Youth and New Media – Framing the Conditions of a Milieu-Sensitive Computer-Supported Youth Work

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1. Introduction

Phrases like *Generation @* or *Net-Kids* suggest that youth has been engaging with ICT (information and communication technologies) on a broad basis and that differences in the utilization of these technologies are above all a generational problem. This is all but true. Several statistics provide evidence that, for instance, youth with low formal educational background or kids from low-income households, whereby both aspects often coincide, are less likely to be accounted as regular users of computers and the Internet than their higher educated peers. This gap in absolute terms has been commonly referred to as a 'digital divide'.[1]

Actually, a divide cannot be digital, increasingly divided are, for example, residential areas. By the end of the 1980s, Manuel Castells already made the ongoing dualization of US-American cities the subject of discussion and pointed out the increasingly serious disparities between 'poor' inner-city ghettos and 'rich' suburbs (Castells 1989). Today, European cities are confronted with similar problems. In Germany, growing disintegrative tendencies in urban development have been observed especially over the last decade and go along with intensifying spatial segregation of socially-disadvantaged groups. A persistent situation of discrimination has been emerging, which hits single-parents, families with many children, and families with migration backgrounds the most (Dangschat 2000, Häußermann 2001, Jaeckel 2001). Youth centers can be a vital resource for adolescents living in such communities, especially if there are no other opportunities to spend leisure time in a safe and supervised environment. Since most offers and services in youth centers are free of charge or require only a nominal fee, economic barriers to participation are low. The majority of youth center visitors usually come from the surrounding neighborhood and thus belong to a similar social-spatial milieu (Bohnsack 1989: 238-67).

Working with different media has a considerable tradition in youth work. Soon after the PC hit the domestic realm of consumption, youth centers started to introduce themselves to the new media. Recently, institutions of youth work have been receiving increasing support for integrating ICT into their program portfolio and Internet cafés now often replace photo-labs and video studios that perhaps were already put into moth balls. These endeavors are driven by the basic assumption, that computers and the Internet are a valuable complement to the pedagogical actions aimed at reaching the declared goals of youth work. These goals can be briefly paraphrased by the principles of integration, participation, and prevention.

The utilization of digital media is not an end in itself. Learning to use a word processor just for the sake of knowing about its functionality is neither tempting nor exiting. Revealing how a spreadsheet may be used to put together a list of cheap used cars found online can be more

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[1] The term 'digital divide' was introduced to the communications policy discourse in the mid-1990s. The probably first publication, which sparked the rising popularity of the term, was the second '*Falling Through the Net Report*' conducted by the National Telecommunications Infrastructure Agency for the Department of Commerce and published in 1998 (U.S. Department of Commerce 1998). See also Kubicek/Welling (2000) for a detailed discussion of this phenomenon.

attractive and interesting for a young girl who looks for a car. Since attendance is voluntary, *all* youth center activities must build on the interests and wants articulated more or less clearly by the adolescents coming to the centers. I talk about computer-supported youth work, where pedagogies use hard- and software applications to implement the goals of their work. Research on the framework, outcomes and conditions of computer-supported youth work is rare, at least in the German context. Existing studies are mainly based on small rather anecdotal evidence-based case study research. Only a limited number of reports are more comprehensive also they often do not focus explicitly on youth centers (see for example Horst Niesyto (2000) and Ulrike Behrens et al (2001).

The research on the development of media practices should emphasize the interests and wants of adolescents, their basic orientations, attitudes and dispositions, which are expressed through habitualized action. These components are at the core of the framework of orientation and the respective behavior that emerge from there and contribute to the creation and development of different milieus. This is what a milieu-sensitive youth-work aimed at creating positive milieus is about (Böhnisch 1998). Milieus are destabilized through milieu-specific processes of disintegration. Respective crisis of orientation and meaningfulness in the adolescence occur aggravated especially where integration into common ground and self-evidence does not exist. In this case a habitualized correspondence of milieu-specific everyday life practice is limited and biographical discontinuities emerge (Bohnsack/Nohl 1998: 266). This is especially true for adolescents of low formal educational attainment and migration background. They contribute to a major share of youth center visitors. Thus they are a main target group of computer-supported youth work. The action of youth is orientated by practical or incorporated knowledge (Bohnsack 2002: 4). Since this knowledge is implicit or tacit (Polanyi 1985) it needs to be 'revealed' to become part of the research process. The interpretation of group discussions by using the documentary method is aimed towards this task (Bohnsack 2000; Bohnsack et al 2001a).[2]

In the next chapter I will discuss the relevance of the peer-group for the socialization of youth in relation to family and the household. The development of biographical efforts is an activity with strong relevance for successful socialization that is supported, among others, by learning processes. Learning is also of central relevance for the development of media practices. I will cover this issue in the triangle of media competence, literacy, and cultural capital. What follows is a short overview about basic theoretical assumptions of the documentary method which are of relevance for my work. First results of the empirical part of this work gets introduced in chapter five. In the last chapter I draw a conclusion on the basis of the results of my empirical work and their implications for framing the conditions for a milieu-sensitive computer-supported youth work.

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[2] The reconstruction of the everyday life practice and the experience knowledge that constitutes this practice also provides the foundation for the creation of theory and typologies (Bohnsack 2000: 10).

2. The Meaning of Household and Family and its Challenge by Peer-group

Statistical surveys indicate, that Internet utilization is, above all, a practice performed at home.[3] Traditionally, home equals family and many people in Germany still live together in a two generational family (parents and children).[4] The activities of the household, of which the utilization of digital media is one, are fundamentally aimed at securing the social reproduction of the household.[5] According to Roger Silverstone et al, the success of this reproduction process especially depends on whether the household is able to create and protect its autonomy and identity as an economic, social and cultural unit (Silverstone et al 1992: 19).[6] From this point of view the domestification of new technologies like the Internet can be seen as a rather conservative process for many households. Its members try to integrate the technology in the patterns of their everyday life in a way that allows them to maintain the structure of their life outline as well as the control over these structures (Silverstone/Haddon 1996: 60).

Youth with migration background may find this situation even more challenging than their German native peers, since they are confronted with a migration-specific discrepancy of spheres and related contrariness of different modi of sociality. At the one hand, there is the modus of the *inner sphere* (family and relatives), on the other, the one of the *outer sphere* (public institutions and discourses) (Bohnsack/Nohl 2001a: 90). The *inner sphere* is characterized by the expectations of normality formulated by the parents and their migration generation. The *outer sphere* is shaped by societal expectations of normality and relations which are embedded both in institutionalized patterns of (vocational) biography and ethnic discrimination (Nohl 2001b: 249f). On the basis of comparative analysis of different groups of adolescents mainly of Turkish decent, Arnd Michael Nohl and Ralf Bohnsack identify three main patterns for processing habitual correspondence (Bohnsack, Nohl 2001; Nohl 2001b):

1. Within the typology of the *primordiality of the inner sphere* exists a clear habitualized separation between the spheres of action. Generally, parent expectations about normality take priority over those formulated in the outer sphere. Activities that may threaten the

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[3] About two-third of the participants of the *Flash Eurobarometer 125* who used the Internet, explained that they do this, among others, at home (EOS Gallup Europe 2002: table 5). More than 80 percent of the participants of a German survey conducted in summer 2002 declared that they can use the Internet at home (SevenOne Interactive 2002: 9). About 60 percent of the 14- to 19years old declared in summer of the last year that they use the Internet only at home (Eimeren 2003: 68).

