Privacy, Self-Disclosure, Social Support, and Social Network Site Use

Research Report of a Three-Year Panel Study

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Content

Selected publications related to this project:

Reinecke, L. & Trepte, S. (in press). Authenticity and well-being on social network sites: A two-wave longitudinal study on the effects of online-authenticity and the positivity bias in SNS communication. *Computers in Human Behavior*

Trepte, S. & Reinecke, L. (Eds.) (2011). *Privacy online. Perspectives on privacy and self-disclosure in the social web.* New York: Springer.

Trepte, S. & Reinecke, L. (2011). The social web as a shelter for privacy and authentic living. In S. Trepte & L. Reinecke (Eds.), *Privacy online. Perspectives on privacy and self-disclosure in the social web* (p. 61-74). Springer: Heidelberg, New York.

Trepte, S. (2012). Privatsphäre aus psychologischer Sicht. In J. Schmidt & T. Weichert (Hrsg.). *Datenschutz. Grundlagen, Entwicklungen, Kontroversen* (S. 59-66). Schriftenreihe der Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. Bonn.

Trepte, S., & Reinecke, L. (2013). The reciprocal effects of social network site use and the disposition for self-disclosure: A longitudinal study. *Computers in Human Behavior, 29*(3), 1102–1112.

Trepte, S., Dienlin, T., Reinecke, L. (in press). Risky behaviors—How online experiences influence privacy behaviors. In B. Stark, O. Quiring, & N. Jackob (Eds.), *Von der Gutenberg-Galaxis zur Google-Galaxis.* UVK: Wiesbaden.

Trepte, S., Dienlin, T., Reinecke, L. (in press). The influence of social support received in online and offline contexts on satisfaction with social support and satisfaction with life: A longitudinal study. Media Psychology. *Media Psychology.*

Trepte, S., & Dienlin, T. (in press). Privatsphäre im Internet. In T. Porsch & S. Pieschl (Eds.), *Neue Medien und deren Schatten.* Göttingen: Hogrefe.

Note:

1   Summary of Findings

This research report is based on a study that employed five waves of data collection using a 3-year panel design in Germany from October 2009 to April 2012. This report predominantly refers to waves one to four with N=327 participants. Participants gave answers to questions regarding media use, privacy behaviors, well-being, social support, authenticity, and specific online experiences. The major focus of this report was on the effects and correlates of behaviors and the psychometrics related to *Social Network Sites* (SNSs). The following key findings were observed:

1. Frequent users of SNSs showed more **online social capital bonding and online social capital bridging** compared to less frequent users.

2. Online social capital bonding was associated with higher positive affect, more offline social support, and higher levels of satisfaction with life. Online social capital bonding rose constantly across the two years of the study. Online social capital bridging was associated with higher positive affect and more offline social support.

3. Participants' **need for privacy increased** across the two years of the study.

4. The need for privacy was associated with numerous disadvantageous factors: People reporting higher needs for privacy were less satisfied with their lives, less authentic in their personal relationships as well as in their online profiles, and generally showed higher negative affect.

5. The time spent on SNSs was not associated with satisfaction with life or positive or negative affect.

6. People who spent more time on SNSs gave more personal information on their profiles, generally **published more content, were willing to disclose more personal information** in online communications, knew more ways to restrict access to their profiles, and were more authentic in their online profiles.

7. People who published more content on SNSs also reported having more **negative experiences** online. People who published more content had higher quantities of online social capital bonding and online social capital bridging.

8. People who had more negative experiences did not adopt more strategies to restrict access to their profiles.

9. Participants who **disclosed personal information** in online communications received more online social capital bonding, online social capital bridging, and more social support in offline contexts.

10. People who were willing to disclose more personal **information** in offline communications were more satisfied with their lives and showed higher positive affect.

11. The willingness to **disclose personal information in offline contexts** declined from T1 to T4, whereas **disclosures in online contexts** increased significantly.

12. **Being authentic** on SNSs and in personal relationships was associated with several beneficial variables: authentic participants reported receiving more social support, were more satisfied with their support, reported having more online social capital bonding, showed more positive as well as less negative affect, and had fewer negative experiences on SNSs.

2   Introduction

The data used in this research report stem from a 3-year panel study that was conducted in Germany from October 2009 until April 2012 (for an overview of all points of measurement, see Table 1). During the course of the study, every participant answered five questionnaires. The first four waves were separated by a time period of 6 months (T1-T4). The sample for this study consists of participants who completed the first four questionnaires completely ($N = 327$). For additional analyses, a follow-up measure was collected one year later (T5). The study was funded by the German Research Foundation.

Several variables were analyzed in this report. In order to provide an overview, all variables have been divided into five distinct groups: The first, labeled *Social Pattern of SNS Use* focuses on social and psychological measures (chapter 3.1). It incorporates results on online social capital, social support, satisfaction with life, and positive as well as negative emotions. The second, labeled *Privacy and Self-Disclosure* summarizes measures related to privacy, such as the need for privacy, quantity of information provided on users' profiles on SNSs, general self-disclosing behaviors, and aspects related to authenticity (chapter 3.2). The third, *Negative Experiences and Profile Restriction* addresses the users' assessment of online risks, their negative experiences, and their knowledge as well as their use of ways to restrict access to SNS profiles (chapter 3.3). The fourth, called *Online Behaviors* reports time spent on SNSs, amounts of published content on SNSs, and diverse specific actions on SNSs (chapter 3.4). Not all variables were surveyed at each wave in order to avoid an inflation of the questionnaires and thus to prevent a high drop-out rate.

As a final note, during the time of the study, Facebook gained a vast number of new users. In general, a large part of the German population started to use SNSs (BITKOM, 2012). Therefore, the time period during which the survey data were conducted covered an important period in the development of SNSs, and thus the data are valuable for describing the characteristics as well as the potential effects of SNS usage.

	Screening	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
Date	2009 (July-August)	2009 (October)	2010 (April)	2010 (October)	2011 (April)	2012 (April)
Finished	1507	921	695	566	457	277

Table 1: Overview of all points of measurement

3   Main Findings

In the following, we will present selected results from our study. The structure of each section is as follows: First, the variable will be briefly introduced and the questionnaire that was used will be presented. Second, the development of the variable across the four waves will be regarded. This development will be specified for three groups: The overall development for all participants, a comparison of the development between women and men, and the development for participants who showed either infrequent, average, or frequent use of Social

Media. Frequency of social media use was determined by ranking participants according to their time spent online and subsequently dividing the sample into three equally sized groups by means of a 33% percentile split. Third, a selection of correlations with other variables will be presented. To avoid reporting an inflation of correlations and to enable a general overview, we computed the average for each variable from T1 to T4. As an example, the four variables of online social capital bridging from T1-T4 were averaged into a single variable, which was then in turn correlated with other averaged variables. An overview of all significant correlations can be found in Table 6.

3.1 Social Pattern of SNS Use

3.1.1 Online Social Capital

People can benefit from social relationships by attaining social capital (Bourdieu, 1980). Social capital can thus be described as positive effects that result from social interaction. With the Online Social Capital Scale, Williams (2006) transferred the notion of social capital to digital contexts. The scale consists of two dimensions: online social capital bonding and online social capital bridging. The first defines social capital gains that result from close and strong social relationships, the latter as gains derived from distant and loose social network ties. The scale consists of ten items. Participants answered items on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*does not apply at all*) to 5 (*fully applies*). Example items are: "There is someone online on my SNS I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions", "When I feel lonely, there are several people online on my SNS I can talk to", and "The people I interact with online would be a good job references for me".
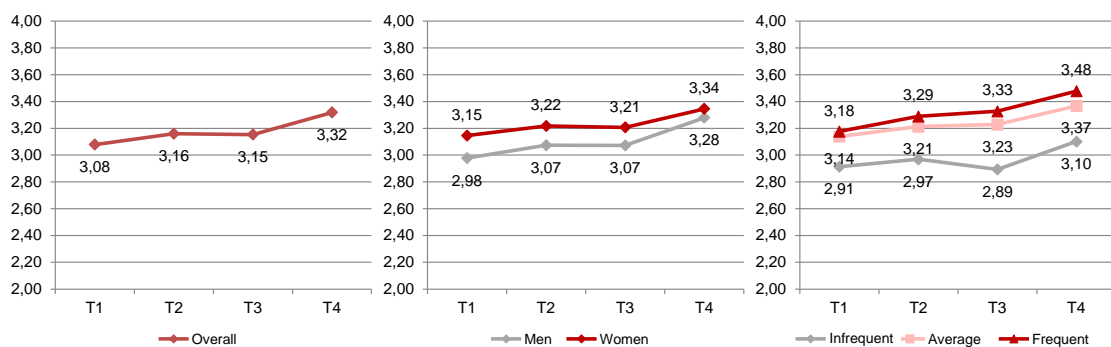
3.1.1.1 *Online Social Capital Bonding*

Figure 1: Means for online social capital bonding (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

As can be seen in Figure 1, online social capital bonding increased from T1 to T4. This change turned out to be statistically significant as revealed by a repeated measures ANOVA ($F(2.88, 817.85) = 15.61, p < .001$). From a visual standpoint, the online social capital bonding means for women were greater than those for men. Nevertheless, analyses showed that no significant difference existed ($F(1, 283) = 2.82, p = .094$). Still, as the *p*-value was below the .1 threshold, a tendency for an effect was found. Online social capital bonding means for

frequent users exceeded the means for average and infrequent users. This difference was statistically significant ($F_{(2, 282)}$ = 8.24, $p < .001$).

