ulla (eds.): *Names in the Economy: Cultural aspects*.  
1089 Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 214–228.
- 1090 Hansack, Ernst (2004): Wesen des Namens. In: Brendler,  
1091 Andrea/Brendler, Silvio (eds.). *Namenarten und ihre*  
1092 *Erforschung. Ein Lehrbuch für das Studium der*  
1093 *Onomastik. Lehr und Handbücher zur Onomastik*. Bd. I.  
1094 Hamburg: baar, 51–65.
- 1095 Hegelich, Simon/Shahrezaye, Morteza (2015): The  
1096 Communication Behavior of German MPs on Twitter:  
1097 Preaching to the Converted and Attacking Opponents.  
1098 *European Policy Analysis (EPA)* 1(2). 155–174.
- 1099 Heisler, Jennifer M., & Crabill, Scott L. (2006): Who are  
1100 "stinkybug" and "Packerfan4"? Email Pseudonyms and  
1101 Participants' Perceptions of Demography, Productivity,  
1102 and Personality. In: *Journal of computer-mediated*  
1103 *communication*, 12(1), 114–135.
- 1104 Herring, Susan C., Stein, Dieter & Virtanen, Tuija (Eds.)  
1105 (2013): *Handbook of pragmatics of computer-mediated*  
1106 *communication*. Berlin: Mouton.
- 1107 Herring, Susan C. (1996): *Computer-Mediated*  
1108 *Communication: Linguistic, Social and Cross-Cultural*  
1109 *Perspectives*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- 1110 Hölig, Sasha (2018): Eine meinungsstarke Minderheit als  
1111 Stimmungsbarometer?! Über die  
1112 Persönlichkeitseigenschaften aktiver Twitterer. In: *Medien*  
1113 *& Kommunikationswissenschaft* 66(2), 140–169.
- 1114 Jacobson, David (1996): Contexts and Cues in Cyberspace:  
1115 The Pragmatics of Naming in Text-Based Virtual Realities.  
1116 In: *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 52(4), 461–479.

- 1117 Kant, Immanuel (1999): *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der*  
1118 *Sitten*. Herausgegeben von Kraft, Bernd/Schönecker,  
1119 Dieter. Hamburg: Meiner.
- 1120 Kaziaba, Viktoria (2013): Namensmasken im Internet.  
1121 Anthroponymika in der deutschsprachigen ICQ-  
1122 Kommunikation. In: *Muttersprache*, 4, 327–338.
- 1123 Kaziaba, Viktoria (2016): Nicknamen in der  
1124 Netzkommunikation. In: *Der Deutschunterricht* 68, 1. 24–  
1125 28.
- 1126 Kaziaba, Viktoria (2018): Russisch. Schlobinski, Peter/Siever,  
1127 Torsten (eds.): Nicknamen international: Zur Namenwahl  
1128 in sozialen Medien in 14 Sprachen. Frankfurt am Main:  
1129 Lang, 311-330.
- 1130 Kersten, Saskia/Lotze, Netaya (2018): Englisch. In:  
1131 Schlobinski, Peter/Siever, Torsten (eds.): *Nicknamen*  
1132 *international: Zur Namenwahl in sozialen Medien in 14*  
1133 *Sprachen*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 101–124.
- 1134 Keupp, Heiner/Ahbe, Thomas/Gmür, Wolfgang (2002):  
1135 *Identitätskonstruktionen: Das Patchwork der Identitäten in*  
1136 *der Spätmoderne*. Reinbeck: Rowohlt.
- 1137 Koch, Peter/Oesterreicher, Wulf (1985): Sprache der Nähe -  
1138 Sprache der Distanz. Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit im  
1139 Spannungsfeld von Sprachtheorie und Sprachgeschichte.  
1140 In: Jakob, Daniel/Kablitz, Andreas/Koch, Peter/König,  
1141 Bernhard/Küpper, Joachim/Schmitt, Christian (Eds.):  
1142 *Romanistisches Jahrbuch 36*. Berlin/New York: De  
1143 Gruyter, 15–43
- 1144 Lasswell, Harold. D. (1948): The Structure and Function of  
1145 Communication in Society. In: Bryson, Lyman (Ed.): *The*  
1146 *Communication of Ideas. A Series of Addresses*. New York:  
1147 Harper & Bros., 32–51.
- 1148 Lave, Jean/Wenger, Etienne (1991): *Situated Learning:*  
1149 *Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: CUP.
- 1150 Lawson, Edwin D. (2016): Personal Naming Systems. In  
1151 Hough, Carole (Ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Names and*  
1152 *Naming*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 169-198.
- 1153 Lettmaier, Saskia (2015): Personennamen und Recht in  
1154 Großbritannien aus rechtswissenschaftlicher Sicht. In:  
1155 *Namenskundliche Informationen* 105/106, 147-167.
- 1156 Lindholm, Loukia (2013): The maxims of online nicknames.  
1157 In: Herring, Susan C./Stein, Dieter/Virtanen, Tuija (Eds.):