[4] In 1998, 56 percent of the German population did so. More than three-fourth (78%) of the family households consisted of married couples with their children, one-fifth (18%) were single parents and four percent accounted for un-married couples with children (Bundesregierung 2001: 97).

[5] ICTs are prominently involved in the process of social reproduction, not only as commodities and *displayed* objects, but also as mediators of social knowledge and cultural pleasures which facilitate consumption activities and support consume itself (Silverstone et al 1992: 19).

[6] Uli Bielefeld, Reinhard Kneissel and Thomas Münster use a similar but not as differentiated argument when they highlight that the analysis of families with migration background must differentiate between the preservation of the material existence and the system itself, as well as the maintenance of an internal balance of the family, or with other words the outer and inner stability of the family (Bielefeld et al 1982: 23). David Morley adds to this that the family is above all dependent from a principle of sufficient solidarity for their own sake. Keeping up this principle requires complex forms of coordination and control of household activities (Morley 2000: 18).

integrity of the family, which is of highest priority, only get interrupted if negative conse-quences that may endanger this integrity are expected.

2. The *attempt of the fusion of spheres* is characterized by the effort to reach intermediation and communication between the two spheres. It is often relatively precarious because the different modi of sociality of the spheres regularly cause diffusions of orientation.

3. Eventually, many youngsters distance themselves from both spheres while *searching for a third sphere.* It is constituted by the group of peers and is often hardly accessible for parents and members of the outer sphere. In this case, communication with parents is often rudimentary, of little biographical relevance and incomplete reciprocity.[7] Instead, many of these youth try to cope with the typical problems of sphere discrepancy through collective and actionist activities (e. g. break dance), which are often the pathway to the (re-)development of biographical designs and perspectives.

Because of the timely expansion and intensification of the youth period, adolescents spend more and longer time in peer-groups than ever before. Apparently, youth has become it's own and most important reference group that shapes personality development and accomplishment of life (Lenz 1998, Ferchhoff 1999). A number of analyses on the basis of the documentary method underline that the peer-group is the central location in the search for life orientations for adolescents (Bohnsack 1989, Bohnsack et al 1995, Nohl 1996, Schäffer 1996, Nohl 2001). This context has an important function for coping with adolescence-spe-cific experiences of crisis. Often youth with low formal educational attainment enter a seri-ous phase of disappointment when they leave school and try to get into apprentice-ship or the workforce. Disappointment leads into a negation phase often accompanied by rigorous rejec-tion of societal normality expectations and delinquent activities. Sooner or later a re-orienta-tion phase set in for most of these youths, where the peer-group has a central function. Together, the peer-group members develop biographical orientations, especially through actionism, that provide new meanings to their lives and lead respectively into enacting biographical efforts (Nohl 2001b: 258).

These efforts go along with learning processes, since they usually include the incorporation of new knowledge, expertise and skills. Somebody may want to find out, for example, how to find an intern ship within a business she is interested in. Learning how to use a suitable online database may facilitate this task. Burkhard Schäffer shows that the transition period between youth and adults is decisive, among others, for basic learning and adoption proc-esses like they occur in the realm of media utilization. Here the peer-group is the central loca-tion of action (Schäffer 2001: 261). Learning is often associated with the concept of cultural capital, which together with the idea of literacy can be thought of as a framework for the development of media competence and media practice.

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[7] Bohnsack talks about a "separation or severance of spheres, which makes it hardly possible to have an open negotiation between children and parents about problems which are relevant for the identity of the young people. Both spheres with their different moralities (the ‚German' and the ‚Turkish') stand apart from each other" (Bohnsack 2002: 7).

3. Cultural Capital, Literacy and Media Competence

Most conceptions of cultural capital originate from the work of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1997 (1983)). Accordingly, incorporated cultural capital describes all the knowledge an individual owns. It also provides the premise for the acquisition of objectified cultural capital as the material carrier of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1997 (1983): 59). This includes, among others, the media as carrier of content (e. g. books or web pages) as well as the respective productive means (e. g. computer). Institutionalized capital covers certified knowledge like school-leaving qualifications, certificates of apprenticeship and university diplomas.

The basic structure of social disparities of educational participation, at least in Germany, has been remaining relatively stable over the last decades despite an overall increase of participation in formal education processes (Baumert/Schümer 2001: 352). Seemingly, formalized education processes remain typically in contradiction to status and competence acquisition and are rather likely to reproduce social inequalities than redeeming them (Bourdieu 1997 (1993): 212). Baumert und Schümer criticize that this assumption can rarely be empirically validated. Among others, the influence of the extracurricular social environment and school form specific developmental milieus on the educational participation should be considered too (Baumert/Schümer 2001: 352f).

Especially concerned with the unequal dissemination of cultural capital are youth with migration background, whereby adolescents of Turkish decent are apparently placed most unfavorable within the educational system and leave school above-average without any educational attainment (Bundesregierung 2001: 105). According to Baumert and Schümer, neither the social situation, nor the 'cultural distance' towards the majority culture determines this problem. The problem rather is triggered by the limited knowledge about the German language on a level suitable for the respective educational career.

The manifold notions of literacy, the confoundedness of the term with other variables as well as its covariance with other social factors as schooling, complicate the investigation of the term (Warschauer 2003: 40-42). Regularly, literacy is thought of as the ability to make "full sense and productive use of the opportunities of written language in the particular culture in which one lives" (Smith 1987: 143) (see also Levine 1986) (Selfe 1989). Thereby, literacy is not "a neutral denoting of skills, it is always literacy for something – for professional competence in a technological world, for civic responsibility and the preservation of heritage, for personal growth and self-fulfillment, for social and political change" (Knoblauch 1990: 75-6). From this understanding, literacy goes beyond a narrow cognitive skill but is rather a set of social practices. Its acquisition is therefore "a matter not only of cognition, or even of culture, but also of power and politics" (Warschauer 2003: 45).

The *Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)* showed that apparently a considerable share of youth living in Germany fail to meet the basic standards of functional literacy, i. e. the level of writing and reading skills, which are considered indispensable to participate in different realms of society. This is especially true for youth with migration

background (Deutsches PISA-Konsortium 2001).[8] At the moment, schools apparently fail to meet this educational challenge. The parents are also often only of limited help. Although they have high expectations about the formal educational success of their children, e. g. having them graduating in higher education or succeeding in formal apprenticeship, their placement behavior lacks behind (Leenen u.a. 1990, Nohl 2001a: 297f).[9] A rather traditional modus of sociality is probably often accompanied by a similar understanding of education, limited closeness and familiarity with the German educational context. Many parents probably also do not meet the quasi societal standard demands of functional literacy. Eventually, their social capital links them more often to people from comparable milieu-like backgrounds than to German natives who have better chances and possibilities to place their children into the sphere of basic and higher education as well as apprenticeship and the workforce.[10]

Youth workers may take on some of these responsibilities and tasks that are only met by the parents in a restricted way. During field work, we observed several times that youth asked pedagogues for help to prepare resumes, write internship reports or fill in formulas. Pedagogues we spoke with confirmed that there is regular demand for such help. These situations may be a good opportunity for introducing adolescents to a word processor or look together with them for available internships on the Internet. Again, this is only one example out of many and for some kids it may be more beneficial to help them placing their dance group on a web page than learning how to use a spreadsheet.