Several correlations between online social capital bonding and other variables were found. The strongest correlation was with online social capital bridging ($r = .39$, $p < .01$). This means that people who possessed a lot of social capital that resulted from close relationships also had higher amounts of social capital that stemmed from loose network ties. Ranked by magnitude, additional correlations with online social capital bonding were found for satisfaction with social support ($r = .39$, $p < .01$), online self-disclosure ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), profile authenticity ($r = .29$, $p < .01$), and offline self-disclosure ($r = .27$, $p < .01$). These correlations demonstrated that people with higher rates of online social capital bonding were more satisfied with the support they received from friends, disclosed more personal information in online contexts, reported being more authentic on their SNS profiles, and also disclosed more personal information in offline contexts. In addition to these findings, higher rates of online social capital bonding were also related to higher amounts of satisfaction with life ($r = .23$, $p < .01$), more positive and less negative affect ($r = .26$, $p < .01$, $r = -.19$, $p < .01$), more pieces of information on SNS profiles ($r = .26$, $p < .01$), and larger quantities of published content on SNSs ($r = .25$, $p < .01$).

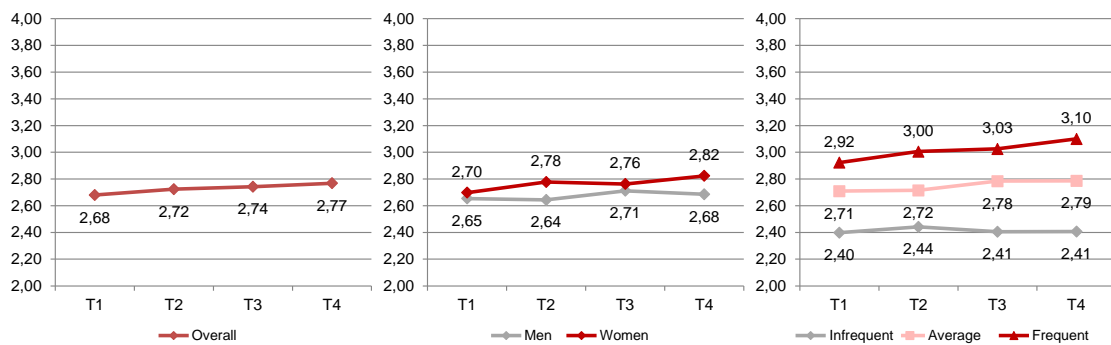### 3.1.1.2 *Online Social Capital Bridging*

Figure 2: Means for online social capital bridging (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

As can be seen in Figure 2, online social capital bridging increased slightly from T1 to T4. This increase did not turn out to be statistically significant as revealed by a repeated measures ANOVA ($F_{(2.88, 891.66)}$ = 1.80, $p = .148$). Analyses showed that gender differences had to be considered unsystematic ($F_{(1, 309)}$ = 1.12, $p = .290$). Online social capital bridging means for frequent users significantly exceeded the means for average and infrequent users ($F_{(2, 308)}$ = 18.46, $p < .001$).

Remarkably, the highest correlation for online social capital bridging was found with the quantity of published content ($r = .40$, $p < .01$). This showed that people who were active contributors of personal content on SNSs reported a higher amount of online social capital bridging. Additional correlations for online social capital bridging were found with online social capital bonding ($r = .39$, $p < .01$), the quantity of profile information ($r = .30$, $p < .01$), and profile authenticity ($r = .21$, $p < .01$). People with higher amounts of online social capital bridging had more social capital that stemmed from close relationships, provided more personal

information on their SNS profiles, and had SNS profiles that more realistically resembled their actual personalities. Notably, in contrast to online social capital bonding, online social capital bridging was not associated with a higher satisfaction with life.

3.1.2 Social Support

For this study, social support was assessed with Schwarzer's (1991) short version of the UCLA Social Support Inventory (Dunkel-Schetter, Feinstein, & Call, 1986). Social support can be regarded from two viewpoints: how *often* social support was received and the *satisfaction* with received social support.

Frequency of social support generally measures how often participants received informational, emotional, and instrumental support from specific sources. These sources are divided into four groups: support from friends, family, romantic partners, and groups/organizations. Participants answered four items for all groups on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). Example items are: "How often did you receive words of advice or useful pieces of information over the last month?", "How often did people listen carefully to you and show compassion over the last month?", and "Sometimes we want to receive support in the form of actions, e.g., by having somebody do our shopping, offer us a lift, or lend us a specific object. How often did people support you through concrete actions over the last month?"

Satisfaction with social support was surveyed with four items from the UCLA Social Support Inventory (Dunkel-Schetter, et al., 1986). All items resembled the following structure: "In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with all the information and advice you have received in the last month?" Participants reported their satisfaction with social support on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*totally discontent*) to 7 (*totally content*).

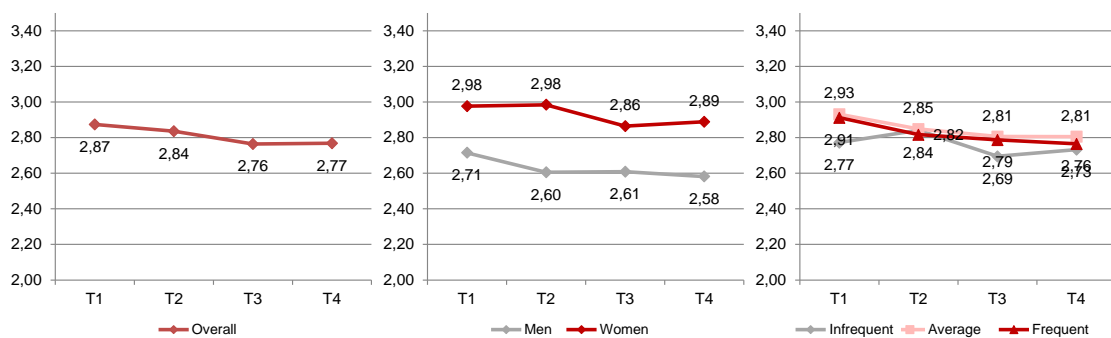3.1.2.1   *Frequency of Social Support*

Figure 3: Means for frequency of social support (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

Figure 3 shows that the frequency of social support declined from T1 to T4. This decline turned out to be statistically significant as revealed by a repeated measures ANOVA ($F(2.91, 859.01) = 4.93, p = .002$). The mean values for frequency of social support for women exceeded those for men; again, analyses indicated that this difference was significant ($F(1, 294) = 23.08, p < .001$). No tendency toward an influence of SNS use on frequency of social support was found ($F(2, 293) = 0.65, p = .522$).

The strongest correlations for frequency of social support were found with both satisfaction with life (r = .49, $p < .01$) and the authenticity subscale "relational orientation" ($r = .49$, $p < .01$). Results imply that people who received more social support were more satisfied with their lives and more authentic in their interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, frequency of social support was associated with satisfaction with social support (r = .42, $p < .01$), need for privacy ($r = -.42$, $p < .01$), positive affect ($r = .41$, $p < .01$), offline self-disclosure (r = .36, $p < .01$), and negative affect ($r = -.35$, $p < .01$). These correlations showed that people who received more social support were also more satisfied with the support they received, had less need for privacy, showed higher positive affect, and disclosed more information offline.

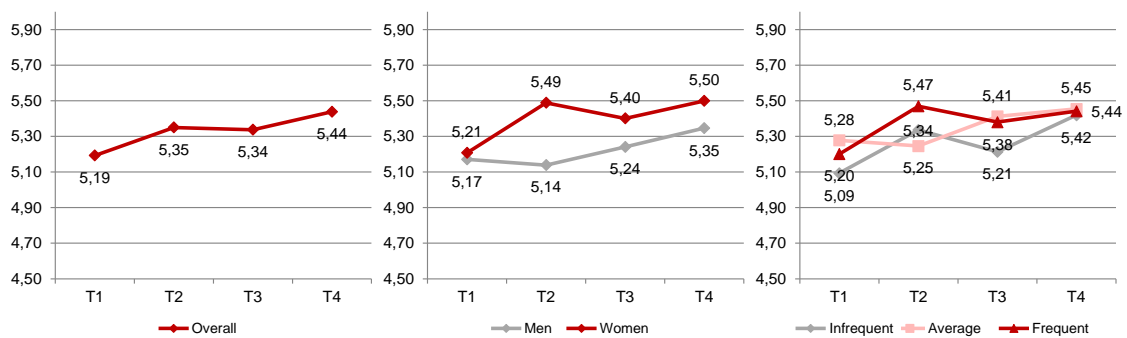### 3.1.2.2   *Satisfaction with Social Support*

Figure 4: Means for satisfaction with social support (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

As can be seen in Figure 4, satisfaction with social support rose from T1 to T4. This development was statistically significant as revealed by a repeated measures ANOVA ($F(2.91, 916.28) = 4.54$, $p = .004$). The mean values for frequency of social support for women were higher than those for men; again, analyses showed that this difference was significant ($F(1, 314) = 4.56$, $p = .033$). No tendency toward an influence of SNS use on frequency of social support was found ($F(2, 313) = 0.63$, $p = .532$).