- 1158 *Pragmatics of Computer-Mediated Communication*. Berlin:  
1159 De Gruyter, 427-461.
- 1160 Locher, Miriam. A/Watts, Richard. J (2005): Politeness theory  
1161 and relational work. In: *Journal of Politeness research* 1(1).  
1162 9–33.
- 1163 Locke, John (1975): An Essay concerning Human  
1164 Understanding Edited with an introduction, critical  
1165 apparatus and glossary by Peter H. Nidditch. Oxford:  
1166 Clarendon Press.
- 1167 Lotze, Netaya/Kersten, Saskia (in press): Nicknamen  
1168 zwischen Anonymität und Wiedererkennungswert. In:  
1169 Calderón, Marietta; Herling, Sandra (Hrsg.). *Namen Digital.*  
1170 *Zeitschrift für Österreichische Namenforschung*.
- 1171 Lotze, Netaya (2016): *Chatbots – Eine linguistische Analyse*.  
1172 Hamburg. Lang.
- 1173 Lotze, Netaya/Sprengel, Sebastian/ Zimmer, Anne (2015):  
1174 Rückgriffe auf ‚dunkle‘ Zeiten? Zur Verwendung  
1175 historischer Ausdrücke in jugendsprachlichen Subkulturen.  
1176 In: *Der Deutschunterricht* 67 (3), 38–47.
- 1177 Mead, George Herbert (1978): Geist, *Identität und*  
1178 *Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- 1179 Nübling, Damaris/Fahlbusch, Fabian/Heuser, Rita (2015):  
1180 *Namen: Eine Einführung in die Onomastik*. Tübingen:  
1181 Narr.
- 1182 Nübling, Damaris (2017): Beziehung überschreibt Geschlecht.  
1183 Zu einem Genderindex von Ruf- und von Kosenamen. In:  
1184 Linke, Angelika/ Schröter, Juliane (Eds.): *Sprache und*  
1185 *Beziehung*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 99-118.
- 1186 Obwerwinkler, Michaela (2018): Japanisch. In: Schlobinski,  
1187 Peter/Siever, Torsten (Eds.): *Nicknamen international: Zur*  
1188 *Namenwahl in sozialen Medien in 14 Sprachen*. Frankfurt  
1189 am Main: Lang, 161-190.
- 1190 Pickering, Martin/Garrod, Simon (2004): Toward a  
1191 mechanistic psychology of dialogue. In: *Behavioral and*  
1192 *Brain Sciences* 27(2), 169–190.
- 1193 Pörksen, Bernhard (2005): *Die Konstruktion von*  
1194 *Feindbildern. Zum Sprachgebrauch in neonazistischen*  
1195 *Medien*. Wiesbaden: VS.
- 1196 Radford, Marie. L./Radford, Gary. P./Connaway, Lynn.  
1197 S./DeAngelis, Jocelyn. A. (2011): On Virtual Face-Work: An  
1198 Ethnography of Communication Approach to a Live Chat



- 1199 Reference Interaction. In: *The Library Quarterly* 81(4),  
1200 431-454.
- 1201 Runkehl, Jens/Schlobinski, Peter/Siever, Torsten (1998):  
1202 *Sprache und Kommunikation im Internet. Überblick und*  
1203 *Analysen*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- 1204 Sachs-Hombach, Klaus (2009): *Bildtheorien.*  
1205 *Anthropologische und kulturelle Grundlagen des*  
1206 *Visualistic Turn*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- 1207 Schlobinski, Peter (2012): Sprache und Kommunikation im  
1208 Digitalen Zeitalter. Rede anlässlich der Verleihung des  
1209 Konrad-Duden-Preises der Stadt Mannheim am 14. März  
1210 2012. Available online: [https://ids-pub.bsz-](https://ids-pub.bsz-bw.de/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/40/file/Schlobinski_Sprache_und_Kommunikation_im_digitalen_Zeitalter_2012.pdf)  
1211 [bw.de/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/40/file/Schlobinski\\_](https://ids-pub.bsz-bw.de/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/40/file/Schlobinski_Sprache_und_Kommunikation_im_digitalen_Zeitalter_2012.pdf)  
1212 [Sprache\\_und\\_Kommunikation\\_im\\_digitalen\\_Zeitalter\\_20](https://ids-pub.bsz-bw.de/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/40/file/Schlobinski_Sprache_und_Kommunikation_im_digitalen_Zeitalter_2012.pdf)  
1213 [12.pdf](https://ids-pub.bsz-bw.de/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/40/file/Schlobinski_Sprache_und_Kommunikation_im_digitalen_Zeitalter_2012.pdf), [11.02.2019].
- 1214 Schlobinski, Peter/Siever, Torsten (2018): *Nicknamen*  
1215 *international: Zur Namenwahl in sozialen Medien in 14*  
1216 *Sprachen*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang.
- 1217 Schmidt-Jüngst, Miriam (2018): Der Rufnamenwechsel als  
1218 performativer Akt der Transgression. In: Nübling, Damaris/  
1219 Hirschauer, Stefan (eds.): *Namen und Geschlechter:*  
1220 *Studien zum onymischen Un/doing Gender*. Berlin: De  
1221 Gruyter, 45-72.
- 1222 Seargeant, Philip/Tagg, Caroline (2014): Introduction: The  
1223 language of social media. In: Seargeant, Seargeant,  
1224 Philip/Tagg (Eds.): *The Language of Social Media. Identity*  
1225 *and Community on the Internet*. London: Palgrave  
1226 Macmillan. 1-20.
- 1227 Siever, Christina. M (2015): Multimodale Kommunikation im  
1228 Social Web. Forschungsansätze und Analysen zu Text-  
1229 Bild-Relationen. Frankfurt am Main: Lang.
- 1230 Siever, Torsten (2006): Sprachökonomie in den 'Neuen  
1231 Medien'. In: Schlobinski, Peter (eds.). *Von »hdl« bis*  
1232 *»cul8r«*. *Sprache und Kommunikation in den neuen*  
1233 *Medien*. Mannheim: Dudenverlag. 71-88.
- 1234 Silva, Rita R./Topolinski, Sascha (2018): My username is IN!  
1235 The influence of inward vs. outward wandering usernames  
1236 on judgments of online seller trustworthiness. In:  
1237 *Psychology & Marketing*, 35, 307-319. DOI:  
1238 10.1002/mar.21088.
- 1239 Sifry, Micah L. (2011): *WikiLeaks and the Age of*  
1240 *Transparency*. New York: ORBooks.