Since all activities of youth workers that involve young people immediately are per se pedagogical, we talk about media education if media become part of this work. At least until the late 1990s the debate about the examination of the development of media education for

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[8] The survey of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) found out that from the 50 percent of the youth from migrant families who achieved less than reading competence level 1 more than 70 percent went through the whole German school system. Thus they received compulsory education of at least nine to ten years (Baumert, Schümer 2001: 379). A level 1 reader can only read easiest texts and lacks behind the reading proficiency, expected to be achieved when graduating from secondary school (Baumert, Schümer 2001: 363f). Such a person is regularly considered functional illiterate, with literacy skills below average. With increasing literacy demands (Internet utilization, for instance, requires sufficient reading skills) the number of functional analphabets may further increase (Döbert/Hubertus 2000).

[9] This is true not only for adolescents who fail within the German educational system but also for those who are successfully meeting it standards. Many of them tell that they accomplished their career without any support from the inner sphere and often scepticism and disapproval from the outer sphere.

[10] This refers to the importance of social capital. According to Pierre Bourdieu, the social capital embodies the entirety of current and potential resources that are related to the possession of a stable network of more or less institutionalized relations of mutual awareness and acknowledgement. With other words, these are resources which are based on the affiliation with groups (Bourdieu 1983: 63). These may be families, as well as relatives or groups living in the same neighborhood, but also ethnic communities or associations or companies (Coleman 1996: 99, Baumert, Schümer 2001: 330). A net of reciprocal expectations and obligations that generates trust and enables cooperation originates on the basis of this structure of common social relations. Information is exchanged, norms are formed and norm violations are punished in these networks (Baumert, Schümer 2001: 330). The outcome of this kind of networking is the product of individual and collective information strategies, which are, conscious or unconscious, aimed at the creation and conservation of social relations that promise an immediate benefit, which can be realized sooner or later (Bourdieu 1983: 65). Within the household, social capital is especially important for the accumulation of cultural capital by the adolescent generation (Coleman 1988: 109-16). Thereby he targets the existing relations between parents and their children and explains it on the basis of the parent's efforts to support their children's cultural capital accumulation. Consequently, social capital needs to become operative intergenerational, with children not only supported by the parents but also by other adults (e. g. friends or relatives) (Coleman 1988: 101).

after-school work with children and youth was poor and guided by a restricted sense of impartment (Anfang/Pöttinger 1999: 321, Hasebrink 1999: 149, and . Today the understanding of media competence stands in the center of a multi-facetted debate. Many of the current thoughts within the German discourse originate from the concept of communicative competence developed by Dieter Baacke (1973) in examination with the work of Noam Chomsky (1965), Pierre Bourdieu (1970) and Jürgen Habermas (1971). With regard to the contribution of media utilization to socialization and enculturation, media competence as a formulated goal of media education should be thought of as part of social und cultural action competences and is thus a part of general education (Wiedemann 2001, Groeben 2002, Sutter/Charlton 2002).

Based on the work of (Baacke 1996), Joshua (Meyrowitz 1998), (Kubicek/Welling 2001) and (Groeben 2002: 166-79) I differentiate between four core dimensions of media competence:

1. *Competency to differentiate and select* enables the recipient to differentiate between various information genres *(Informationsgattungen)* and to choose adequate media sources for diverse purposes.

2. *Orientation competence* for the media-adequate utilization, i. e. in the realm of given prepositions and conventions of use of different media genres.

3. *Evaluation competence* based on the ability to form an opinion about content and to criticize it. This is the established core of almost all media competence conceptions. Similar important, especially in the realm of youth work, is the ability to enjoy and to perceive media-related issues positively, a dimension of competence that is often neglected in the discourse about media competence.

4. *Production and creation competence* enables people to produce media-adequate content (e. g. knowing how to put up a web page that can be read by different Internet browsers).

This differentiation has much of a delineation and is thus rather a starting point for the definition of a comprehensive conception of media competence and its empirical operationalization (Groeben 2002: 165). An important aspect for the development of these competences is a detailed exploration of the covered issues that occurs outside from media-typical reception and production patterns (Groeben 2002: 178f). This is another point, besides voluntary attendance, where, for instance, schools differ significantly from youth centers. Youth workers have much more time for personal support, talks and ventilation than teachers since they are not obligated to teach a certain curriculum.

4. The Search for the Congruity of Habitus and Milieu

I already stressed the importance of the family for the process of socialization in chapter 3. This entity is, according to David Morley, the central location, where children already learn the habitus of their culture, which gets transmitted through generations and that is, among others, influential for the development of media practices (Morley 2000: 20). The habitus is, according to Pierre Bourdieu, a system of enduring dispositions and structured structures,

functioning as principles of creation and structuration of forms of praxis (*Praxisformen*) and representations (Bourdieu 1976: 165).

The reconstruction of the habitus or the framework or structure of orientation like it is called here, stands in the center of analysis of the documentary method (Bohnsack et al 2001a: 15). One of the key questions is *how* reality is produced or accomplished in practice by social actors. According to Ralf Bohnsack, because "[a]sking for the *how* is asking for the *modus operandi*, for the *habitus* which is the basic to the practice in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu" (Bohnsack 2002: 5). Asking for the *How* needs to be distinguished from asking for the *What*, since the immanent meaning in group discussions "comprises that stock of knowledge which can be made explicit by the participants themselves. It has to be distinguished from a knowledge of experiences, which is so much taken for granted by the participants that it must not or also *can* not be made explicit by themselves. The participants understand each other, because they hold a common knowledge, without any need to explicate this knowledge" (Bohnsack 2002: 6). Thus the framework or structure of orientation is not explicated by the participants of a group discussion and "can only be unfolded by depictions and narrations, that means: it can only be depicted metaphorically. It is the researcher, who in behalf of the participants explicates their frame of orientation, who brings it to terms. The task of the researchers as documentary interpretors thus is the theoretical explication of the mutual implicit or intuitive understanding of the participants" (Bohnsack 2002: 6).

The orientation framework consists of several orientation figures. They are most present in the so-called focusing metaphors, which describe a passage in the text that reveals the spanning orientation framework of the group. It also covers the 'central' problems standing in the center of attention of the respective group (Loos/Schäffer 2001: 70). The interpretative creation of the framework of orientation also introduces the step of typology construction that is obligated to comparative case analysis of the documentary method. Step by step, pre-existing assumptions of the researcher get replaced by empirical horizons of comparison taken from the research project. This procedure also assures the methodological control of the existential determination of the researcher. In the course of typology creation, relations are revealed between biographical orientation, biographical self-placement (*Selbstverortung)* on the one hand and existential background on the other (e. g. job experience, neighborhood, gender relations). The fundamental principle of typology creation is called the 'contrast in commonness'. We can ask for example, how the motivation of learning to use certain software programs differs between adolescents visiting a high-school and those attending secondary school (see Bohnsack 2001 for a detailed discussion of typology creation).