The strongest association with satisfaction with social support was found for satisfaction with life (r = .43, $p < .01$). People who were more satisfied with the social support they received were also more satisfied with their lives. Additional correlations with satisfaction with social support were found in the following order of magnitude: social support frequency ($r = .42$, $p < .01$), positive affect ($r = .35$, $p < .01$), profile authenticity ($r = .28$, $p < .01$), and the authenticity subscale "relational orientation" ($r = .27$, $p < .01$). People who were more satisfied with the social support they received also reported more social support, showed more positive affect, and were more authentic on their SNS profiles as well as in their interpersonal relationships.
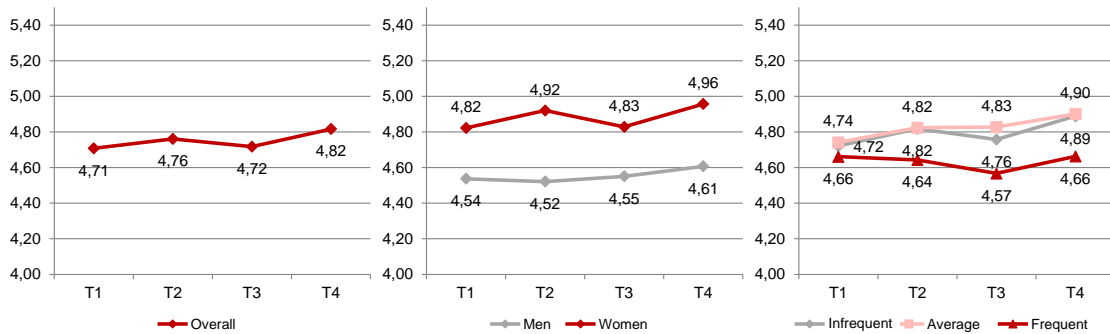
3.1.3 Satisfaction with Life

Figure 5: Means for satisfaction with life (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

Satisfaction with life measures the way in which people evaluate their overall existence. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) that we used for this survey includes five items: "In most ways my life is close to my ideal"; "The conditions of my life are excellent"; "I am satisfied with my life"; "So far I have gotten the important things I want in my life"; "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing". Participants rated all items on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*total disagreement*) to 7 (*total agreement*).

Figure 5 shows that satisfaction with life remained comparatively invariant from T1 to T4. This was also shown by the ANOVA, which revealed no significant effect ($F(2.87, 921.38) = 2.02, p = .112$). The mean values for women's satisfaction with life surpassed those for men, and analyses indicated that this difference was significant ($F(1, 320) = 6.43, p = .012$). No tendency toward an influence of SNS use on satisfaction with life was found ($F(2, 319) = 0.87, p = .419$).

Satisfaction with life was strongly associated with positive as well as negative affect rates ($r = .55, p < .01$, $r = .49, p < .01$). People who were more satisfied with their lives reported that their feelings over the last four weeks were more of a positive and less of a negative nature. Additional correlations for satisfaction with life were found with negative affect ($r = -.50, p < .01$), satisfaction with social support ($r = .49, p < .01$), need for privacy ($r = -.46, p < .01$), social support frequency ($r = .43, p < .01$), and the authenticity subscale "relational orientation" ($r = .30, p < .01$).

3.1.4 Positive and Negative Affect

People show various emotional conditions that have been broadly categorized into positive and negative affect. One approved scale for measuring affect is the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS, Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1998). Participants indicated the extent to which each of 20 adjectives (e.g., "active" or "irritable") described their affective state during the past four weeks on a scale from 1 (*very slightly* or *not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*).
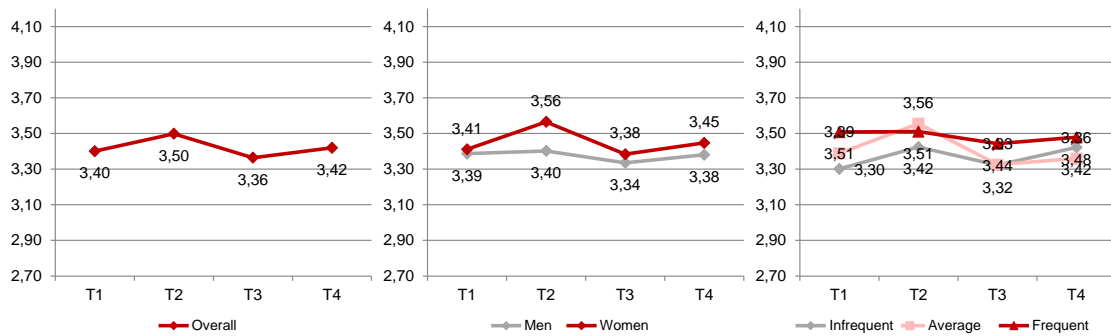
3.1.4.1   *Positive Affect*

Figure 6: Means for positive affect (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

Though not visually apparent, calculations showed that positive affect changed significantly from T1 to T4 ($F(2.91, 909.04) = 4.37$, $p = .005$). However, the means between T1 and T4 did not differ. This implies that positive affect fluctuated between T1 and T4, but did not change consistently in one specific direction. No effect of gender and type of usage occurred ($F(1, 311) = 1.68$, $p = .196$; $F(2, 310) = 1.45$, $p = .237$). The means for positive affect rates can be found in Figure 6.

Positive affect was correlated with several variables. The highest association was found with satisfaction with life ($r = .49$, $p < .01$). People who showed more positive affect were also more satisfied with their lives. Moreover, additional correlations with positive affect were found for negative affect ($r = -.41$, $p < .01$), satisfaction with social support ($r = .41$, $p < .01$), frequency of social support ($r = .35$, $p < .01$), need for privacy ($r = -.39$, $p < .01$), the authenticity subscale "relational orientation" ($r = .35$, $p < .01$), and profile authenticity ($r = .31$, $p < .01$). These correlations demonstrated that people who had higher positive affect also reported lower negative affect, were more satisfied with the support they received and generally received more support, had less need for privacy, and were more authentic on their SNS profiles as well as in their personal relationships. Notably, people with more positive affect also disclosed more personal information in offline contexts ($r = .27$, $p < .01$)—but not in online contexts.
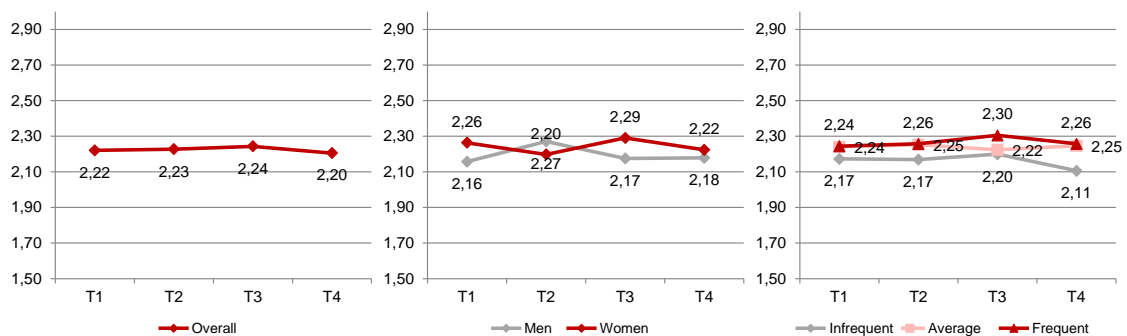
3.1.4.2   *Negative Affect*

Figure 7: Means for negative affect (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

Means for negative affect rates can be found in Figure 7. As the graphs already imply, calculations showed that no significant effects existed for time ($F(3, 951) = .34, p = .797$), gender ($F(1, 316) = 0.63, p = .428$), or type of usage ($F(2, 315) = 1.07, p = .346$).

Similar to positive affect, negative affect was correlated with the following variables: Satisfaction with life ($r = -.50, p < .01$), need for privacy ($r = .41, p < .01$), positive affect ($r = -.41, p < .01$), satisfaction with social support ($r = -.35, p < .01$), profile authenticity ($r = -.28, p < .01$), and the authenticity subscale "relational orientation" ($r = -.26, p < .01$). These correlations indicate that people who reported more negative emotions also reported being less satisfied with their lives, having a higher need for privacy, showed less positive affect, were less satisfied with the social support they received, and were less authentic on SNSs as well as in their interpersonal relationships. Negative affect was also positively correlated with negative experiences ($r = .24, p < .01$), revealing that people who reported higher negative affect also experienced more problems on SNSs. Interestingly, negative affect was not associated with frequency of social support, indicating that the level of negative emotions people showed was not related to the frequency of social support they received.

