"If you show your real face, you'll lose 10 000 followers" – The Gaze of the Other and Transformations of Shame in Digitalized Relationships

Vera King[1]
Sigmund-Freud-Institute & Goethe-University, Frankfurt/M., Germany

Abstract: *This essay examines the significance and transformation of shame in the context of digitalization, in particular, the psychosocial and psychological consequences of shifts in the boundaries between public and private manifest in the contemporary digital world. Moreover, it will examine the dynamic relationships of shame, humiliation and shamelessness as they develop in digital environments characterized by the dissolution of physical and communicative presence, as well as the, in turn, changing functions, ambivalences and affective pitfalls of self-presentation. On the basis of descriptions and commentaries by contemporary adolescents on the significance of social networks and on their own digital self-presentation, it will identify mechanisms for dealing with the imagined, projected or abnegated gaze of the other in the net.*

Keywords: *digitalization, shame, transformation of shame in digitalized relationships, gaze of the other, digital shame*

The consequences of digitalization for the development of the psyche and the construction of subjectivity are a matter of intense debate. While some emphasize the dangers of digitalization with incisive metaphors like "digital dementia" (Spitzer, 2012), others, such as Altmeyer (2016), make the argument that the contemporary digital age offers the opportunity to "present yourself to

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[1] Contact with author: King@soz.uni-frankfurt.de.

others in order to receive more attention … and affirmation" (14). The Internet, Altmeyer maintains, has turned out to be "a social resonance system" (15).

This essay is less concerned with normative observations than with the analysis of the psychic significance of self-presentation and communication in digital worlds, and the associated transformations of shame in digitalized relationships. The latter refers not to the frequently discussed phenomenon of lowering thresholds of shame, i.e. revealing oneself and sharing the intimate details of one's life publically on the net. Rather, the focus, here, is on the more crucial transformations in configurations of shame brought about by changes in the meaning of the *gaze of the other* in the context of the digitalization of communication and life practices, as well as associated changes to the relations between the self and other.[2] Thus this essay will examine changes in the relation to others, as well as to the self, in a communicative context in which the gaze of the other is directed, concretely and figuratively, towards an image of the self generated through the use of media. The article will further discuss changes in the quality of relationships to physically present – yet communicatively absent – others.[3] For example, children often experience primary caretakers, who share the same physical space, but whose attention is frequently directed towards mobile and digital devices, or third-persons, resulting in greater fragmentation of the parent-child interaction and the relationship, as a whole. Psychoanalytic concepts regarding the construction of subjectivity and the significance of shame in the development of the psyche provide insightful tools for the analysis of the transformations now common to growing up in the wake of digitalization.

The essay will, first, sketch some thoughts on the particular situation on the net, wherein the other is both omnipresent and ephemeral (1), before turning

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[2]   In a broad sense, the self constitutes itself in the mirror and through the resonance of the other. Experiences with the other are fundamental to the development of the psyche, for self-image and identity. As a result, the (type and quality of) interactions of the self and other are at the centre of various social and psychological theories that conceptualize the constitution of subjectivity, psychological, social and mental development (see section 2 of this article). "We are what we are through our relationship to others", maintains G. H. Mead (1934/1973: 430). "What the individual is for himself is not something that he invented. It is what his significant others have come to ...treat him as being", as Goffman (1972: 327) writes, as an extension of Mead. For the understanding of shame, experience of the self with significant others plays an essential role. Compare Seidler's theory of shame (2000; 2014), which references the prominent theory laid out in *self*-psychology (e.g. Broucek, 1991 or Goldberg, 1991), as well as to Sartre's notion of the "Gaze of the Other" in *L´etre et le néant* (1943). The relationships of self and other are central for the constitution of subjectivity and shame (as well as for the transformations in the scope of digital relationships).