The focusing metaphors also refer to the centers of shared or common experience of the members of a group (e. g. the peer-group). Accordingly, "[t]hose, who have biographical experiences in common, who have things in common in their history of socialization and thus have a common or conjunctive experiential space, understand each other immediately insofar as these biographical commonalities become relevant in interaction and discourse" (Bohnsack 2002: 8). Here the documentary method is used to access the underlying conjunctive knowledge in its function as milieu-specific orientation knowledge (Bohnsack et al

2001b: 14). In the conjunctive experiential spaces, youth also acquires basic orientation, attitudes and dispositions through habitualized action (Schäffer 2001: 20).

Ralf Bohnsack differentiates between milieus as groups, milieus as communities (e. g. families, neighborhoods) and milieus in the sense of spanned and interrelated conjunctive experiential spaces, which consist, among others, of gendered milieus, educational milieus, and migrational milieus (Bohnsack/Nohl 1998: 262, Bohnsack 2000: 130ff).[11] Above all, it is the collective everyday life practice that causes a syncretism of social stratification (*Lagerung)* of which the milieu emerges from (Nohl 2001b: 32). Thus, milieus can be thought of as a folding of different conjunctive experimental spaces where the members of the milieu understand each other in the medium of the matter of course (*Medium der Selbstverständlichkeit)* (Schäffer 2001: 20, 60). Milieu-typical experiences as shared or collective orientations most extensively, where those come together, who share the respective conjunctive experiences, which is the group of people in the same age that emerges in a local socio-spatial context: the peer-group (Bohnsack 1998: 97)

5. Peer Activities and Digital Media

The following chapter presents some first results from the empirical work of my research project. It focuses on the media practices of chat and gaming since these are two of the practices that are apparently most popular with youth. My findings are based on the analysis of four group discussions that took place in three different Bremian youth centers between December 2002 and March 2003. Further data and context information come from extensive participant observation.[12] All centers are equipped with a computer lab, which can be used in accordance with the existing lab rules. The two city-owned centers are only open to youth who own a computer drivers license. In one of the centers the license is only awarded to those who pass a respective test. The third center is run by a scout organization.[13] There, the computer lab is open to everybody.

A first discussion took place with a group of youth with migration background. I met them in a youth center, where approximately up to 90 percent of all visitors have a migration background. According to center staff, formal educational attainment of regular center visitors is low and the majority of adolescents attend secondary school and special schools. Nine people participated in the discussion with varying intensity. *Im* and *Nm* were two of the most active speakers. Because *Im* left during the discussion we were not able to ask him additional questions about his socio-cultural background.[14] He is probably between 17 and 19 years old and

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[11] See Matthiesen (1998) and Hradil (1999).for further discussions of milieu characteristics and development and Vester et al (2001) for the empirical operationalization of a rather socio-structural milieu conception

[12] Besides gathering research data participant observation opens the field for the researcher, i. e. it is indispensable for him or her to establish a trustful relation to those under research. In one case it only took two or three visits to establish such a relation. In another case we needed more than ten visits on site before youth agreed to take part in a group discussion.

[13] The scouting organization receives financial support from the city government but employs, in difference to the city's youth centers its own staff and has more independency in program development.

[14] We always try to gather some basic social-cultural background information at the end of every discussion. Often, people leave during the discussion our reject filling in a questionnaire. In this case we try to reconstruct

may graduate soon. He did an internship at a car repair shop and would like to start an apprenticeship there. He has a personal computer with Internet access at home, which he bought by himself. He is not a regular visitor of the center and I have not meeting him again. I have met Nm several times during our site visits and he also took part in two group discussions.[15]

The understanding of the development, performance and relevance of media practices by and for youth is an important aspect of my research, because it is primary component for constructing of a framework for computer-supported youth work. During the discussion the interviewer already asked the participants what they do with the Internet. After naming some practices (e.g. chatting, burning, listening to music) they changed topic within less than 20 seconds and started to talk about girls. Apparently this topic has much more relevance and importance for the young men and is embedded into their framework of orientation. When I addressed the topic again the following discourse emerged:

(Respect, The missing importance of Internet utilization, 1-19[16])

    01 Y1:   Erzählt doch mal ein bisschen so generell, mal unabhängig hier von

          (Why don't you tell a little bit in general, apart from this)

    02   , Computer, Internet ist das für euch wichtig?

          (Computer, Internet, is that important for you?)

    03 Rm: Ja, eigentlich ja

          (Yes, actually yes)

    04 Im: Also wenn man Sachen guckt, sagen wir ich such, ein Ausbildung

          (Well if you look things, let's say I am looking for an apprenticeship)

    05 Rm: +(………)

    06 Im: Sagen wir ich such, ich will chatten, sagen wir,

          (Let's say I am looking for, I want to chat, let's say)

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some of this information from our recording. Therefore the amount of additional information vary from person to person.

[15] The first time we met Nm was during a group discussion that completely failed. He arrived during the final stage of the discussion and was very interested in our work. When we asked him whether he would participate in another group discussion he agreed immediately. The discussion took place in October 2002. Actually it was rather an interview with him because the other young guy only talked rarely. In December 2002 Nm participated in another group discussion. He is 18 years old and fled with his family from the Kurdish part of Turkey when he was seven and a half year old. After he was almost deported to Turkey in 1998 he now has an unlimited residence permit in Germany. His father is unemployed, his mother works in the household. After graduating secondary school he wants to go to secondary modern school and high school so that he may afterwards attend college.

[16] See chapter 7 for an overview of transcription guidelines applied to all passages.

07	Freund ruf mich an, ey, geh mal in Chat rein, lass mal chatten, weißt du,
	(Friend call me, hey go into the chat room, let's chat, you know)
08	sagen wir, dies, ä:h, so Sachen immer, alles so, nicht wichtige Sachen ist das
	, let's say, this e:h such things always, everything, no important things is that)
09	weißt du? Alles was wir machen ist scheiße, was wir machen
	(you know? Everything we do is crap what we do)
10 Nm:	Warum ist das Scheiße?
	(Why is that crap?)
11 Im:	Was machen wir denn in Internet? Wir gehen chatten
	(What do we do in the Internet? We go chatting)
12 Nm:	Ja, vielleicht, vielleicht willst du einen kennen lernen
	(Yes, perhaps, perhaps, you wanna got to know somebody)
13 Im:	Ja o. k. das ist schon gut, da da, sage ich doch nichts
	(Yes, o. k., that's good, there I don't say anything).
14	(2) Aber und sonst?
	(2) (But anything else?)
15 Rm:	Zum Beispiel willst du dir ein Auto kaufen du suchst ein Automobil(e)
	(For example, you want to buy a car, looking for an automobile)
16 Nm:	Ja
	(Yes)
17 Im:	Ja::::: hast du Führerschein, bist du schon 18?
	(Ye:::s, do you a licence, are you already 18?)
18 Rm:	''Natürlich''
	(Surely)
19 Im:	Ja, wenn du, wenn du bist, dann können wir reden, dann hätte ich nichts gesagt
	(O.K. if you, if you are, than we can talk, than I would have say anything)

Im's description starts very ambitious ("looking for an apprenticeship") but he does not continue to develop a narration about how to use the Internet for the suggested task. Since he is looking for an apprenticeship himself he probably has no success story yet to share. His opening may also be interpreted as trying to meet supposed expectations of the interviewer.