3.2 Privacy and Self-Disclosure
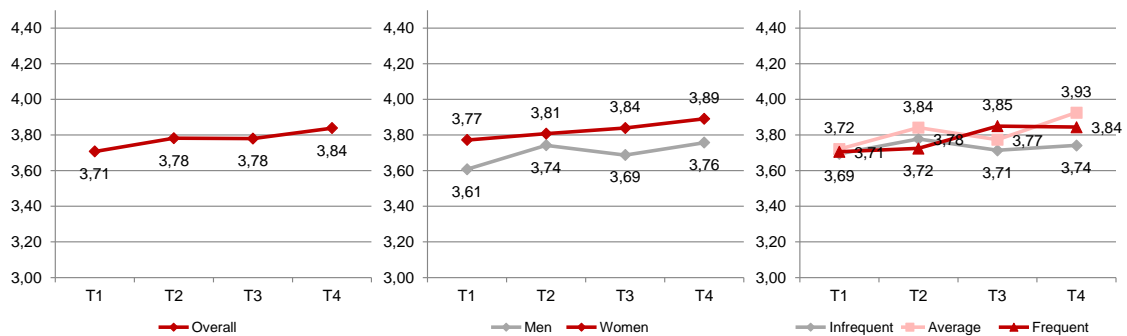
3.2.1 Need for Privacy

Figure 8: Means for need for privacy (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

Need for privacy measures an individual's desire for undisturbed and protected contexts and was assessed with the Psychological Dimensions of the Self scale by Buss (2001). Example items are "When I am at home, I leave the curtains closed, even when I'm not naked" or "I do not talk about personal issues unless my conversation partner brings them up first". The scale consists of nineteen items, which participants had to answer on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*total disagreement*) to 7 (*total agreement*).

As presented in Figure 8, the need for privacy increased from T1 to T4. This was confirmed by the ANOVA, which revealed a significant effect ($F(3, 924) = 5.07, p = .002$). The mean values for need for privacy for women were greater than those for men; all the same, analyses showed that this difference was not significant ($F(1, 307) = 2.08, p = .150$). No tendency toward an influence of SNS use on need for privacy was found ($F(2, 306) = 0.31, p = .737$).

Need for privacy was associated with several variables. The strongest correlation was found with the authenticity subscale "relational orientation" ($r = -.48, p < .01$). Generally, need for privacy was correlated with satisfaction with life ($r = -.46, p < .01$), offline self-disclosure ($r = -.44, p < .01$), satisfaction with social support ($r = -.42, p < .01$), negative affect ($r = .41, p < .01$), and positive affect ($r = -.39, p < .01$). People who showed a higher need to safeguard their privacy were also less authentic in their social relationships, less satisfied with their entire lives, disclosed more personal information in offline contexts, were less satisfied with the support they received, and reported higher levels of negative affect and less positive affect.
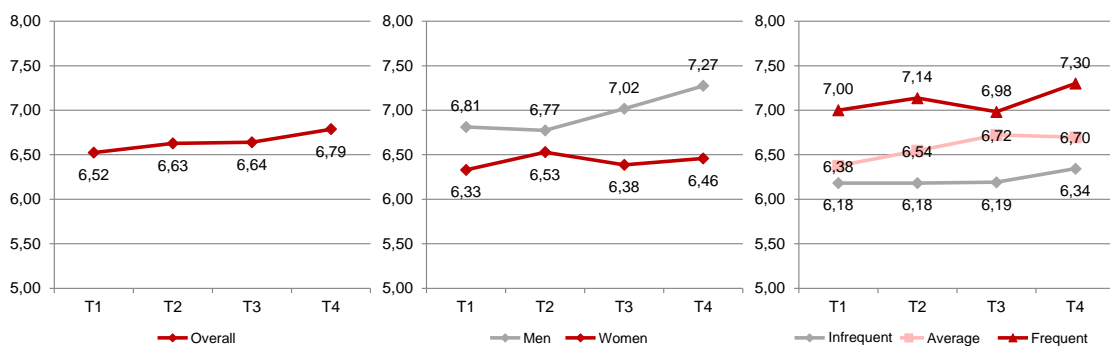
3.2.2 Profile Information

Figure 9: Amount of personal information (e.g., name, address) provided on SNS Profiles (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

Furthermore, the nature of participants' profiles on SNSs was investigated. Participants were asked if their SNS profile included specific information such as their name or their address. Participants had to address thirteen different possible kinds of information with either *yes*, *no* or *I don't know*. Table 2 shows all the pieces of information respondents provided on T4.

As reported in Figure 9, the quantity of information given on SNS profiles increased from T1 to T4. Nonetheless, the ANOVA showed that this increase was not significant ($F(2.69, 876.91) = 2.30, p = .083$). The resulting *p*-value, which was below .1, indicated a possible trend all the same. The mean values for men's quantity of given information were greater than those for women, and this difference was statistically significant ($F(1, 325) = 7.40, p = .007$). The frequency of SNS use showed a significant effect ($F(2, 324) = 6.79, p = .001$)—frequent users provided more information on their SNS profiles compared to less frequent users.

Substantial associations with the quantity of information reported on SNS profiles were found for online social capital bridging and online social capital bonding ($r = .30, p < .01; r = .26, p < .01$), as well as online self-disclosure ($r = .23, p < .01$). In other words, people who indicated displaying more pieces of personal information on SNSs also possessed more social capital that came from loose as well as close social network ties.

Information provided on SNS profile	Yes	(in %)	No	(in %)
Fotos of oneself	302	(93 %)	23	(7 %)
Fotos of friends	215	(66 %)	110	(34 %)
First name	279	(86 %)	45	(14 %)
Last name	230	(71 %)	93	(29 %)
School/University/Employer	241	(74 %)	82	(25 %)
Cellphone	37	(11 %)	285	(88 %)
Instant-Messenger name	95	(29 %)	227	(70 %)
E-Mail	136	(42 %)	184	(57 %)
Link to blog	287	(88 %)	36	(11 %)
Local residence	269	(83 %)	51	(16 %)
Music/Audiofiles	47	(14 %)	275	(85 %)
Video	61	(19 %)	261	(80 %)
Comments/Statusupdates	271	(83 %)	49	(15 %)

Table 2: Information provided on profiles

3.2.3 Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure measures the extent to which people communicate personal and intimate feelings to specific interaction partners. In this study, The Self-Disclosure Index by Miller, Berger, and Archer (1983) was adopted. Furthermore, this measure differentiates between the quantity of information people were eager to disclose in offline versus in online contexts. Participants were asked to rate their willingness to disclose ten different categories of personal information (e.g., "My deepest feelings", "My close relationships with other people", or "Things I have done that I feel guilty about") to a friend online/offline on a scale ranging from 1 (*discuss not at all*) to 5 (*discuss fully and completely*).
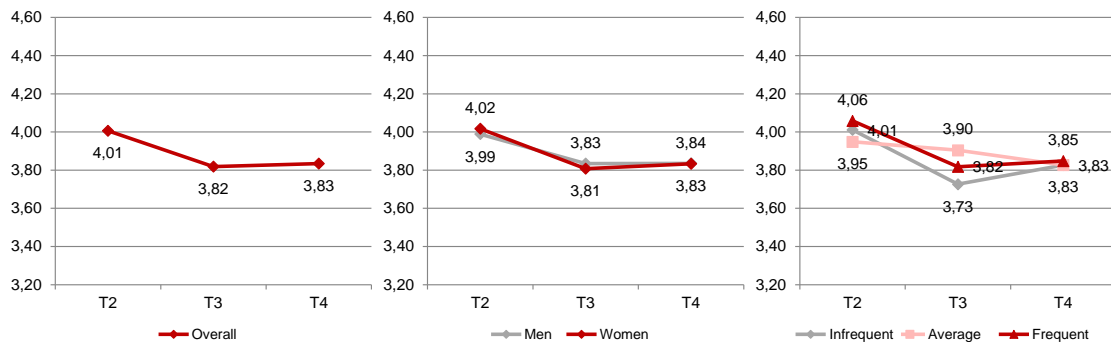
3.2.3.1   *Offline self-disclosure*

Figure 10: Means for offline self-disclosure (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

As can be seen in Figure 10, the amount of self-disclosure in offline contexts decreased from T2 to T4. The ANOVA revealed that this effect was significant ($F(1.96, 629,27) = 11.40$, $p < .001$). Gender as well as frequency of SNS usage did not influence the amount of offline self-disclosure ($F(1, 320) < 0.01$, $p = .997$; $F(2, 319) = 1.99$, $p = .820$).