[3]   On the relationship between presence and absence in communication, see also Turkle (2011), Baym (2010), Gergen (2002).

in the next section to a discussion of the psychoanalytic (development-theoretical), social-psychological and sociological aspects of shame and the gaze of the other (2). Thereafter, it will look at practical examples of changed constellations in the relation of self and other in the context of digitalization (3). These will illuminate the effects of what media theorists refer to as POPC, the state of being "*permanently online, permanently connected*" (Vorderer et al., 2016) and of subsequent alterations in face-to-face communication on a.) parent-child interaction, and b.) interaction with members of the adolescent peer group. This discussion will be used as the basis for examining the changed form, practice and significance of the phenomenon of "see and be seen," and of self-presentation and being observed in social networks. Particular attention will be paid to the explicit orientation of this behaviour towards success, efficiency and profit, in the broader sense of the "entrepreneurial logic" (Bröckling, 2016) of self-presentation on the net (4): Excerpts from interviews conducted with adolescents, in which young men and women explain their methods of, and motivations for, posting images of themselves on social networks, illustrate the "entrepreneurial" and psychic significance of being-seen and not-being seen or not being-'liked'. The essay concludes with the identification of emerging variants of shame in digitalized relational contexts and shifts in the meaning of shame.

1. The Other in the Vastness of the Net – Omnipresent, Yet Physically Absent and Uncertain

For the majority of adolescents, but not only adolescents, communication takes place largely through digital networks, with others or an other, who is not physically present, yet whose physical absence is tied to a virtual permanence. In a peculiar way, the other is always and never there. There is a permanent connection to physically distant people, whose perpetual medial presence is a virtual precondition of the connection, though it is not necessarily or, in fact, continually guaranteed – like a person lurking in the background, who may or may not be watching. For, at some point, he or she, or the others, will, perhaps, read the message, look at the posted photos, the selfies and posts, or the text messages and emails, or follow the Twitter messages, hashtags and endless stream of communications in the various Whatsapp groups – all the things that happened while you slept or had to 'tune out' for a second to watch for cars as you crossed the street. But, sometimes the other(s) might be looking at the

very moment "I" am writing. "Are you there?" is the typical call, as we enter the vague and uncertain space of the net, appealing to an echo, we might say, the call of the always-present-yet-never-unequivocally-there other of digital communication.

Correspondingly, the significance of the real, physically present other vacillates and declines; behaviour towards physically present others and the gaze of the other transform in a physically immediate and symbolic sense. Face-to-face communication is partially supplemented and partially replaced by net-based or medial communication, whereby, on the whole – that is, through the increase in digital communication – relationships take on different forms. For example, face-to-face communication is often accompanied by parallel medial communication, so that, one might say, the inner, mental representation and relationship of presence and absence, of separateness and relatedness, as well as the various meanings of the gaze of the other, transform in very fundamental ways. So, too, does the significance of seeing and being seen, of self-presentation and being observed in social networks. There, the gaze of the other takes on a different quality, generating new constellations of shame. In this regard, selected psychoanalytic, social-psychological and sociological aspects of shame will be outlined below.

2. Shame and the Gaze of the Other – Psychoanalytic, Social-Psychological and Sociological Approaches

The self is constructed through the gaze of the other. Shame derives from the awareness of this relation. Sartre describes this experience pointedly in *Being and Nothingness* (1943), where he writes, "[S]hame is a unitary apprehension with three dimensions: "*I* am ashamed of *myself* before the *Other*" (289). G. H. Seidler (2000) extends Sartre's constellation of shame in his book on the analysis and psychoanalysis of shame, entitled *In Others' Eyes. An Analysis of Shame.* In his conception of shame and *alterity,* Seidler distinguishes between three structural levels of shame: Whether someone a.) "is able to be genuinely self-reflective", or b.) if self-reflection "requires the real presence of an external observer", or c.) is "shamelessly 'naïve' vis-à-vis" the gaze of the other (Seidler, 2014: 827). The capacity for shame also reflects the level of structural development of the psyche. While shame may be a response to the experience of objectification, or take on a distressing or even pathological character, in this

perspective it is not merely a negative phenomenon, nor merely a potent and meaningful intrapsychic affect impacting our sense of self-worth. It also serves to protect us from and bind us to the other (Scheff, 2010).