Instead, talking about chat seems to be more familiar to him. Here he probably builds on shared experience with friends. He also calls a friend first to join the chat room together with him. Even if he is sitting alone in front of his computer, in the chat room he is together with a

friend, a peer. It is not his prior intention to go online alone and get to know people or to meet people he already knows online. The interaction with his friend, who is probably also a member of his peer-group, comes first. He does not continue to include other practices into his description. Instead he paraphrases them as "such things" (line 8). These things are not important; apparently they have no serious meaning. Instead everything the young men do with the computer is "crap" (line 10). Here he speaks not only for himself but for the whole group. Apparently, from the point of view of *Im,* the young men are not able to meet the expectations that emerge from the stated importance of the computer (line 3).This is a clear clue that *Im* and his peers are located within the negation phase (see chapter 2). Since everything the do is "crap", i. e. that it is not successful the Internet too has no relevance for them.

The personal utilization of the Internet is negated here in the first place. In the second place it becomes obvious that the use of the computer or the Internet makes only sense, if a respective utilization context of institutional rationality exists. Apparently, *Nm* does not agree with him and wants to know why *Im* thinks that the things they are doing on the Internet are meaningless. *Im replies* with a rhetorical question about what they are doing on the Internet and returns to the example of chat (line 11). Building on this topic, *Nm* suggests that *Im* may get to know somebody in a chat room. *Im* agrees that this is acceptable since it is purposeful and is not arguing against it. Like this could be only the exception of the rule or with other words the only acceptable rationale for using the Internet, *Im* asks for other examples. *Rm* suggests the utilization of online car markets like *mobile.de* (http://www.mobile.de) for buying a car. Instead of agreeing or declining the suggestion, *Im* first wants to know whether *Rm* is already 18 years old and whether he has a driving license. Before the dialogue can continue *Im* makes sure that the specific requirements (being 18, having a license) for the context of institutional rationality are in place. Because they are, *Im* offers *Rm* to continue the talk. This basic modus of perceiving the computer correlates with the findings of Burkhard Schäffer. 'His" group of young adults in their early 20s with rather low formal educational attainment also primarily sees the computer in a context of institutional rationality (Schäffer 2001: 138).

The last passage also showed that chat is apparently an important media practice for this group. It is obvious that this is true for many adolescents. Since chat is such an attractive media practice for youth, it is worth examining it in a more detailed way.

5.1 The Practice of Chat – Dating, Taking People on Rides and the Performance of Power

Chat is not only popular with adolescents but also within academia. See, for example the work of Beißwenger (2001), Danet (2001) and Heller and Dresing (2001) for an overview of current work on the issue. Whenever we have been into the field, we observed several people interacting in chat rooms. In one of our research sites several times all computers (ten computers are available at this site) were occupied by chatters. Besides the motivation to get to

know people, taking people on rides or to make fun of them is a regular occupation.[17] We observed that several times: A group of young males (we never saw mixed groups chatting in this computer lab) is in the same chat room. Since they use different nick names to log in, the boys do not recognize each other coercively. For example, one boy may log in as a girl and tries to flirt with one of the others. If one gets in contact with a character of whom he thinks that she is a female and can establish a successful communication he sometimes offers such a contact to his peers. This can be seen as a ritual of showing off personal success with girls.

Girls also take people on rides but also act differently with chat than boys do. An 18 years old girl told us that she expects other people not being "honest" to her. Therefore she also takes people on rides. This causes a dilemma, because after a while chatting it is no fun anymore for that reason. Burkhard Schäffer shows that girls also use the medium of chat for the testing of hetero-sexual patterns of relationship. They functionalize the computer to solve a problem that is located outside the sphere of computer activities (Schäffer 2001: 128).

Another motivation is the performance of power as we observed it in one discussion with high-school students.[18] The chat practice, described by the two boys shows strong parallels to the form of relationship as we often find it within the dyad of young women (Bohnsack 1989: 269). When we asked the youth about what is happening during chat, *Gm* first points to the practice of taking people on rides. *Jm* differentiates *Gm's* statement and tells him, that he cannot tell that to him (*Das kannst du mir nicht erzählen*). *Mm* joins the discussion and differentiates the statement of *Jm*. It is also important to know that all but one of the young men told us, that they no longer or only rarely use the computer lab at the center,

(Kanu, The whole city is my informant, 346-372)

346 Mm: Na komm wir beide chatten auch immer nur, was macht die, was macht die (….....)

(Come on, we always chat about, what does she do, what does she do, too (…..))

347   (……………………….) was erzählt

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[17] *Nm,* for example, told us that he got to know a 30 year old woman who asked him to meet her. He said that he probably will not do that, because she probably only wants a 'sexual relationship' with him. He supposes that she perhaps wants to take him on a ride. He already made this experience. A girl he got to know in a chat room did not appear as agreed. When he came home late in the night his father yelled at him intensively.

[18] The discussion with seven boys in the age between 16 and 17 took place in a Bremian youth center in February 2003. *Am* is 17 years old and was born in Germany. He meets with this group since his childhood and the group is very important for him. His hobbies are clubbing and soccer. His father is a tax consultant, his mother is a kindergarten teacher. *Gm* is almost 18 years old and was born in Germany. He has been meeting with the group for the last five years and the group is very important for him. He wants to become a professional soldier or a police officer. His father is a trainer in a company, his mother works as an office clerk. *Jm* is 17 years old and was born in Germany. He has been meeting this group for the last two years. The group is very important for him. His hobby is rap music, he also raps by himself and already had entraces during youth center events. He is looking for a career as a police officer. His father works in the harbour, his mother is employed as a nurse. *Mm* is 16 years old and was born in Germany too. He meets with this group since his childhood and it is very important for him. His hobbies are soccer, fitness training and coming to the youth center. His parents are teachers and he is looking for a career as a police officer, too.

(.................................) what tells

348 Jm: +Ja, ja, wir chatten aber von zu Hause

aus

                                    (+Yes, yes, and we chat from home)

349 Mm: Ja immer. Aber da erzählen wir uns immer nur was die gesagt hat, was hat die

(Yes always, Then we always tell each other, what did she say, what did she)

350   dir gesagt

(told you)

351 Jm: ? Ja genau

                                     +(yes, exactly)

352 Mm: was hat die wieder

(what did she again)

353 Jm: ? was hat der gesagt

                        (+what did he say)

354 Mm: Wir wissen immer alles,

(We know everything, always)

356 Jm: ? Ja (wir müssen das zuordnen)

                              (+yes, we have to assign this)

356 Mm: so was die gesagt haben. Deswegen, keiner kann uns was vormachen.

(like what did she say. Therefore nobody can fool us)

357 Jm: Ja Mann. Wir sind Dings (1) Äh, wie sagt (……………)? Die ganze Stadt ist

(Yeah man, we are like (1) Aeeh, who does (…….) say? The whole city is)

358   mein Informant (1) Wissen sie was ich meine? (1) Wenn irgendeiner was sagt

(my informant (1) Do you know what I mean? (1) If somebody says
something)

359   (2) immer erfahre ich das zuerst und dann weiß es immer ganz

((2) I always hear it first, and than knows it always whole)

360 ?m: ? @(.)@

361 Jm: ganz Oberstadt (1) Das machen wir per Internet. ICQ, kennst du bestimmt (1)

(Oberstadt (1). We do that with the Internet. ICQ, you certainly know (?)