Not unexpectedly, self-disclosure in offline contexts was most closely correlated with self-disclosure in online contexts ($r = .59$, $p < .01$), thus indicating that the participants' disclosure behavior was similar between offline and online contexts. Additionally, a strong correlation with the authenticity subscale "relational orientation" was found ($r = .55$, $p < .01$), indicating that people who disclosed more in offline contexts were also more authentic in their overall relationship behavior. Offline self-disclosure was also correlated with need for privacy ($r = -.44$, $p < .01$), satisfaction with social support ($r = .36$, $p < .01$), profile authenticity ($r = .30$, $p < .01$), and positive affect ($r = .27$, $p < .01$). Hence, people who communicated more personal information in the offline world needed less privacy, were more satisfied with the social support they received, were more authentic on their SNS profiles, and reported feeling more positive emotions. Notably, people who disclosed more information in offline contexts did not provide more pieces of information on their SNS profiles and did not publish more content online.
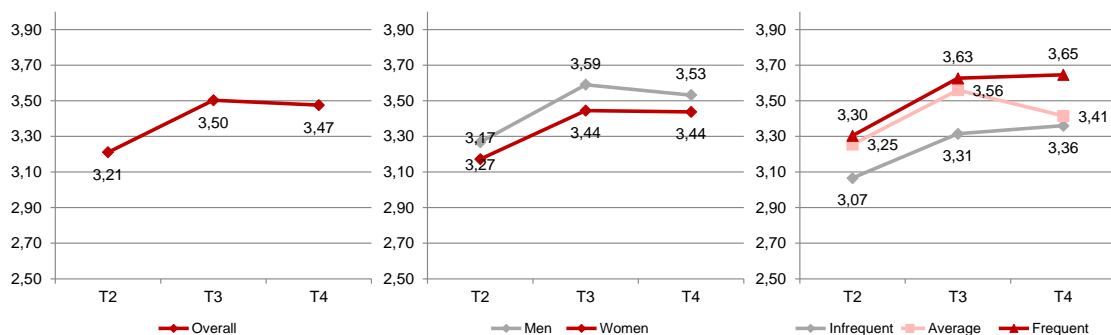
3.2.3.2   *Online self-disclosure*

Figure 11: Means for online self-disclosure (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

Figure 11 shows that the amount of self-disclosure in online contexts increased from T2 to T4. An ANOVA indicated that this effect was significant ($F(2, 646) = 18.94$, $p < .001$). Gender did not have an influence on the amount of online self-disclosure ($F(1, 320) < 0.01$, $p = .997$). By contrast, the frequency of SNS usage affected self-disclosure in the online world ($F(2, 321) = 4.13$, $p = .017$).

The strongest correlation for online self-disclosure was found with offline self-disclosure ($r = .59$, $p < .01$). Subsequently, significant correlations with online self-disclosure were also found for online social capital bonding ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), the authenticity subscale "relational orientation" ($r = .29$, $p < .01$), published content ($r = .24$, $p < .01$), and the quantity of profile information ($r = .23$, $p < .01$). People who were willing to provide larger quantities of personal information in online communications also showed higher amounts of social capital that stemmed from close relationships, were more authentic in their everyday relationships, produced

more comments and postings on SNSs, and generally disclosed more personal information on their SNS profiles.

3.2.4 Authenticity

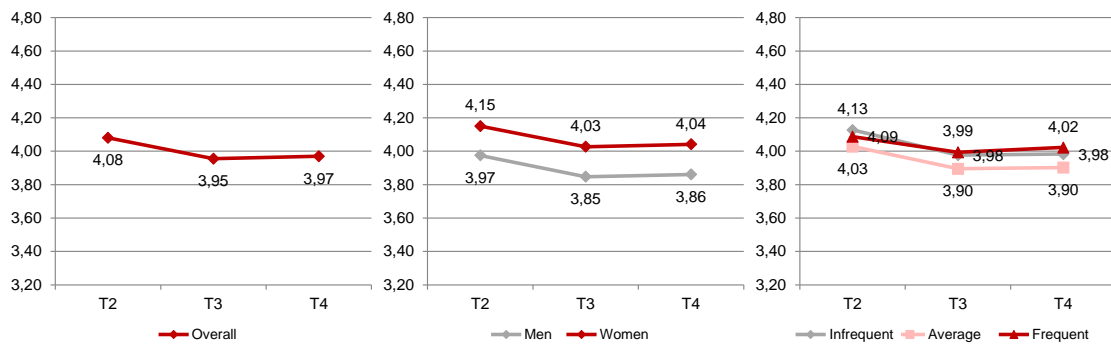#### 3.2.4.1 *Relational Orientation Authenticity*

Figure 12: Means for the authenticity subscale "relational orientation" (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

The dimension "relational orientation" of the Authenticity Inventory by Kernis and Goldman (2006) was surveyed to assess participants' degree of authentic behavior in personal relationships. The twelve items were answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*absolutely disagree*) to 5 (*fully agree*). Example items are "I want people with whom I am close to understand my weaknesses" and "I want close others to understand the real me rather than just my public persona or 'image'".

The means for the relational orientation subscale of authenticity are portrayed in Figure 12. Though not visually obvious, a significant decrease in relational orientation was found ($F(2, 636) = 17.75$, $p < .001$). Additionally, a gender effect was found ($F(1, 317) = 12.22$, $p = .001$). By contrast, frequency of SNS usage did not affect relational orientation ($F(2, 316) = 1.42$, $p = .244$).

Several significant correlations with relational orientation were found, the strongest one with offline self-disclosure ($r = .55$, $p < .01$). Among others, relational orientation was also correlated with satisfaction with social support ($r = .49$, $p < .01$), the need for privacy ($r = -.48$, $p < .01$), profile authenticity ($r = .41$, $p < .01$), positive affect ($r = .35$, $p < .01$), satisfaction with life ($r = .30$, $p < .01$), disclosure online ($r = .29$, $p < .01$), and negative affect ($r = -.28$, $p < .01$). People who were more authentic in their relationships thus were more satisfied with the support they received, needed less privacy, had more accurate SNS profiles, were more satisfied with their lives, reported experiencing more positive affect, communicated more personal content online, and reported less negative emotion.
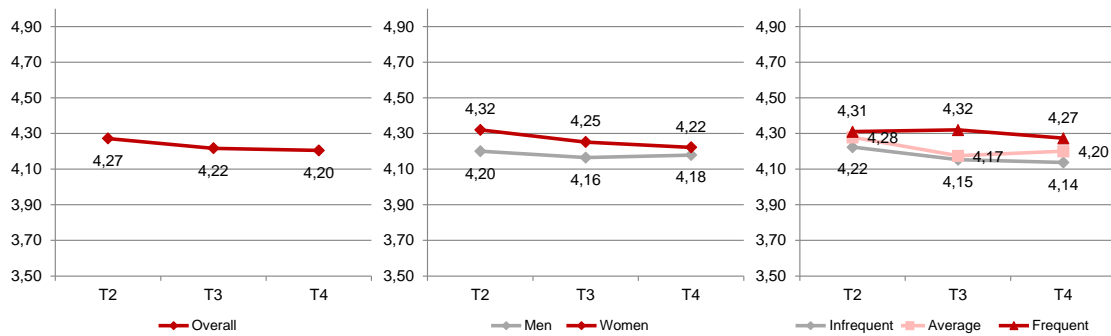
3.2.4.2   *Profile Authenticity*

Figure 13: Means for profile authenticity (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

Additionally, the authenticity of SNS profiles was estimated. Thus, the Integrated Self-Discrepancy Index (ISDI, Hardin & Lakin, 2009) was adopted in a slightly altered version: In the beginning, participants were asked to reflect on their online profile. They were asked to name five adjectives that "describe the person you represent in your online profile on [name of preferred network]" and subsequently to rate the extent to which each of the five adjectives describes who they "really are" on a scale from 1 (*does not describe me at all*) to 5 (*describes me very well*).

As Figure 13 shows, the mean values for profile authenticity did not change over time. That said, a trend toward a statistically significant decline was found ($F(2, 636) = 2.78, p = .063$). Equally, gender did not turn out to be a significant factor with regard to profile authenticity although a statistical trend occurred ($F(1, 317) = 2.81, p = .095$). The same was true for the effect of SNS use as we found merely a statistical trend that indicated that frequent users showed higher degrees of authenticity than less frequent users ($F(2, 316) = 2.39, p = .093$).

Profile authenticity was most strongly correlated with the authenticity subscale "relational orientation" ($r = .41, p < .01$). Subsequently, correlations with positive affect ($r = .31, p < .01$), satisfaction with social support ($r = .31, p < .01$), offline self-disclosure ($r = .30, p < .01$), online social capital bonding ($r = .29, p < .01$), social support frequency ($r = .28, p < .01$), and need for privacy followed ($r = -.28, p < .01$). In other words, people who used a more authentic self-presentation on SNSs were also more authentic in their personal relationships, reported experiencing more positive emotions, were more satisfied with the social support they received, were willing to communicate more personal information in offline contexts, had more social capital stemming from close relationships, received more social support, and needed less privacy.