Shame, in other words, performs two operations simultaneously. Like the two sides of a coin, it is both a model of psychological development and the construction of subjectivity. For in the gaze of the other, the I recognizes itself, its value, and becomes aware of its self. This fundamental constellation of self-evolution in the mirror and through the resonance of the other (Winnicott, 1965) can be formulated in various theoretical positions emphasizing different aspects of the process – object relations theory, or the findings of infant research, as well as attachment and mentalization theory, intersubjective and recognition theory. According to Kohut (1971), the self delineates itself, in the best case, within the shine of the mother's eyes (141). The gaze of the other, then, is a mirror of the self, but more than simply a reflection, as new meaning is continually produced in the interaction and mutual relation. Shame is a developmental-psychological aspect of this process. It points to the dialectic of successfully proving oneself and the potential for failure in the gaze of the significant other. At the same time, it reveals the self's dependence on the related and affirming other and on the constructive relational experiences out of which the developing childhood self emerges and the adult self draws its psychic energy.

The possibility of shame, the potential to feel ashamed, then, is a constitutive and indispensable part of this constellation of dependency from which we cannot escape. For without the gaze of the other, the child's world remains empty and their psychological development is impeded. This is how the Subject affirms itself in the eye and gaze of the other, the one who "sees and recognizes", who gives affection and affirmation. For the self, this gaze of the other bears important emotional consequences. Love and appreciation produce a balanced satisfaction with oneself and pride, while indifference and rejection produce insecurity and a fearful, unstable sense of self, resulting, in some cases, in the compensatory attempt to make oneself independent through increased self-centredness or exaggerated feelings of grandiosity. Like pride, shame is an affect closely connected to narcissism, to the sense of self and self-esteem at a basal level (Hilgers, 2012).[4]

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[4]   Development theoretical and psychoanalytic approaches often understand shame as an indication of a discrepancy between the I and the Ideal-I, and guilt as a discrepancy between the I and the Super-ego (Piers & Singer, 1953). Following Steiner (1985), shame becomes meaningful in relation to the observing object, guilt in relation to the desired object.

Sociological approaches point out that the experience of shame is related to social conditions: When, why and how shame is experienced or triggered is dependent upon a number of different cultural and historical circumstances (Neckel, 1991), as well as on the social and psychological constellations of self and others. As M. Lewis (1992) maintains, guilt is characteristic of a competitive, individualistic, capitalist society, while shame takes on a particular, even regulatory function in precapitalist, ethnic and traditional societies. Losing one's credibility or honour, or falling into disgrace can mean social death.[5] More recent scholarship, however, argues that shame has become more significant in late Modernity, as a result of the pressure on the individual to perform, optimize and continually push boundaries. Consequently, we see an ever greater discrepancy between the I and the Ideal-I, which, as A. Ehrenberg (2009) suggests, can increase the tendency toward depression.[6]

As this essay contends, the idea and meaning of (the gaze of) the other changes in *the wake of digitalization*, lending a different quality to the phenomenon of shame. Furthermore, it will provide a selection of descriptions of the various constellations of shame, humiliation and shamelessness, as they emerge through forms of digital communication characterized by the dissolution of physical and communicative presence. On the one hand, there is the *digitally-absorbed gaze* of the *physically present other* and, in consequence, the thinned out and fragile communication and attention to physically co-present persons; on the other, there is the *greater significance* of the gaze of the physically absent other onto the medially-constructed image of the self.

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[5] Norbert Elias' theses (2000) on the civilization process have been most commonly understood that in this process the thresholds of shame increase and shame is increasingly internalized. As Wouters (1999) determined, for example, a contrary tendency developed, by the end of the 19th century at the latest, in which the public demonstration and presentation of things once painstakingly concealed (especially those of a sexual nature) were no longer taboo. There is an evident shift in the boundaries of shame. It almost goes without saying that this shift has experienced greater expansion through the *World Wide Web*. This essay is not concerned, however, with questions of sexuality and taboo in the public space of the net.