362   und so sind wir zu hause tss, tss, tss, Aber ich bin eher so der, der, ich bin

(and this way we are at home tss, tss, tss. But I am rather the, the. I am)

363   immer so der

(always the)

364 Gm: ? Eher so der Lover

                       (+Rather the lover)

365 ?m: @(.)@ [several]

367 Jm: Ich bin eigentlich so der richtige Chatter. Ich chatte den ganzen Tag zu Hause.

            (I am actually the real chatter. I chat at home the whole day)

368   Ich komm von der Schule

            (I return from school)

369 Mm: ? Er ist süchtig, er kommt von der Schule, geht chatten

                                 (+He is addicted, he returns from school, start to chat)

370 Jm: Chatten bis vier, dann trainieren, dann Freizi bisschen Rappen, nach Hause

            (Chat till four, than training, than youth center, some rapping, back home)

371   wieder chatten (2) so der Tagesablauf. Da kommen auch die Hausaufgaben

            (chat again (2) that's the schedule of the day. Thereby homework)

372   manchmal zu kurz.

            (sometimes get a raw deal)

According to *Mm,* both guys always talk online about the action of girls they know (line 347). *Jm* restricts the statement and points to the fact that they chat from home. *Jm* makes a clear distinction between chat locations in the inner (at home) and outer sphere (at the youth center). Apparently, the place of communication influences the object of communication. With an antithetic differentiation (yes, but) *Mm* brings the discourse back to the practice and the further elaboration of their communication. They also tell each other what the young women were talking about. *Jm* confirms this (line 349-352). As a consequence of this particular communication they claim to know everything. Prior to that, exchanged information must also be assigned to become useful. This includes processes of differentiation, selection, as well as evaluation and thus requires media competence, or vice versa, helps to build it through praxis.

The intention that drives the boys is another one. Because if they know what the young women said and if they have assigned it, they cannot fool them anymore. They exercise power over their peers since they use this systematic exchange of information to get an advantage over the others in dealing with allegations and rumors like they are an integral part of adolescent everyday life. *Jm* further tries to explain their role in this situation and uses a quotation from somebody else. According to this metaphor, the whole city is the informant of the young men (line 357-8). Since he is not sure whether the researchers understand the meaning of his statement he asks them and explains it at the same moment. If somebody says

something, he is the first to know. He clearly exaggerates the possibilities of online communication, but nevertheless stresses the general power of this form of communication. Besides gathering information he also processes them to other people. Here it is the whole neighborhood where he lives. Therefore he not only uses chat but also ICQ.[19]

His next statement first looks like a differentiation of the statement he made before. Before he can finish his sentence, *Gm* interrupts him and continues the sentence by suggesting the *Jm* is rather a lover. *Jm* does not take this turn and continues his last sentence by stating that he is actually rather the type of a real chatter (line 367). According to this account, being a "real" chatter is first of all a matter of time spend for this activity. Apparently, the amount of time spend by *Jm* is so large, that *Mm* describes him as being addicted. On a normal day, *Jm* returns from school, which is probably between 1 and 2 pm and starts to chat. Around 4 pm he goes to a training (probably sports) and than to the youth center. There he exercises rap. After returning home he continues to chat. Eventually, he acknowledges that sometimes work for school get a raw deal on this schedule. From an abbreviated perspective, one may conclude that this is a good example how chat addiction retrenches formal educational success. This is of course the flip site of the competence debate that surrounds questions of chat. Competence is not only necessary to communicate adequately, but is at the same time developed in the process. Competence is also needed to avoid harms and risks like addiction but also self-destruction, an issue that is discussed more detailed in the next chapter.

5.2 Ego-Shooter, Media Competence and the Importance of Collective Peer Experience

An ego-shooter is a computer game where the players slip into the roll of a combatant, who has to fight, alone or in a group, against other combatants and / or monsters, people and alike. On the computer screen the player sees the scenery from his or her perspective, i. e. he or she normally does not see him- or herself but everything in front of him or her. In most of these games the basic goal is to kill as many of your opponents as necessary to accomplish your mission. Popular games of this genre are *Doom*, *Quake,* or *Counter-Strike.* Apparently these games are especially attractive for young men who are often organized in so-called clans. Regularly, different clans meet, real or virtually, to fight against each other. Because of the violence and brutality included in these games there has been an ongoing discussion regarding issues of legal protection of children and young persons. There is no agreement on the question whether and if yes how dangerous those games are for the socialization of youths and whether playing these games panders violent behavior. The discussion in Germany got fulled after it turned out that an adolescent who performed a killing spree in a school in April 2002 causing several victims, played ego shooters on a regular basis.

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[19] ICQ is an instant messenger service that enables the user to talk online with friends as soon as they are online, too (see http://www.icq.com).

It is not the aim of this paper to curb this discussion.[20] I will stress the development of media competence throughout LAN-parties and the importance of gaming as collective peer experience. Waldemar Vogelsang (2000: 378) addresses the possible contribution of playing computer games to the acquisition of incorporated cultural capital (see chapter 3). The following passage illustrates this relation. It describes the beginning of a LAN-party. During such a party several computers get networked via a local area network (LAN) so that several people can play together. In the past a number of LAN-partys already took place at the center.[21]

(*Preparation of a LAN Party, Backstein, 253-277*

253 Rm: Und dann kommt es eben soweit, das wir erst mal unsere Rechner hier

(And than it comes so far that we first bring our computers)

254 aufstellen.

(in place)

255 Tm: Hier in diesem Raum, an diesen Tisch.

(In this room, on this desk)

256 Rm: Alles in Seelenruhe (2) Und plötzlich von einer Sekunde auf die andere gibt es

(Everything' s placid (2) And suddenly, from on moment to another, emerges)

257 einen Megastress. Da schreit einer mein Netzwerk funktioniert nicht. Alle

(mega stress. One screams, my network does not work and everybody)

258 rennen da rüber und und

(runs across and, and)

259 Tm: (Dann sagt der andere au bitte(..........) (will nicht angehen). Alle wieder da

(Than the other says, uah please (...........) (won't start) Everybody on that)

260 rüber.

(site)

261 Mf: @(.)@

262 Rm: Auf jeden Fall

(for sure)

263 Tm: Komm ich mit was Neuem an. Ich habe wieder ein neues Spiel. Alle wieder

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[20] See also Fromme/Meder (2001), Mertens/Meißner (2002) and Rötzer (2003) for a more detailed discussion of the issues surrounding the use of computer games.

[21] The discussion took place in December 2002. Besides *Rm and Tm* two girls participated in the discussion, too. *Rm* is 17 years old, was born in Germany, but has a migration background. At the time of the discussion he visited a vocational school to receive his secondary school exam. After graduating he first wants to do his military service. His father is an officer in a company. His mother works for a fast food restaurant. He has two older sisters. *Tm* is probably 18 or 19 years old. He left secondary school before graduation and is unemployed at the time of the discussion. Both young men have a number of computers at home.