3.3 Negative Experiences and Profile Restriction
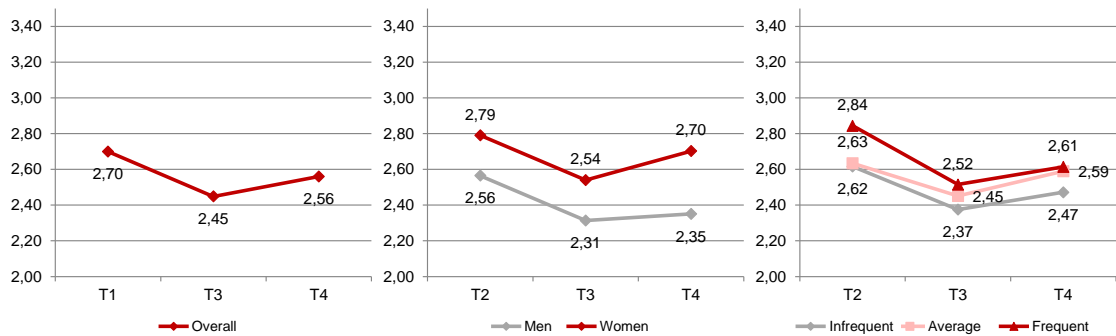
3.3.1 Risk Assessment

Figure 14: Means for risk assessment (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

Risk assessment defines the extent to which people associate danger with behaviors relating to SNSs. Items asking for the individuals' risk assessment were developed specifically for this study. We formulated six items, which participants had to rate on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 5 (*very likely*). Example items are: "Somebody will spread a rumor about you in the online community", "Somebody will post pictures that are embarrassing to you".

As can be seen in Figure 14, the overall means for risk assessment declined from T1 to T4. The ANOVA showed that this effect was significant ($F(1.92, 626.91) = 14.32, p < .001$). Additionally, risk assessment differed significantly by gender ($F(1, 325) = 9.91, p = .002$). By contrast, the frequency of SNS usage did not affect the amount of risk assessment ($F(2, 324) = 1.35, p = .261$).

Risk assessment was most closely correlated with negative experiences ($r = .31, p < .01$). Thus, people who perceived SNS use as more dangerous also reported experiencing more difficult situations on SNSs. Furthermore, correlations with profile restriction use ($r = -.19, p < .05$), social support frequency ($r = .17, p < .01$), negative affect ($r = .16, p < .01$), and online social capital bridging ($r = .14, p < .05$) were found. In other words, people who evaluated SNS use as more dangerous employed fewer strategies to restrict their profiles and showed higher amounts of received social support, more negative emotions, and more online social capital bridging. The fact that people who assessed SNSs as more dangerous used fewer means to restrict access to their profiles is striking. This finding might correspond with the privacy paradox, which says that privacy-related fears do not translate into actual behavior (Barnes, 2006). By contrast, it can be argued that because people used more restriction measures, they became more confident and evaluated the risks associated with SNSs as less prevalent.
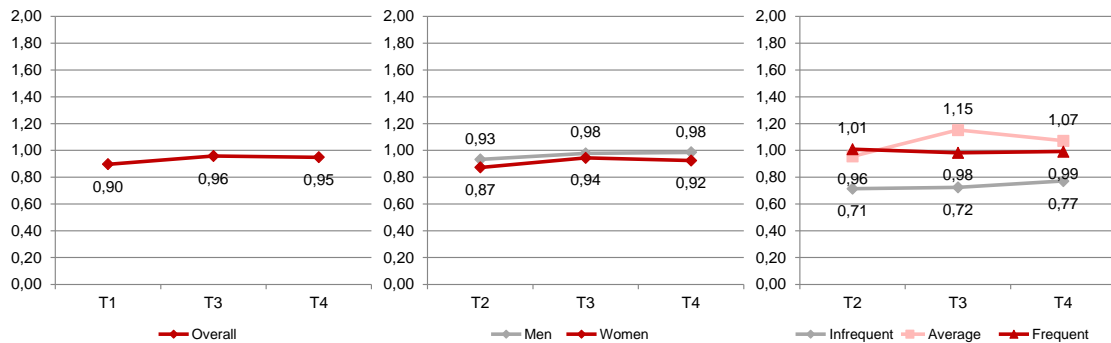
3.3.2 Negative Experiences

Figure 15: Means for negative experiences (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

Six items rating the negative experiences that people had already encountered on SNSs followed the same structure as the ones measuring risk assessment. This time, participants did not have to report the likelihood of a given event. Instead, they had to report whether the respective event had happened within the last two months. Thus, study participants were asked to use the answer categories *yes*, *no*, or *I don't know*. To form the scale, all positive answers were summed.

Figure 15 shows that the means for negative experiences remained constant from T1 to T4. The ANOVA did not show a significant effect ($F(1.94, 630.77) = 0.76$, $p = .466$). Additionally, gender did not affect negative experiences ($F(1, 325) = 0.30$, $p = .585$). The frequency of SNS usage influenced the number of negative experiences ($F(2, 324) = 4.52$, $p = .012$)—the more people used SNSs, the more negative experiences they reported.

The closest relation with negative experiences was found for risk assessment ($r = .31$, $p < .01$). In addition, correlations with negative affect ($r = .24$, $p < .01$), published content ($r = .19$, $p < .01$), and profile authenticity ($r = -.15$, $p < .01$) were revealed. Thus, people who experienced more negative events also showed higher negative affect, posted more comments and status updates, and were less authentic in their online profiles.

3.3.3 Profile Restriction

In order to test how informed and active participants were in terms of privacy issues relating to SNSs, a novel set of items was developed specifically for this study. Six items measured whether participants knew of certain strategies that could be employed to restrict access to their profiles, and six items measured whether participants also applied the respective strategies on their SNS profiles. One example items is: "Do you know how to determine whether your profile can be found via search engines such as google.com? If so, are you doing this?" Participants answered the knowledge and usage questions with *yes*, *no*, or *I don't know*.
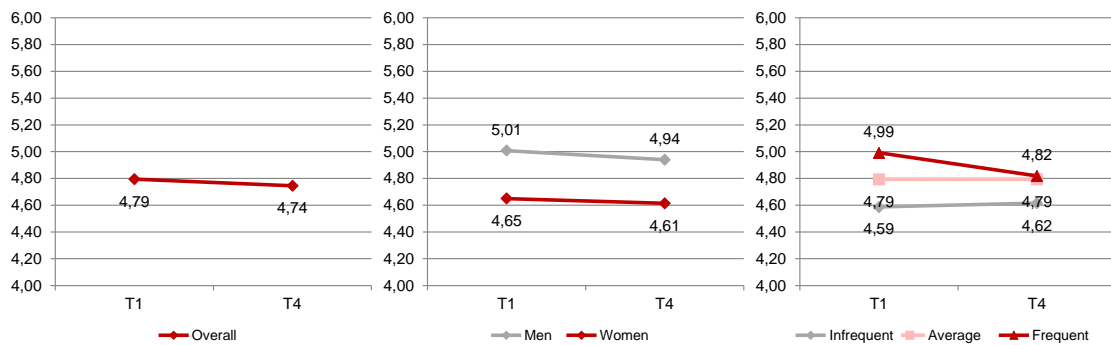
3.3.3.1 Profile Restriction Knowledge

Figure 16: Means for profile restriction knowledge (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

Figure 16 displays the means for knowledge about how to restrict access to an SNS profile. The difference between T1 and T4 was not significant, implying that the knowledge of restriction measures did not change across the two years ($F(1, 324) = 0.36$, $p = .548$). Men reported more profile restriction knowledge than women ($F(1, 323) = 9.80$, $p = .002$). Although not statistically significant, a trend was found indicating that more frequent SNS use was associated with increased levels of profile restriction knowledge ($F(2, 322) = 2.65$, $p = .072$).

Only a few variables were associated with profile restriction knowledge. The closest relation was found with profile restriction usage ($r = .59$, $p < .01$), followed by published content ($r = .20$, $p < .01$) and quantity of information on profiles ($r = .13$, $p < .05$). People who had more knowledge about potential restriction strategies also employed more ways to restrict their profiles, published more personal communications on SNS, and provided more personal information on their profiles.
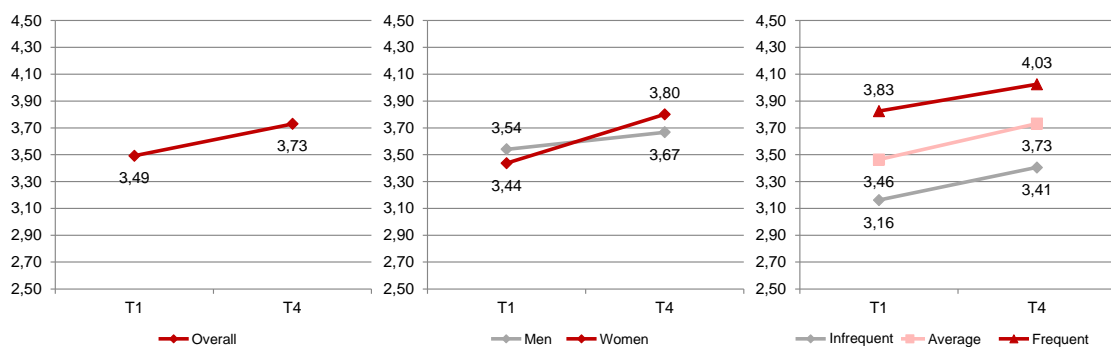
3.3.3.2 Profile Restriction Usage

Figure 17: Means for SNS profile access restriction (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

The mean values for profile restriction usage increased from T1 to T4, which is displayed in Figure 17; that said, only a statistical trend was detected ($F(1, 117) = 3.42$, $p = .067$). Men and women did not differ with regard

to their profile restriction usage ($F(1, 116) < .01$, $p = .948$). From a visual evaluation, frequency of SNS use seems to have affected profile restriction usage; all the same, again, only a statistical trend was detected ($F(2, 115) = 2.70$, $p = .072$).