[6] An overview of psychoanalytic theories of shame is available in Seidler (2000, 2014), Hilgers (2012); on the history and discussion of a sociology of shame, see Scheff (2010), who defines shame as "the premier social emotion" (84), as well as Neckel (1991) and Greiner (2015).

3. The Digitally Absorbed Gaze of the Physically Present Other

3.1. The Gaze of Father and Mother at the Smartphone

In a society shaped by digitalization, communication with physically absent people has grown increasingly significant, so that, meanwhile, physical presence is no guarantee of communicative attention. The spaces of secure, undisturbed face-to-face exchange have become more seldom and fragile. Such spaces can only be created with a concerted effort to keep our permanent availability from interrupting the conversation, distracting our attention from one another. In the German state of Hessen, billboards remind parents to talk to their children rather than "chat" with others while with their kids.[7]

Digitalization creates the expectation and the illusion of omnipresence in digital communication. Yet, our permanent availability in the private sphere leads to the fragmentation of our face-to-face, immediately connected interaction and, in turn, the tendency toward shifts in significance, which are unintentional and often go unnoticed. Guilt and shame can be the consequences, for example, when, despite self-expectations and good intentions, we still do not manage to sustain our attention towards our children and avoid digital "distraction":

> "Sunday morning, any given amateur football field in Germany. Football with fathers and their children. Your own son has been looking forward to this all week. So have you. Then, you stand on the field and somehow play football, but you are an empty shell, not really there, because your thoughts are somewhere else. You are thinking of the email you got from your supervisor at work just before the game started… Then you go back home and ask yourself why, once again, at least this time, you weren't completely into the game. Why you weren't able to relax. And then you see the Smartphone lying there, its red light blinking incessantly, and reach for it. You read and begin to type. You don't hear your son ask if you saw the goal he made. Every mail, every quick SMS is a little betrayal: another minute sacrificed for work, even though you had promised *this* weekend to really spend time with your family…" (Borst & Wefing, 2014: 2)

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[7]   The motto and central message of the billboard campaign in Frankfurt a. M. 2015, showing images of mothers and fathers looking at their smartphones or talking on their cellphone while with their children, read: "Talk to your child *instead*"; cf. also Turkle (2011).

The father describes his regret for betraying his son but cannot change the situation: A moment later, he is already digitally distracted once again. F. Opitz (2012) describes a similar situation in his film *Speed* and his book by the same name. Opitz interviewed a journalist after the latter had prescribed himself a period of "rehab" from the Internet and his Blackberry, because his behaviour with these technologies "had become creepy" and he was ashamed of it: "If my phone vibrated and I was with other people … and it was embarrassing to look at it …, I would go the bathroom quickly to look at the message" (Optiz, 2012: 64). Similar situations occurred more and more frequently within the family: *When I came home at night, the first thing I did was turn on the computer."* Or, *"the Blackberry – a devil's tool* (63). *My kids were furious at the thing. Rightfully so … 'cause I was always looking* at the screen while talking to them, at the same time, *real quick, just to check my emails* (74).

While feelings of shame predominate in these examples, in some cases, the blurring of lines between work and private life is not experienced as burdensome or as a shameful communicative shortcoming vis-à-vis one's children. On the contrary, the feeling of being or needing to be permanently available is accompanied by a sense of importance, of being irreplaceable, by the desire for self-superiority that admits no feelings of shame:

> Florian K.,[8] for example, an enthusiastic self-optimizer, explains how he keeps a log, so he knows …*down to the minute precisely how much of his day is free-time and how much is work time … though, at the end of the day, it's not that accurate, because … well, when I am … at home sitting in my son's room playing with him and my cellphone is within reach and it somehow buzzes … and I pick it up to glance at it … or I … write a quick message … it is actually difficult to distinguish what is work and what is explicitly leisure time.*