(Do I have something new. I have another new game. Everybody)

264   da rüber, das ist jedes Mal so

(on the other site. It's like that every time)

265 Rm: Und das ist so heftig.

(And that's so intense)

266 Tm: Das ist Riesenchaos

(That is huge chaos)

267 Rm: Mindestens alle sechs Stunden nippelt irgendwie ein Rechner vollkommen ab

(At least every six hours somewhere a computer dies completely)

268   und muss wieder irgendwas gemacht werden. Neues Spiel installiert, das Spiel

(something has to be fixed again. Installing a new game, the game)

269   muss neu Installiert werden. Ganze Betriebssystem muss neu Installiert werden

(must be installed again. Whole operating system must be installed again)

270 Tm: Wie bei Patrick.

(Like with Patrick's)

271 Rm: Der Rechner muss auseinander genommen werden.

(The computer must taken apart)

272 Tm: @(So wie bei mir)@ Mein Rechner wird jedes Mal aufgeschraubt, auseinander

(@(Like with my computer)@ My computer gets unscrewed every time)

273   gepflückt

(teared apart)

274 Rm: Also bei einer Net-LAN sollte man alle Schrauben vom Rechner entfernen und

(Well, during a LAN party you should remove all screws from your computer)

275   einfach so stehen lassen.

(tower and just leave it that way)

276 Tm: Am besten einfach den ganzen PC ausschütten.

Best is simply shake out the whole PC)

277 Am: Und man sollte ab und zu mal Pause machen.

(And you should have a break sometimes)

The application and acquisition of media competence starts soon after all players arrived at the venue and begin to bring their computers in place. First, the situation is placid until everything changes all of a sudden. Some players encounter first problems with hard- and software and ask others for help (line 256-62). Stress emerges and participants start to solve existing problems in cooperative interaction ("everybody runs across, everybody on that side") that we can call collaborative peer-group based learning. Since computers crash regularly, respective competences are needed and build over the whole time of the game. The scope of skills needed here cover a broad spectrum and reach from re-installing a game to replacing the complete operating system of the computer.

Since the hardware also needs to be fixed from time to time so that the computer must be taken apart, *Rm* recommended to remove the shell of the computer at the beginning of the game. *Tm* closes this topic by recommending that the best thing is simply to shake out the whole PC. Since the metaphor should not be valued for its immanent meaning, shaking out a computer would end its functioning; the applied modus of doing computer handicrafts becomes apparent. Burkhard Schäffer already worked out this modus for a group of high-school students and shows how action-oriented knowledge *(handlungspraktisches Wissen)* is incorporated through doing computer handicrafts. When the technical problems interrupt the 'play-modus', the pupils change into the modus of doing computer handicrafts (Schäffer 2001: 139).

Another aspect should be mentioned here, even if it cannot be discussed in detail. The discussion about the LAN-party is developed almost solely by the two boys. The two girls only comment briefly on this topic because it only has limited or no relevance for them. Asked whether they are interested in LAN-partys, one of the girls (who is also the girlfriend of *Tm*) says that she rather watches it, whereas the other girl declared that LAN-parties are nothing for her.[22] Subsequently, a short argument between *Tm* and *Rm* develops about the question whether girls are allowed at all to participate in LAN-parties. They find no agreement about the 'rules' in their center but agree that girls are not allowed to take part in LAN-parties at another youth center. This gendering of computer games should be kept in mind when taking the use of computer games into account for supporting the development of media competence since the setting of LAN-parties as we find it here seems to discriminate young women.

A final aspect that relates directly to media competence is mentioned by *Rm* at the end of the passage (line 277). The advice to take breaks from time to time sounds rather superfluously from an impartial standpoint. That neither *Rm* nor *Tm* took this advice seriously in the past is illustrated by their narration. First they talk about the vast amount of stimulating drinks like caffeine-containing beverages or so-called energy drinks needed to stay awake. They also both talk with pleasure about how they collapsed during the game. Whereas *Tm* only felt asleep, *Rm* collapsed so badly that his peers called a doctor who had to reanimate him. They

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[22] This attitude overlaps with a statement of one member of the group *Bass*. Talking about the PC studio in the youth center that is reserved for playing games she states this is really boring and that this is only something for real computer freaks who sit there from three in the afternoon to ten in the evening and play any computer games.

both call others who went home after one day to get some sleep the "total weak ones". Therefore, LAN-parties not only cause fun for the players, they also contain an element of competition. In this case it is the question about who can play games for the longest time without sleeping. Here having fun and being into competition is followed by developments with self-destructive character. Media education is asked to develop strategies that support pedagogues to cope with such problems.

An interesting point is raised by *Tm* when he starts to talk about the motivation for playing ego-shooters:

(Games and Fun, Backstein 430-432)

430 Tm: Aber es ist gar nicht so es ist halt, oftmals die Spiele, die indiziert werden

            (But it is not like, it is, often the games which are on the index)

431   machen einem Spaß und das nicht weil da Blut spritzt, fließt sondern weil es

            (are fun and that is not because blood splatters there, but because)

432   Spaß mit anderen zu Spielen macht. Genau das (.......................)

            (it is fun to play with others. That's exactly (…………………)

The main motivation is the fun achieved by playing such games. But it is not the splattering blood that causes the fun but rather the game situation where these adolescents can play with each other. Again, the peer-group moves into the center of attention and becomes the locus for the development of shared orientations. This can be especially helpful for youth who not only have literacy deficits but are also known for their dysfunctional social behavior. One pedagogue told us, for instance, that he worked with a group of young boys for a longer period, whose social behavior can be characterized like I have done it in the sentence before. While playing an adventure computer game with this group, participants first all played for themselves. During the course of the activity the kids realized that they can achieve more throughout the game as a group. They learned to develop and agree on certain strategies and also to make compromises as a group, all skills that contribute to the development of social capital.

The importance and value of shared activities with the peer-group is also stressed by the group *Kanu.* They talk about the times when they were used to play *Half Life,* another ego-shooter at their youth center. In this center, ego-shooters were proscribed after the killing spree mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Youth completely lacks understanding of this decision, since they relate the decision not to the general problematic of playing ego-shooters in youth centers but to the specific incident. Since this happened almost a year ago, they cannot understand why it is still prohibited.

(Kanu, The Attractiveness of Gaming Together, 264-274),

264 Am: ? haben wir immer *Half Life*
        gespielt,

                                        (did we always play *Half Life*)

265   *Half Life* ist geil echt. Sobald das Internetcafé aufgemacht hat

        (*Half Life* is so cool, really, As soon as the Internet café opened)

266   Montag, wum, proppenvoll sofort.

        (Monday, wosh, packed immediately)

267 Jm: Ja, nur wissen sie auch noch warum? Nicht weil, keiner hat alleine gespielt.

        (Yes, but do yon also know why? Not because, nobody played alone)

268 Hm: ? Ja genau, genau

                                (Yes, of course, of course)

269 Am: ? Ja echt

                                (Yes really)

270 Jm: ? weil wir alle
        gegeneinander

                                            (because we all played
        against

271   gespielt haben
        (each other)

272 Hm: ? Ja

                                (yes)

273 Jm: ? Weißt du dann, immer
        einer

                                            (Do you know than,
        always one)

274   war der beste und ich war immer der Schlechteste

        (was the best and I was always the looser)

In line 267, *Jm* stresses that there was such a huge demand for the game because nobody played alone. This gets confirmed immediately by two other participants, which points to the shared conjunctive experience of this group. The group also stresses another motive for play-ing games together, which is the one of competition. This is a motive not only important for boys but also for girls. In one of the centers, for instance, a group of young women formed a dancing group and they also take part in dance competitions. Based on this exemplifying

21

analysis of peer-activities and digital media, I will now discuss some related consequences for computer-supported youth work.