Once more, profile restriction usage was most closely related to profile restriction knowledge ($r = .59$, $p < .01$). Another weak correlation with profile restriction usage was found for risk assessment ($r = -.19$, $p < .05$). People who used more ways to restrict usage thus showed better knowledge of profile restriction and less fear about SNS use.

3.4 Online Behaviors

3.4.1 Published Content
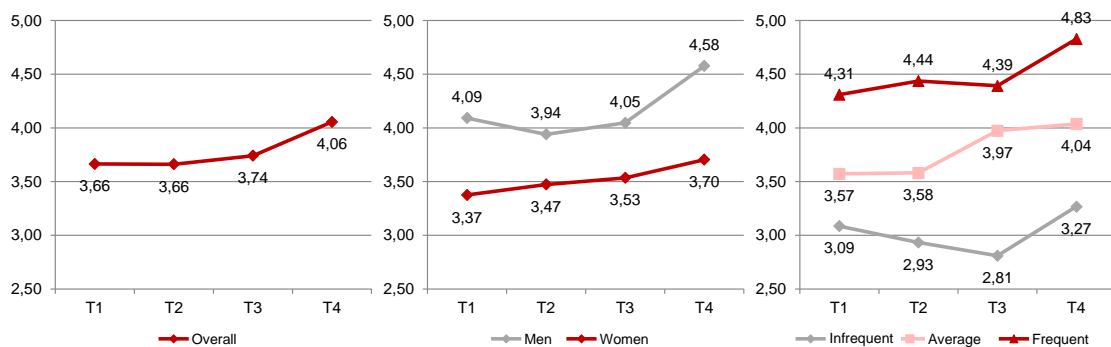
Figure 18: Means for published content (left: overall score; middle: gender; right: frequency of use)

Participants were asked how much content they generally published online. Developed specifically for this study, the item was: "How often do you publish content on the Internet, for example, by posting status updates, comments, or videos on user boards, blogs, or SNSs?"

The mean values for published content increased from T1 to T4, as can be seen in Figure 18. All three effects were significant ($F(2.86, 933.61) = 9.00$, $p < .001$). Men exceeded women with regard to published content ($F(1, 325) = 16.32$, $p < .001$), and people who frequented SNSs more often produced significantly more content ($F(2, 324) = 33.25$, $p < .001$).

The strongest correlation with published content occurred for online social capital bridging ($r = .40$, $p < .01$). Hence, people who communicated more—for example, via status updates—reported more social capital that stemmed from loose network ties. Furthermore, correlations with published content also occurred for quantity of profile information ($r = .33$, $p < .01$), online social capital bonding ($r = .25$, $p < .01$), online self-disclosure ($r = .24$, $p < .01$), and profile restriction knowledge ($r = .20$, $p < .01$). People who published more content generally posted more personal information on their profiles, showed higher amounts of social capital that resulted from close relationships, and knew more ways to restrict access to their SNS profiles.

3.4.2 Time Spent on SNSs

	Mean	Mean (men)	Mean (women)	< 1x per month	1x per month	1x per 2 weeks	1x per week	> 1x per week	≥ 1x per day
Time on SNS (T1)	5,74	5,66	5,80	0 (0 %)	1 (0 %)	4 (1 %)	7 (2 %)	54 (17 %)	261 (80 %)
Time on SNS (T2)	5,68	5,59	5,74	0 (0 %)	2 (1 %)	5 (2 %)	10 (3 %)	61 (19 %)	248 (76 %)
Time on SNS (T3)	5,66	5,57	5,71	3 (1 %)	1 (0 %)	5 (2 %)	10 (3 %)	58 (18 %)	249 (76 %)
Time on SNS (T4)	5,72	5,69	5,74	2 (1 %)	0 (0 %)	4 (1 %)	10 (3 %)	49 (15 %)	260 (80 %)

Table 3: Time spent on SNSs
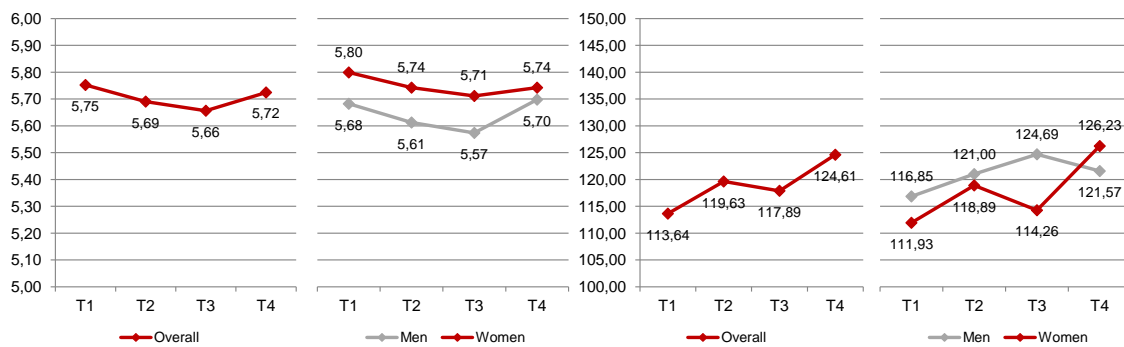
Figure 19: Means for time spent on SNSs measured with ordinal (left) and metric scales (right; minutes per day)

Two variables were used to measure the time spent on SNSs. In a first step, users were asked: "How often do you log into your favorite SNS account?" Possible answers ranged from 1 (*less than once a month*) to 6 (*daily*). The results are presented in Table 3. Furthermore, in a second step, participants who replied *daily* were asked how many hours and minutes per day they spent on SNSs.

Results for both variables produced somewhat diverse findings (see Figure 19). Concerning the development of SNSs as assessed on an ordinal scale, a slight visual decrease of SNS use could be observed; all the same, results did not a show a statistically significant difference but rather only a trend ($F(2.68, 863.77) = 2.59$, $p = .059$). Women and men did not differ in SNS usage; nevertheless, a trend showing that women used SNSs more than men was found ($F(1, 321) = 3.09$, $p = .080$). For people who logged into their SNS account on a daily basis, the results were different. This time, from a visual viewpoint, the means seemed to have risen. Be that as it may, this increase was not significant ($F(2.72, 505.53) = 0.92$, $p = .426$). Besides, no gender effect

occurred for time spent on SNSs ($F(1, 185) = 0.52$, $p = .820$). Altogether, we found that the time spent on SNSs did not differ from T1-T4.

The following correlations were significant: Time on SNSs measured on an ordinal scale was associated with published content ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), online social capital bridging ($r = .27$, $p < .01$), online social capital bonding ($r = .21$, $p < .01$), quantity of profile information ($r = .20$, $p < .01$), profile restriction knowledge ($r = .19$, $p < .01$), and online self-disclosure ($r = .15$, $p < .01$). People who spent more time on SNSs also communicated more via status updates or comments, reported possessing more online social capital bridging and online social capital bonding, provided more information on their SNS profiles, knew of more options to restrict access to their profiles, and were willing to communicate more personal information in online conversations.