Florian K. describes a scene in which he reads and replies to mails and SMSs while playing with his child, something not unique to him. What concerns him in the narrative, however, is not the idea that repeatedly interrupting play with his son might be a problem but rather his not knowing how to categorize the time he spends in his son's room. His interest is limited to his own self-observation and the perfection of his digital diary entries on how he spends

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[8] The case samples of Florian K. and Andrea W. derive from the APAS project by King, Gerisch, Rosa. For more details on the project, see: King (2013), King et al. (2014), Schreiber et al. (2015).

his time. His son's needs are secondary. A similar constellation can be seen in Andrea W.'s narrative:

> *I think that was when Rafi was – older, well, relatively speaking older, I mean, he wasn't, wasn't a baby anymore, but a bit older, a toddler – and then, suddenly, uh, started a little bit to, uh, uh, to demand things: I want to play Duplo with you. I would be like: oh, ok, here is someone who wants you to have time for him right now – and who is not a baby anymore that you can lay down somewhere and (takes a deep breath) say (in a high voice) 'looky here, look at this awesome toy, now lay here under it, see the little bell, super!' (in a normal voice). Now, uh, there is someone who says, 'I want to play Duplo with you now and you just picked me up from daycare and now do something with me – I want to go to the playground with you, uh, Mama, put your cellphone down' … Well, I think I really needed someone, 'cause I actually really like what I do? Eh – someone who really calls it like it is and says, 'Hey, now, take a bit of time off and relax and stop thinking about your job the whole time'.*

Here, too, the needs of the child are secondary. The mother's reflections on the episode are focused on herself. Comparing the four narratives, each depicts parents, fathers or mothers, working in the presence of their children and keeping a steady eye on the more or less irresistible cellphone. The fathers in the first narratives (still) experience shame and guilt for their lack or lapses of attention, escaping to the bathroom with their smartphones. Florian K., however, is most preoccupied with how to categorize the time he spends in his son's room – work or leisure? Andrea does not say, "my child needs me" but "*I* needed someone to say to me, 'Stop working for once' – 'Put your cellphone down'".

Each of these narratives makes clear in its own way how the gaze of parental others for their children can be absorbed elsewhere. Children compete for attention with the (smartphone or computer) screen towards which their parents focus their attention with great interest – and, often, they come up short. In the face of the increasingly common, even normalized practice of withdrawing from immediate communication with those physically present to devote attention to digital activities, the lack of shame visible in the narratives of Florian and Andrea might be understood as an expression of an emerging cultural transformation of values: When the majority behaves similarly it becomes ever more natural – despite the costs and disadvantages – to turn away without shame from others, even a child in need of communication. In this

sense, what can be seen here is a historically new variety of shamelessness. For the development of the psyche, the result may be a deficiency of affection and affirmation that, in turn, affects the child's development of the capacity for shame. As explained in the opening segments of this essay, to an extent, taking up Seidler, to fully develop this capacity, the child must have adequate experience of being seen and affirmed by the significant other, that is, their primary caretaker.