- 1241 Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2005): *Relational Concerns in*  
1242 *Intercultural Workplace Teams: Theoretical Insights from*  
1243 *the Study of Emotions*. Available online:  
1244 [https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/people/spencer-](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/people/spencer-oatey/spencer-oatey_h/interpersonal_relations.pdf)  
1245 [oatey/spencer-oatey\\_h/interpersonal\\_relations.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/people/spencer-oatey/spencer-oatey_h/interpersonal_relations.pdf),  
1246 [28.06.2018].
- 1247 Stommel, Wyke (2007): Mein Nick bin ich! Nicknames in a  
1248 German Forum on Eating Disorders. In: *Journal of*  
1249 *Computer-Mediated Communication* 13, 141–162.
- 1250 Swennen, Geert (2001): *Identiteit in computer-mediated*  
1251 *communications: Een analyse van nicknames*. Licentiate  
1252 dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.
- 1253 Szurawitzki, Michael (2010): Wie lässt sich Sprache in  
1254 sozialen Internet-Netzwerken untersuchen? Grundlegende  
1255 Fragen und ein Vorschlag für ein Analysemodell. In:  
1256 *Muttersprache* 120, 40–46.
- 1257 Tagg, Caroline (2015): *Exploring Digital Communication:*  
1258 *Language in Action*. London: Routledge.
- 1259 Tajfel, Henri/Turner, John C (1986): The social identity  
1260 theory of intergroup behavior. In: Worchel,  
1261 Stephen/Austin, William G. (Eds.): *Psychology of intergroup*  
1262 *relations*. Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall, 7–24.
- 1263 Thomas, Angela (2007): *Youth Online: Identity and Literacy*  
1264 *in the Digital Age*. New York/Frankfurt am Main: Lang.
- 1265 Turkle, Sherry (2012): Wir müssen reden. Laptops,  
1266 Smartphones, Tablets. Die digitale Technik verändert nicht  
1267 nur unsere Kommunikation – sie verändert uns. *Die Zeit*,  
1268 03/05/2012, 11.
- 1269 Twenge, Jean/Campbell, Keith (2009): *The narcissism*  
1270 *epidemic. Living in the Age of Entitlement*. New York:  
1271 Ataria.
- 1272 Van der Nagel, Emily (2017): From usernames to profiles: the  
1273 development of pseudonymity in Internet communication.  
1274 In: *Internet Histories: Digital technology, culture and*  
1275 *society*, 1, 312–331. doi:10.1080/24701475.2017.1389548
- 1276 Varis, Piia (2015): Digital Ethnography. In Georgakopoulou,  
1277 Alexandra/Spilioti, Tereza (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook*  
1278 *of Language and Digital Communication*. London:  
1279 Routledge. 55–68
- 1280 Voigt, Martin (2015a): *Mädchenfreundschaften unter dem*  
1281 *Einfluss von Social Media. Eine soziolinguistische*  
1282 *Untersuchung*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang.

- 1283 Voigt, Martin (2015b): *Mädchen im Netz. Süß, sexy, immer*  
1284 *online*. Berlin: Springer.  
1285 Wesch, Michael (2008): *An anthropological introduction to*  
1286 *YouTube*. [www.youtube.com/user/mwesch](http://www.youtube.com/user/mwesch) and  
1287 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPAO-lZ4\\_hU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPAO-lZ4_hU)