3.4.3 Actions on SNSs

	Mean	Mean (Men)	Mean (Women)	= Never	<1x per Month	>1x per Month	= 1-2x per Week	> 2x per Week	≥ Daily
Status-Updates	3,11	3,31	2,99	24 (13 %)	40 (21 %)	63 (33 %)	27 (14 %)	23 (12 %)	12 (06 %)
E-Mail	3,34	3,17	3,44	27 (15 %)	26 (14 %)	50 (27 %)	35 (19 %)	36 (19 %)	12 (6 %)
Chat	3,43	3,55	3,36	33 (17 %)	33 (17 %)	31 (16 %)	28 (15 %)	40 (21 %)	24 (13 %)
Photo-Upload	2,28	2,38	2,21	33 (17 %)	96 (51 %)	44 (23 %)	7 (4 %)	9 (5 %)	0 (0 %)
Video-Upload	1,33	1,41	1,28	140 (75 %)	36 (19 %)	8 (4 %)	2 (1 %)	1 (1 %)	0 (0 %)
Visiting friends' pages	3,88	3,79	3,94	5 (3 %)	29 (15 %)	42 (22 %)	34 (18 %)	65 (34 %)	14 (7 %)
Finding new friends	2,07	2,13	2,03	39 (21 %)	107 (57 %)	37 (20 %)	3 (2 %)	3 (2 %)	0 (0 %)
Changing profile photo	1,93	1,96	1,91	23 (12 %)	157 (83 %)	9 (5 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)
Posting on friends' pages	3,01	3,01	3,01	12 (6 %)	54 (29 %)	68 (36 %)	32 (17 %)	21 (11 %)	2 (1 %)
Posting of location	1,70	1,96	1,55	109 (58 %)	48 (26 %)	15 (8 %)	10 (5 %)	6 (3 %)	0 (0 %)
Changing privacy settings	2,03	2,07	2,00	28 (15 %)	135 (71 %)	22 (12 %)	2 (1 %)	1 (1 %)	1 (1 %)
Using the friends list	2,44	2,53	2,38	46 (25 %)	75 (41 %)	25 (14 %)	13 (7 %)	14 (8 %)	8 (4 %)
Like	4,33	4,48	4,24	8 (5 %)	16 (9 %)	23 (13 %)	24 (14 %)	67 (39 %)	34 (20 %)

Table 4: Actions on SNS

Note: Due to rounding, summing across categories is not equal to 100%

In the beginning of the study, several different SNSs were used by the participants. Across the course of the two years, most participants migrated to Facebook. Thus, we designed a set of questions that explicitly addressed the use of Facebook. This set of questions was sent to participants at T5 and was answered by 194 people. Items included use of the friends list or the frequency with which privacy settings were changed. For an extensive overview, all items and results are presented in Table 4.

4   Procedure and Sample

4.1   Procedure of the Study

The research report presents data from a five-wave longitudinal online survey study, which was conducted in Germany from October 2009 to April 2012 (see Table 1). The first four of these five waves (October 2009 to April 2011) have been addressed primarily in this report. The study was promoted via advertisements on Facebook and studiVZ, which were both among the most popular SNSs in Germany at that time (Social Networking Watch, 2010). People who indicated their interest first received an online screening survey. The screening survey served to promote the study and offered participants the opportunity to register for the main study. Furthermore, basic demographic information was collected along with their e-mail addresses so that participants could be contacted. To guarantee participants' anonymity, e-mail addresses were saved in a separate database. In general, no personally identifying information was stored with the individual responses. Survey answers were collected from June to August 2009, and a total of 1,507 participants took part. Invitations to all of the five waves of the main study were sent out by e-mail. The main study began in October 2009. Participants received three reminders for each wave. Participants were informed that they could stop taking part at any time during the longitudinal study.

The following sample sizes resulted for each wave (see Table 1): wave one in October 2009: 921 participants; wave two in April 2010: 695 participants; wave three in October 2010: 566 participants; wave four in April 2011: 457 participants. Overall, a response rate of 49.6% from wave one to wave four was achieved. 130 participants had to be excluded as they had either no connection to prior corresponding cases or large amounts of missing data, leaving 327 participants. The participants from wave four were used for all calculations in this report. 194 participants answered an additional wave five. In this wave, questions concerning Facebook use were added; results of these questions are described in chapter 3.4.3. Completion of the survey took approximately 25 minutes.
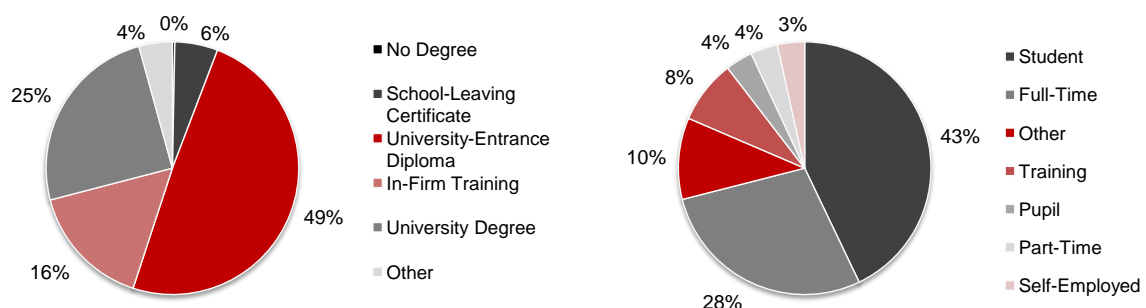
4.2   Age, Gender, Occupation

Table 5: Educational level (left) and occupation (right) of participants

327 participants were used in the analyses presented in this report. 195 participants were female and 132 were male. On average, participants were 25.85 years of age, with a standard deviation of 6.38 years. Table 5 shows the participants' educational levels and occupations at wave T4. Altogether, the majority of participants were young and educated; at the same time, other groups of the population, such as older and working people, were also well represented. Comparisons showed that the sample represents average German SNS users to a satisfactory degree (Busemann & Gscheidle, 2010).

5 Methodology

5.1 Description of Calculations

In order to determine the changes in the variables across time, one way independent analyses of variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures were computed. One precondition of computing ANOVAs is sphericity. Sphericity is granted if the variances of the differences between the conditions of an ANOVA are homogenous. In order to test for sphericity, Mauchly tests were calculated. In cases in which the Mauchly test turned out to be significant, thus implying a violation of the assumption of sphericity, the corrected Greenhouse-Geisser scores were reported. All hypotheses were tested with a two-tailed significance level of .05. Correlations were calculated with Pearson correlation coefficients. Correlations were tested with a two-tailed significance level of .05. Correlations whose coefficients exceeded a size of .1 were considered small, .3 medium, and .5 large (Cohen, 1988).

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Appendix

	Online Social Capital Bonding	Online Social Capital Bridging	Social Support Satisfaction	Social Support Frequency	Satisfaction With Life	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Need for Privacy	Profile information	Offline Self-Disclosure	Online Self-Disclosure	Risk Assessment	Negative Experiences	Profile Restriction Knowledge	Profile Restriction Usage	Published Content	Time on SNS	Authenticity Relational Orientation	Profile Authenticity
Onl. SC Bond.		**0,39**	0,25	**0,33**	0,23	0,26	-0,19	-0,13	0,26	0,27	**0,31**					0,25	0,21	0,25	0,29
Onl. SC Bridg.	**0,39**		0,20			0,16			0,30		0,20	0,14				**0,40**	0,27		0,21
Soc. Sup. Sat.	**0,33**			**0,42**	**0,49**	**0,41**	**-0,35**	**-0,42**		**0,36**	0,18		-0,12					**0,49**	**0,31**
Soc. Sup. Fre.	0,25	0,20	**0,42**		**0,43**	0,35		-0,26		0,24		0,17						0,27	0,28
Satis. Wi. Life	0,23		**0,49**	**0,43**		**0,55**	**-0,50**	**-0,46**	0,13	0,23			-0,11					0,30	0,24
Pos. Affect.	0,26	0,16	0,35	0,41	**0,55**		**-0,41**	**-0,39**		0,27								**0,35**	**0,31**
Neg. Affect.	-0,19			**-0,35**	**-0,50**	**-0,41**		**0,41**		-0,13		0,16	0,24					-0,28	-0,26
Need f. Privacy	-0,13		-0,26	**-0,42**	**-0,46**	**-0,39**	**0,41**			**-0,44**	-0,18							**-0,48**	-0,28
Prof. Info.	0,26	0,30			0,13			-0,11			0,23			0,13		**0,33**	0,19		
Offl. Self-Discl.	0,27		0,24	**0,36**	0,23	0,27	-0,13	**-0,44**			**0,59**							**0,55**	**0,30**
Onl. Self-Discl.	**0,31**	0,20	0,18					-0,18	0,23	**0,59**			0,11			0,24	0,15	0,29	0,20
Risk. Assess.		0,14	0,17			0,16							**0,31**		-0,19				
Neg. Exp.				-0,12	-0,11	0,24					0,11	**0,31**				0,19		-0,11	-0,15
Prof. Restr. Know.									0,13						**0,59**	0,20	0,19		
Prof. Restr. Use												-0,19		**0,59**					
Publ. Cont.	0,25	**0,40**							**0,33**		0,24		0,19	0,20			**0,37**		
Time on SNS	0,21	0,27							0,19		0,15			0,19		**0,37**			0,11
Authent. R.O.	0,25		0,27	**0,49**	0,30	**0,35**	-0,28	**-0,48**		**0,55**	0,29		-0,11						**0,41**
Prof. Authent.	0,29	0,21	0,28	**0,31**	0,24	**0,31**	-0,26	-0,28		**0,30**	0,20		-0,15				0,11	**0,41**	

Table 6: Zero-Order Correlations for all Variables.
Note: All effects are significant at the .05 level. Weak correlations are marked in grey, medium correlations in black, and strong correlations in red