3.2. Multiplied and Fragmented Communication among Adolescents

The boundarylessness of medial consumption affects not only parental practice but that of adolescents themselves as well (Kammerl et al., 2012; King, 2014). The JIM study, focusing on the use of media by children and adolescents in Germany, emphasized as early as 2013 that "a marked transformation … in the length of use-time had taken place" (JIM-Study 2013: 28). The findings were summarized in 2015 as follows, "At 97%, nearly all adolescents use the Internet. Among these, 80% of 12 to 19 year olds are online daily (...) While 12 to 13 year olds spend an average of 156 minutes online, this value increases to 260 minutes by the ages of 18 to 19 years" (JIM-Study 2015: 56). Given these numbers, it is reasonable "to assume that, in addition to the increasing duration of use of the various options in the net (…) the permanent, very much desired, availability allows for the (subjectively experienced) increase in use-time" (JIM-Study 2013: 7). Correspondingly, there are changes in the forms of adolescent communication – even among peers there are similar constellations of disrupted attentiveness or communicative withdrawal as a result of digital practices. As can be seen in an interview with a young man in Grosser's study (2014), when he is out with friends or a friend, "*and then he's on the cellphone the whole time, [it's] really annoying, because he only listens with one ear and just messes around with his phone*" (4). A 22 year old describes a typical scene, when "she is out in the evening with friends, e.g. at a bar, then they all sit down and '*the first thing that happens, they all put their cellphones on the table*' and it has become normal that '*someone writes real quick, although we are all sitting there together*'" (4). "When she is with someone alone '*and he spends the entire time on the phone, I could scream, because that's just something I can't stand*'. She thinks to herself, '*You don't even have to be here talking to me*' and she speaks about it directly. She does it herself, she admits self-reflectively. Yet she finds it '*not very*

pretty or entirely polite'" (5). Michael "uses his smartphone during conversations with others, too … '*but you try to avoid it, but it just happens again and again. It's really already a part of you*" (7).

These descriptions, too, suggest that, though contrasting norms are brought into play, the physical, analog presence, i.e. the gaze of the other in its physical immediacy, is becoming less significant. Physical, "real presence" grows ever more similar to a kind of ornament or background in relation to what is really important, like the temporary and inconsequential presence or insignificant gaze of passengers in the train, who are co-present for a certain period of time, but who remain insignificant and the majority of the time ultimately disappear without trace. This logic of *being absent in the presence of others* penetrates ever deeper into our intimate relationships that require sensual attentive presence. In other words, as ever, adolescents meet up with their peers and spend a good deal of time with other "physically present" adolescents. This does not mean, however, that they engage in actual face-to-face communication. For even when together in the same physical space, their gaze and attention are repeatedly turned to the digital, i.e. messages, information, communication partners or sources of entertainment, which affect the quality of communication, relationships and forms and relevancy of exchange with present and absent others.

It can also be assumed that *the more the shine in the eye of the other is sought in digital social networks* – especially for those who experience the eye of the mother or father (or other significant other) shining brighter when she or he looks at the smartphone than at his or her child's face, or those who must compete with the smartphone or screen of another device for their mother or father's attention – the more likely it is that the search for this "shine" in the mother's eye will be displaced onto the number of *Likes,* the affirmations and attention received in the social network. Granted, one possible response to the childhood experience of competing with the Smartphone for the mother's attention might be to reject the smartphone. However, in a social environment in which digital communication plays such a significant role, this response grows increasingly improbable. The more likely outcome – precisely in the case of insufficient attention from the primary caretakers – is greater conformity and the desire or hope to at least gain control over the gaze of the digital other.

The process of proving oneself in relationships in the classical sense – through an always risky exposure of the self, in which failure is also a possi-

ble outcome – in a form of communication in which individuals experience themselves in speech and response, in direct exchange with one another (i.e. dialogue, gestures and actions) not only loses significance but even appears subjectively obsolete in the end. The experience of the self in the gaze of the other is, thus, one might say, from the start, fragile, erratic, wavering and flickering, like the screen itself. The greater the dependence on the diffuse recognition of the digital *generalized other*, who replaces intimate experience, the more pressing the shame resulting from disregard, from feelings of falling short: Pressing and yet directionless, for ultimately it is only ever about the next round of seeking attention and affection or acclamation, from whomever it may be.

4. The Self in Digital Worlds – Entrepreneurial

Like – Test
… you get notified on your phone or through Facebook – Because of – eh – messages – um – you know how many Likes you get – a message for a Like or a Comment – eh – and, of course, you follow that … so … 'cause you just always go to Messages and, well … of course you look at the photo to see how many Likes it has (Tom, 16).