6. Consequences for Computer-Supported Youth Work

My analysis provides some first insight about the motivations of adolescents for developing and performing different forms of media practices. This is a first step towards the development of a framework for a conception of computer-supported youth work.

It is striking that most of the adolescents who have been participating in my research apparently own computers and many also have Internet access at home. Therefore, providing youth with computers and the Internet for the reason that these adolescents would otherwise lack any access to these media will probably loose much of its relevance soon. However, having physical access to the digital media does not reveal much about the development and the performance of media practices. I have shown, for instance, that during a phase of negation the utilization of digital media may get devaluated because of its missing relevance for the own biography that is not successful during this period. These adolescents who often belong to an educational milieu of rather low formal educational attainment may also find it difficult to develop media practices beyond a context of institutionalized rationality.

This shuts the door for acting with media technologies in a dimension of work vs. play. This is one of the three central dimensions, which provide the basis for the development of a first typology for acting with new media technologies (Schäffer 2001: 105ff).

For the first dimension, the interest in playing computer games provides the initial motivation for grappling with the computer. When technical problems interrupt the game, the adolescents develop another modus for dealing with the computer: through handicrafting they build action-oriented knowledge (here media competence) on the basis of peer-group interaction that may be used in other contexts. I showed how LAN-parties serve this purpose. Interestingly, here it is not a group of high-school students like in Burkhard Schäffers work, but boys from a low formal educational milieu who perform this modus. It should be kept in mind that LAN-parties are apparently appropriate primarily for male adolescents. Further research is needed to find out if girls are likely to enact this mode too or if they are rather affiliated to different practices.

The second dimension covers the relation between proximity versus displacement. It addresses, above all, the possibilities to use digital media for releasing communication and interaction from its close temporal and socio-spatial relation (e. g. dating online vs. dating physically) (Schäffer 2001: 262).

The third dimension (strangeness vs. familiarity) covers aspects of varying scopes of bonds or ties with the technology, created on the basis of gender- and milieu-specific actions practices (Schäffer 2001: 140-41).[23]

My analysis also shows that the performance of media practices might be exaggerated over time and may cause negative consequences for the performer (playing computer games until the player collapses, becoming a chat addict). Therefore, media literacy teaching should take a stronger emphasize on enabling youth to recognize and avoid risks of harm and self-destruction. Such risks may be amplified by competition, another important motive for using the digital media besides having fun and defeating boredom. Since a competition may be used as an incentive for motivating youth to take part in certain activities it may also drive youth to take certain risks, like participating in a LAN-party without a rest until somebody seriously collapses.

Through comparative analysis between different groups these first clues need to be further scrutinized. Successful computer-supported youth work must build on the interests, wants and needs of youth. Thus a better understanding of the general motivations of adolescents that bring them to the youth centers is needed when designing conceptions of computer-supported youth work. Apparently, one main motivation to come to the youth centers emerges from missing possibilities to spend leisure time otherwise. This seems to be the case for all different groups, independently from their belonging to certain educational milieus, as the following passages show.

(Kanu, Reasons, 405-411)

404 Mm: Also ich glaube wir kommen so oft ins Freizi weil wir sonst nichts wissen was

(Well I think that the reason why we come to the youth center so often, is)

405 wir zu tun haben.

(because we don't know what to do otherwise)

406 Gm: Ja

(Yes)

407 Am: Ja echt

(Yes, really)

408 Am: Wenn wir nichts zu tun haben (kommen wir hier her)

(If we don't have anything to do (we come here))

409 Mm: + Und weil das eigentlich keiner weiß, kommen wir alle

(+And because actually nobody knows that, we all)

---

[23] These bonds or ties are difficult to detect and are often revealed in subordinated clauses. This is especially the case when adolescents frame their computer in a "human way" (e. g. talking about the computer as it would be a person).

410   hier her.

       (come here)

411 Jm: @(Ja)@

         @(Yes)@

It is the lack of alternatives and the missing knowledge about what to do that drives the group to the center. Because the group shares this conjunctive experience, they all come to the center. In this case youth come without a particular intention, they are just there. Being just there is regularly described as bumming around by youth. Asking for the meaning of this modus of action, the interviewer received the following description by *Af*:[24]

(Bass, Bumming Around, 13-21)

13 Y1:   Was heißt gammeln?

         (What means bumming around?)

14 Af: Ja, rumsitzen, labern, keine Ahnung. Was Großartiges machen wir echt nicht

         (Yeah hanging around, babbling, don't know. We really don't do anything special)

15   hier. Irgendwie ab und zu mal

         (here. Somehow, sometimes)

16   vielleicht Karten spielen eine zeitlang. Das auch nur eine kleine Phase, dann

         (perhaps playing cards for a while. Just a short phase, than)

17   haben wir gar keinen Bock mehr. Dann geht das wieder los, das wir

         (we don't desire that anymore. Then it starts over again, that we)

18   rumgammeln. Dann haben wir irgendwann dann kein Bock mehr. Dann

         (bum around. Then at some time we do not have a desire anymore. Then)

19   kommen wir mal eine Woche gar nicht mehr hier hin. Und dann kommen wir

         (we do not come here for a week at all. And than we come)

20   wieder (1).Dann fängt das alles von selber, das ist alles gleich so was man

         (again (1) Than it just starts over again, it's just all the same you do)

21   macht.

         (do)

Two important components of bumming around are hanging out and babbling. With these actions *Af* describes two important processes of the creation of the conjunctive experimental space of her peer-group (line 14). This is 'just' an everyday life procedure, or like *Af* formulates it, nothing special. Sometimes they may play cards, but only for a while, just for a short phase, because soon they do not like to play anymore (line 16-17). This is an important point that got already stressed by other groups, too. It seems to be that there is no continuity in activities as in interests but rather repeating phases of interest, which are taken over respectively. At the end of such a cycle the girls do not come to the center at all for maybe a week. If they return to the center, everything starts over again almost automatically and repeats itself. New activities, like a dancing group that gets established by the girls, are integrated into this cycle as well. In this case it restricts the establishment of continuous training units. Therefore it is also probably too early in this case to consider the practice of dancing as a serious attempt to develop new biographical orientations.[25] It also has to be explored whether at least some of these girls will find the digital media helpful for re-orientation and the development of new biographical perspectives.

7. Transcription Guidelines

The following transcription guidelines are applied to the transcript:

Y: *abbreviation for "interviewer"*

Am: *abbreviations for "interviewed person No. A, male"*

example   underlined word means: *speaker emphasises word*

"example"   small circles before and after a word mean: *word spoken very quietly*

(2)   number in brackets means: *break of a duration in seconds according to the number in brackets*

⌊   tick: *overlap: speaker starts utterance while another person is speaking*

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[25] (See Bohnsack/Nohl 2001b for a detailed discussion of the development of new biographical orientations on the basis of actionism like dancing).

(example)	word in brackets means: *doubt in transcription: utterance cannot be understood clearly*
( )	brackets with space in between: *utterance cannot be understood at all*
@example@	word within @-signs: *person is laughing while speaking*
@(2)@	number in brackets within @-signs: *person is laughing for a duration in seconds according to the number in brackets*
((coughing))	words in double brackets: *comments on non-verbal utterances or explanations*

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