Bröckling (2016) describes the categorical imperative of our times as a maxim with the invocation "Be entrepreneurial!" Every single person is called upon equally to think in the logic of the "entrepreneurial self" (ibid.), to focus on lifelong profit, customer satisfaction and success, and to act flexibly and be prepared to take risks. This way of life is the result of permanent competition and continually demands further and enhanced, ultimately never-ending efforts at optimization. In this context, optimization generally means the continual orientation towards improvement and extending or crossing boundaries, the creation of relationships (with others and with oneself) within the logic of investment and anticipated returns, and keeping our options open (in case returns might be higher elsewhere) (King et al., 2014). Yet no amount of effort is able to quell the fear of failure: "Because one can assert one's position only for the moment and only in relation to one's competitors, no one can simply rest on their achievements. Today's recipe for success is tomorrow's path to ruin" (Bröckling, 2015: 10).

Self-presentation, then, must always be focused on drawing maximal attention to oneself and showing oneself in the best possible light, and this is all the more true, we might add, in digital contexts: 'Successful' digital self-presentation must be permanently controlled and renewed. In a teaching research project within the scope of a seminar at the University of Hamburg, interviews with adolescents were conducted about what it means to them to post images of themselves on social networks. The results of these explorations underscore the degree to which precisely this logic of optimization and the figure of the entrepreneurial self were implemented in the youths' digital self-presentation practices.

The adolescents maintain, organize and balance their self-presentations with painstaking attention to detail, like an entrepreneur monitoring his profits daily. They look precisely at which images are received by viewers and how, through using particular hashtags and technical possibilities and finesse, they can manage to artificially raise the number of Likes (if you like me, I'll like you) and new 'products', i.e. images of themselves are tested and evaluated constantly. There was also a continual process of optimization in their self-presentation, designed to sustain an audience, i.e. the attention and gaze of others, to increase their numbers and win their loyalty.

Interviewer: What do you think would happen if you were to suddenly stop posting photos?
Bianca: Well, if I suddenly don't post, eh, any more photos at all, the first thing that would happen is I would lose all of my followers (laughs)
I: Oh no (laughs)
B: No – that's bad – I'd lose all of my followers right off the bat.
…
I: And having followers is extremely important, right, that you have lots of them?
B: Yes
I: Why?
B: I don't know, I mean, I don't really know. …most followers aren't even people I know. They aren't even friends of mine. Yeah, I like, actually I only think the followers are important so, well, so they just see what kind of photos I have and so and I don't know.

I: But you would probably be sad if, let's say, half of your followers would cancel their subscription suddenly, right?
B: I would be really sad! …yeah, that would be really stupid, eh, all that hard work. I say hard work, but –
I: Yeah
B: - It's really hard work to get that many followers.

These responses illustrate the extent to which the efforts of the "entrepreneurial self" to optimize must be permanently sustained in a very concrete and practical sense. While this entrepreneurial logic is by no means limited to the digital sphere, it is strikingly clear how much this work in the digital network epitomizes the entrepreneurial *ductus*, the imperative of constant improvement and performance – and how, precisely by this means, adolescents are trained and socialized, almost to perfection, in the relevant forms of entrepreneurial behaviour.

At the same time – the focus is on adolescents, here – their fragility is palpable, the neediness, even the self-doubt, which can hardly be hidden in this presentation market place, for example, with the question, "What would happen if the other saw the real me?"

Some of the interviewed teens state that they regulate their feelings of self-worth through posting images of themselves: When I'm not doing well, I post a nice photo on Facebook and if it gets a good response and lots of people like it, it makes me feel better – of course, the opposite is also true if something goes wrong. Here are some excerpts from the interviews with the young men and women:

Anna responds to the interviewer's question, "What do you think most people, in general, or when you think of friends, want to achieve by posting images in social networks?"

Anna (18): Well, that other people have some kind of idea who they are. And somehow you make an impression on them or something. And I think lots of people…when they post a photo, most likely want to show how good they look – I mean, no one actually posts a photo they look terrible in. I think that would be cool, but no one does that. I think they more want to achieve, that they want to create an image of themselves, what the others then think …

Jule (18): Lots of people pretend to be something maybe to feel better about themselves or edit [the photos] a lot. I mean, I know a few people who really do a lot of that …

Tom (16): Every day a new photo – just to get those Likes…

At the same time, there is shame about the dependence of self-worth on these practices, wherein – in the majority of cases – it is clear we are dealing with the creation of appearances, a construction.

Tony: And that's just somehow, in some way, totally stupid and I think, too, that there is too much of that… I mean…I just don't think it's good that…well, on Facebook everything is just so extremely faked and extremely … embellished, and that… I just don't like it.

Insecurity creates a new need, or rather neediness continually reproduces itself. The unambiguous experience of successfully proving oneself before the other, before the gaze of the other, is lost in the digital vagueness, virtuality and uncertainty of the relationship between self and other. The functions of failure and success lose their foundation, as it were. Failure is not failure; it was only the wrong image of my self, perhaps. Confirmation is not confirmation; it is not recognition, since it was only an image and not my real face, as we see in the thoughts of the young woman whose words form the title of this essay, "If you show your real face, you'll lose 10 000 followers".

5. Conclusions – Shame in Digitalized Relationships

This essay has examined the psychosocial and psychic ramifications of new digital boundaries and constellations of shame, humiliation and shamelessness, as they develop out of the disjunction of physical, communicative presence in the wake of digitalized forms of communication. In particular, it has examined the associated changes in functions and affective pitfalls of self-presentation. Selected descriptions and statements from adolescents of the meaning of social networks and their digital self-presentation illustrated mechanisms that are operative in their practices with the gaze of the other on the net. Psychoanalytic concepts regarding the construction of subjectivity and the significance of shame in the development of the psyche pointed to changes in developmental processes in digitalized worlds.

In summary, the following conclusions can be drawn: Transformed constellations intensify shame and fear of humiliation through social exclusion and inadequacy (in the sense of loss of status or marginalization). Changed forms of communication and the associated forms of relationships can increase the pressure to conform and intensify the fear of marginalization. Those who do not succeed at drawing the attention of others are always the ones who are ashamed – at the same time, the competition for attention in the digital world necessarily grows ever greater.

The analysis further identified the dynamic of an often proclaimed, but actually rather minimized, shame with regard to the virtual negation of the significance of the physically present other, the gaze of the other, in the immediacy of shared physical space (as the basis of self-reassurance). Put another way, it is growing ever more acceptable, as it were, to 'shamelessly' turn away or withdraw from communication with – or to never even turn towards – the physically present other.

Though often indirectly thematized by pointing to behavior of others, new variants of shame for one's own dependence on attention from the digital, physically absent other emerge, reflecting the urgent and simultaneously disappointed hope to establish connections on the net in order to find confirmation and feel a sense of belonging there.

Lastly, the essay turned its focus to the phenomenon of shame for the inadequacies of the virtual self – a variant of shame arising in awareness of the fact that neither the gaze of the other nor the digitally presented self has withstood a direct process of proving themselves. The gaze of the other in digital communication is fleeting and wavering, while the self present on the net is a constructed, in the best case, playful version of the self, but often enough a very seriously considered construct with an eye to the significance of one's own position and status in social groups, instrumentalized to regulate one's feelings of self-worth. As such, it bears great potential for humiliation should the number of Likes be too low, lower than for other people.

In keeping with Seidler's differentiation among various structural levels of shame, this would concern a psychic constellation in which the self remains concretistically dependent on affection and affirmation in order to avoid feeling ashamed. Because these 'concrete' attentions are, at the same time, volatile, the fear of shame remains and continually grows.

Loss of status and shame related to exclusion, thus, takes on greater significance the more the gaze of the digital other assumes responsibility for functions or has this responsibility projected onto it (recognition, affirmation, the desire for a sense of belonging) – functions no longer fulfilled by the digitally-absorbed though physically present other, in particular, the primary care provider in the process of growing up.

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